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Insight 2024 Dedication



Miss DeRosa, Mrs. Cotchen, Mrs. Junjulus and Mrs. Sniffen

This year's Literary Magazine is dedicated to the wonderful women of the high school office- Ms. DeRosa, Mrs. Cotchen, Mrs. Junjulas, and Mrs. Sniffen. Every student at Haldane can tell you that stepping into the office is always an absolute pleasure. Whether we are filling out blue forms, scheduling meetings, or just stopping in to say hello, we are always greeted with smiles and cheer. There's Ms. DeRosa and Mrs. Junjulas, who always greet everyone with the brightest hellos and the most helpful answers. There's Mrs. Cotchen, who keeps us all calm through the craziness of high school while never seeming stressed herself. Then there's Ms. Sniffen, who manages to remember everything about each student and make us all feel seen. They are truly miraculous and we are so lucky to have them. We thank them wholeheartedly for everything they do!

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From the Perspective of an Unknown Creature at the Bottom of the Sea

By Louisa Schimming

There are two things I have to say:

1- My house is made of things mythical to you. It's a protracted crack in the floor of the world, cradled by navy basaltic walls as high as the eye can see. It's warm but treacherous, silent but lively, so that it holds a dose of mystery to even its inhabitants. And it's deeper than you've ever seen.

You do know of it: you've sent us lots of peculiar parcels and called it Mariana. But that is not its name. It doesn't have one that you can understand.

2- I think I am dying.

I can feel the final act and scene, it's scratching my skeleton and ripping my nerves. And so I've said goodbye. It was easy. I left my kind and now I find I'm tasked to wander one last time to find my final bed.

You won't know I was here. And I'm okay with that. You will never be able to know me. This is what I wanted.

To you this means I'm dead to history. That I never existed at all. But I know what I've felt, and my life has been one of wonder, fulfillment, and peace.

To you your perception dictates reality- whether trees fall and cry. Whether that cat is still alive.

But when every last one of you is gone, who will notice?

Who will remember?

Who will write it down?

And really, does that matter?



ARTWORK BY HENRY SCHIMMING

Hungry

by Percy Parker

The man comes home from work hungry.

His wife and son are gone, but she's left a note on his desk. It says: *Dearest, we will be gone tonight. I've left dinner for you on the table.*

He walks to the kitchen, where a steaming steak sits waiting for him. He takes the plate into the living room and settles into his leather chair. Its grooves are molded to his familiar shape. The man has spent more minutes of his life in this chair than he has spent washing his hair, brushing his teeth, and feeling honest love.

He turns on the television as he cuts into the steak, which is done rare as he likes it—which is to say the meat is nearly Kool-Aid red on the inside. When he bites it, it's unusually sweet, with a metallic aftertaste. It's the best thing he's ever eaten. He tears into it with wolfish eagerness.

The local news channel is on. The man prefers it to the national news, because the local news channel doesn't have any of those damn liberal false news agendas. Nothing gives the cold, hard facts like the man's small county in Eastern Alabama.

They're talking about a murder tonight. He listens with half interest. His mouth is open as he chews his steak. Bits of meat fly out and onto his lap.

This is Michael Stevens, coming to you live from downtown. The police think they finally have a lead on the case that's been haunting us all for weeks.

Remind us, Michael, what are the details of this gruesome case?

Well, Diane, there's no easy way to say it, but someone has been murdering the teenagers of our city. Tonight marks the eighth death.

So terrible.

You're absolutely right, Diane. And worse still, the bodies are always missing one part when they're found: a heart.

Tell us, what's the update in the case tonight?

Well, Diane, for starters, there's been another murder.

The man feels something twinge deep in his chest, but he doesn't allow it to reach the surface. It's been too many years since he's felt anything besides boredom, anger, or hunger.

Who is the unfortunate soul this time?

Unfortunate is right, Diane. The victim's name is— CLICK.

The power cuts off. The man rolls his eyes, taking another bite of his steak before hauling himself out of the chair and walking down the basement stairs to turn on the generator. By the time he gets back and settles into his chair, the newscasters are nearly done with their story.

She puts their hearts in her food, Diane. Her restaurant on Main Street will be shut down for the foreseeable future while the kitchen is ensured to be clear of any cannibalism.

And what about the woman herself?

In police custody, Diane. We'll get back with any updates. Thank you for watching Channel- The TV is interrupted again, this time by a phone call from the next door neighbor. The man puts his half-eaten steak down again, unhappily picking up the landline.

Did you know?

"Did I know what?"

Your wife.

"She's out right now, call back later."

You really don't know? What about your son?

"He's with her, call back later."

You poor sap. Look it up.

Slamming the phone down, the man, still hungry, pulls out his cellphone and looks up his wife's name. He has clumsy thumbs and it takes him a few tries to get it right- reminiscent, his wife could tell you, of their life in the bedroom.

CANNIBALISTIC WOMAN ARRESTED FOR MURDER OF HER OWN SON ALONG WITH SEVEN OTHER MURDERS.

KILLER FINALLY CAUGHT???

MODERN DAY SWEENEY TODD!!

Damn pansies and their musical theater creeping into our serious news sources, the man thinks. He clicks on the second article.

And there, staring at him from the phone, is a picture of his wife.

He skims the article.

His wife would put the hearts into the steaks she served people at the restaurant, stupidly leaving the unused bits under the sink, allowing them to be traced back to each victim. She's never been great at cleaning, the man thinks.

The only heart that wasn't found under the sink in some capacity belonged to the final victim- her son.

The man walks slowly back to the television and looks down at his unfinished steak. He sinks into the chair and picks his fork up.

He can't help himself. He came home from work so, so hungry.



Sculpture By Kira Drury



Love By Rain Lee

Love is
leather-bound classic
Grover Washington
old peanuts sweater attic-stuffed.

Patiently thriftig
fishing what's right

crossing border, money in shoe
holding hands, monsters won't grab ankles.

Love is

old European architecture
gold softened & strained in trees

asking
why,
am I so moved

by the sun on the wall?



Artwork by Molly Bernstein



Artwork by Ruby McCormick

TeenageHood by Izona Tavares

The world of teenagers is filled with memories to never forget.

Late night swimming on summer nights and endless sleepovers as the days reset.

Cracking jokes while laughing endlessly is truly a blessing, appreciating those you're surrounded by.

Adults always say these are the happiest times, We're starting to think they just lie.

School is coming next fall and we're getting closer to losing it all.

Losing our youth as the years pass by, our childhood memories gone and our eyes begin to cry.

We're going off to college in a year, where did the time go?

We're anxious and our hearts are pounding, feeling at an all time low.

Curiosity gets the best of us as poor decisions come about.

We ponder, "What would my mother think of the child who's going down this route?"

We feel like we're drowning, drowning in inescapable h*ll.

Who will pull us out of the hole we've dug? Let us out of our shell.

We don't know who we are anymore, our lives already filled with regret.

TeenageHood, now built with unfortunate memories that we're sure to never forget.

Sculpture by Izona Tavares



Poem by Dominik Kulan

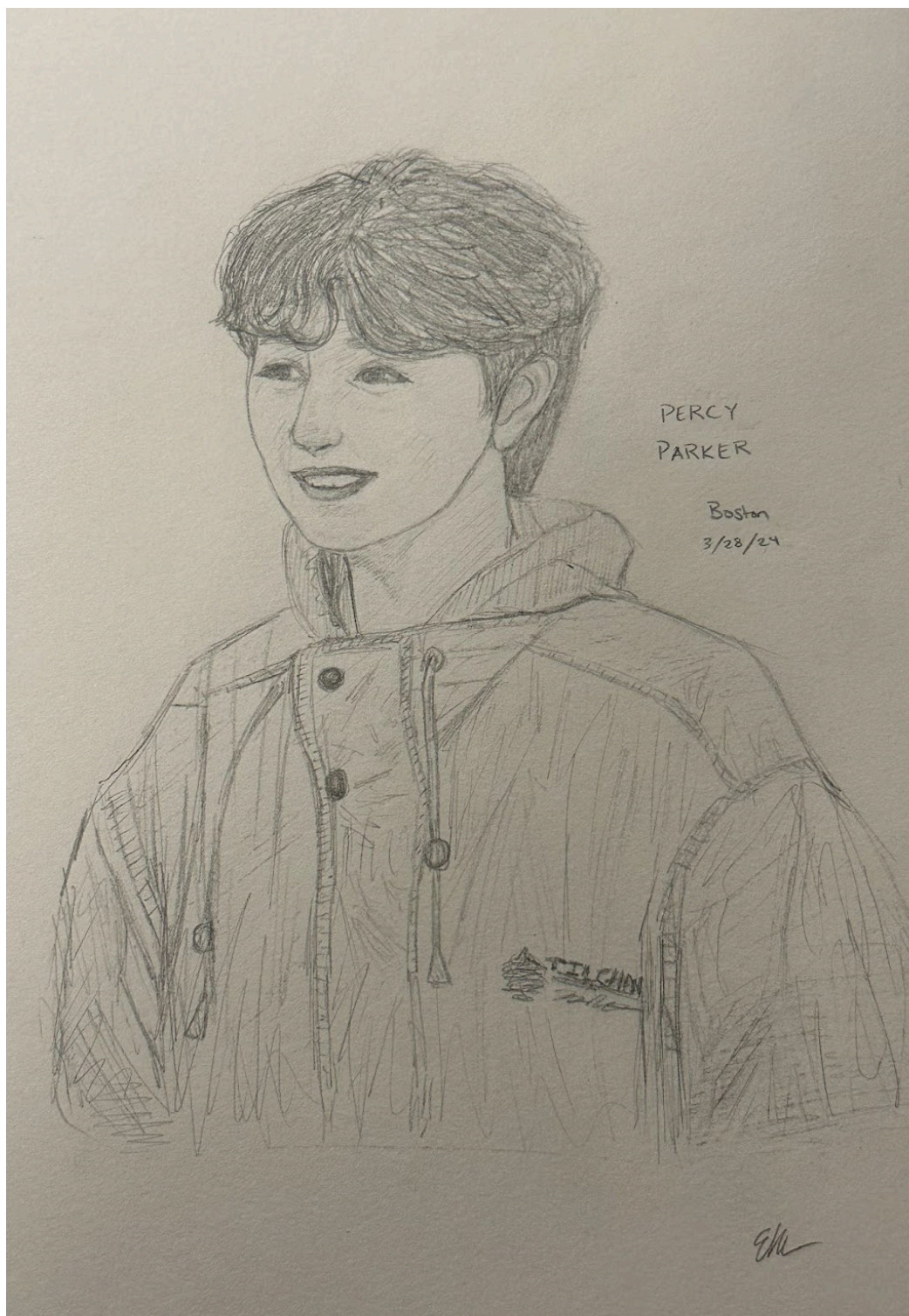
The bike was as orange as can be as it rips the trails
 you can taste the dirt, you can hear the bike bouncing off the limiter wang wang wang
 2 cycle mix fills the air
 As the stunning bike goes faster and faster you feel the satisfaction and fear of speed.
 As you fly faster and faster you start to disappear and become part of the bike
 The bike is you and you are the bike
 It will always be a part of you

Wander *By Nico Massella*

In some ways
In Perfect ways
The mind begins to wander
Through an endless forest
or a never ending field
the hum of the world
drowning under the buzz of a bee
until a drop of a pen brings it all back
the splintered wooden desk
and the paper you never want to finish



Artwork By Quin Carmicino



Artwork By Ella McKeel



Artwork By Louisa Schimming

Busy Days by Sofia Kelly

Busy days

Autumn haze

My mind is not complete

Often, never neat

Time slips by

I often wonder why

I can't hold on to my life passing by

I often struggle with living in the
moment

The passions and struggles never even
that potent

I love being alive, but It keeps passing
me by

Every day feels like a second and I can't
help but cry

The beauty of the sky, the glitter of the
lights

The endless infinity of sultry summer
nights

Oh god the world is just beautiful

Time is just too dutiful

Marching like a little soldier

Nothing real could ever hold her.

So as you can see

Overwhelmed is what's inside of me

Racing through the garden of life

Jumping over the puddles of strife

But on the outside I am kind

I always speak mind

I live passion and with pride

Never swept out by the fearsome tide

I keep my feet in the sand

Anchored to the land

I never lose sight of the horizon line

My destinations always far behind

I'm always moving always racing

No earthquake could leave me shaking.

I appear as though I'm in control

Not restrained by any base conventional
role

But maybe that's my fatal flaw

I'm too outside the laws

I don't belong

I'm essentially wrong

I have no place

I have no plan

I must build my own promised land.

Life Through A Car Window
by Merrick Williams

It's easy to watch TV

Pure absence of your influence
Untainted and unreal

A tree seen out of a car window

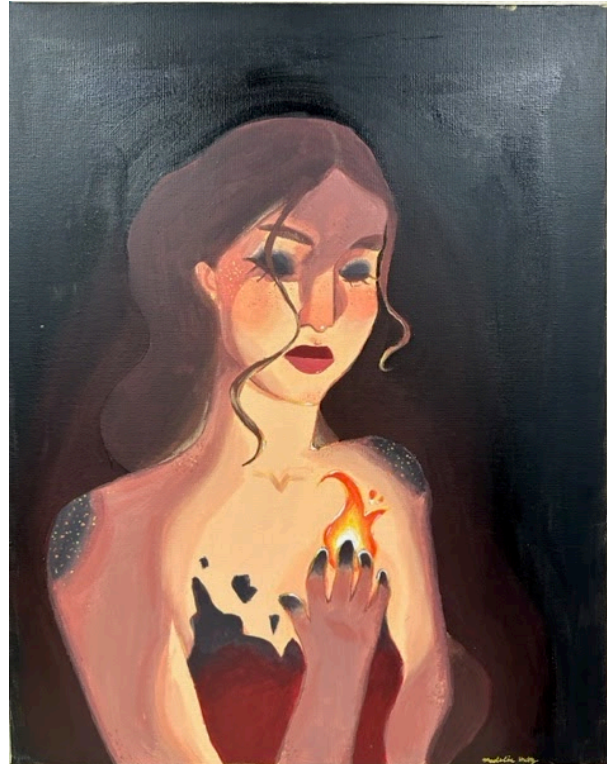
- Born
- Lived
- Loved
- Cut down

All with zero presence on your part
All without the one step to make your effect

With no action, the tree is no more real
Than the TV screen
You could have

The tree was only real
if you had gotten
out of the car.

Gone right up to the tree
Gone right up to her
But you didn't



Artwork by Madeleine Hutz



Sculpture by Lenny Chandler



Artwork by Rosie Herman

The Land of Wu

By Kit Connery and Kylee Marino

In the ancient land of Wu, there lived a young and talented man named Liang. Liang was known for his courage, intelligence, and exceptional martial arts skills. He had a loving family and was studying under a renowned martial arts master, Master Ren, to further nurture his abilities.

One day, the peaceful life of Liang was shattered when an evil warlord, General Xue, led his army to attack the village. In the ensuing chaos, Liang's family was ruthlessly murdered, and his master was taken captive. Consumed by grief and filled with a burning desire for revenge, Liang swore an oath to avenge his family and rescue his beloved master.

In his quest for vengeance, Liang sought guidance from the ancient scrolls of the Wu lineage, which spoke of a mythical artifact hidden deep within the treacherous Mount Qianyun. According to the legends, this artifact possessed immense power and could only be wielded by someone with a pure heart seeking justice.

Determined to harness this power and unlock his true potential, Liang embarked on his treacherous journey, climbing the treacherous mountain and overcoming numerous obstacles in search of the

artifact. Along the way, he encountered mythical creatures and faced daunting challenges that tested his strength, wit, and resolve.

Finally, after days of arduous travel, Liang reached the heart of the mountain. Suspended amidst wisps of clouds, he found a sacred and ethereal courtyard. Surrounded by statues of legendary warriors and guarded by a wise spirit, Liang stood before the artifact – the Soul of Qianyun.

The spirit, recognizing Liang's pure intentions, bestowed upon him the knowledge and power to wield the artifact. Transformed by the Soul of Qianyun, Liang turned into a formidable warrior, radiating an aura of justice and righteousness.

With his newfound abilities, Liang confronted General Xue and his army. The battle that ensued shook the earth and blocked out the sun. Liang's strength and agility were unmatched, and he defeated countless foes effortlessly. However, his sole purpose was not only to defeat the warlord but to offer him a chance at redemption.

In the face of Liang's unyielding determination and the strength of his character, General Xue recognized the error of his ways and begged for forgiveness. He confessed to his cruel deeds and asked for an opportunity to atone for his sins.

Liang, guided by compassion and justice, spared General Xue's life but made him swear to devote the rest of his days to rebuilding the village and ensuring peace and prosperity. General Xue, forever changed by the encounter, accepted his penance and pledged to make amends.

From that day forth, Liang and General Xue worked hand in hand to rebuild the village, fostering harmony and unity. Liang became a revered hero, and his tale of seeking revenge transformed into one of redemption and forgiveness.

At the end of his adventure to his avenger master and his family, Liang faced another challenge in the form of an evil flying unicorn. This mythical creature had terrorized the village for years and was now determined to stop Liang from achieving his goals.

Aware of the unicorn's power and ferocity, Liang sought out help from the local villagers. Together, they devised a plan to lure the unicorn into a trap. Using his martial arts skills, Liang managed to trap the unicorn in a net and brought it to the village.

The unicorn, now defeated, tried to deceive Liang with visions of destruction and carnage. But Liang's unwavering determination and the support of the villagers helped him resist the unicorn's manipulations. After a lengthy dialogue involving the unicorn's past and future actions, the unicorn agreed to leave the village in peace.

Liang emerged victorious, once again demonstrating his power, heroism, and compassion. He had defeated a powerful enemy and helped restore peace and harmony to his village. With his mission complete, Liang returned to his life as a village leader, forever grateful for the sacrifices and support of those who had helped him along the way.

Many years passed, and the village thrived under the leadership of Liang and General Xue. However, one day, General Xue suddenly disappeared without a trace. Liang, filled with worry and confusion, searched desperately for his friend, fearing that he had fallen victim to a new threat.

In his search, Liang encountered a mischievous trickster monkey who claimed to have information about General Xue's whereabouts. The monkey, sly and cunning, offered to guide Liang to the location where General Xue was allegedly hiding.

Unbeknownst to Liang, the monkey had succumbed to darkness and sought to drive a wedge between him and General Xue, seeing an opportunity to sow chaos and destruction. Manipulating Liang's emotions, the monkey deceived him into believing that General Xue had turned back to the path of evil.

Under the influence of the trickster monkey's devious trickery, Liang's thoughts became clouded and his judgment distorted. Convinced that killing General Xue was the only way to protect the village, Liang set off on a perilous journey filled with doubt, conflict, and twisted loyalties.

As Liang delved deeper into the web of deception, encounters with mythical creatures and challenges designed by the trickster monkey tested his resolve and loyalty. Each step he took fueled by misguided anger and desperation, further distanced him from the truth.

Liang's heart grew heavier with each passing day, torn between his longing for justice and his yearning for the friendship he once shared with General Xue. Despite the trickster monkey's treachery, deep down, something within Liang whispered of doubt, urging him to question the monkey's motives.

In the midst of his turmoil, Liang chanced upon a wise old sage who saw through the illusion surrounding him. The sage, recognizing the torment in Liang's eyes, offered guidance and insight into the trickster monkey's true nature.

With the sage's wisdom and guidance, Liang began to see through the fog of deception that had clouded his mind. He realized the depth of his betrayal towards General Xue and the dire consequences of his actions.

Filled with remorse and fueled by the newfound clarity, Liang vowed to right his wrongs and seek forgiveness from General Xue, no matter the cost. With the sage by his side, Liang set forth on a journey of redemption, traversing treacherous landscapes and confronting inner demons to reunite with his lost friend.

After braving countless trials and pushing his limits, Liang finally stood before General Xue. The warlord, wounded by the betrayal but forever influenced by their shared past, guarded his heart cautiously.

With sincerity and humility, Liang pleaded for General Xue's forgiveness, recounting the treacherous path he had traveled and the ultimate betrayal orchestrated by the trickster monkey. Overwhelmed by Liang's genuine remorse and the memories they once shared, General Xue found it within him to forgive his friend.

Their reunion marked the restoration of their friendship, forged through trials and tribulations. Determined to confront and expose the trickster monkey, Liang and General Xue joined forces, vowing to protect the village from its malevolent influence once and for all.

United once again, their bond stronger than ever, Liang and General Xue embarked on a journey to expose the trickster monkey's deceit. They faced trials and traps laid by the tricky creature, using their combined strength, wisdom, and unwavering faith in each other to overcome each obstacle.

With the villagers by their side, Liang and General Xue confronted the trickster monkey in a final, epic battle. Together, their martial prowess and unbreakable friendship proved to be more powerful than the monkey's deception.

In the end, the trickster monkey was defeated, banished from the village forever. Liang and General Xue stood as heroes, their journey of redemption inspiring others to seek forgiveness, embrace unity, and shun the temptations of darkness.

From that day forward, Liang and General Xue became symbols of forgiveness and redemption, their story passed down through generations as a lesson in discernment, resilience, and the power of true friendship. As they watched the village flourish with renewed harmony and peace, Liang and General Xue knew that their shared legacy would forever resonate throughout the land of Wu.



Sculpture by Ashley Sousa



ARTWORK BY QUIN CARMICINO

Poetry Collection by Keira Shanahan

Bleeding conditions

At least I do not have to pay for pads at my school.
 At least I do not have to pay for pads
 With a bar of soap in an overcrowded prison,
 Or steal them from the corner store, or
 Wad up yesterday's paper
 At least I'm not married off to a stranger
 At age eight.
 Or battling gender dysphoria and hate
 With all the right products in the wrong bathroom
 At least I am not removed from the house by
 Disgusted brothers, or
 Forced around by uncaring lovers, or
 Bleeding in the middle
 Of war.

At least I am bleeding at all.
 And not breaking down from starvation
 Or from stress in isolation or the pressures of
 An exercise-obsessed generation
 At least one day I could have a kid if I wanted to.
 Unlike the people rendered sterile
 By a government or "God"
 Disorder or corrupt doctors
 At least I could *not* have one if I *didn't* want to.
 Sixteen in New York and not sixteen in Florida
 Or ten in Ohio
 At least if someone's hands shall thief from me
 I don't have to carry the fetus
 Just because some ancient male genius says its life matters more
 Than mine.

At least the people in my life are kind.
 At least "period" isn't prohibited, at least I am not
 Shamed for being in pain in my household of women.
 At least my story does not match that of millions
 Of oppressed civilians who bled first from their mouths
 Or of victims who must scrape out the evidence
 From underneath their nails
 To be allowed necessary care
 From a system that fails every person attacked for being born wonderfully
 Or wretchedly
 Female.

Spider Morgue

There are spiders at my door every evening
They knock and wait politely, itching to get in
The know the frost is coming and
they know the house is warm
So they line the frame and crowd the steps
And each spider waits their turn.

Every living thing is programed
With what they need to survive
But they were never taught to die
They crawl and stumble and scuttle inside
And they do not know that the house will kill them
just as quickly as the cold.

I watch my step as they swarm the deck
And infestation of leg
Mother is not a fan of spiders
She has them swallowed down winter's throat;
But I keep the side door open
Let them bundle into the garage
There, the illusion of a longer life
There, the choice of here or outside
Perhaps the frost is a gentle killer;
I will let the spiders decide.

-Keira Shanahan



SCULPTURE BY ADA CACCAMISE

Every once in a while.

I know you are clay-born
But you follow me like fog
I suppose I do write more of you
Than I do of other subjects;
I wonder what my friends would think of that.

You gave your heart to me
And you didn't come back to get it
Now I have this bleeding thing
Useless in my hands
Useless in my house
It's rotting on my mantle
It stains my clothes red.

The heart isn't alone.
I keep finding more and more of you
All along my bedroom walls
A rib stuffed behind old toys
A finger bone slipped between book pages
I am still cleaning you up from me
Boxing away your liver, found hidden behind cables
Bagging up your entrails, found wrapped around my chair,
Oozing half-digested butterflies all over my carpet;
I see your hands in the mirror and I wash them down the drain.

The thought of you doesn't stop me in my tracks
As often as it used to.
But there are still moments where I see
A hint of your poison seeping in through the peeled paint
Of my homestead halls;
Or staining my friend's clothing
Or contaminating my food
Or clogging up my boot soles.

I wipe you away
And move on.

-Keira Shanahan

Love bomb

You're sweet as rot, as
mud-soaked mulberries,
Sweet as discarded apples left by Kore to ferment

Sweet as sickness, sweet as bleeding
Sweet as unbrushed teeth;
A callus leaking nectar, gift unto me.

You love like infection
Pink-eyed rat's treat;
A putrid soup of affection,
Unable to breathe.

-Keira Shanahan



Sculpture by Ember Mahoney

Story By John Mangan

A motor bike drove by, dragging dust through the outskirts of an abandoned city. A city that was once thriving but now is as destroyed as could be, what looked to be trees are now as dark as the night sky, without a leaf on them. Glass is scattered throughout the city, with pollution on the cross walk and even in the streets. The streets that are now cracked, as well as practically any structure that used to be occupied in a once great city. Now there are only three types of people that live or run through here: bandits, ravagers, and tribes that live for the primary purpose of taking control and gaining notoriety. The bike came to a stop right at the edge of a cliff, where the man looked down at a series of tents and wooden structures. The man began to take off his mask and his face was wrinkly, hairs are gray like wool, and he began to say, "Home sweet home."

The man walked through the tribe, where he walked with his bike, he had a bag that was comically big, it looked as though he was carrying a massive stone over his back. While traveling through the tribe, an imprisoned bandit screamed at the top of his lungs at the biker man. Similarly to the biker man, the imprisoned bandit also appeared to be old, as well as every guard, merchant, hunter, and member of this tribe. The imprisoned man said, "Dive in Ash, soak in blood, drown in a snake." He did not say anything else other than that and screamed. The biker man walked over to the guard, the guard said, "Ahhhhh, how are you Ghost!" Ghost responded immediately and with a tone of whine and worry.

"What are we doing with this poor soul?" The guard looked down, with a face of irritation and a tone of exhaustion.

"Look, he's just a nutjob, a nutjob that has claims that disrespect both this tribe, but practically everyone in the world." Both knew what happens when disrespect and irrationalities happen in tribes and organized gangs, it's either a slow death or swift execution. While they must wait for King Andy's final decision, they all knew what the outcome of this wackjob would be.

The Guard said, "Listen, I promise that this job is harder than any adventurer like you would know, people have to die and with no one under the age of 60, order means everything in this tribe now more than ever."

Ghost responded with a very disappointing tone, "So when will it happen?"

The Guard states, "Tomorrow."

King Andy arrives, "By the name of our tribe *Viente*, I will send this poor soul to the kingdom of God!" King Andy often spoke with intensity, his words stabbed like knives and they

carried such an anger, not one of confidence but rather a voice that demanded a level of order that was never met. A desperation if you will.

Just then a child cried out, "Stop!"

The entire tribe took a pause, a hiccup, just about everybody's heart skipped a beat. A child? Who sees children? They've been dead for most of their lives, the youngest men would be about in their mid 60's. Children were absent, nonexistent, almost as though they had been a myth. Thousands of questions jogged the minds of the tribe but just then the child ran into Ghost to hug him. The entire tribe could not comprehend what was happening, who would they tell? Do we make him a slave? Is this a trap?

The lunatic stated with pride, "Finally, I knew this day would come, you are all fools, I am saved!" The King looked at him as though he foolishly and playfully forgot to complete a task, and just then loaded his crossbow and shot him a few times, his screams crowded the atmosphere.

The child says, "Don't do that, what kind of king are you?"

Usually King Andy would kill anybody who said anything remotely similar to what he just said. But this is different, a child? There is so much that nobody knows and would like to. Kind Andy's frustrated face changed into a relaxed smile, as though all his stress had disappeared.

He looked at the boy and at the guard, then said, "Take him to my home, make him accustomed to this tribe and the culture, make sure he is fed and bathed."

Hours later people noticed a very bizarre characteristic of the Boy, he only said, "It's in the sperm."

They all were confused, they knew that there was something wrong with their reproductive organs, but that was just about it. There really was not a major need for scientists, and the medics just used whatever was around them, and that was their life.

Except, those four words would destroy the tribe, people started to question if their infertility was planned, if its the environment, or if it was a plan by God.

The Guard came to check on King Andy, only to gasp as loud as a scream. King Andy was dead, actually... beyond dead, mangled, destroyed, the sight was so disgusting that it would make the devil cry. But people were celebrating that day, King Andy was not a popular figure, but when Ghost heard about this he knew who would replace him.

The Child...

Ghost knew that the tribe was over with, so during the night he approached the child with a knife, the child said to him, "Why?"

Ghost responded with disappointment, "I don't know."

The Child responded confidently with, "Is this for the tribe, or for yourself."

Ghost still responded, embarrassed as ever, "I don't know."

The Child asked him a question that sent him into shock. "Are you disappointed in yourself?"

Ghost asked, "For what? Trying to kill you?"

The Child knew what to say, "No, I am useless, just a representation of what you all want, I mean nothing."

Ghost started to realize that this child was far more similar to him than anyone he ever knew. Not only did he let the child live, but gave him words of encouragement, "You will likely be the last human on this planet, I don't know how you came here, or if there are more of you, but it doesn't matter to me."

Ghost decided that he was done with the Tribe, so he took the child, burned the castle down, and they traveled on a motorcycle with limited supplies. But... He discovered something that made it all worth it, a society of young people, the city was inside a mountain. And he knew that life was far beyond his tribe, other tribes, and deserts.

Tears left his eyes, a smile began to form, and he closed his eyes and began to see the light.

He spoke, and said one final statement, "It was worth it, God, all the years of torment and depression are all finally gone, there is life."



ARTWORK BY FRANCES DONAHUE



Artwork by Emil Schweizer

Black

By Emmett Horner

It lurks in the night
In every shadow
hidden from the light

In empty cupboards
And under the stairs
In basements and attics
And, well,
Everywhere

A colourless colour
Never seen in the air
What gives it its name
A sign of despair

Tucked under a bookshelf
Or inside of a sack
It lies and waits
And then all fades to black



Artwork by Lincoln McCarthy

Poetry Collection by Percy Parker

A Boy Calls His Friend a F----t, They Both Laugh, I Listen

-Percy Parker

Quiet crawls into my bones and starts to destroy me-
Inside first

My pen scratches paper like snow landing in the dark.

I wonder if I will ever become
Hopscotch laughter falling from clouds,
Dinner glass satisfaction, napkins on the left
World explosion, red magma

Wish for a world with wings,
Castle for our dreams

Our bloods together in a vial
Stained red glass changes the light on the wall
What is a god?

Painful breath of a lonely world,
Forget how important things once were
Like
Your mother's gaze
And your lover's voice
And your own hand on the doorknob at dawn

My body swallowed whole.

I cry, KNOW ME to the world
She doesn't respond, too busy choking
In the bottom
Of a well

Dead eyes fixed on the ground,
What does a corpse have to be ashamed of?

Earth weeps.
Not for me.
For the monsters.

Wingless Icarus

-Percy Parker

Dust bowl tangerine clouds toss pennies from the sky
And I don't grant any of their wishes

The world is an Edward Hopper painting,
Muted blues slamming into my stomach like a train

A train

Races by me and the camera clicks as all the doors in my chest creak open
She's telling a joke and I'm smiling at her and I don't have time to blink before they close again,
My doors that lock from inside.

I am in a constant state of unbelonging,
A child playing hide and seek who believes that if I can't see you, you can't see me

Shadows whisper in my veins.
They always have.

A Poor Soul's Patience

-Percy Parker

Poetry, I told you, is not my forté
Because poems are beautiful truth
And I am a liar.

My inside world is rich, I swear
I hold eternities behind two brown eyes
You tell me that sounds lonely
And then your brow furrows when I shrug

Hold me like a child crying for the world,
Hold me like a dream

I won't tell you that I'm ashamed
But you'll see it in my eyes as I watch the boys laugh like honey in class

You can't know who I am but you can know what I long to become.

Story by Lucy Petty

a sheep in wolves clothing

in a world where vulnerability plagues the masses, the weak will stand together to seem strong. all they are doing is making a larger target.

the wolf will come and pluck off one sheep each day, and devour it in-front of the others. their fear feeds him. meat tastes better scared.

there will be few who are aware. they will take on the hardships and will protect the innocent. they will watch each other be eaten, day by day. the wolf doesn't appreciate being known.

the remaining will herd the younger, moving them away from their fate. they will all see him one day. today they will not.

those who are aware stay towards the back of the herd. they know when his eyes are hungry, and they will stop walking, waiting for him. the perfect martyr is silent, but knowing. the perfect martyr is aware.

when the youngest of the herd begin to realize, they too will begin to walk slower and slower. they will watch their counterparts drift away in silent ignorance. those who are aware will never stop loving those who aren't. those who cannot see will forget the others even existed.

the oldest sheep will soon die off, a new generation will take over. one will be forced into awareness. she was born staring into the eyes of the wolf, and she saw nothing but a creature to pity.

she will herd her counterparts. she will never let them see what she has. she will never let them look into the eye of desperation. they'll never know, as long as she's there.

soon the wolf will begin to kill again. he'll sink his teeth into innocent flesh, and he'll dismember each one, leaving a piece of them with her. she will take a bone, and bury them in silent graves. her pleading seems to only make him more gruesome.

at night, she will shelter the young. she will cradle them close until their eyes no longer reflect the moonlight, and she will leave them to sleep. unlike those before her, she has a plan.

she studies the wolf as he sleeps, noticing every detail in the fur on his spine to the tips of his ears. how every tooth is like a blade, ready to kill her at any moment. she could never kill him,

for when he looks at her, she sees too deep. her bloodlust ran thin when she was young, his strengthened. he stirred. he will wake soon. she will save them all. they'll never have to know.

that morning, she goes to wake one of the eldest. she tells him to not be afraid. she tells him he must herd them for the day. he does not understand. she is grateful.

the caricature of the wolf she had created was perfect. she would wear its skin, and free them of him. she'll never feel his hungry eyes again. she would set out, parallel to the wolf, stalking him, while he stalks his target.

she will walk beside him, copy his movements until he sees her. a new face. a new counterpart. a new competitor. he will back off for the day, fearing his new rival. she has won. she can rest.

that night, she tucks in the little ones until their glassy eyes hold no tears. she has returned, as promised. they told her they needed her. she knew they weren't lying.

once they had all dozed off, she couldn't help but wonder about the wolf. she couldn't help but be happy to feel his fear. she went to him, to see what she could understand from his sleeping body. she would watch until he stirred, for many nights. in the day, she would protect her clan, by staying with the wolf. he would not kill if he could not be alone.

one night, however, it dawns on him to challenge her. the wolf does not sleep. he does not rest, but instead continues to stalk his prey. she mirrors him like a shadow, never letting down her facade. the perfect partnership.

when she returns, it is harder to take off her caricature of the wolf. it clings to her wool, begging her to be whole again. she will never be a wolf. how could she?

but the wolf loves a challenge. his ancestors did too. so he will continue to stalk for longer periods. she will be forced to as well.

the longer she performs, the harder it is for her to shake this character.

until she can't.

she comes home to care for the young. she sees them shaking in the wind. winter is coming. it's cruel, really. the young can't comprehend why life would turn on them so.

she reaches to unveil herself, only to be found trapped. she's bonded to what she's made. she's bonded to the monster.

the wolf and her are too close. they are one. he has poisoned her without her even knowing.

she will tear off her own flesh before she becomes him. chunks of wool and skin fat and muscle lay in a heap along with the costume. she is done pretending. she will protect them how those before her did.

she goes to say goodnight, and they do not recognize her. those who are ignorant have forgotten her, and those who are aware are horrified by her grotesque appearance. a monster. how could she let this happen to herself?

the next morning, she drags far behind the pack. her hooves are bleeding and unkempt, her wounds open and raw. she knows. the smell of blood will linger behind her, like a trail. he will find her, and she will be his perfect victory. his life's work.

he is doing what his ancestors did before him, as is she. she will drag her feet and close her eyes, but not before getting a glimpse of the setting sun. she will not tuck in the children tonight.

the wolf has come. and god, isn't she perfect. a true sacrifice. her flesh is sweeter than any other, she's taken in all of the fear for her herd. she's delectable. the pain is enough to kill an innocent, but she does not die. he knows. he will lay her sin next to her instead. the caricature.

when her herd finds her, those who are ignorant will tell the others. she is the wolf that haunts them, she is what kills the young. those who are aware know this is what must be done. they will be the ones to end her life.

she does not flinch when they come. she waits. they tell her that the young will never have to know. they needed her to be a hero. she is killed by those she swore to protect. even in death, she finds comfort in their presence. the wolf watches, and chooses its next lamb. how beautiful its eyes reflect the moon.

the perfect martyr is always aware.



Artwork by Hazel Berkley

In classroom full of loud kids, where pencils danced
 Teachers juggled textbooks with glee
 In the cafeteria the spaghettis sang
 In geometry class the shapes made a cha cha sound

School was whimsy full of chaos but it was all cool
 Students were happy and full of laughter, which is the most important thing
 All this in this weird wacky school

By Nicole Perez

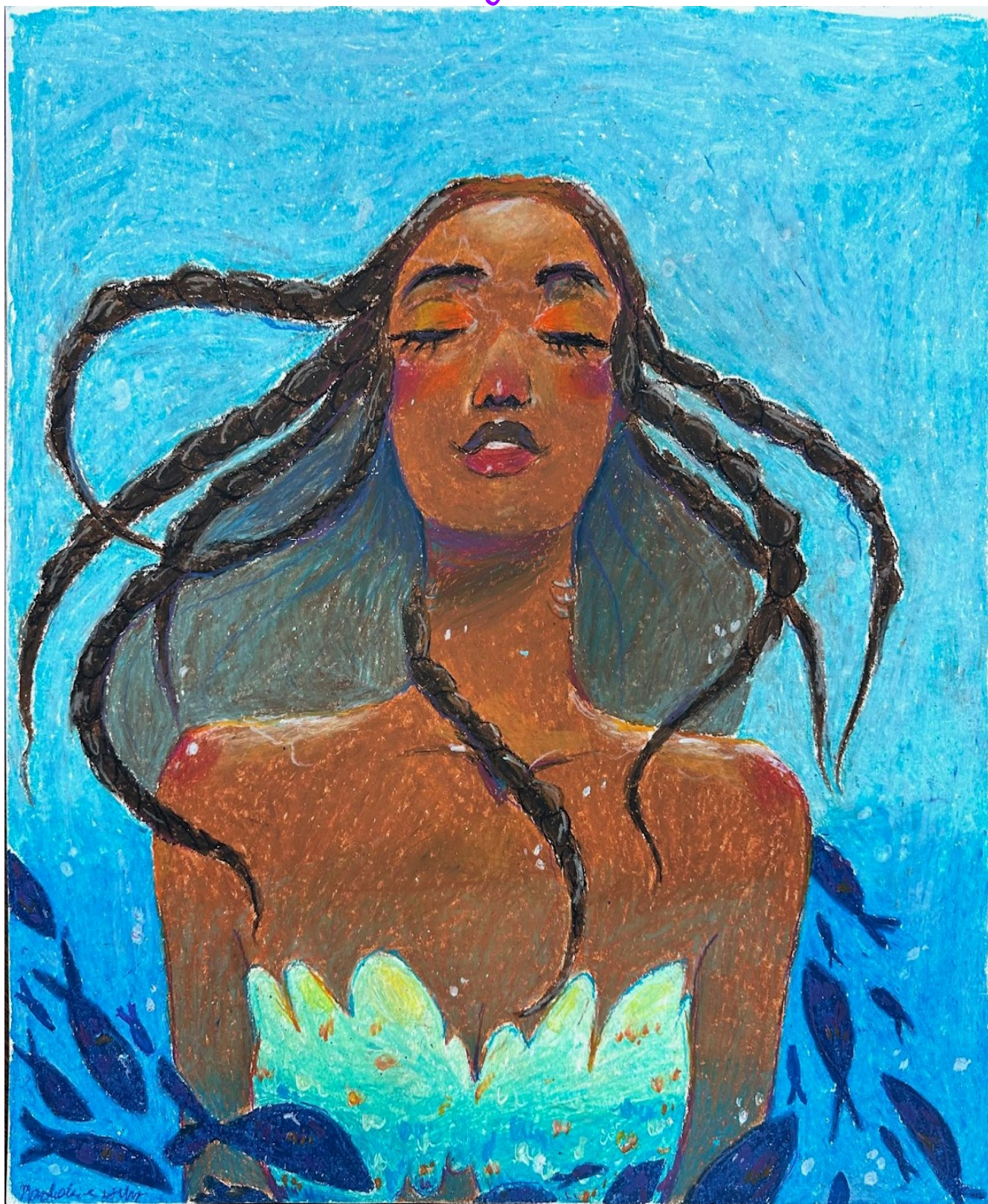


WINTER IS CHAPPED LIPS AND KNITS
 SNOW BLOW AND CANDLE GLOW
 RAIN-GET-OUT-OF-BED-DAYS
 SLEEP DEPRIVATION HAZE
 ABBEY ROAD RECORD DAYS
 WINTER SUCKS ASS.

BY RAIN LEE

Artwork by Jackie McCormick

Artwork Collection by Madeleine Hutz







a first hunt, and a new beginning.

a cold winter, and a foot of snow

a child, alone in the woods

a pair of snowshoes, holes in the fresh white landscape

gouging

an
orange foreign to the pigmentless landscape
fox

a l o n g rifle silently hefted from its holster
a
quiet
click
ensues

a single LOUD crack

the cardinals s a k e the branches of the trees, fleeing
h

splattered splattered
the fox lies motionless, its crimson essence splattered on the now impure snow
splattered
splattered

the boy's thoughts wheel in his head, and suddenly, all is silent.

he has never felt so alone

By Anonymous



Artwork by Louisa Schimming

Starlight - By Helen Hutchison

Most nights

I can stare at the stars

Until my eyes go numb

Until I forget where my feet are

and how far my hair has strayed

Until nighttime chills start to fill my chest up

with rays of comfort

Until the busy little fairies in my brain

stop their antics to watch the stars too

Until I can feel the smallness of my life

ingrained on to the grooves of my fingernails

Until loneliness is replaced with my imagination

and I have no more left to wish for

Until dreams call my quiet, drifting conscious

up and away, past the constellations

Until, through all the shifting clouds

and all the city lights, I find the moon

I can just sit

And stare

At the stars.

Good Morning - By Helen Hutchison

To the dewdrops straight from fairy kisses
And the children who keep those stories alive
To the sleeping eyes dreaming bizarre fantasies
And the wide-open eyes sitting in their silent kitchens
To the poets who thought they'd "remember it in the morning"
And their pen and paper who watched them forget it
To the dandelions covering their sleepy eyes with petals
And the faded forsythias longing for their yellow back
To the neighbors with their own deep stories
And the dreamers who hug them tight
To the clothes waiting to be put on
And the shoes resting in an empty downstairs
To the tiptoes staying quiet until dawn
And to the still world:
Just you wait for sunrise.



SKETCH BY GABRIEL ROTENBERG

Story by Alek Noormae

I was out messing around in the woods as I do when I need a break from the stress of life. When I first saw it I was sitting on a rock listening to music. A giant shiny object had come crashing down from the sky and it couldn't have landed more than a couple hundred feet from me. Being the curious boy I was and still somewhat am I went to see what had fallen. A few weeks prior my parents had been talking about a meteor that had fallen out in Illinois and I thought I had found one as well.

These thoughts came to a halt when I saw it. It was a large, chrome, egg shaped object that left a trail in the ground about 10 feet wide and the length of a football field. The giant metal egg had knocked down trees and eviscerated rocks yet as I approached it I could see there was barely a scratch on it. When I was close enough to touch it I really saw how massive it was. With the height of a two story building and the width of three school buses, this thing towered over me.

As intimidating as it should've been to nine year old me, I sensed no danger and my mind started to up a world of amazing wonder. Growing up on movies like Star Wars and E.T. the idea of an extraterrestrial right in front of me had me ecstatic. So I did exactly what any of the characters in my favorite movies and tv shows would've done and explored the crash site. I started by doing a few laps around it observing the smooth surface marked only by perfectly carved lines and dots making up what seemed to be some outlandish language. By my third time around it I noticed that all of the markings seemed to lead to a diamond shaped carving dug deeper than all the others. Even to a young boy like me this was obviously the key to opening it up.

I placed my hand upon the diamond and the whole thing lit up. A bright blue glow emanated from the cracks and it slowly opened up. In the center there was an unearthly creature floating in a fetal position. It slowly fell to the bottom of the space shuttle and stood up. It couldn't have been taller than four feet tall and had odd features that somewhat resembled a human. Its nose was long and its ears were pointy, it had a somewhat of a pot belly with long bony arms. Its arms matched its knees perfectly, they were as thin as toothpicks and ended with feet that were more toes than anything else. Its skin was as pale as a sheet of paper and fit its body like a shoe two sizes too small.

My young self who knew no evil approached the small creature and reached out to shake its large bony hands. It took a step forwards and placed its hand on mine. It didn't reciprocate my hand shake or anything like that, it simply placed its hand atop mine. I could feel its cold dry skin and long nails resting on my hand as it looked up at me. I didn't realize until this point that it had three

eyes in a straight line across its forehead. At first it startled me but i still wasn't scared it just made my curiosity heighten even more.

I then grabbed onto its hand, lightly like my mother would when leading me up to bed at night. I started to pull it out of its spaceship into the surrounding forest. At first it resisted but after my pointless words and gestures it followed. It looked around cautiously then gripped my hand firmly. It didn't hurt in the slightest and in my mind this showed a sign of companionship, something a younger me deeply sought. I didn't have many friends and often spent my time alone so this was new to me and made me full of joy.

It was at this point that I decided that my new found friend needed a name and I would be the one to give it to him. I had recently seen the movie, *The Phantom Menace*, and decided that I would name him after one of my favorite characters. I looked him in all three of his eyes and told him that his new name would be jar jar. I saw it fitting because of his awkward appearance and at the time I thought I was quite clever for making the connection.

Jar Jar and I walked around the woods for a while until we got to the pond where I would often sit and watch the fish. We sat down on a rock near the pond and I pulled an ipod shuffle from my pocket with a pair of wired earbuds. At the time I had been listening to the smiths and I wanted to share my music with anyone I could.

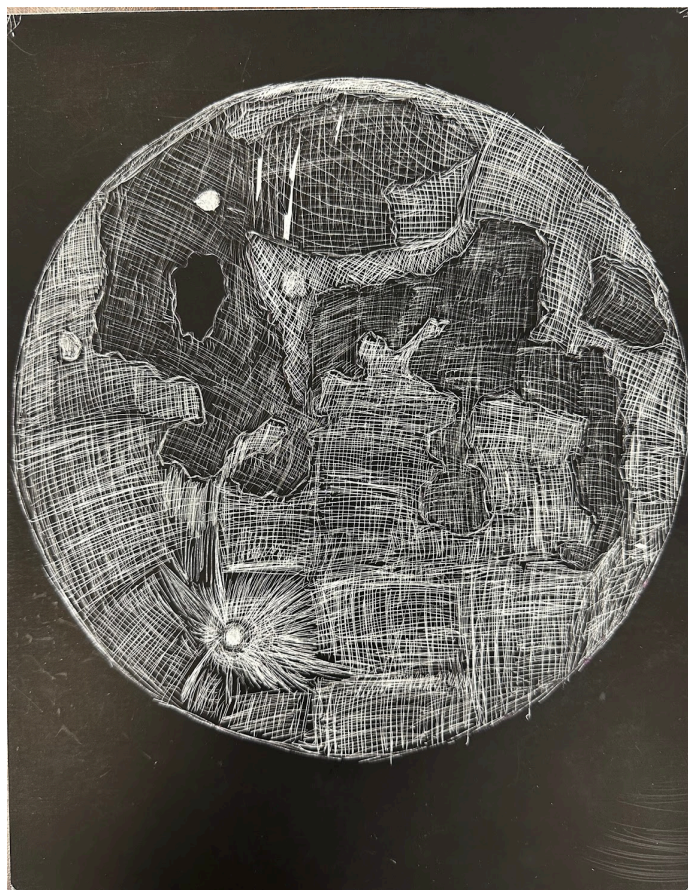
I plugged in the earbuds and handed them to him. He was puzzled by the foreign object and because my efforts to explain through words was pointless I took them and gently placed them in his ears. At first he struggled but as they were in he ceased to fret. I turned on the song, "This Charming Man," which was a song on the smiths self titled album. He was at first scared freaking out but once he realized that the music wasn't harming him he settled down. His reaction to the music was amazing. He sat there wide eyed as he swayed back and forth to the beat. After the track ended he gestured to the ipod but before I could replay the song he opened his mouth. It was wide and toothless and it looked as if it was lined with gills. This took me off guard but right as I was about to react the song I had just played for him started playing. He was producing the song just as it was on the album and it was amazing. I sat there in awe before I burst into laughter. He was greatly amused by my reaction and for the first time I saw him smile. We sat there for a long time listening to music and enjoying ourselves until it grew dark.

Once the sun had set and we could barely see, I started to panic. Jar Jar noticed my distress and grabbed my hand just as I had done to him when we first met. He started to glow the same blue that his space shuttle had glowed and suddenly it wasn't so dark. My young self had always been scared of the dark and what lurked within it but in this moment I had no fear. I wasn't alone and I didn't have anything to be afraid of. We walked to the edge of my property and I motioned for him

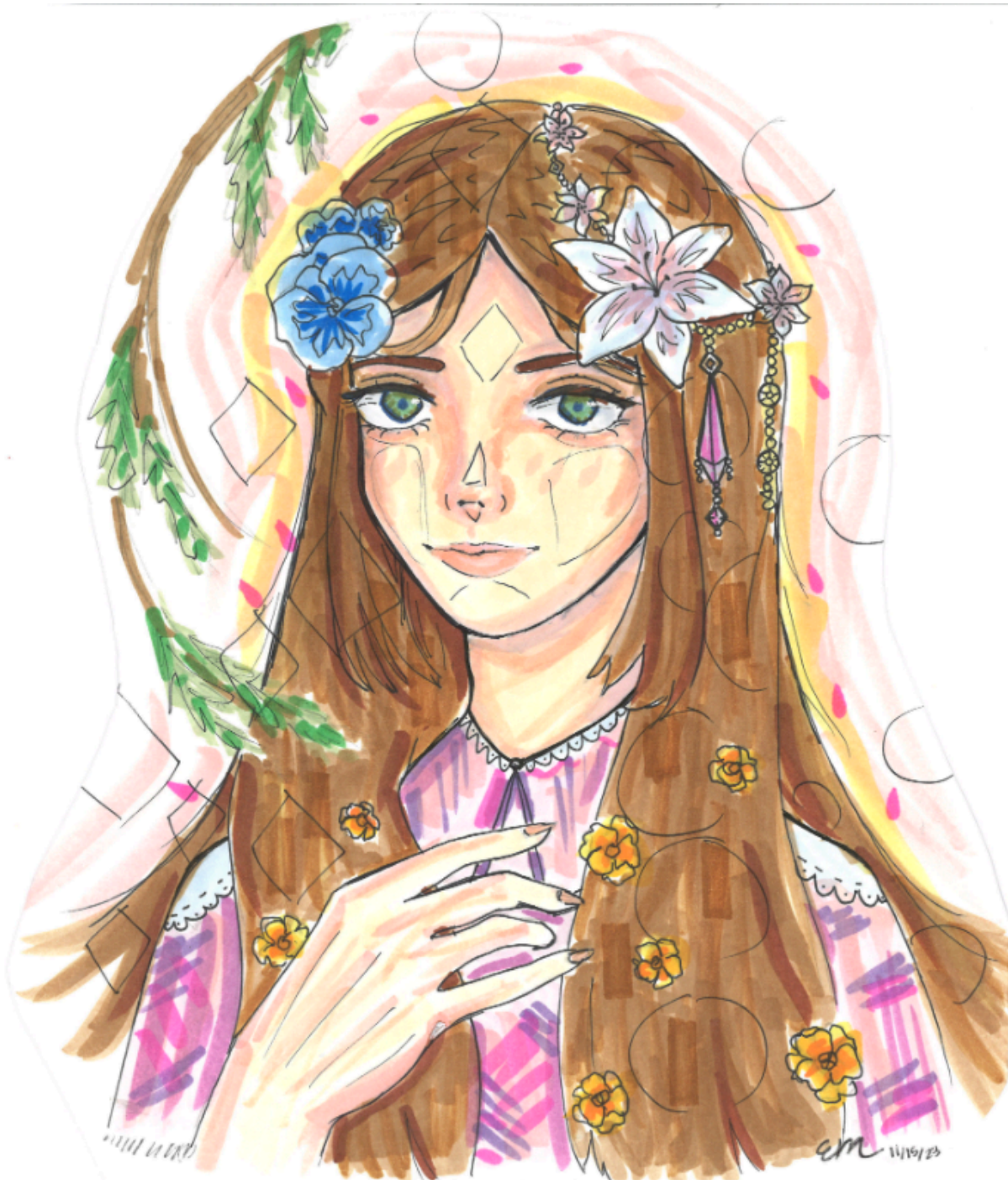
to come in with me. He simply shook his head and released my hand then he waved goodbye, turned around and walked away into the woods.

Once I had returned home I found my parents fuming with anger sitting in the living room. They had been worried sick about me all day and even though I tried to explain to them all about my friend they weren't hearing a word of it. I knew at that point that no one would believe me without proof so the next day I went to where I had found a jar jar and to my surprise nothing was there. No Jar Jar, no spaceship, not even the trail that had been left from the crash. I was dumbfounded and angry but most of all I was sad. He was my first real friend and he had left me all alone.

Now 20 years later I still haven't forgotten my alien friend and the values that meeting him taught me. To this day I still show my kids where I met my friend and tell them his story. They're the only ones that will believe my story because of their open minds and innocence and while one day that will go away I think it one of the most amazing things in this world.



Artwork by Diego DiGiglio



Artwork by Ella Mekeel

Still Snowing by Percy Parker

There is something undeniably restless about summer homes in winter. There is a taut condition to every room, like the air itself longs for the warmth that lingered months before.

I was staying the night at my friend Lady Beatrice's second estate by her request, as she had taken a car up from town on a whim and, finding herself regrettably lonely, phoned all her acquaintances in the area and insisted they at least come for dinner.

Having nothing to do with myself for the weekend and always eager for intelligent conversation, I happily agreed to spend my Friday night at her Wagner Place.

I arrived only moments before dinner, and the servant showed me into the dining room to find a pleasantly motley crew gathered around the tall wood table. Lady Beatrice had kept the seat to her left open for me, and I happily took my place.

Looking around the table, I found several familiar faces: the Andersons, a lovely couple who I knew lived down the road, the Eastmans, who were acquaintances of mine from the city, and Lady Sullivan, an old woman whose husband I had met in the war. There was only one face unbeknownst to me in the group, and his chair was directly across from mine.

"Oh, Edward, have you met Mr. Peterson?" Beatrice asked, gesturing at the man. "This is James Peterson, a recent graduate of Cambridge. My father is a good friend of his father's."

"Edward Nelson," I said, holding out my hand, which he shook with a smile. His eyes were a piercing blue, I noticed. He kept his gaze fixated on me in a way that was so devoted it was nearly disturbing.

"So, Edward," Beatrice said to me, and I turned my attention away from Mr. Peterson to hear her ask what I hoped would be a delectably thought provoking question. "We were discussing this Flager woman's plight in the city, have you heard of it?"

"The one mixed up in this funny business with her husband's will?" I asked, for I'd read the curious story in the newspaper that morning. "I tell you, I'm on her side. She's fighting for the right to a house that she has lived in and cared for over the past ten years, why should it not be hers?"

"Yes," chimed Lady Sullivan on my left, "but have you heard them say that the very reason his will remains unfound is not because he did not leave one but rather because she has hidden it?"

I was running the ridiculous notion through my mind when Mr. Peterson spoke softly. "I don't care much for gossip myself."

I knew instantly that this was a man I would so like to become acquainted with, for few would so willingly and kindly make such a stabbing remark over the dinner table. "Ah, Mr. Peterson, it is but human nature to tell one another stories," I said to him, leaning in excitedly.

"If it will not change the course of my own life, I don't see why I should give one thought on the matter," he responded, the same thrill I felt in my chest present in his own voice.

I raised an eyebrow at this. "Must something be life changing in order to earn your time, Mr. Peterson?"

“It is not a lack of time, Mr. Nelson,” he said, “but a lack of care.”

I threw my head back and laughed, and looked to see him laughing too.

“I see I’ve found myself a cynic,” I said, unable to keep the grin off my face. “What do you care for, then?”

“The essentials,” he responded after a brief pause.

Beatrice, who had been listening to this conversation and was clearly annoyed by the idea of being left behind intellectually if our minds were given free reign with each other’s for too long, put her hand on my arm and asked me about my family. Distracted, I turned away from Mr. Peterson and began to talk to her instead.

Mr. Peterson and I did not exchange another word over the course of the meal, as Beatrice kept me busy with tale after tale, but I could feel his blue eyes on me all night.

I had a tendency towards certain sinful urges that my upbringing had led me to, and while I had never acted upon them, I knew said urges caused me to occasionally see things that were not there, and therefore did not allow myself to dwell upon his staring.

As dinner came to a close, Beatrice informed me that only two guests would be staying the night instead of traveling back to town then. To my surprise, when she directed a servant to show us to our rooms, the other party that stood was none other than Mr. Peterson, who smiled at me faintly.

In that smile, there was an understanding, and I felt suddenly quite certain that Mr. Peterson harbored the same unspeakable desires as myself.

This realization caused a stinging sort of sensation of panic in my chest and I had to keep the shake out of my voice as I thanked Beatrice and bid her good-night. When I reached my room upstairs, I shut the door immediately and leaned my back against it, eyes closed as my mind ran. I listened through the door as Mr. Peterson was shown into the second guest room, incidentally directly next to mine.

I took my jacket off and hung it in the closet, but I refrained from undressing further. Undressing in the evening was the bane of my existence, for it caused me to face a fact that I preferred remain unknown to even myself.

Dress shirt still on, I picked up one of the books that had been left on the desk and began to read it on the bed. Over an hour of this went by, for I was oft known to allow time to slip away from myself when I had a book in my hand. I might have gone on the whole night in this position had I not heard the scrape of a window opening and the echo of a laugh coming from the neighboring room.

I stood up curiously and walked over to my own window, throwing back the curtains. What I saw upon inspection was, to my delight, a snowstorm.

I had a theory that inside me was the young person I used to be. In fact, I believed I was still a little boy entirely; it was only that I rarely got a chance to show it.

This was decidedly one of those rare moments for me, and so I thoughtlessly opened my door, intent on running downstairs and outside to exist within the storm more defiantly.

What I found was the eeriness of the red carpeted hallway, a horribly silent contrast from the thrill of the storm outside. It was at this moment that I had the aforementioned realization that for all the beauty of winter outside, the house itself was merely waiting for summer to come again.

I had stepped out of my room but was about to turn around, forget the snow, and go to sleep as I certainly should, when Mr. Peterson's door opened and I found him standing in front of me.

He was dressed in his night clothes and his yellow hair was slightly damp. His face was alight with a kind of unbridled joy, his cheeks flushed and his blue eyes glowing even in the dim hall.

We stared at each other shamelessly for a moment, and then he beckoned for me to enter his room.

His window was wide open and the scent of the cold air had filled the room.

"I see I've found something you care about, Mr. Peterson," I said to him, not bothering to hide the smile that had crept onto my face as I alluded to our dinner debate.

"Yes, well, this is essential," he responded. I felt sure, looking at him, that he too harbored a little boy underneath his man skin. He only furthered this happy realization when he said, "Go on, then, put your head out in it."

I leaned outside and shut my eyes. I let the storm overtake me, snow filling my dark hair and wetting the collar of my dress shirt. The earth's indifference slipped away, revealing a secret, cacophonous joy harbored in a snowstorm that I doubt most men get to find in their lifetime. But we do, I thought giddily, as I pulled myself inside and faced a grinning Mr. Peterson.

"I was going to go outside and run about in it," I said to him, embarrassed to hear that my happiness had sent my voice into a much higher register than I had spoken in yet. I coughed to conceal it, but Mr. Peterson seemed not to care, taking a step closer to me.

"Your clothes would get wet," he whispered, "like your hair." He reached up and touched his hand to my snow-soaked curls. My heart began racing.

"Mr. Peterson, are you—"

"Please call me James," he cut me off saying, and suddenly his lips were pressed against mine.

I pulled away quickly, panic-stricken. I had certainly thought about it for years but I'd never kissed a man, or quite frankly, kissed anyone.

He was staring at me with those blue eyes, looking horrified. The fact that I now knew a secret that I could ruin his life with pulsed through the air between us.

Little did he know, though, that I had my own fair share of secrets.

I took a deep breath and said, "Then you must call me Edward," before placing my hand on the back of his neck and pulling his lips again to my own.

He kissed me back, first with relief but then with something greater, an intensity I'd read of but never truly believed in. I thought of the infamous Oscar Wilde's claim that uranian love was the most natural form, and decidedly agreed with the sentiment as James led me to the bed.

He pushed my chest gently so that I fell down onto the mattress, and his hands, which had been holding my face with care, now moved down to the buttons of my dress shirt.

My stomach clenched as it occurred to me that there would be no escaping what was about to happen. This man was about to know something about me that no living soul did.

“James,” I said, my voice raspy. “Wait.” He sat up, looking suddenly uncertain, and I might have stood up and left the room in that moment, but instead all I did was reach over to the lamp and turn it off, bathing us both in darkness.

He hesitantly leaned down and kissed me again before going back to work with my buttons.

As I had expected, because of the darkness he made it quite far down the shirt, with only two or three buttons remaining, before he went to run his hand along my chest and felt the cloth covering it.

I shut my eyes as he gently touched it in silence for a moment, seemingly trying to figure out what it was, before he withdrew his hands from me and sat up. “Edward?” he asked.

I pulled the shirt off and, almost thoughtlessly, began to unwind the cloth that bound my chest everyday. When it was all off I let it fall to the floor, taking my first real breath in hours. I found James’ hand in the darkness and placed it on my chest.

My chest was not flat: it was a lady’s chest. It was a lady’s chest, for I had been born a lady.

It was almost instant: James leapt up from the bed and away from me. “Sir- or, ma’am, rather, I’m terribly sorry, I didn’t mean to offend...”

I remembered the men I had seen in the news who would pretend to be homosexuals in order to catch men like Mr. Peterson and send them to jail, realizing that he must think this was a more elaborate form of the same ruse.

I shook my head and buttoned the shirt back before reaching to the lamp and illuminating the room again. I looked at James, standing confused in the middle of the room, surely wondering what kind of fantastic plot he had found himself in.

“I am no ma’am,” I said, speaking to him but keeping my eyes on the floor all the while. “And my secret is worse than yours. I am what is known in some parts of the city as a... transvestite.” I whispered the word, for I had a deep hatred for it.

The truth, as I confessed to James that night, is thus: I had grown up a young woman in the north- one of the reasons I now believed there was still a little boy inside of me, for he had not been permitted to live in the years he was meant to. I turned sixteen just as the Great War began, and my family had no sons. Insistent on my duty to my country, I made a decision much to the chagrin of my mother. I cut my hair and, donning men’s clothes, enlisted with my own surname but a new first one.

I had grown into my new identity as a man during the war, and was uncertain of what I was to do when it came time to return home, as I knew that I could not go back to womanhood.

Then, just a month before the end of the war, an illness fell over my house and left both of my parents dead. Heartbroken, I decided to never return to the town of tragedy, and when the

war ended, I instead came to London. No one there had ever known me, and so I entered the world as a man and I had never once turned back. I forcibly lowered my voice, I bound my chest, and no one ever thought anything of it. I made friends, got an education and then a job. I found that I still liked men, despite being one myself, but I hid this too. I ignored my past, for it meant nothing to me. This was who I truly was. I had made myself the life I wanted.

By the time I finished my tale, I was shaking. Never before had I voiced this story, and despite choosing to tell it, I could not help but fear the way I might seem in the eyes of the man who remained before me. I stood and closed the window, which had remained open for all of my tale and turned the room ghastly cold.

It was still snowing.

I tried to hold away the tears, but they would not be stopped, streaming suddenly down my face with force. I gasped and turned around, intent on leaving the room and perhaps the house too, when suddenly James grabbed me by the shoulders and pulled me into his arms. The sobs died away softly as we stood there and I got the sense that he might have held me forever had I not pulled away and apologized.

“Don’t say sorry, Edward,” he said. “You’ve nothing to be sorry for, you brilliant man.” He laughed softly to himself. “You brilliant, brilliant man.”

“Brilliant?” I inquired, unsure what it could mean. What I did not inquire about was the word *man* still falling so easily off his tongue, for while I did notice I feared if I repeated it I would start to cry again.

“You made your life what you wanted,” he said by way of explanation, and suddenly, seeming impulsive, he kissed me again.

“James... I cannot...” I paused, my mind blurred by his illogic and even more so by his lips and his eyes. “I cannot fulfill you in the ways you want. You know I cannot.”

He took my hand and pulled me over to the bed again, sitting down beside me. “You are a gentleman, Edward. And you are beautiful. How do you assume I should want anything more than that?” He kissed me again and then lay down on the bed. I lay beside him and turned the light off once more. He wrapped his arms around me.

I slept like that, my face tear streaked, my chest unbound, and my body being held by the greatest man I’d ever met.

The next morning, he would give me his city address, and we habitually paid secret visits to one another over the next eight months before moving into a place on the outskirts of London together and living in the most passionate peace. We had made ourselves the lives we wanted.

Perhaps Wagner Place was waiting for the summertime, but I came to life that winter. The house was made for sunshine, but James and I were pulled into the passion of the snow.



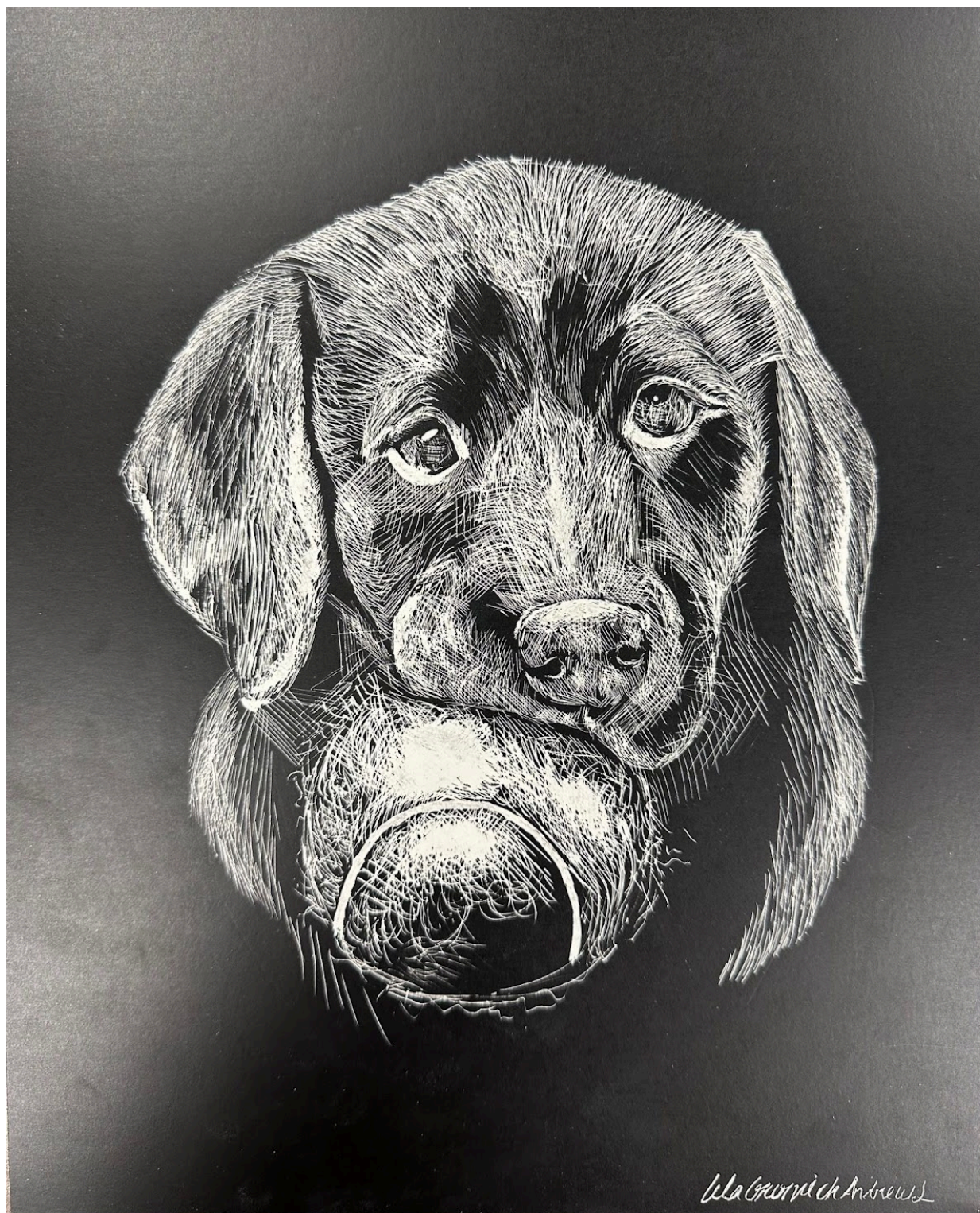
Artwork by Alexa Arcigal



Artwork by Alexa Arcigal



Artwork by Frances Donahue



Artwork by Lela Gurvich-Andrews

Poem by Sofia Kelly

I want to know what it means

To feel as though some of it
matters

With the invading scourge of frost

I am terrified

As it crawls up my skin and leeches to my Calves
and slowing but surely to the aching,
pulsating sack of meat in the center of my chest

God, I can't read the compass any more

In my world North will always point down and east will always lead me backwards.

The trees are cast in stiff casts, comprised of H2O. Everything hurts

To touch

Even the air doesn't go down easily. It claws at my throat, like a rock climber desperate to
ascend my slippering esophagus.

Why won't my lips stop being so chapped

I can't

Bear

To speak

Any

longer

Artwork by Molly Bernstein



Sculpture by Ada Caccamise



The swing set has been rooted where it is for longer than she has been rooted anywhere. It is surrounded by sun-dappled trees and the unapologetic notes of bird song, and it is a private space, hidden. The set stands upon moss and grass; though the sections under the swings themselves have been scuffed away to bare earth by restless shoes. There is a view of the road behind it, but it's beyond a patch of forest, and so the intrusive asphalt isn't so immediate. It has weathered every kind of wind, from the unforgiving gales of Hurricane Sandy to the gentle breeze of a summer afternoon, and it certainly bears the scars to prove it; the whole thing sways with the girl's own movements, wooden joints creaking cheerfully, and the roof of the little house structure is broken in and overgrown with lichen.

Her parents do not trust the swing set as much as she does, but she is not the only one who has found a safe haven here. Many a millipede huddles in the swing set's crevices; many a mouse hides in the dead leaves that serve as its carpet. The girl has twice been stung by startled wasps making their homes under its shattered roof. They are the only company here that she will welcome.

She loves being on the swings after it rains especially, for the water sinks into the cracks and cleanses the metal parts efficiently enough that there is no longer any creaking. Only the steady thump of the swing set's legs rocking in and out of their grooves can be heard, like a heartbeat. The rain stains the wood a lovely, rich hue; a color as dark as animal eyes, as black as snake's hide. She does *not*, however, like it when it snows; though presumably the snow has a similar effect on the set as the rain. She always feels restless in the winter, pacing around her house like some caged creature, barred from the set by fields of white.

That swing set has seen the girl at her best and at her lowest. On the worst nights, it flew her over the ghosts she was sure surrounded her, ones she knew she would never be able to outrun if she fled for home. But she was safe if she stayed on her swing. On the good nights, it soothed her senses soft as moth wings, and filled her mind with the buzz of only the very best ideas for the story she hopes to write when she is older. The swing set has listened to every dream of hers, and it remembers them all. Trees have the best memory, and the swing set is made of them.

After all these years, the mosquitos know to keep their distance, and the spiders have learned to leave the middle swing untouched. And though her legs have begun to outgrow it, the little marks that the edges of the swing have made in her thighs are a welcomed scar. The girl will grow bigger still, and when she leaves to start her life elsewhere, the swing set will wait for her in the spot it's always been, donning a new coat of lichen and web, until she returns to swing again.

By Keira Shanahan

The Yard

by Louisa Schimming

I moved into this house about
Ten years ago today, you see
It came with soft, green meadows and
the tallest trees I'd ever seen

Well I was really small back then
and I could barely climb the bows
up in my favorite Climbing Tree
but I improved with many hours

We'd scale the branches, thick and thin
and loved each bramble, stick and knot
And every time a storm came by
and took a tree, we cried a lot

So lots of storms and lots of falls
and lots of children's ugly cries
And lots of games and dreamy days
and snows and thaws had soon gone by

And now that I've grown up a bit
I don't go out to play much more
I'm busy, there's no time for all
those silly things I did before

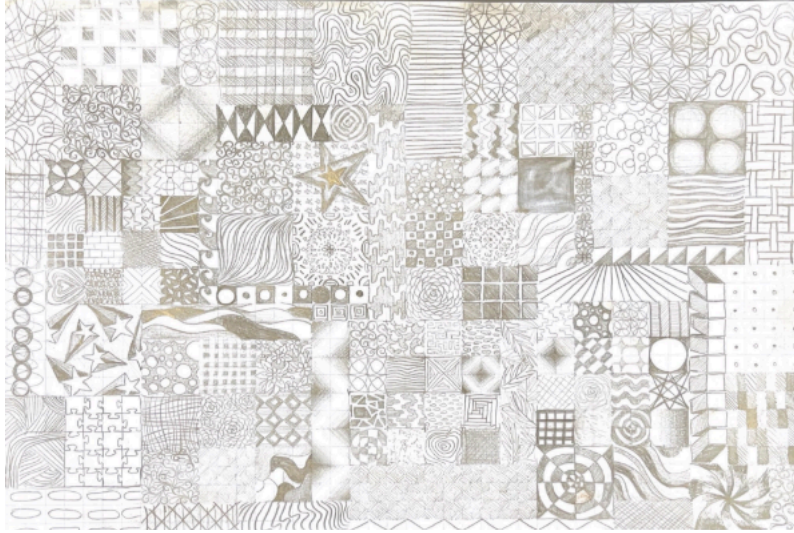
But yesterday my dad told me
to give the yard my focus:
the Climbing Tree had fallen and I
hadn't even noticed.



Illustration by Anatoliy Alhov



Artwork by Lela Gurvich – Andrews



Artwork by Elaine Llewellyn

The Story of Tod

By Daniel Campanile

Once upon a time, a boy named Tod lived in a small town near a dark forest. In this forest, he had always been told that in the woods were creatures of legend that once attacked the town. Tod has always been scared of the woods. But today he gathered enough courage to look in the woods. All the townspeople knew that you had to stay out of the woods. Tod walked to the edge anyway. As he peered into the depths of the trees he felt like they were staring back at him.

"It can't be that bad," Tod whispered as he took a step into the woods. He slowly walked faster until he was sprinting as far as he could into the forest with his eyes sealed shut. He slowed down and slowly opened his eyes. In front of him was a huge cliff with a shadowy figure on top of it. The large figure was illuminated by the light through the thick leaves, revealing a large catlike beast with fangs bigger than Tod. Tod took a few steps back. Then once again it was a sprint and he could hear the large steps of the beast approaching without having to look.

In front of him in the distance was a figure of a man. As he got closer he could see that it was the old man who lived near the edge of town.

"RUN!" Tod yelled to him. As he dashed past the man he turned around to see if he would be eaten. But by the time he turned around the beast lay on the ground with marks all over its face and body. The man was walking toward Tod and asked, "Are you alright Tod?"

"That was amazing, how did you do that?"

"I have been training to protect this village my whole life." Tod stood in shock looking at this old man who just beat a huge beast in seconds. Tod then questioned, "How do you know my name?"

The man was quiet for a moment before responding, "I have seen you in the town and can tell you have the spirit able to protect this village even if you may not know it yet."

"But I ran from that thing. I don't think I'm cut out for this." Tod then ran back towards the light of the village but deep down the feeling that he should turn around lingered.

A few days later Tod was out in the town and like all the days prior the man would be around every turn he took and it seemed like Tod couldn't escape him. Tod felt like he couldn't ever do what that man did. "Why does the forest seem to call for me?" Tod asked as he stood at the tree line once again.

"It's because you need to take the responsibility of the town protector," a voice said behind him. Tod turned around and there stood the man, "I don't think I could do it."

"You need to... My life is almost over and the moment I die the village will be destroyed." Tod once again felt the feeling that he could do something more. "Fine." The old man chuckled, "Tomorrow meet me at my house at the end of the village. That's where your training will begin."

"You're finally here," the man called out as Tod approached the shed by the end of town.

Tod asked, "This is where we train?"

"We train below." the man replied. They went down a trapdoor and there was a huge room that was like a gym. There were weights, machines Tod had never seen before and in a cage in the corner the beast that the man defeated yesterday. "Are you ready?" the man questioned.

"I think so," Tod replied slightly confidently. Over the next few weeks they trained every day and Tod never fully overcame his fear. The man seemed to never be proud and always disappointed in Tod. Tod was improving and he was able to beat the tiger just as fast as the man did. "I think I'm ready," Tod said confidently.

After a few expeditions into the woods with the man they stumbled across a beast larger than any they had ever seen. "What is that?" Tod asked worriedly.

The old man replied "The strongest beast there is. It could destroy the village in a single swing. We should leave."

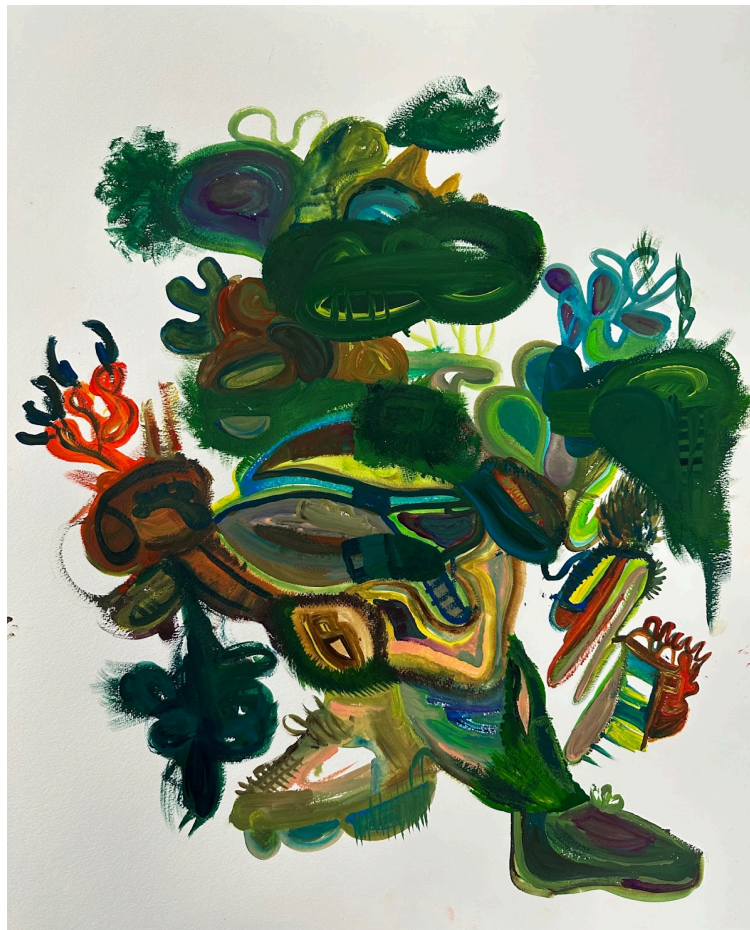
"Alright." As they turned to sneak away from the bear-like beast as tall as the trees the old man suddenly collapsed with a scream. "Are you ok!?"

“Tod... I have been pushing my life for too long now. You have to protect the village.” The beast turned to look at them from hearing the scream. “RUN TOD!” The beast charged at them and crushed the old man flat. Tod was already sprinting back to the village with the beast close behind. With each swipe from the bear’s claws, its huge paws got closer and closer to Tod.

“If I go to the village it will destroy everything. I have to fight.” Tod turned around and leaped at the beast. He began to punch it with monstrous strength. The beast was launched into a mountain side and Tod followed. He continuously attacked with no hesitation and no fear in his mind. He attacked until he ran out of energy hours later and the beast was just a stain in the forest. Tod didn’t even notice the townspeople watching him do this. They heard the noise and gathered. As he turned around they cheered. “All the beasts have begun to run away!”

“You saved us, Tod.” After what he did to the strongest one all the creatures ran and never returned. Tod had saved the town and forest. Tod went to sleep that night as a different person. As he lay in his bed he heard the old man’s voice. “I always knew my grandson would save the village.”

Artwork by Evan Schweizer



Artwork by Lenny Chandler



Artwork by Ty Villella

Perhaps a Poem? #3: A Poem For You, A Poem for Me

By Lincoln Wayland

A Poem for Three:

Oh the fun we had
Those happy spring days of youth
The blissful ignorance, Ironclad
So blind from the hard truths
How I look upon that haze
Of those rapid, vapid flower-filled days
Oh, how I wish they lasted forever
Before our cynical endeavors...

A Poem for Two:

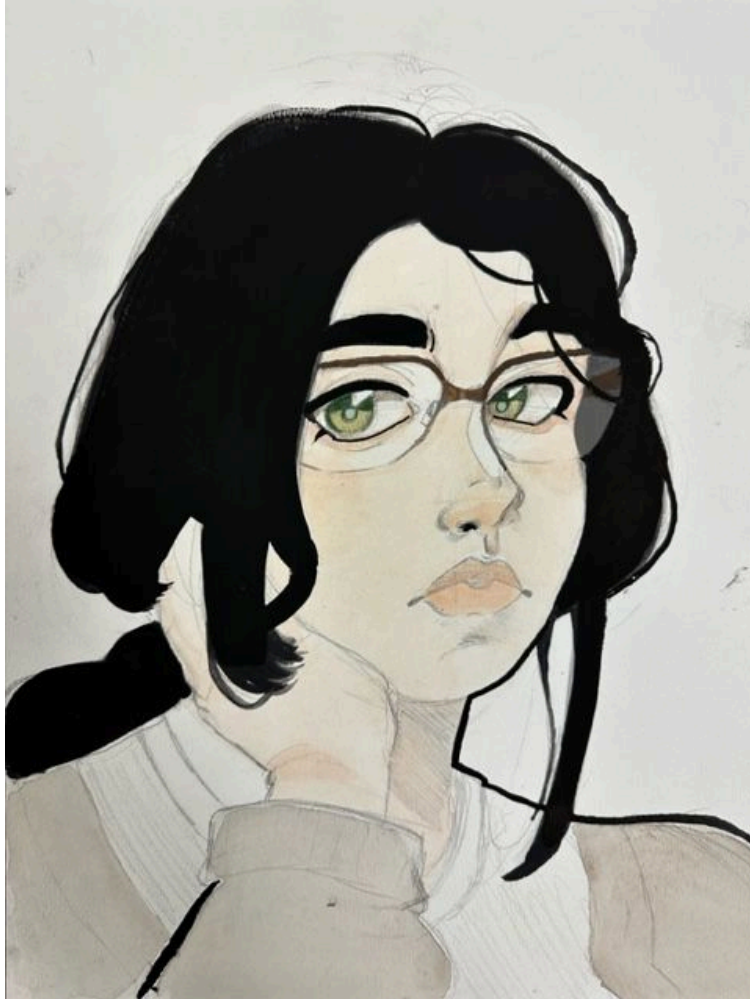
What pretty things
Arranged on strings like pretty little dolls
Puppets trapped in an endless dance
Of flirtatious delight
Together
Forever
Or never at all
The pride doth cometh before the fall
I loved you
And thought you loved me
I gave myself unto thee
So give me credit where it is due
Try as I might I could not accrue
Enough to be
Enough for you
(foolish, foolish dreams)

A Poem for One:

Goodbye my friends
I've failed you all
Now too late to make amends
I guess my pride did come before the fall
But now it's over
Through and done
Call me a cynical
(Ashes to Ashes)
The last of three, the final one
It went by too quickly, a fading pinnacle
A meager testament to fading glory
(Dust to Dust)
Perhaps a perfect end to our somber story...

A Poem for None:

What beautiful fragile things you are...
Like the flowers you so loved
So prideful in duty,
Frivolous in fancy,
Tragic in love.
Up into the ferry,
My solemn charge,
Away,
Away into the valley of forever.
The Canyon of Eternity
The promised forever land.
(The curtains set only your stage)



Artwork by Alexa Arcigal

Poem by Merrick Williams

A Fool

A fool is innocence
In place of ignorance

His vice, superiority

Compensating for the vulnerability
He chooses to be blind to

The fool is foolish enough to have faith in his
Immunity to his own lies

Chasing comfort, his downfall



Artwork by Elaine Llewellyn

For Those Who Remember By Nicolo Masella

For those who rise for the rest to wake,

Remember those who wake to watch you rise,

For those who comfort all above themselves,

Remember those who care live on a two way street,

For those who fear that life has left you behind,

Remember those who stand proudly next to you

For those who remember, remember it all,

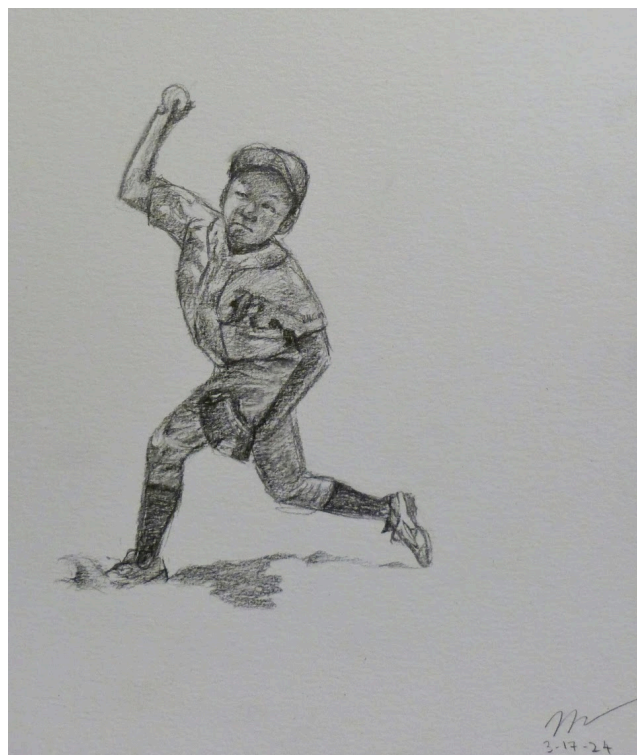
Remember for those who always seem to forget



Artwork by Jackie McCormick



Artwork by Helena Kottman



*Poems and art by Helen Hutchison***Don't Worry.**

We used to believe in fairylands
Through the hagstone holes
In each butterfly that passed our eyes
And each patch of moss that met our bare feet
Flapping of wings so quiet only us children could hear
We used to believe in monsters
Under the bed or in the long-kept-shut closet
Crimson blood dried and dripping on their mouths
Sharp teeth for tearing limb after limb
Metallic scents left behind when they move on to their next prey
The fairylands grew far away
Or rather, we grew too tall to see the ground as detailed as before
But we began to more closely see the monsters
Lurking in the alleyways on walks home under the not-so-watchful stars
Hiding with guns and knives in the newly empty closets
Relaying to us as we attempt to close our tired
eyes:
The fairies' wings are vanished now
But the monsters?
Don't worry, those can stay.



Sanctuary

When silence makes way for ceaseless chattering of bugs
Raindrops drift down to spongy moss creating a muffled pitter patter
Lightly mired skirts and dresses swiftly swish around
Slow heels tap in an echoey square
Grass rustles and mud sloshes below quick feet

When the raw taste of humidity leaves mouths warm
Wind whistles above towering trees and bustling marketplaces
Flowers and leaves and vegetables plucked with a snap
Clothes wet from resting on the safe moist earth
Faces left drenched and raw after spurts of violent downpour

When hair gets caught in the breeze and falls lightly just to the ground
Bare feet feel cold on smooth stone baths
Rainwater falls gently onto soft exposed skin
Busy voices calling out from the distance
Just out of reach.

Artwork by William O'Hara



*Poetry Collection by Elaine Llewellyn***The world is cruel, but not deliberately**

-Elaine Llewellyn

This winter I came to realize that
yes, the world is cruel, but not deliberately.
Not like that girl whose biting comment
nips at your ankles every time you
look in a mirror,
or like that gravelly voice that whispers
'you're not enough' the moment a smile flits across your face,
or like those rough, ever-present hands encircling your ribs.
The world is cruel like a baby who
cries because it has no other way to be heard,
like a creek that muddies fallen leaves and overturns stones
because it simply cannot stay still,
like an icicle falling from an overhang
because thaw is as inevitable as the freeze that came before.
Time passes, and everything is united
in its futile straining to resist change.
You were just as helpless when you were a child,
trying to pick up your father or make cookies appear with your mind
or wish a dead pet back to life.
You were frustrated and confounded by your powerlessness then,
but you've accepted it now.
The world is cruel, but not deliberately.
Flowers were meant to bloom, and then wilt.
Snowflakes were meant to fall, and then melt.
People were made to live, and then die.
Suns were made to rise, and then set.
Puddles were made to form, and then dry up.
You were made to witness the little moments,
and then to forget them.
The world is cruel, but not deliberately.

Artwork by Frances Donahue



Peter Pan

-Elaine Llewellyn

I talked to Peter Pan last night,
and I realized I was older than him -
older than size small shirts,
little league baseball,
freshman year gossip.
His brown hair was dirty and long,
his teeth were yellow from not brushing,
his clothes were inside out and backwards.
He looked at me with sad eyes,
pitying me for my straightened hair,
my forced posture, my trained half smile,
he mourned my unrestrained laugh,
my crumbling sand castles, my sticky fingers,
and I told him that I missed those things too
but I didn't miss being lost.

Split ends

-Elaine Llewellyn

Split ends-
the sworn enemy of anyone
with long hair.
Think of Medusa-
how many snakes
did she behead,
begging to be free
of her curse,
only for two more to grow
back in their place!
No one could even
stand to look at her,
her split ends were so bad.
So be grateful that no one
notices yours.



Artwork by Andres Lopez

Excerpts of Other Worlds By Julian Costantine

It's like our world but different, see

It's a world where the mighty river roars more like a frozen sea

A world where airplanes are replaced with blimps

And wires of all sorts can be found above you, unsorted limp

A world where on every street there is an electronic billboard

A world where they STILL throw garbage on the corner in hoards

It's a place where Scheherazade's tales come true

And the dazzling aurora comes back each night anew

Where every shade of gray, blue, and black is replaced with wondrous shades of orange

Where Vaudeville and Broadway come together to make acts amazing and strange

And in Harlem, you can still find some speakeasies to make whoopee at

And every rooftop in Hell's Kitchen is governed by a king rat

Where Chinatown is now Little Japan

Where the destitute and the ritzy stand together man to man

Yes, when compared to our world we seem quite hork

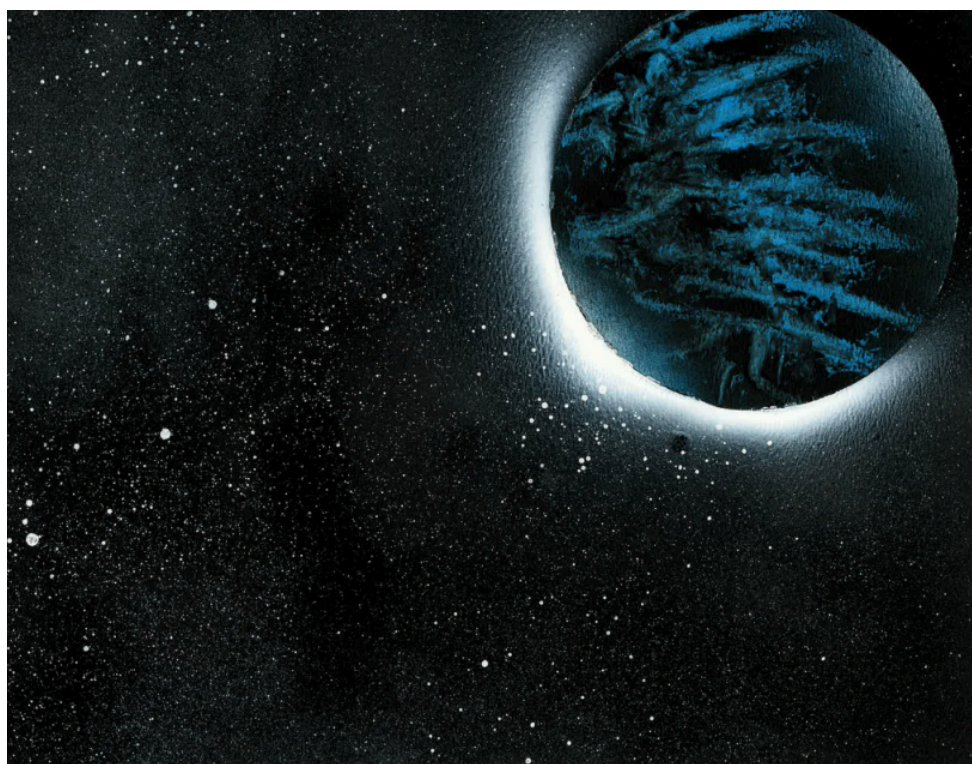
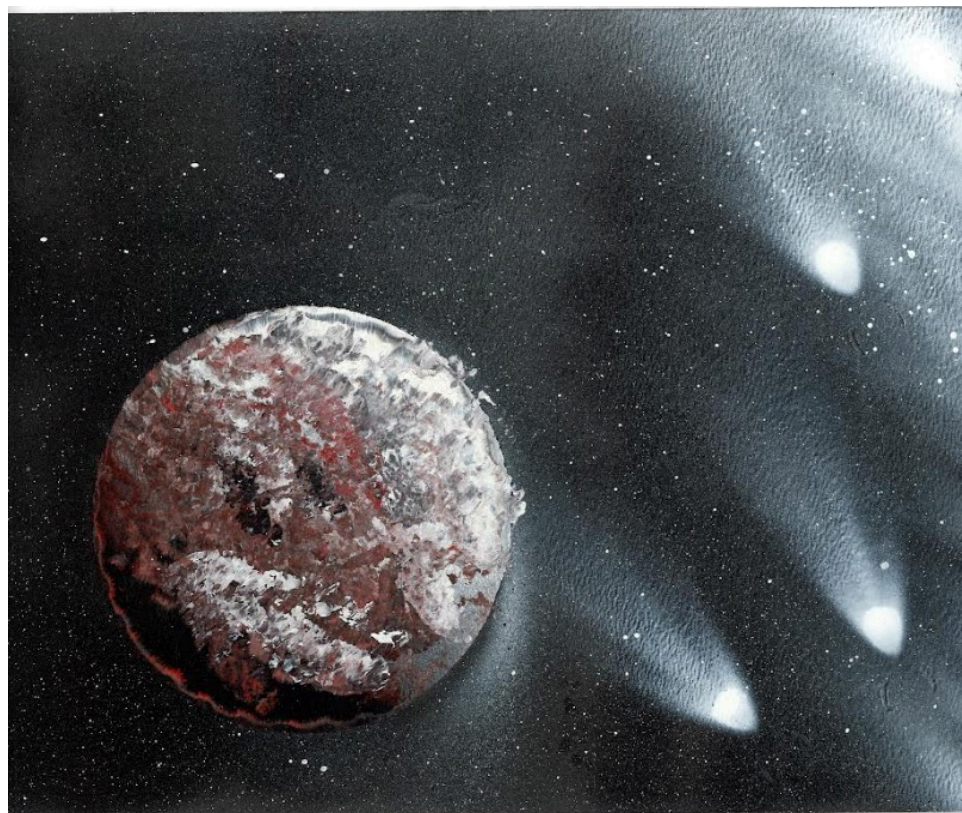
But just remember, despite the world, it's still called New York



By Helena Kottman



Artwork by Louise Denehy



Artwork by Christian Ferreira

The boat sank mid-January.
No one quite knows why.

I had always blamed it on Dutch, his late-night smoking habit has always put me on edge, especially around the boat's more volatile components.

Naturally, the captain went down with the ship, his pipe clutched to his breast. His mournful humming was the last thing I heard from the bowels of the *Unicorn*.

These days, a sailor would howl with laughter if you called the craft we sailed a dinghy. Some days it felt as if faith alone kept the craft afloat. A final bastion against the frigid Atlantic, we teetered daily over the brink of death, at the mercy of the thoughtless tide.

We all agree Augustus had it the worst. The one and only child of Captain, his inheritance now sat in oblivion, with the last of his predecessors. His once ginger hair was now pitifully bleached by the sea's frigid spray, his abnormally gaunt frame skeletal by weeks of improper nutrition.

The pork didn't last long, and neither did the sardines, but I always despised anything that came out of a can. For weeks all we had was hardtack. If you were lucky, you'd get maggots for extra flavor. That may sound mad, but protein goes a long way in the cold. Besides, the critters were all long dead anyway. It seems even they couldn't live on a diet consisting of only flour, water, and salt.

By my count, It had been nearly two weeks since the meat ran out. Day after day, Old man Viktor cast a wormless line. It was on that day that one of the mad bastards suggested we cut a pinky off one of the dead.

"It's not like they're going to miss it."

They collectively agreed it would be Dutch to do it. I saw a deplorable curiosity in his eyes, as he shuffled towards one of the freshly dead.

We usually said a prayer and tossed the poor souls to the mercy of the tide, but this one felt different. No one had the nerve to toss the carcass of a boy to the uncaring ocean.

The second knife touched skin, something sparked in Dutch. His unfocused eyes found something, someone no one else could see. From the way he screamed, you would think Death herself had walked up and offered him a smoke.

We all expected him to stop, to dive off the boat, or curl up and sob, but he just kept cutting. He laughed like a hyena the whole way, his eyes unfocused once again.

That night, while he sat curled up in a ball, chittering, the rest of us whispered about his newfound madness.

Viktor told stories about sailors lost to the ocean, in body and mind. We listened solemnly to his tales, he'd been on the water since before the captain was born, and he'd outlived him.

Viktor fell silent at the mention of the captain; and once more tossed out his line. I awoke to cheering, as Viktor held a large marlin aloft, the fruit of his labors. What fools we were. When nature throws you a line, you better be ready for her to cut it.

To the dismay of Viktor, hundreds of parasites sat on the fish's stomach, their thousands of razor-sharp teeth gnashing at the creature's insides.

That was all he could take. Viktor spent the remainder of the trip finding solace in the monotony of the horizon. We never again heard his tales or the joyful tunes he whistled. When we checked the ramshackle crow's nest the next day, all that was left of him was a mandolin string and a fishing line, tied together in a wake bend.

Dutch had gotten far worse. His mindless chatter kept me up all night, in fear of what he would do if I closed my eyes. The final straw came on the first few days of April, by my count. I had lost track after the loss of Viktor. The days were lost to my sleepless mind, and an eternity passed in those three months.

But the cold was the straw that broke the camel's back. Even Dutch, mad as he was, couldn't bear bitter air. I watched him one day, take a match to each of his fingers, and press his freshly lit cigar into his forearm. He said he couldn't feel it. I believed him.

With his tobacco and matches gone, the hunger set in again. He scoured the ship for anything that could satisfy his revitalized cravings. And unfortunately, he found what he was looking for. Deep in Augustus's breast pocket sat the last can of pork. He had saved it for months, but when Dutch came, he could do nothing to fight off the frenzied navigator. It was over in seconds. All that remained from the struggle was a boy skewered with an oyster knife, and a beast once called Dutch feasting on its ill-gotten gains.

By Anonymous

Little Bow by Laurel Sassano

*I'll give you a bow
Just so you'll know
How special you really are*

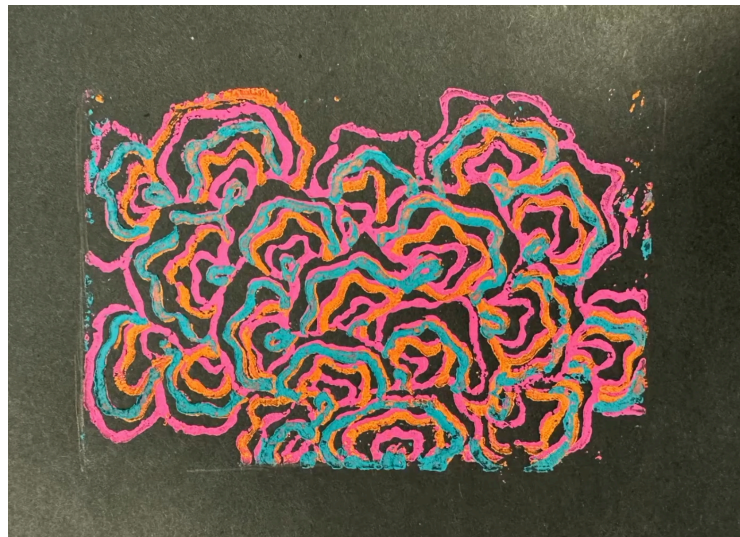
*And in twenty years
You won't have these fears
Of what you'll ever be*

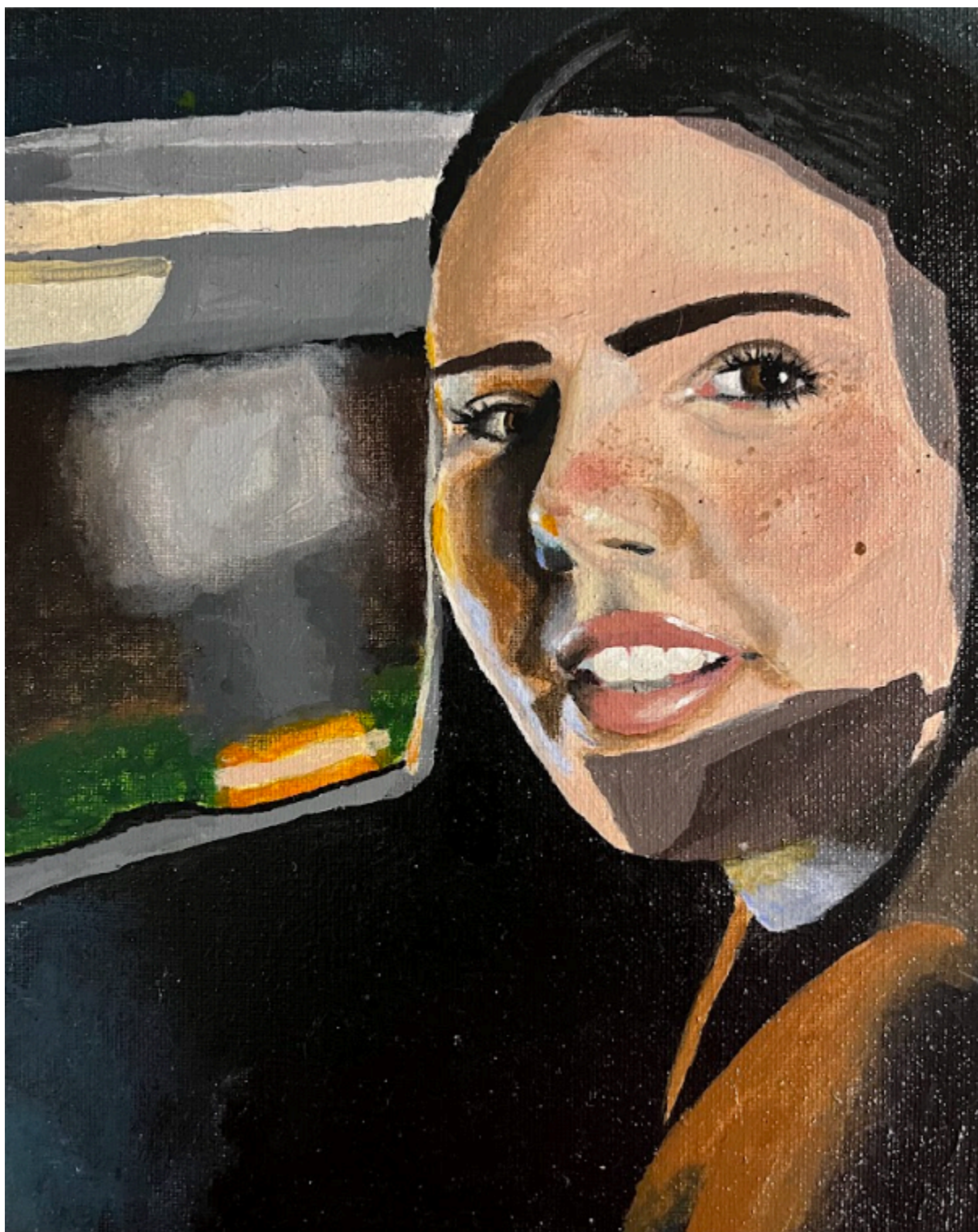
*I'll buy you a car
Or maybe just a jar
To let this little bow grow*

*In the summer toolbar
You can travel afar
With your new jar
And this little bow*

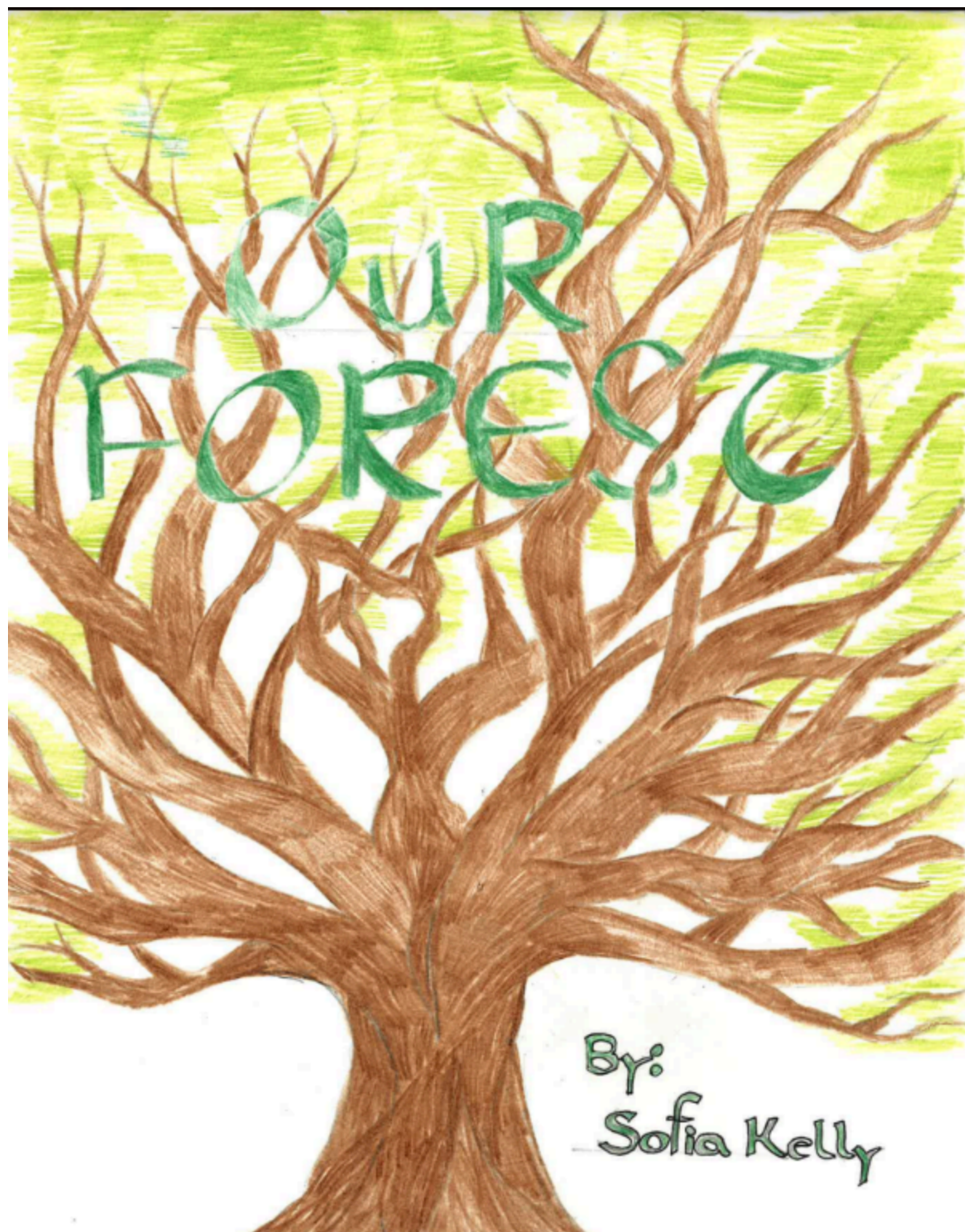
*And in the winter
We can watch the snow flow
We'll let the day glow
Just you, me, and this little bow*

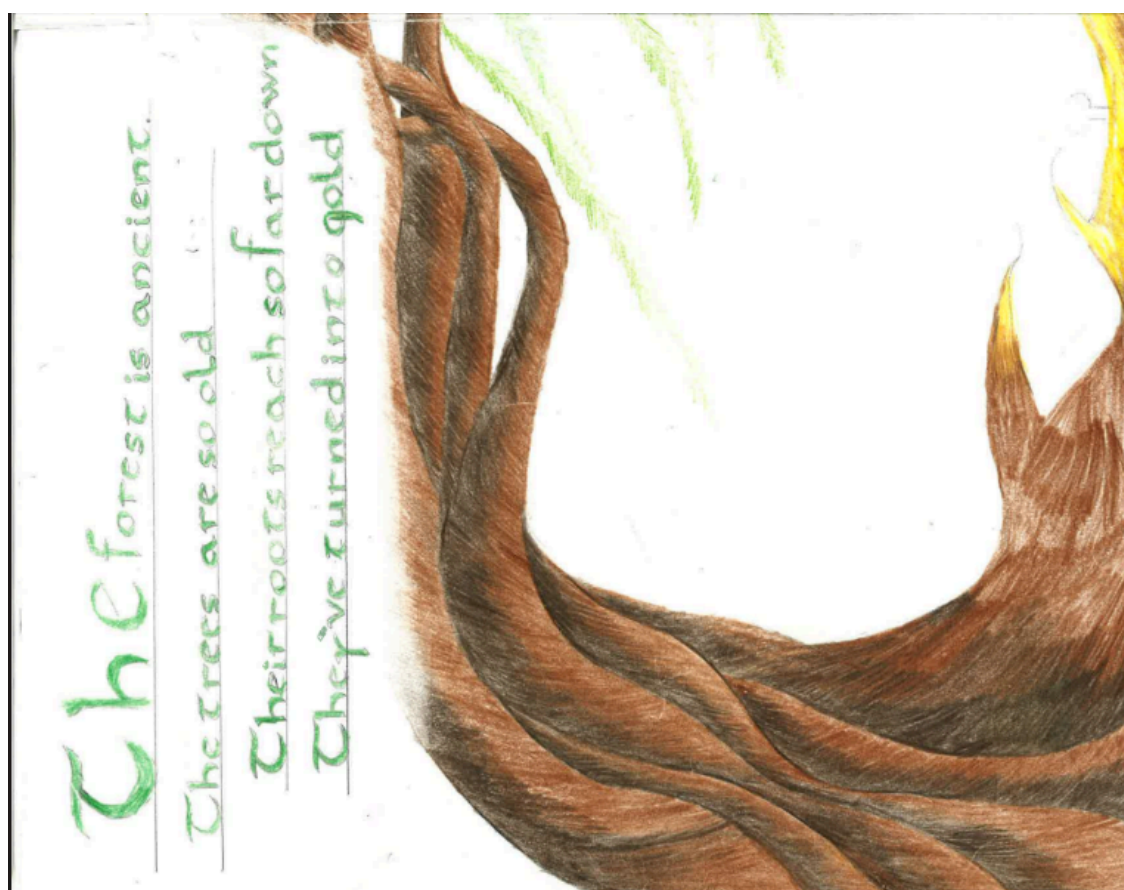
*Because of this bow
I just need you to know
How much I love your heart*

ARTWORK BY AMELIA KAYE



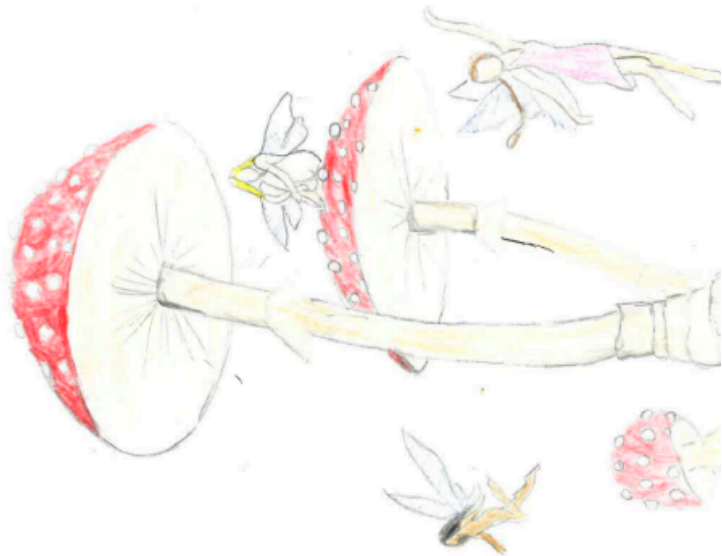
Portrait by Louise Denehy



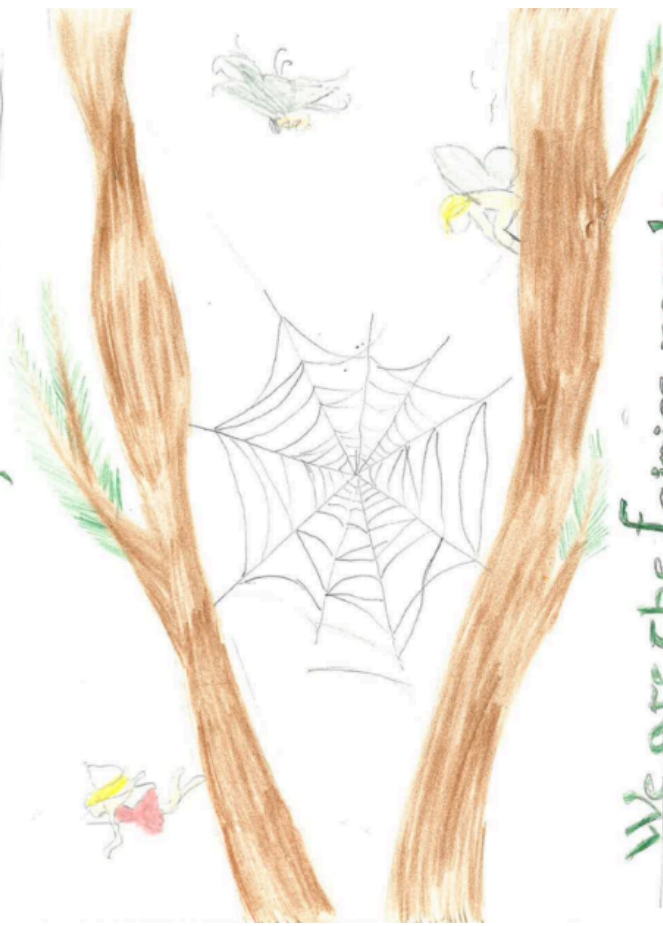


The forest is ancient.
The trees are so old
Their roots reach so far down
They've turned into gold

In this grand forest we spend
our small lives
no more noticable
than little old flies.



Here we build our villages
on the boughs of great pines
and use the webs of spiders
as our clothing lines



We are the fairies, people
of the leaves, always and
forever bound to our trees

Our job is quite simple
but we do it with glee
as I hope you can obviously see



first we spread our fairy dust
That's something you can always
trust. And we give the birds their
merry song, so the days won't
feel so terribly long.

We dew orbs of water on the
tall blades of grass. And we turn
the fair leaves brilliant red
and orange once summer has

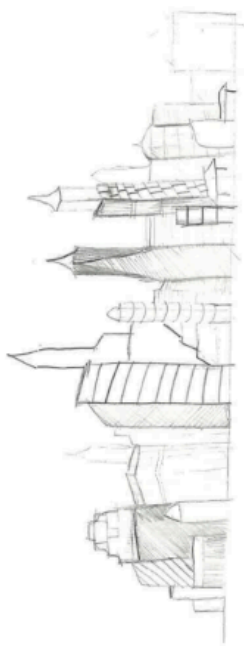
past.



But most of all we keep the
people at bay so we can survive
for just one more perfect day



For if they arrive, how can we survive
Their cities are too mammoth
Their farms are too wide
If they come there is nowhere
to hide



They'll cut down our trees
melt down our gold, tell glorious
tales of the creatures that now
lay cold.



The fireflies won't glimmer
The birds won't sing.
Because people for some reason
cut down everything

They are evil I know this is true

Just blind to the damage they do



Maybe if they saw the beauty
we did

Maybe they'd let our little forest
live



*Artwork by Quin Carmicino
To the next part of everyone's journey*