Eye of the Storm

Spring 2016



Literary Journal

Pueblo West High School

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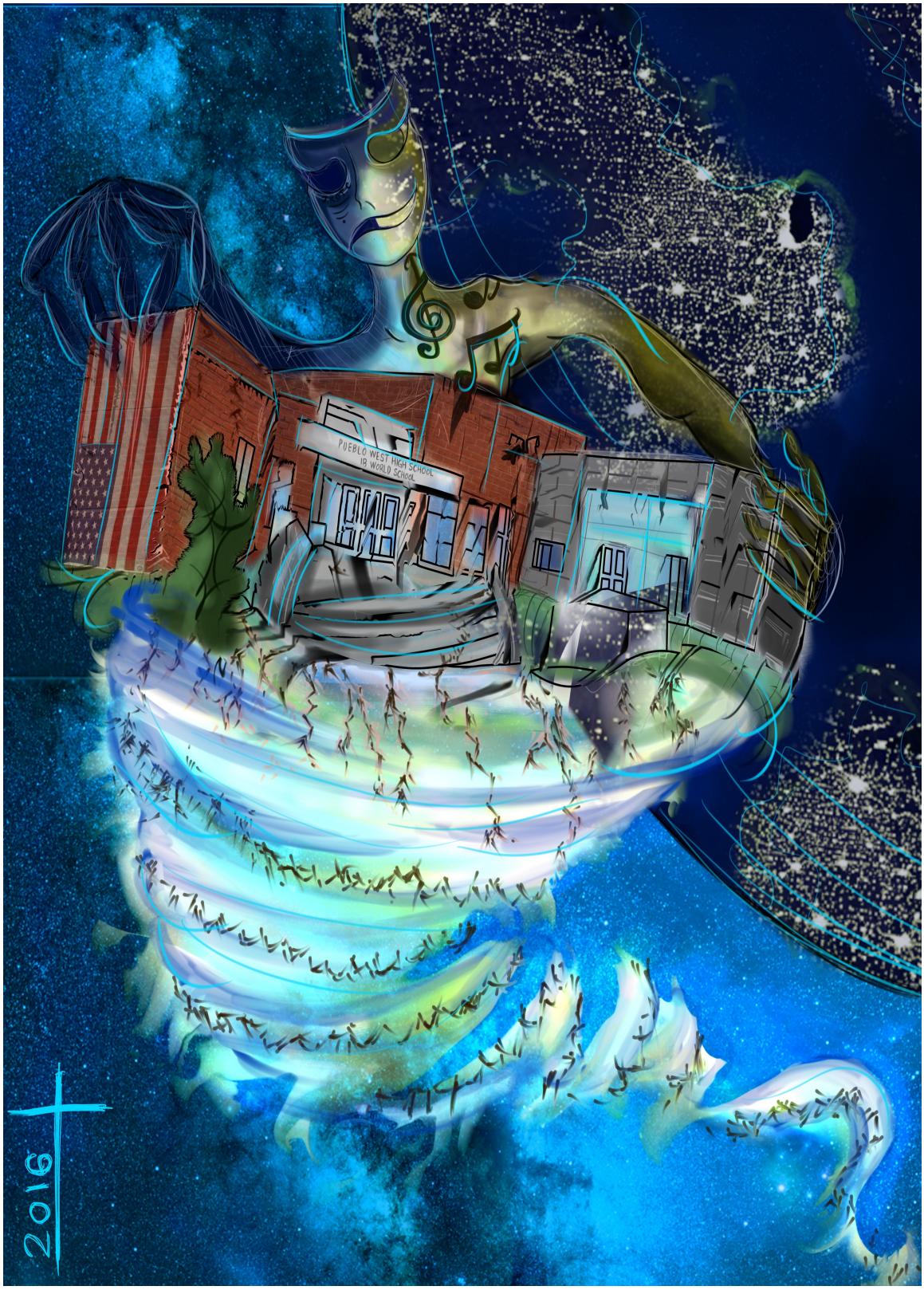


Image by Serena Szarmac

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Dear Lovers of English

Megan Price

Dear Lovers of English who Don't Embrace It,

Dear Lovers of English: how are you? Are you in love with the words on a page? Are you so in love with those words that you want to SCREAM from rooftops because you feel like screaming is the appropriate thing to do?

Dear Lovers of English, do you cringe every time someone uses the wrong form of to? Or how about when they replace you're with your? Do you correct them and silently curse them down to the bottom of their being because you love English so much that a miniscule mistake like that could tear your entire world apart?

Dear Lovers of English, do you internally squeal every time your teacher brings up poetry and then groan out loud because UGH POETRY HOW DARK AND IRRELEVANT.

I MEAN ALL THOSE HIDDEN MEANINGS. IM DYING OF BOREDOM.

Dear Lovers of English, do you internalize your love for English to conform to the world where books become a thing of the past and living in the now is using your phone to take pictures of the sunset?

Because there are SO many words that you could use to describe that sunset:

> *crimson, early, fading, fiery, fine, first, flaming, glorious, golden, gorgeous:*
> *A beautiful ending to a beautiful day.*

Dear Lovers of English, never conform. Never replace words like amazing and awe-inspiring with words like "lit" and "turnt." Never take the images you create in your mind through a book for granted because chances are the movie will warp your imagination.

Dear Lovers of English, enjoy the sunset with the two lenses God gave you instead of the lens given to you from a manufacturer.

Dear Lovers of English, never stop loving.



Image by Adrianne Bunyard-Krukoff

Untitled

Sarah Megilligan

Dive into my world for one minute… don't be scared, I don't bite.

Take one look into the depths of hell, the wonders of heaven.
Take a shoe, put it on, then take a sock and put it over top.
Take a 2-sided coin: penny and flip it three times.
Now imagine the headache perceived by Mr. Abraham on that shiny penny. That's you, me, you.
Now do this in order: Go to your room, take out the trash, and then go back in your room because you forgot your shoes. Now ask yourself shoe, what shoe? Then get into a heavy mess with the conglomerate shoe collection. Oh look pink, blue, gold, silver, red… Now ask yourself, what were you doing? What was your intention?
Then you start to go mad, bonkers, and absolutely insane!
You start to go into every single detail in your life, going from one thing to the next. You start to wonder if that shoe you were going to pick out was good enough. You start to go into a looney mind set thinking of judgmental comments your friends might, will, or possibly could have said. STOP. Breathe. NO! STOP.

My life is an upside down, inside out, over top swirly ice cream mess.
But the ice cream so biter sweet.
I always thought when I got that delectable treat the cherry was the top of iceberg of creamy goodness.
I thought it was a red crown the ice cream wore to make it mightier than the others.
I always thought the swirls in my ice cream were links to a new destination, a journey.
I am the child that decided that ice cream is meant for your head.
The cone was a one-way ticket to majestical freedom.
I was a unicorn that nobody could stop!
I rode that rainbow road all the way to Paradise Island.
Nobody could stop the madness in my head!
Nobody can stop the voices! HAHA!

I wonder some days when I am alone how I can possibly live my life.
I always think about what people say, said, or will say about me.
I get anxious all the time about what clothes to wear what food to eat, how I look, if I did that essay correctly, if I have enough time, will I ever be free!...
Hmm. Free. Free. Free.
What is this word?? I have never heard such melodious measures come from a single word.
Free.
What is “free”?
Free.
Is free when your mind has finally let go of the grey clouds and started to make rain?
Is free when your brother yells at you for not being on time to a family meeting?
Is free when your being told every second, of every minute, of every hour, of every day living how people tell you to live?
Is that freedom?
Are you possibly free when every single thought on your mind is tearing you limb from limb day by day.
Always hoping that maybe one day, just one day you can see beyond the terrors of every single situation.

I want to be that sticky unicorn with an ice cream cone horn…
I want to be free but it is hard with anxiety…

The Forest
Shania Roberts

Sickly branches,
twisted trunks,
bone dry soil.

This forest is suffering.

But the Fall has come early
as red leaves fall
trees blacken
and the sky goes dark.

The forest is still suffering.

Flames roar,
trees topple,
and the air suffocates
as the forest smolders.

The forest no longer suffers.

Now all that is left is
sickly branches,
twisted trunks
and bone dry soil.

Death still lingers in the air.
Death
and smoke.

The Forlorn Pattern
Joseph Schwartze

James stared unblinking at the pile of wood before him. The chopping block stood to the side motionless, and the freshly sharpened axe, his axe, rested beside it easily. A huff escapes the man's lungs. He stepped forward, powerful hands gripping the shaft of the tool and lifting it with hardly any effort. James's body worked automatically, even near autonomously from his roaming mind. One solid piece onto the block. *Whack*! The next solid piece of wood. *Whack*!

The pattern repeated into eternity.

His strong arms knew this chore well; they acted without question or complaint. Meanwhile, the neurons of the man's brain fired relentlessly. This was the end of his day, the final chore before setting his fire and accepting the oblivion of sleep. He had done much that day. Starting with the actual gathering of most of the raw wood within the unusually large pile, multiple chores had filled his time. Tending the small garden he cultivated took a little time. The various crops were growing well, his herbs especially would likely boast a plentiful crop when he could harvest them. *Good meals in the future…*

James really did love the special blend of herbs and spices he personally cooked up. What else? Ah, yes. The potato-

His axe suddenly stuck. "What the--" A scowl and a closer look later the man saw a big knot resting dead center in the wood. James's foot came up quickly and stomped his axe down hard, driving the blade in slightly farther. "Perfect." The next moment the axe was lifted above his head, and before someone could have finished a breath he had slammed the axe, piece of wood stuck to it, down onto the chopping block twice to finish the blow. The two pieces went flying out to the sides, and James nodded to himself in satisfaction. He gathered up a few pieces he thought would last him the night, and sauntered into his cabin with hardly a care. He tossed the logs into the fireplace, resigning himself to taking care of the details of his nightly warmth last.

Chht! He lit a match and subsequently a candle. Going about his more domestic chores, the man's mind returned to his potato crop. He mused aloud, "Oh yeah, my potatoes. I'll need to go into town to buy more. Something got into the damn things again this year." Soon, the lonely man held his candle low to the ground, crouched beside his fireplace as he set up the logs in a position to burn throughout the night. He held the candle out into the dry grass he kept a store of for starting such fires. The flames spread. Crackling. Growing. A grim smile spread over James's lips, and he ran his hands through the writhing, biting flame. He felt keenly the sting of that life-giving heat, and took some satisfaction in the stability of fire.

It could never leave him. It could not abandon him to this life of meaningless, empty chores. The man stood, a tear in his eye. Candle in hand he shambled out to his "backyard", barely making it to the hunk of stone stuck in the ground before he collapsed. His tired eyes looked up, reading the softly carved words in the flicking orange light of his candle.

"But you didn't want to leave me, did you honey? You wanted to stay here with me-" The man sobbed softly. The bout of sadness lasted only a minute. He composed himself before the stone as if his wife herself stood in front of him. "You wouldn't want me like this. I live on. I keep working. I don't let the sadness get me…" He turned away, his footsteps coming slowly and bitterly to him. These actions were not easily practiced like those of his chopping arm. He laid on his bed, the warmth of the fire having spread to fill his humble cabin.

As crackling flames filled his ears, James's last thought was: Another chore for tomorrow: Pick some flowers for her. She deserves it.



Image by Taryn Medina

The Silent Hunter

Anonymous

The world is still; the air is cool and crisp. Very few would be out on this day after the snow that fell the night before but not me. My beautiful white feather blend into my surroundings flawlessly. The perfect camouflage in this world of white. I sit sedentary as to remain undetected but those who will awake and become my strength. They will scurry out from under their rocks and out of their holes feeling safe with their own coat of white blending into the snow. Their camouflage is insignificant to the razor sharp knife that is my sight. Nothing can escape my penetrating gaze. Suddenly, to my right there is movement. Turning my head I see the small head of a snow hare rise from the ground. Moving his head right and left as his ears move back and forth. Scanning the area for signs of predators, HE will not be able to detect me simply passing me off as a pile of snow. The hare now moves more confidently, bounding farther and farther away from the safety of his hole. I do not move, I wait for him to become comfortable. Nibbling on the grass buried under the fallen snow. Hares are stupid creatures and it takes him quite some time to find a patch. I spread my wings and ascend into the air. I fly high into the brilliant clear sky and catch the currents, feeling as each feather is caressed by the waves. But I do not have time to linger. As quiet as take off was there was a breeze created that could have alarmed the hare. I hone in on him, focusing my eyes to see every detail. The hare is still as stupid as before, he felt no breeze though he is looking to where I previously sat he does not even realize that the pile of snow is n longer there. Oh

well, all the better for me. I plan my trajectory, curl my wings in and dive. The wind brushing my body as I descend. I love the rush. Spreading my wings I swoop in for the kill, talons extended. Only when the hare is in my grip does he detect me and by then it is too late. I eat him quickly, ripping the meat from its corpse with my sharp beak and I return to my position waiting for my next meal. The world is still; the air is cool and crisp. Very few would be out on this day after the snow that fell the night before. All is quiet. I go undetected. I am the silent hunter. I am the owl.

Into Her Eyes
Trenton German

I see my world inside her eyes.
Blue and green; a spot of brown
I'd give my life to take a swim
Into her eyes; where I would drown

It's where longing and desire collide
To steal my heart, her beauty's endeavor
Like a snare that keep me locked inside
Into her eyes I'm trapped forever

Her lips like letters wrapped in crimson
Inviting me with lavish luxury
I want her kiss to take me to heaven
Into her eyes, my soul I'll bury

Love has its peculiarities
And destructive power, that's no lie
But even with the ups and downs
I find my peace inside her eyes

I have a fire blazing and immense
It's in my spirit and in my heart
It fills me with a love that's so intense
And inside her eyes ignites the spark

Wisdom Teeth

Marirose Bernal

faded white, with blood resting on the lips
seeping up from the gums
and gathering in pools on the crowns:
my wisdom teeth are talking to me again.

just shut the hell up already

I know where my wrongs are –
my memories, laughing, scars –
my sins sit on my lap and ask me to reclaim them as sons and daughters,
but the truth is that I never left. My sins braid my hair
ask me to turn off the sun, bring nighttime back into my lungs,
and inhale.

her mouth tastes like you but sweeter.
her mouth tastes like arsenic but sweeter.

so stand before narrowed eyes at seventeen
and tell them
that your country is burning again.

The Assembly of Life

Sam Sasaoka

We're all just trying to make it
In this world so strange,
Leading different lives
With different ways to survive.
We are separated and connected at the crossings of time,
Intersecting existence and the place to depart
Commenced from Carbon,
Made to our rule respective plane
We are duplicate individuals,
Nobody the same
These beings are shaped
Through the particles of life
The inhale of each passerby is marked
By the exhalation of the unidentified.

Somewhere

Emily Evans

There is poetry in here somewhere
Deep inside a dying mind so immeasurable
Maybe within the walls
That a single fly sits
They reveal the articles of our past
behind the lenses
The image of a child who sits
Written in pen a notebook
Within a broken heart
Backing the iris and the pupil
The universe hides there
Washed over a sunset behind the hills
The last dashing star
On the last dawn of your life
The final page on an uncharted novel
There is poetry in here somewhere
Go find it

The Love

Molly Essenburg

Love is if you like someone a lot
But love can mean other things
Love can mean like family love
Family love is caring and always being there for them
There is boyfriend girlfriend love
That love is a strong connection between the two
They don't and cant leave each others side
But love could be hatred
You can be let down by the person you love
They can tell you they don't love you

They can tell you that they don't have the connection
They can tell you they don't like you because you are being you
But love mainly is someone who cares about you
Love feels as though you are passionate
And the magnetic pull gets stronger and stronger
Love feels like a rush of butterflies all over your body
Love feels like you would imagine it.
You can love a family member
You can also love a person not in your family
You can love a friend as though they are family.
Love I what keeps everybody together
Love is what makes a lot of people happy.
Love makes people happy
Love is like caring for someone
Love is what makes everyone happy
Love is what makes the world
Love is what makes the world happy.

Personal Tastes

Marirose Bernal

He turns left and takes two steps back
but I don't mind the boy's subtle crimes
beneath the guise of giving.

I had been living there for a while,
caught between car rides and lopsided smiles,
tires screeching on paranoid gravel
beneath music too fast,
and too forgiving,
for my personal
tastes.

I was bound to walk back up the driveway,
heels solid in the soil,
hair beginning to coil
beneath the crescent like Eve's favorite snake.
Don't take me back:
I grow tired of a charade that lacks any clever faces,
I want to go home and read
leave your nice teeth behind me forever.

Soles etched, crawling, entwined in the vines
under the mantle.
But soul rises to a blanket of black where the stellar-fabric opens up before us all,
leaving a middle space where they can climb up my intestine walls like ladder-children
and try
to play the heartstrings.
But it doesn't matter; it won't be handled:
no ever one gets the terrible melody right.
A lucky note, here and there,
replacing the almost-hope with switchblade-satire
so I can still leave this fire
feeling somewhat satisfied.

And now, this guilt-trip of admiration,
this raven-haired gift before me, adore me,
this bottled-up doves' creation
ties my hands together with flowers too soft for the
hard angles of the face and the
sharper synonyms of the mouth I bore.
Which direction from here?
Trapped into moving forward:

Pastel display case and a quieter form of fear,
reaching for charcoals behind a letter heading,
"Dear," now don't tell me what I already know,
crack my fingernails until aurora and I glow, blood-letting,
emanating the iridescent inverse of your greatest disappointment.
Dance with me, mon chéri
to the songs I refuse to forget.

Lips turn blue on Mondays,
melancholy face of the future flickers from the bonfire dark,
asking that you either kill this spark or
light it alive,
lights in my eyes,
bright-fighting lies that are smothered beneath the truth.

Void.
Sputnik sweetheart.
Jungle iris, unwind the beating heart,
wrenching my affection as a willing regret
that has yet to start.
Architectured hands rattle the car engine and
why pretend this won't end, why pretend we won't part?
We might.

Always in contrast, always a gentle fight,

disagree on everything except a mutual magnetism and ignite:
can it be helped?
Sputnik sweetheart,
recruiter of cupid,
hurtled through the race without ever finding that evasive goal line.

In biding my time, I allowed no victors,
caught you working for the man, who keeps getting richer,
so staple your heart to your sleeve and leave this town again.
Play the heartstrings as best you can until the cunning sands
reverse gravity one more time, as they please,
back to the starting line.

The Performer's Meeting

Regan Sanders

The hot tears of a stifled sob burned the back of Victoria's throat as she furtively snuck her way through the club. All throughout the dreary Friday evening, she had been feeling savagely morose. It was as if an unwarranted pit of grief had permanently taken up residence in her soul. And it was obnoxiously unexplainable. Nothing of note, sorrowful or otherwise, had occurred and yet there the young, inexperienced novice sat. Consumed by her trite breakdown that she was certain was all too familiar to the numerous other performers she was constantly surrounded by. There was no reason for her to feel such melancholy and yet, Victoria was unable to raise herself out of it. She slowly and aimlessly meandered around the restricted area meant solely for the club talent, and found her way to the dressing room she once shared with Anna, one of the other dancers. She was flummoxed to find a sliver of artificial yellow light escaping the space between the door and the carpet. She was certain she had left the lights off. With trembling hands, she trepidatiously turned the handle. Lazily laying on the velvet sofa with his legs sprawled and arms at his side was a tired looking private detective. Victoria's heart beat quickened at the familiar site and, knowing that she would flee if otherwise, she slammed the door shut.

"I, uh, was going to send my partner to do this but when I explained our history, he said that I should and that led to a massive argument and… well suffice it to say we reached a stalemate, no compromise was made and before it came back to haunt me I figured I could swallow my pride enough to talk to you. So… Hello." The detective said, suddenly on his feet. Victoria gulped.

"What's this about, Sam? I have a show to do in thirty minutes." She replied, keeping her voice as icy and apathetic as possible. Sam bit his lip and sat back down, motioning for Victoria to join him. With an annoyed sigh, she walked over and sat on a chair facing the couch.

"I'll try not to prolong this conversation," Sam began. "But this is about your friend, Annabelle Timden." At the mention of Anna, Victoria's stomach dropped.
"Anna? What about her? Has she been found?" Sam leaned forward.
"Not exactly. But we did find her car and…" His voice trailed off. Victoria furrowed her brows in confusion.

"And what?" She demanded. Without elaborating, Sam suddenly stood up and walked towards the door. Victoria repeated her question but Sam ignored her. The moment seemed to stretch into infinity. Victoria waiting in limbo at the edge of her seat, Sam desperately searching for the courage to say what the girl he scorned desperately needed to hear. With each mute minute, the room seemed to close in, the walls creeping towards the two ex lovers as they fought the urge to say the first thing that popped into their mind. Finally, after what seemed a lifetime, Victoria could handle it no longer.

"Sam, please. I'm a big girl. Whatever they think happened, whatever you found… I can take it. Just tell me. I'm begging you." Tears once again welled in her eyes and the desperation in her voice was palpable. With a sigh, Sam turned and walked back to the couch, taking the seat opposite her.

"We found a large trace of blood in the passenger seat. Not only that but in the glove compartment… there was a gun. I was called in because the police didn't want to be associated with a possible homicide involving a dancer at a seedy club in lower Chicago. Victoria, we think Anna's been murdered. I'm so sorry." Sam's tone was matter of fact, but his eyes were empathetic. Victoria's eyes widened in astonishment and suddenly, her mind went blank. We think Anna's been murdered. She and Annabelle were not extremely close, none of the girls were, but they had bonded over the more tragic aspects of their respective stories, and when you share the worst parts of your life with someone… Victoria closed her eyes and took a deep breath in an effort to clear her mind. No. This was too much. Anna deserved better. She deserved to find the love she desperately searched for. She deserved to find a better life in a place free from hard up men looking for a piece of warm flesh to take advantage of. She deserved to live. At last, the tears that had been trapped in the corner of Victoria's eyes fell down her cheeks.

"Victoria, I know this is difficult, but I need to know if Anna had any enemies that you know of. Maybe she was afraid of someone." Sam prompted gently. Victoria wiped her face and opened her mouth to reply, but before she could speak the door flew open and in steeped the club manager.

"Tori. You need to get backstage." He ordered. Victoria turned back to Sam, motioned for him to stay put, and walked towards to door. But just as she was about to walk out, she caught a glance of the floral calendar hanging to the right of the entryway. For the first time that day, she noticed the date. April 15th. Suddenly, her despondence earlier made sense. At 7:26 P.M that night, Anna would've been 23.

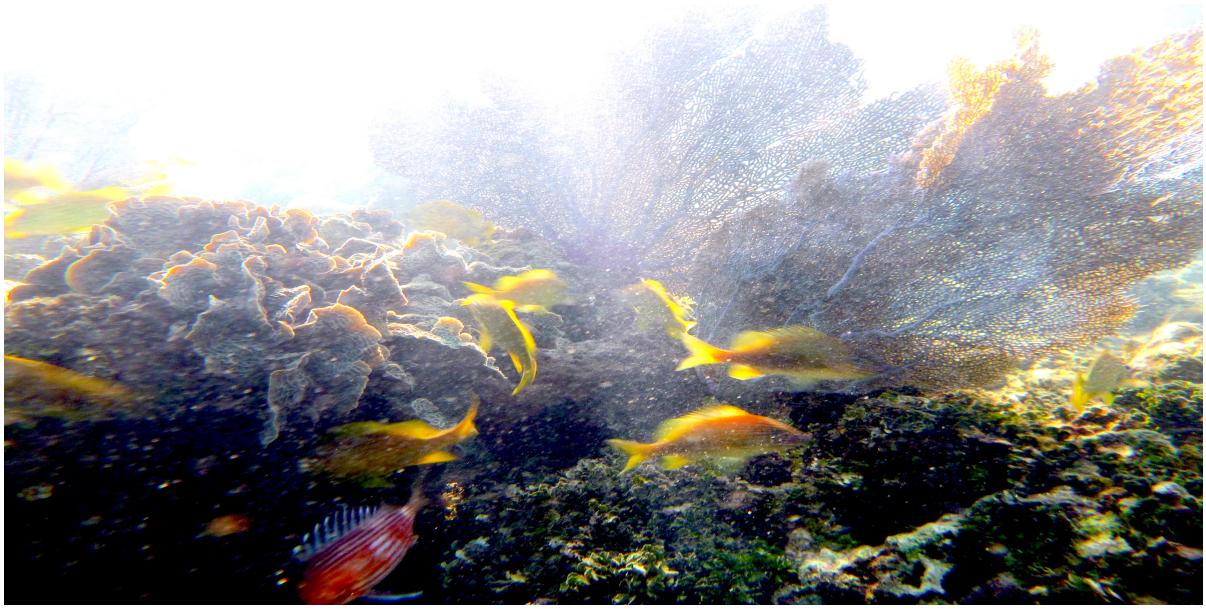


Image by Shae Wheeler

Lock and Key

Trenton German

Draw for me a lock and key
That I might use it sparingly
And with the key, I'll keep away
My heart, so it shall never fade

Draw for me a lunar scene
Akin to one I see in dreams
And shine the stars for me so bright
A marvelous night to tease my sight

Draw for me a melting candle
And I will gaze from every angle
To see how much time I have left
To live my life; my greatest gift.

Scribe for me a lovely poem
And give it to me, from you spoken
So I can hear beauty ring and chime
Before I meet death in my due time.

Torn Up Heart

Trenton German

What kind of life am I living?
Anger surges through my body
And my eyes fill up with strange tears
Burgeoning from my ever torn up heart.

The rust is rotting and my pulse fading,
As the hinges pull further away.
I feel the collapse about to reach
As love becomes a foreign experience.

Stranger are the sweet things becoming,
And I'm losing sight of who I was.
As the transformation takes its place,
A barren wasteland now has my heart.

Nothing is pumping
Nothing is loving
Nothing is feeling
Nothing but darkness

But hark! I see a glimpse, but a flash!
Light has sparked, and life fills me once more.
I remember the foreign things,
Things that anger and hate once hid from me

The light grows brighter, ever merrier
And I expel the anger; destroy the hate.
The ocean of love refills my heart
As it had so long ago, and songs ring out

My head has cleared; I'm set free
My eyes are open and I can see.
See the source of light in front of me
Her face so bright, has resurrected me

Her face so bright has brought me light
And healed the tattered ever torn up heart.

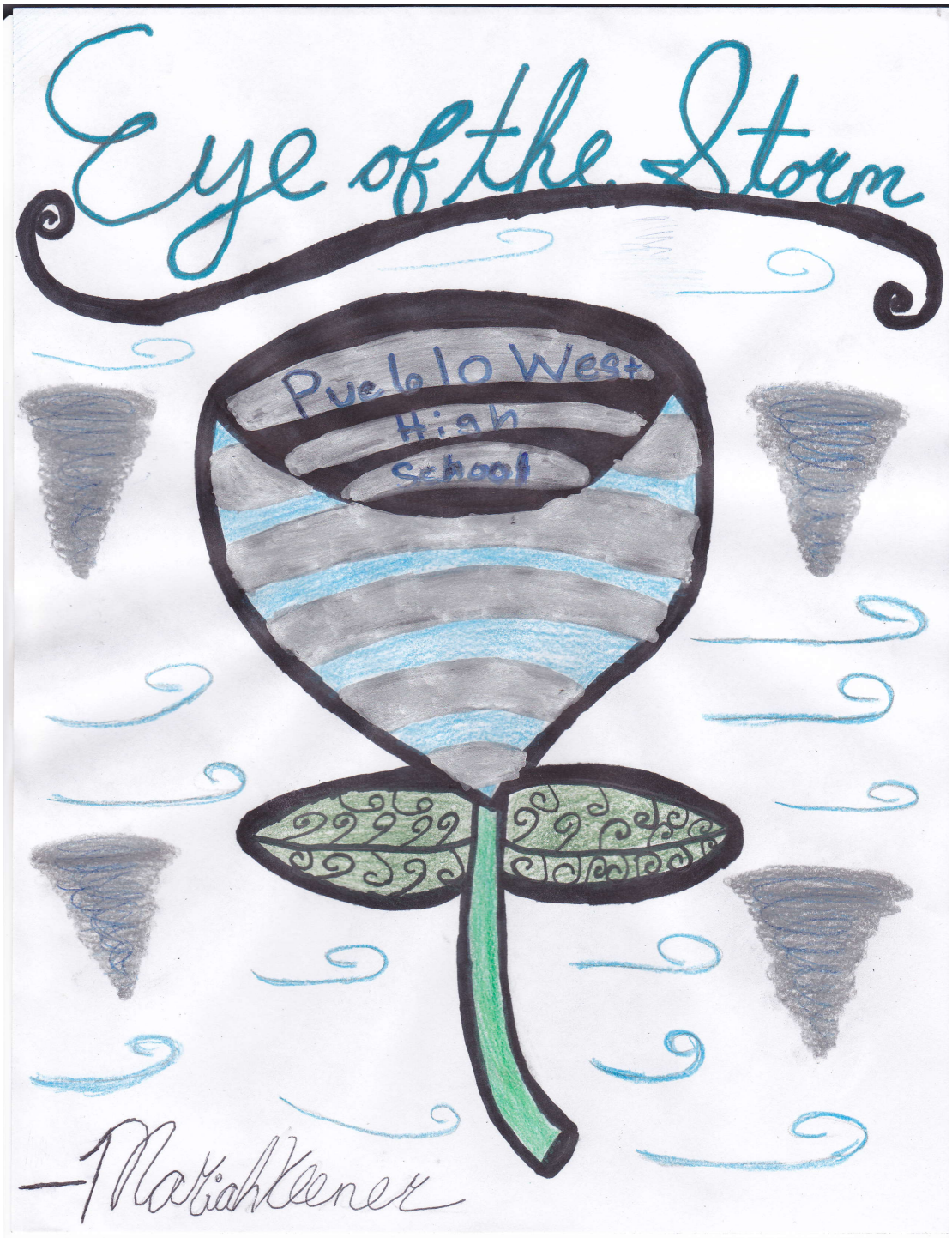


Image by Mariah Keener

Day of the Binding

David Lichliter

Carl slowly woke up and inhaled the crisp morning air. The sun was just beginning to rise over the tops of the forest at the edge of the Institute's grounds. He stood up from under the cherry blossom tree he had slept beneath. While getting up, he straitened his red jacket, which he had acquired from a Noxian merchant. It had orange trim and yellow runic letters near the bottom hem. He pulled out his summoning orb and with a quick set of motions he brought up the time.

His eyes grew wide for a second as he saw the date. It was the Day of Binding.

Since he had arrived here four years ago, he had trained and learned in preparation of the day, a day when potential summoners would be bound to champions to further their magical abilities.

Carl didn't see himself as one who would enjoy being bound to a champion.

"This is going to suck. Imagine if I get bound to a really clingy champion. Or what if it's a woman and she falls for my dashing looks? Or what if I never find out about my history? Or maybe I'm just overreacting? Or what if I'm --- just talking to myself again?"

"Did you know-," an oriental voice said from behind Carl.

Carl jumped around and faced the owner of the voice, posed in a fighting stance. He lowered his hands. It was Master Yi, dressed in his champion clothes for the Day of Binding.

"They say those who speak to themselves is a sign of insanity."

"What the Void, Yi. I swear if you do that again, I'll light you up so hard, you'll still be burning when they find your body, you quiet, sneaky son of a bitch."

"That's highly unnecessary. As they say, I was, ahem, 'messing' with you."

"Messing with me?"

"I believe that's what I just said."

"Yes, bu-"

"Then why would you repeat it?"

"I don't see any logical reason for you to repeat me."

"I was-"

"Unless you have a stutter?"

"WHAT? I don't hav-"

"Or a speaking disorder."

"Just listen here-"

"Or another type of speech impediment?"

"Yi!"

"Yes?"

"Shut your damn mouth!"

"Well, that seems a bit rude."

Carl just rubbed his eyes in anger; he was still tired. His next question seemed to be a bit calmer.

"What can I do for you on this morning so fine?" He said in a sarcastic tone as he began to take off to the Halls of Honor. Yi jogged to catch up.

The tall, twenty-foot doors were open today, unlike most other days, because of the special occasion. A few, select summoners would be bound today, but many more would not.

"I wanted to wish you luck in the match today. I have been studying you for some time now, and I can see you have been hiding your true power. There is reasoning behind this fancy helmet of mine. I know you will be bound today, and hopefully to me."

Carl's response was unexpected. He laughed and turned to Yi. "You may be right, but don't forget you're not the only one who wishes to be bound to me.

The summoner and champion parted ways to their respective seating.

Yi walked up the champion seating area and glanced around at the champions already seated. There were a few summoners who hadn't been challenged, or had defeated the challengers.

"Mind if we sit here, mister Yi?" came the sweet tone of the Lamb's voice. Yi turned to see the newest addition to the League, Kindred facing him. The wolf was looking towards the open area where the battles would take place.

"When does the action begin?"

Yi mentioned to the lamb, "Be my guest."

Yi smiled and turned towards the elevated seating where the Elders sat.
There was the Elder of Fire, nicknamed the Man of Rage. Presumably, he had only released his true anger once, during the Noxian invasion of Ionia. Both sides limped away after that display. His robes featured various shades of red and orange that appeared to shimmer, much like a flame.

Then there was the Elder of Earth, his green robes in swirls reminded Yi of the bushes that are seen throughout the jungle on the Rift. He was rumored to be as old as the Rune Wars, and had joined the Institute to ensure that such a tragedy never happened again.

Next was the Elder of Air. She was very young, and had been made an elder from her vast knowledge of the world. Her robes were light blue with various white swirls in the design. Next to her was another woman, but she was much older.
The Elder of Water sported robes of deep shades of blue and green with runic letters on the borders. She had been through the transformation of the Shadow Isles and was rumored to have gone through so much evil and hate; she was now immune to either of the emotions. All four of them had their hoods up, so all that was seen was their glowing eyes, which happened when you discover your true magic potential.

In the middle of the four sat The Master. He or she was someone whose face had never been seen. He or she had created the league, and had always worn a mask since their first appearance. Many rumors surrounded this person, but the more popular rumors involved The Master being a male, but wore his or her mask because his or her face was scarred beyond recognition from his participation in the Great War. The mask had no designs on it; rather it was plain silver with two small slits for eyeholes and no mouth gap. His or her robes, on the other hand, were quite elaborate. The first "robe" could be described as more of a cloak. It was a deep purple color with many yellow runes on the outlines of the cape. The hood also featured golden fur trim. The second robe started from around the shoulders and stopped just below the waist and gave sleeves to his arms. It was more of a lavender color, also with many rune symbols throughout. The final layer started around the waist area and ended at his or her feet. Their boots could not be seen in great detail. They also had on light yellow gloves that

stretched up to their elbows and many belts around their waist, with various scrolls tucked into them. The Master approached the front of the stage and awaited complete silence.

Yi leaned with great interest, along with all the other original champions who had joined on The Institute's foundation, yet had never heard The Master speak.

"Welcome to the Day of Binding," The Master spoke, with a deep masculine voice that would make Malphite sound as though he was undergoing puberty. So, the rumors of The Master being a man were true. "In the League's existence, there have been many Days of Binding. However, this one is special, as you may have already figured out from me addressing you rather than my colleagues. For this is the 50th anniversary of the League's existence." Many cheers were heard throughout the hall, due to the excitement of hearing The Master's voice for the first time. "This year, many of you will join the ranks of the senior and traditional summoners. However, the proven few will be bound to a champion that fits your abilities and your personality. You select few will be called True Summoners. In the rare case of being bound to two champions, you may either choose the champion you wish to be bound to, or choose to have the two champions fight for you. Once completed, all new True Summoners will take the Oath of Bondage. Once taken, summoner and champion will be bound until death or until challenged at a Day of Binding in the future. If you are late to a Day of Binding, you shall be removed of your title and your bindings are broken until your death. The champion shall then participate at the next Day of Binding. Are these rules clear?"

One of the senior summoners came forth. His name was Richard and although not terribly tall, he was very stoutly built. He had brown hair cropped shortly and a clean face. He wore the standard purple robes of a traditional summoner. "Yes, Master," his deep voice boomed.

"Then let the Day of Binding spars begin!"

Many of the fights were complete shutouts, with the opponents quickly falling. Although not taught by the Institute, many students favored hand-to-hand combat as their primary fighting style. Due to the speed of the bouts, the last fight soon approached. It was the premiere fight of the day, with Richard pitted against Carl. The bets show high favor of the crowd towards Richard, who had proven himself as the top of the class. Yi and several other champions leaned forward as Carl readied himself for the match.

"So it appears that I wasn't the only one who noticed his aptitude," Yi muttered.

Richard leapt up onto the stage and threw off his cloak, revealing his muscular frame beneath, while leaving him in white trousers. Carl, however, quietly stepped onto the stage with his hands in his pockets and the hood of his jacket covering most of his face. All that could be seen was the slight smirk on his mouth.

"We all know who is going to win, why don't you just forfeit now, coward," Richard yelled.

"Really, is that the best you can come up with?" Carl replied.

"Well, if you want to do it the hard way, so be it," Richard retorted. "Master, I am ready."

Carl just grinned and nodded he was ready as well.

"Begin!" boomed the Master's voice.

Carl just stood there with his hands in jacket. Meanwhile, Richard charged, using Ignite to light up his fists and Ghost to quicken his pace into a devastating charge that should one-hit his opponent. He wound up his right fist, and began to move in for a right hook. Right before the punch could land, Richard stumbled, slightly confused as his fist did not make

contact. The crowd gasped. Carl was now standing behind Richard because he used Flash, and he quickly swung his left leg in-between Richard's guard to knock him on his back.

"Going to have to try harder than that!" Carl shouted, loud enough for the crowd to hear, as he took off his jacket. Richard took this time to get up and fire off a comeback.

"You --- ass-" Richard quickly switched to a defensive stance, as Carl was now on the offensive. Right before he was to strike, he muttered something under his breath, and his hands became enveloped in cackling energy. "Smite!"

Thanks to a quick but rather weak Barrier spell at the last second, Richard was still standing. Then, Richard disappeared. He used an alteration of Ghost to go invisible, a rather hackneyed tactic. Carl just shrugged and whispered, "Clairvoyance." The shocked Richard was standing to his left, guard open. Carl used this to his advantage, stepping into Richard's guard and unleashing a flurry of blows that was hard for the crowd to keep up with.

When Richard eventually escaped the torrent of abuse with a quick Flash, and he quickly surveyed the damage. He suffered a few broken bones, but nothing that would keep him from winning. Right as he looked up to make an offensive move, he realized his mistake. While surveying his injuries, he had let his guard down. A white blast of solid light, similar to the opacity of the Barrier spell, hit him square in the jaw, dislocating it, and he was knocked to the other side of the stage.

Carl just stood back, not even appearing to have broken a sweat. Casually he assumed a defensive stance.

"Wha the f' wha' was tha'? Masta, ban him immetialy! He use a spell we wunt ta'!" came the slurred speech from Richard.

"It's been a long time since I've seen that alteration of the Barrier spell," the Elder of Fire stated, with his eyes lighting up like actual fire.

Richard's expression turned from one of anger to one of fear for a split second, but then reverted to the prior.

"I'm gonna brea' every sin'le bone in y'ur body!" Richard rushed towards Carl with his left fist engulfed in flames and his right in lightning. "Fa before me, you losa!"

Once again, right before Richard could land the blow, Carl disappeared, using an alteration of Teleport to quickly blink to his jacket. Then Carl kicked Richard over; he could not get up due to the severity of his wounds.

"---' you," Richard gasped, still trying to land a blow on Carl.

Carl just stepped forward, a green aura glowing from his arms. He ran his arms over Richard's torso, healing his wounds. Richard just laid there, groaning softly. After his was completed with this, Carl put his left hand on Richard's jaw, his right supporting his head.

"Ready? This is probably going to hurt," Carl whispered.

All Richard could do was groan slightly louder. A small scream was heard from Richard as his jaw was set back in place. Carl then turned and bowed to The Master.

Richard stood up, ready to go for another bout.

"That is enough," the Elder of Air stated.

Cheeks red, Richard also bowed to The Master, muttering something inaudible beneath his breath.

"The winner of the fight is the summoner Carl. Carl, please take your seat behind me with the other winners. Richard, take your seat with those who also did not win their match," The Master declared.

Carl took his seat, wondering if he was to be bound to a champion.

Real Beauty

Shae Wheeler

Is there any real beauty?
Is it made in one color and shape only?
Does it have blond hair
And clothes that consistently impresses?

Or is there some hidden truth
Beauty that is invisible to all
Beauty that has no ends
Or is that just a myth

An idea covered in magic
Obscured by the mind
Teaching one generation to the next
Teaching, "It matters what's on the inside,"

There is no truth
But, there are no lies, either
There is no beauty
But, there is no unattractiveness

The girl with brown hair and eyes verses
The blue-eyed blond
There is no difference
It all is in the head of seeing eyes

So… Is there any real beauty?

Photograph

Aubriana Chase

Doesn't it seem a little funny
How one message changed me completely?

How a single second made three years insignificant?
How I still stay up at night remembering?
Mindlessly scrolling through photos
As I discover my trigger, resting in your hands.
You're laughing with me, a smile on both of our faces.
Just another memory to remind me

I cannot get away from this.
It doesn't matter how hard I try to forget.
Each time I try to push the thought from my mind,
It approaches again, with a vengeance.
It's moments like these that throw me
And make me realize how fragile it all really is.
What I thought was too strong to ever be broken
Broke within a matter of seconds.

I wish I could take it all back,
I know I have made a mistake.
But I've found that life doesn't give second chances
And I don't expect you to, either.
All I want is for you to come back to me
But I know that it won't ever be the same.
The things I said were truly unforgivable,
And I couldn't expect you to forget

The feeling hits hard every once in awhile
But it's only to be expected
Because you left, and took a part of me with you.
A part that will never be replaced.
What I wouldn't give for us to be happy again,
Laughing at one another, reliving old memories.
Sadly, my wish is much too unlikely.
Still, part of me hopes that you'll come around.



Image by Luke Mayes

Untitled
Amber Vaught

He asked how it's easy for a girl like me to smile.
I said let me count the ways...

I said one
There's a sun.
And I said two
There's a moon.
I said tell me what's better
Than a sun hugging me with warmth,
What's better than being warm?
I said tell me what's better
Than a moon singing me to sleep
With tides?
I said what's better than that?

I said three

Air is quiet.
And that peace makes me smile
Because that's when my heart is loud
And it's beautiful when a heart can be loud.

I said four
I love my dog.
I said no one loves me like my dog does.

Then I said five
Sometimes I whisper
And only a few people hear
And that makes me smile
Because those few people are friends
And I know I don't have to be loud to be heard.

I said six
My mom knows how to laugh
And seven
My dad laughed with her once
And when mom laughs I know I've done my job
And dad doesn't laugh often so it's a thought that makes me smile.

I said eight
I ride a beautiful horse
And beauty makes me smile

I said nine
My favorite number is nine

Then ten
There's more than just yes and no
There's maybe,
Maybe not,
And probably,
And probably not,
And there's hopefully
And could happen
And might happen
And there are always more roads
Than the one less and more traveled
There's always a C.
In fact, there's 26 letters in the alphabet
And numbers never end.

I said eleven.

Rainbows sometimes even get lost in the grey

Then twelve.
I have four limbs.
And thirteen.
Even numbers can be lucky.
Fourteen
Air in my lungs
Fifteen
10 fingers
Sixteen
10 toes
Seventeen
If I don't like who I am today, I can be someone else tomorrow
Eighteen
I'm doing alright

Nineteen
Time wouldn't exist if I shut off the clock.
Then twenty
My soul still works.

He asked how it's easy for a girl like me to smile
And I said twenty-one
I'm alive today.
And I can see tomorrow through the front window of my house
And when it knocks on my door
I'll let it in and say "Hello.
Thanks for the weather
And how are you
And who do I get to be today?"

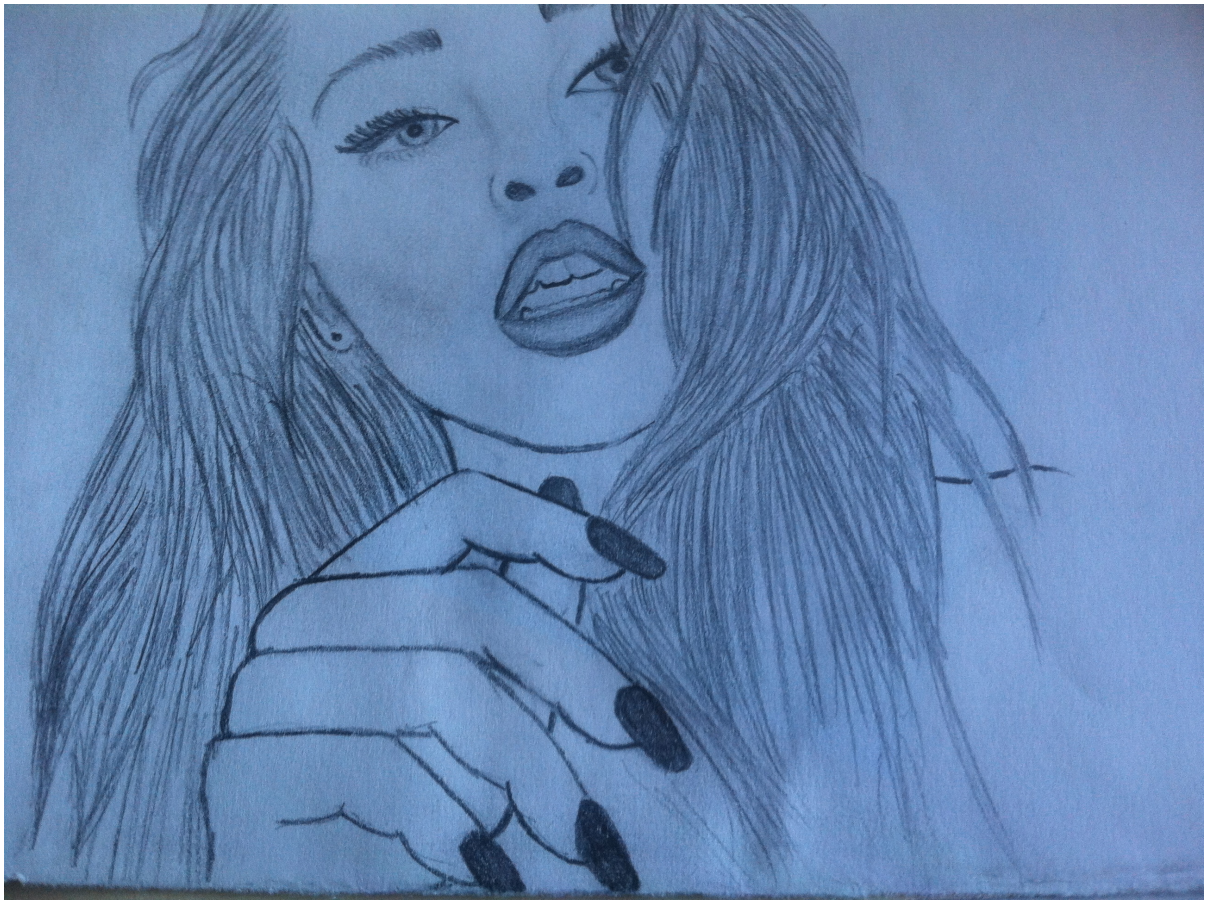


Image by Cianna Angel

Me
Amber Vaught

My eyes are glass.
Somebody visits me in my room every night,
Takes them out of my head,
And paints them differently every morning.
Today they're blue.
But I like green.

My lips aren't mine.
I bite them,
And I can feel them,
They're here,
But it's like I signed a contract with the corporation of Things I Shouldn't Say

And all my feelings are ruled out.
But I can scream loud.

My hands don't work.
They operate slowly -
Rusty machines.
And I want so much to build a tower of luxury,
Even if it's just with a deck of cards.
I can't do this with minimal switches
And all these glitches
I have when my fingertips turn on.
But I know where I can get more batteries.

Sometimes I feel like red velvet with high heels and lip stick
And bad manners on a sugar high
And sometimes I feel like sunflowers with lemonade
And sweet honey dripping down on a cold shoulder.
Sometimes I feel like red and black and cat eyes staring at a dark night
And sometimes I feel like me.

Sometimes I fight the guy who paints my eyes.
I get the paintbrush,
And I decide what color to be.
And sometimes I break the chains on my lips,
Demand them to be mine,
And I say what needs to be said.
Because whatever "me" is, is strong enough to.

"Me" knows that my hands aren't the only things
I need to put new batteries in.
They're not my only rusty piece of human
That can't operate under pressure.
But I put power back into my soul when I am me
When I paint my own eyes
And when I control my lips.
I put the oil between my bones.
I am my own mechanic.
And I want to be that me.
Every time.



Image by John-John Alvarez

It's Terror

Joseph Schwartz

He ran.

He ran for his life.

He ran from *It*.

His feet carried him at an incredible rate. His legs pumped beneath him like a machine.

They wouldn't be enough.

Through the jungle he moved, dodging bushes and whipping around trees like a shot. The boy's mind remained a deadly calm. There was no room for intrusive thoughts. He just needed to keep moving.

It wouldn't be enough.

The boy bit his lip hard enough to draw blood; he tried to distract himself from the pain his legs screamed at him. But he had to keep moving. If he gave in *It* would be right on top of him.

For all of his determination, an important trait of the human soul, he would be devoured. No human could outrun the thing that currently chased the boy.

None of them were enough.

None of them could overcome its terrible might.

Then he tripped. The boy fell, immediately scrambling forward on all of his limbs to keep propelling him forward. He couldn't fall after all of this time. He'd tried so hard. He couldn't give in.

Looking up, the boy saw his doom clear before him. In the severe darkness of the jungle canopy he could not make out the features of the monster's body, but three points were clear to him.

Two yellow pinpricks of menacing light focused right on him, the eyes of *It*.

And a big, happy grin that looked disturbingly human shone brightly white below the glowing yellow orbs.

He screamed; *It* lunged. The teeth of the beast sunk into the boy's flesh, tearing and ripping his body to bloody shreds. The boy's life source fed the monster; *It* drunk it all in, relishing the delicious flavor of the young child's fear.

But one child was not enough.

Then he screamed again, against the looming specter of death.

And he sat straight up in bed, throwing aside his blanket with a shriek. His body felt cold, and he noticed the sweat he had been in.

But it had only been a dream. He set his head back down and sighed, shaking away the terrible nightmare. In truth, he was a young man, but that unconscious event had removed his age, heightening his fear to make him more afraid of the monster.

Rolling over he groaned, knowing it would be difficult to get back to sleep now.

Then he felt a comforting hand rustle his hair, and he felt at peace for a moment.

The young man lived alone.

Recalling this, he sat up straight again and whipped his head around to survey the entire room. Against his door his eyes fell and widened in pure terror.

Two yellow pinpricks.

And a big, goofy grin that promised the happiest death.

His scream was drowned out by the monster's laughter as it came in again, lunging atop him in a single movement.

Teeth bit in, removing the man's neck and turning his scream into a sickening gurgle.

It only giggled happily, the sound filling the room as if it were full of playing children.

Perhaps this young man would be enough for its hunger.

He was so deliciously terrified from both his dream and reality. The monster could hardly contain the joy it felt at such a terrific meal. Still, as *It* looked out the open window a million ideas sprung into mind.

Having traversed from the less-than-tangible reality of dreams through this vessel, *It* had a veritable feast awaiting it.

The formless body shivered in pleasure, thinking of the meals to come. *It's* joy could not be overstated.

It slithered out of the window, big happy grin leading the way.

Music

Rhiannon Winch

Medicine that speaks
When you have nothing to say
Going through your mind through weeks
Or tracks you keep on replay
A heartbeat that never fails
A friend that never leaves
Listens to all the details
That you conscious silently thieves
An uplifting noise
or a calming sound
Can create an inspirational poise
with no actual instruments around
The world would be dark
If no birds were to sing
No imagination would spark
Sound wouldn't be a thing
But music will never die
As even the deaf can listen to it
See the vibrations magnify
Allowing the beat to transmit
Music is an art
An expression at the very least

Feelings that come from the heart
Because it is an vibration that is released
So take a look around, because music is always there
Bringing steadiness to the chaos, allowing light into the dark
There is nothing else that can compare
To the way music leaves a mark.



Image by Tiffanyy Skelley

Seven Deadly Sins of Our Love

Anita Baler

1. Lust

    I grab her hand and pull her to me

    Just close enough that I could see

    Everything I want to feel so greatly

    But haven't been able to touch lately

    Wanting her remarkably is toxic

    But this sin makes me feel ataraxic

2. Gluttony

    I want her touch I want her kiss

    Because this craving makes me miss

    All the times I had here near

    And everything was bright and clear

    With this thirst I cannot be acquitted

    Because with this a sin I have committed

3. Greed

    Day after day I wonder why

    With selfishness I can just cry

    She's all I have and I wish she were just mine

    But I know that it will never be fine

    I want her all to myself

    But this is a sin all by itself

4. Sloth

    I've become lazy and I no longer care

    What she does and how of herself she takes care

I might have lost my salvation

And threw away my motivation

Helping her is a useless attempt

But from the sin of lethargy I'm not exempt

5. Wrath

I've packed my bags and flew away

I was mad at myself the very next day

I left everything I knew behind

And the anger of it left me blind

I have sinned and at myself

I'm angry and that's the sin itself

6. Envy

They are so lucky, I ache,

They get to see her by the lake

Every day they make her smile

And get to admire her interesting style

Every day I am so greedy

And this sin makes me terribly needy

7. Pride

For this one I have nothing to say

I'm proud of our love and what it became

I'm proud of the struggles overcame

And we managed to contain the flame

Through all the struggles we went through

We made it like we knew

The Mystery of Mrs. Payne
Trevor Warren

We stand at the door unannounced: me, and my two friends, Tyler and Savannah. I knock on the door--three loud knocks--and we all are expecting Mrs. Payne to come out and to greet us, but she doesn't. I look behind Tyler and Savannah to see the front yard lined with crisp golden leaves and the light brown dead grass that follows her sidewalk all the way to the street. We are only in 5th grade, and yet we feel like we are the most important people in town. Tyler looks at me in disappointment and says, "I'm tired of this. Can't we take a break from being detectives and go to my house and eat cookies and have lemonade?" I don't look back at him and instead study the old house with its rotting wood and creaky front porch. I finally respond with my back turned towards him still and answer, "No, we can't give up now. I am sure we are close--we have to be."

"Well you have no…um…no…"

His momentary pause of silence indicated to me that he was trying to say a word but couldn't remember it. I take an educated guess and say, "Leads?"

"Yes, you don't even have any leads."

“Yes I do, how do you explain the odd items we found in the dumpster behind Joe’s Burgers? And when we interviewed the little girl who was riding her bike she said she saw Mrs. Payne dump those items into the trash can.”

“So what she was throwing away trash? People throw away trash.”

“But it wasn’t trash, why would she dump a sea shell, a pocket watch, a bird feather, a container of red paint, and candles into the dumpster? Why wouldn’t she just throw them away in her own trash? I think she didn’t want anyone to connect her to those items.”

Savannah stood trying to wrap her brain around the situation, seeing whose side she wants to take.

“Why wouldn’t she want people to connect her to those items? It’s just junk.”

“That, my friend, is why we are here.”

After saying this I can see that I have partially changed Tyler’s views on our case. Suddenly I realize it has easily been around ten minutes since I laid the three loud knocks upon her door. I whisper under my breath,

“Where could she be?”

My concentration is interrupted when the door slowly creeks open and we start to call her name,

“Mrs. Payne, Mrs. Payne, Mrs. Payne!”

Our actions were futile because we never got a response back. I start to step in when I feel Savannah's hand grab my shoulder, "You can't just walk into her house."

But I do anyway and then they timidly follow behind me. Our footsteps make slow creaking noises on the floor boards beneath us. I try to turn on the lights using the light switch by the front door but it doesn't work and we are forced to use the light coming in through the cobweb-filled windows of the house. As we stroll along I tell them, "We should use this time to our advantage and look for clues."

They stand still at the front door until Savannah breaks the silence and says, "Are you crazy?"

"Are both of you babies?"

My response angers them and they proceed just to prove me wrong and my plan has worked. Savannah walks through the living room and continues on while Tyler goes upstairs and I approach the staircase door to the basement. Slowly I open it, take a deep breath, and walk down. Each step on the stairs is louder than the front door and I finally reach the bottom. I can see a faint glow around the corner and I turn to see what it is and was surprised to see candles lit near the wall. I couldn't see the rest of the basement but could see the pictures that covered the wall. They were all pictures of Mrs. Payne with Mr. Payne. I never knew what had

happened to him until I continue to walk down the wall and find all sorts of newspaper clippings. When I reached the end of the wall with the candle light now barely visible I see the final newspaper clipping. It is titled “Local becomes widow after husband passes from car accident.

I suddenly know it was Mr. Payne and feel bad for Mrs. Payne. I now feel warm tears going down my cheeks and I rub them off for I do not want Savannah and Tyler to see them.

My small episode is interrupted by the bone chilling scream of Savannah. I run back up the stairs in a frantic and yell “Savannah! Savannah!”

I dash through the kitchen and to the back hallway and see a broken bowl on the floor and a trail of blood leading out the door into the forest behind Mrs. Payne’s house. Suddenly Tyler runs up behind me and joins us. I look at them and say,

“We have to follow it.”

Tyler responds, “No way, we don’t know what’s out there. We could get hurt.”

My curiosity overcomes my fright and I run out the door following the trial and I hear behind me,

“Wait…”

But it was too late because I had already left and was following the trail through zigzags around the leafless trees. I couldn’t see far in front of me because of the thickness of the woods. After about

ten minutes of walking I hear someone chanting and I know they are in front of some bushes ahead. I walk through the bushes and there was a clearing in the shape of a circle. I can see that Mrs. Payne was the source of the chanting and I can see she had all the same items she thrown away but these were brand new. I stood in amazement and finally found the words to come out of me,

"Mrs. Payne?"

She turns to me with tears trickling down her face and says,

"I just want him back."

The Grand Party

Emily Evans

Hard to be yourself
Yet to hard to pretend
Hard to be free
Like a grain of sand
Life will slip through your fingertips

But the party awaits you
Don't hold yourself back
Don't be afraid or shy
Show the grand party what you are

Be yourself, let go and live
Life is a party, full of fun
Live the grand party and never let it die



Image by Perla Treviso

The Wall
Shayne Doughty

Out of all the walls, the one thing that stuck out to me was a poster in the room that read, “Make effort, not an excuse”. This stuck out at me because of many different reasons. This saying relates to life, school, sports and pretty much anything, it relates to school because if you are struggling just because your not trying then your pretty much just making up excuses and not putting in any effort. Its sports related because if your not doing your best then you shouldn’t be playing. The main one that I think this saying relates to is being healthy and losing weight. I struggle with this so I know what it means. The quote proves that if you want to succeed in your goal of looking amazing and feeling healthy, then you have to put in work and do your best to accomplish your goal.



Image by Madison Montoya

The Blood on the Wall
Dominick Campbell

Hours turned into days as he slept in the med bay awaiting his alarm. Then after almost a week he awoke from another long sleep. Beginning his descent onto the crimson planet, touching down on the surface and morphing into the shape of pure darkness. Moving like a strike of black lightning striking across the ground he reached his destination after but a few seconds, a small monastery sitting on the ridgeline of a canyon filled with rushing water.

Walking in he watched as the monks looked at him and drew their staves preparing for the fight. Smiling maliciously, Shadow regained the striking shape of darkness and began to indiscriminately kill off the monks. At first he just decapitated them leaving their dismembered and bloody bodies broken upon the floor, but as he reached the shrines alter he became crueler.

Time clicked in the cellar the remaining monks heard their brother's screams and felt the blood drip onto them through the cracks in the weathered oak floor above them. On the strike of the hour every hour another of their brothers was forced to their doom above the stairs. Finally, as they came down to only about five monks, they overcame their fear and slammed themselves against the door cracking it, breaking it down, and climbing the rugged stone stairs back to the shrine's altar.

When they arrived at the top of the stairs they saw a scene that they were unable to comprehend. Several of their brothers stood guarding the altar, Shadow standing behind them, bodies strung up against the wall a golden colored vase embroidered by ancient looking hieroglyphics resting at their feet. As they peered closer at the bodies they saw it. The one thing that made the scene even more gruesome than normal, their entrails hung low from their bodies draping like curtains and leaving a streak of blood on the floor where they had originally swung. Blood seeping through their gaping wound falling with a loud and sticky sounding drip into the large embroidered vase.

The eldest remaining monk looked at his brothers and rushed them. Although this was a mistake for they pounced upon him, drug him to the wall and began hammering large iron spikes through his hands into the stone slats. Blood spewed everywhere as they continued their gory work. The man screamed at the first bits of blood poured out around the spikes, and as it fell into the vase his body went limp insides searing with the heat of a thousand suns. Then, finally, the spike reached the man's palm and they motioned to the expressionless Shadow who slowly, meticulously, began to draw the Dark green jagged knife across the mans exposed abdomen. Then as the entrails began to fall, a small chuckle escaped his mouth. The gory sight of the now exposed entrails brought forth another gush of the life force that this man had lost. Louder and louder Shadow's laugh grew as he threw his head back allowing for the noise to echo throughout the room.

"You monks have no idea just how useful your blood is. Though as a generous man, I will let the rest of you live, no more of you need die today." Shadow said turning towards them "Now leave me, before my patience is stretched thin and I end all of you as well."

Frightened the monks ran, terrified an unearthly screech escaping their hoarse throats, out of the monastery and into the open rust colored desert outside. Shadow looked back at the project at hand and began to gather the blood from the vase dipping his hand in he began to draw magical symbols on the wall.

Time slowed and passed as he drew, the walls of the monastery becoming more and more covered with the rich blood of the monks. Though as he was beginning the last symbol a loud noise alerted him to the presence at the door. There, Shangir stood hands resting firmly on her hips, lips pursed in fury and exasperation.

That Place

Chris Ashley

The place that I most desired to be
is the one place very few will see
I love the place I go when I read
it always just plants one new seed
The Place is always the same
just new pieces in the domain
Yet this isn't the place I want to be
I have one place desired for me
Although I love my books
while reading in a small nook
Though my World is perfect there
theres still one with a better flare
Not somewhere I can visit anytime
A place where I fly like the time
Where my problems fade away
and my heart will always stay
Warmth pressed against my chest
and a small head just rest
The peaceful quiet
the silent warmth of our bodies
As our love embodies
when she falls asleep
yet I'm still here counting sheep
but in these moments that I'm awake
I think for heavens sake
How did I get such an amazing girl
What did I do to make my life into a pearl
What did I do to deserve this place
surrounded by black quiet space
Yet filled with warmth and love
as I drift off to sleep
when the dreams start to creep.

as my love brings her clos
and the love gives me another does
The tight warmth only given by another heart
A feeling you wont get at the start
You have to earn this love
By giving your self a shove
so you can be the best you can
In your own life span
I have not earned this love
but she gives it anyway
SO I want her to stay
oh god oh god let me say
I love this girl in everyday
she makes my life worth living
and just keeps on giving
So I'll give back to her
all my love for sure
because I need her so bad
losing her would make me so sad
It wouldn't be sadness though
Something I wouldn't show
SO I'll keep her so close
and give her another dose
Let her feel my love
the true symbol of the dove
Good night as I drift
Let there be no rift
in her heart
to tear us apart.

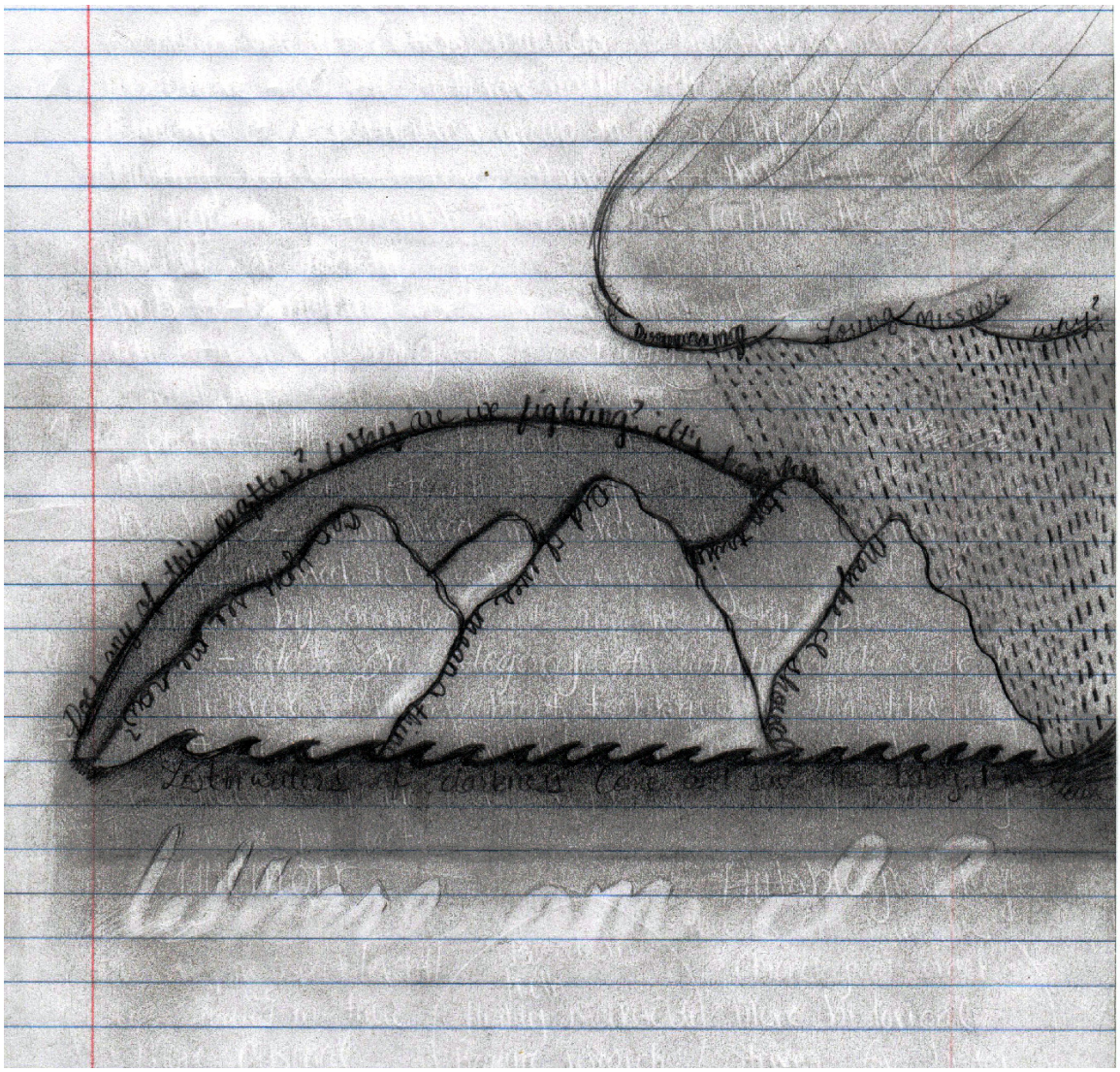


Image by Taryn Tibbs

Locked Out

Josh Leyba

John glares at the light switch across the room, his eyes barely able to pierce the darkness. He groans at the thought of stumbling around in the dark. Unfortunately, he has to use the bathroom. He leaps across the room and flicks the switch on. The lights flicker on and he moves quickly down the hallway illuminated by the light from his bedroom. A scowl spreads across his face when he looks up the stairwell. The light switch is at the top of the stairs and turning on that light switch would wake the rest of his family. The walk to the bathroom must be made in darkness.

"I'm not afraid," he thinks aloud. He looks into the dark stairwell for a few seconds. The eerie lack of light seems to have it's own silence, one different from quiet in the day. "I'm worked up over nothing." He glances at the stairs then goes out the basement door, where the light from his bedroom partially illuminates the outside. "This is easier."

Outside, he urinates and stares at the stars. The splatter against the grass mixes with the sound of a light breeze. His gaze is skyward toward the vast emptiness of space as he pulls up his sweats. The frigid air bites at his bare fingers and toes when a rustling interrupts the quiet wind. He turns away from the night sky to open the door.

The door doesn't budge. It's locked and he has no key in his pajamas. His breathing quickens. The dim twilight surrounds him. Fear rises in his chest; he feels trapped.

He collects his thoughts, "I'm locked out, not trapped. I could leave his house; my friend's house is about mile away, maybe a little more." He looks down and says, "Even though I'm barefoot." A barefoot walk in the world of night does not appeal to him. "That's the backup plan. All right: Think. My room is the only one downstairs." He pauses then continues thinking aloud, "I could wake my brother. His room is nearby but I need something to throw at the window."

The yard surrounding his house is neatly landscaped; nothing is out of place.
He continues, "I could grab a handful of wood chips from the base of the cherry tree."

He hears the rustling again. His heart beats faster. He inhales sharply and moves closer to investigate. Nothing. The same noise comes from behind him accompanied by a heavy exhale.

He runs from the sound. Its source maintains a constant distance behind him. Four legs or two, he cannot tell. He sprints back to the front of his house and bangs on the doors and windows. No response. The wind picks up and he takes of running. He forgets about the rough gravel of the street. He ignores the pain in his feet. Self-preservation is his sole concern. The distance was further than he

anticipated. He can feel his heart pound in his ears. His friend's house comes into view. He frantically rings the doorbell. The howling wind fills the night.

A glance back into the blackness reveals nothing at first, and then his steady gaze makes out two red eyes in the dark behind him.

The door clicks open. He rushes forward and slams the door behind him, stopping to catch his breath. The world seems to slow down and he changes his focus to explaining himself to the concerned mother who answered the door.

"I locked myself out and someone must have left their dog out or something and I ran." She nods in consolation and offers an explanation concerning a troublesome pit-bull a few houses down.

Woken by John pounding on the door, his drowsy friend walks into the room and asks, "What's going on?" John replies, "I'll explain tomorrow I need to get some sleep." His friend shrugs and they go to his room. John quickly falls asleep despite the dull throbbing in his feet.

Midway through the night a tap on the bedroom window wakes him. Behind the window he sees the same sinister eyes he saw earlier are staring back at him and they send a chill down his spine. In the next instant they were gone.

"There couldn't have been anything out there." He says in reflection, "Did I actually see or hear anything yesterday or was it all in my head?" Afterward he is unable to sleep.

The next morning John yawns during the short drive back to his house. The morning air is devoid of any noise other than the hum of the car's engine. When they arrive at the house the doors remain locked. He rings the doorbell. No answer. He rings a second time and still no answer. John's watch reads a quarter till noon.

He says, "That's odd, my parents are always up before seven. Can I use someone's cell?" The caring mother and John's friend check their pockets. His friend hands him a cell phone. John dials his grandmother and asks for her to bring the spare key. When his grandmother arrives they gain entry into the house.

The first thing that hits him is the smell. Like bugs on a zapper or cattle being branded. There is no mistaking the smell of burned flesh. He follows the smell into the living room. There, his family sits back-to-back with their eyes burnt out; the charring goes deep into their skulls. In the place of eyes scorched black pits stare forward. John falls to his knees and his grandmother screams. He stays inert on the floor unable to feel the passage of time. Sirens wail from outside and he remains motionless as paramedics carry him off. In the ambulance he can still smell the charred flesh.

Your Hands
Megan Price

Your hands spoke so much more than your words and I loved watching you speak. I loved watching the movement of your fingers and the lifting of your arms as you exaggerated and spoke so vividly through your motions. I loved the way your fingers twirled in circles as you described how often someone did something. I loved you the most when your eyes were bright your hands were wild and your voice was loud. I loved you the most when you spoke. I loved your voice. I loved your eyes. I loved your hands. I loved your everything.

Today
Chris Ashley

I don't know why I feel this way
today just hasn't been my day
there's something destroying me
something I don't even see
So please just hold me close
please I need another dose
I need another kiss
one that will not miss
so just please give me love
give my heart a shove
I don't know why
but I kinda want to cry
I just need something
to make my heart start beating
Please I need it quickly
I feel so sickly
the memories are just too much
I'm scared of even the slightest touch
I need your arms around me

this right now is my plea
So won't you rescue me
my SOS is out there
waiting for my own flare
to light it up so high
so I do not die
So save me if you want
this is no crazy stunt
Your love is what I need
For its why I feed
Without you I don't need food
I wont have a mood
for without you life is meaningless
I'd begin speaking less
my room would Absorb me
It is I No one would see
For I only exist when you think of me then
as long as I'm on your mind
I will never be blind
for you're what keeps me alive
The one thing that for I strive
So please just kiss my lips
So we can survive the apocalypse
just hold me so tight
hold me every night
let me keep you warm
even in a big storm
because if I'm in your heart
I know where to start
so please Always love me
please do not flee
but lets just kiss in the rain
as it washes away our pain
like a cleansing bath
Baptized by its calming wrath
so please just kiss me hard
and let this tiny shard
grow so big I'm the one you fall for
let me be at your hearts core

let mere the apple of your eye
and dry your tears when you cry
Because i want you happy
I don’t want your life to be crappy
I want you to be strong
Even if you’re wrong
just keep your head up high
So high you think you can fly
because if our life is great
you’ll know your true fate
but if you want to die
you’ll only hear lies
so please kiss me hard
and deal your next card
because the games just begun
and this is where it will get fun.



Image by Destin Bogart

Wishing for Change

Kayli Allum

I gather my tears up in a bottle and float it out to sea.
Watching as it drifts away, perhaps now I am free.
Free of sadness, free of pain, free to sleep once more.
Freedom to sleep good dreams of happiness is all I wish for.
No more twitching, no more screaming, my breath will finally be steady.
And I will wake from those dreams when I am good and ready.
No cloudy brains and baggy eyes, no more lying on the floor.
Freedom to sleep good dreams of happiness is all I wish for.

I gather my fears up in a bottle and float it out to sea.
Watching as it drifts away, perhaps now I am free.
Free of anger, free of hurt, free to breathe once more.
Freedom to think about good things is all I wish for.
No more fear, no more pain, no more reliving the memories.
And I will think none but happy thoughts with these beautiful remedies.

No fear of people and little trust, no hiding anymore.
Freedom to think about good things is all I wish for.

I gather my love up in a bottle and store this one away.
Wondering who I will give it to come the perfect day.
Locked away up in my vault, no one can touch it there.
I just don't have enough left to give everyone their share.
I save it for the ones I love; my mom, my dad, my brother.
And in the days that are to come, I will share it with my lover.
I feel I've found him, I'm pretty darn sure, but time it will take.
Before he can be there every morning when I am to wake.

Mr. Wooden Door

Kayli Allum

I love the way you crack
With such elegant and extraordinary pattern
Splintering on the edges
But strong and beautiful in the center.

I love tracing my fingers along your lines
Trying to navigate your beautiful form
But every road leads to another
Every crack has somewhere to end.

I love that you alone
You and your simple beautiful structures
Can bring me such a joyous light
Turning my life around entirely.

I was on a path to failure
Letting the worst get the best of me
But you my friend, you showed me a new
You brought me to a state of content.

You showed me there is more than I thought
You gave me back what I had lost
And now I owe my life.

I love you
Though I barely know you
Mr. Wooden Door.

Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep

Tallen Smith

Darkness engulfed the house. To an everyday, average person, the house would look pitch black. However, Jason was no ordinary person. As he stood outside of the

house on the porch he could see a small blue light, flickering almost like a torch, shining through the second floor. He had done this hundreds of times before; he had long since become callous to the experience. Today was just like any other day.

Jason let out a deep sigh as he walked up to the door; which was elegant and gave off a sense of faith with an angel neatly etched onto the glass. Jason pondered on the angel for a second; on whether or not angels actually existed. He passed through the door and into the house, leaving his thoughts outside on the doorstep. The living room was just as elegant as the door with a large couch next to a beautiful fireplace and facing a large, flat-screen television. The living room branched in two ways, to the left of the couch was a glass staircase that went to the second floor, and behind the couch was a small hall that leads into the kitchen.

Jason walked over to the stairs, his footsteps not disturbing the silence. Once he got to the top, he saw three closed solid white doors. Behind the furthest door he could see the light flickering. Without a sound, he passed over to the third door and passed straight through it.

In the room, he saw a small cradle by the far corner, accompanied by a small mobile with little cars on it. The light was emanating from inside the crib. Jason's eyes grew wide and he felt his heart stop. He passed over to the cradle and looked inside. Staring back at him was a small baby, no more than a year old, quietly sleeping. The baby's small arms were reaching around a teddy bear that was about a foot long, yet was still bigger than the child.

"Oh no…" Jason said, looking at the small blue light that was glowing inside the baby's chest. "You're joking?" He asked aloud. The silence didn't break, as if he didn't say anything.

"This is too far!" He backed up from the cradle, shouting at the ceiling. "This has gone too far!"

There was no response.

"I hated doing this every other time, but at least they had a chance to live! This is just a baby!"

Silence. Jason looked into the crib one last time. The baby began to turn a little bit with a look of pain on his face before coughing a few times.

"Don't make me do this…" Jason said, tears welling up in his eyes. "I can't…" After a second he looked down at the baby who had began to cough again. During one of the coughs, the baby coughed up a bit of blood that found itself on the bears face. Where the baby had been sleeping with calm serenity just moments before, it now seemed to only be in misery and pain.

"No…" Jason said, trying to put his hand on the baby's cheek. His hand passed right through but for a second the baby looked calm.

"Fine," Jason said as a tear fell off his eye and landed on the teddy bear, vanishing into its fur. "Have it your way."

Jason reached into the cradle and attempted to slowly and carefully remove the child, but his hands passed through the child's torso and slowly guided the light upwards.

The baby began coughing again, but as the light left the child's body, it went silent. Jason shut his eyes to stop the flow of tears. But then, the sound of a child's laughter began to fill the room. Jason opened his eyes. The light hovering above his hands was glowing brightly.

Jason smiled "You're free from the pain now," The light flickered above his hands as the laughing continued. Jason raised the light above his head for a moment before a string of light wrapped around itself around the light and carried it into the sky, out of sight. Jason sighed.

He walked down stairs with a heavy heart. The silence of the house had returned. Jason sank into a seat on the couch. He thought about the child as he sat. Time passed and the sun began to rise over the community.

The first sound to break the stillness of the atmosphere was the sound of shattering glass from upstairs. The second sound to burst through the house was of a woman screaming.

Jason squinted his eyes in pain, not because of her scream, but because of the ache in his heart. Jason went over to the stairs and just began to listen.

"Joann, what is it?" Jason heard a man call as he ran into the room.

"It's Adam!" wept the woman. There was silence; Jason assumed the man was checking on the child. Then there were footsteps as the man rushed down the stairs. Jason shuffled to the left to allow the man room to pass. The man ran to the phone, not noticing Jason at all.

"My child…" The man said in between breaths, "I need help!" The man looked back at the stairs. Jason turned away, looking the man in the eye was too painful. Jason made his way onto the couch. Joan came down the stairs. She ran over to the man and hugged him. There was silence as they cried. Jason thought about the child that he had taken -no, stolen.

The hug broke and the man sat down on the couch on top of Jason. For just a second, the two merged as one. Jason saw flashes and images of various memories popping in and out of his head.

A clear white room with a woman sitting in a bed appeared. The words "It's a boy" rang around the room as a doctor handed the woman the child.

"Dave, look. He has your eyes," Joann had said, looking at the baby in her hands.

Another flash. A small kitchen; Adam was sitting in a high chair.

"He's gonna love my world famous stew!" Dave said as he scooped up liquid from a bowl in front of him. He slowly lead the spoon into the baby's mouth, who proceeded to spit it out. Both Dave and Joann laughed.

"Some 'world famous stew'," Joann giggled.

A third flash: a couch where Joann was sleeping with Adam in her arms. Dave smiled as he pulled a blanket over the two.

The flashes stopped as Dave leapt out of the chair.

"Woah!" He shouted.

"What?" Joan asked, drying her eyes.

"I don't know," Dave said slowly looking at the couch,

Tears were freely flowing from Jason's eyes. "I never wanted this," He whispered.

A light pressure placed itself on Jason's shoulder. Warmth flooded into his body and he was overcome with calmness. He took a deep breath and looked up slowly.

"I understand," he exhaled. The pressure faded along with the warmth. Jason stood up and put his arm on the shoulder of Dave. The father froze. He slowly put his hand on the shoulder, which Jason was touching.

"Adam is with us. He's happy now," Jason said softly.

The laugh of a baby filled the room,

"Adam?" Dave looked around slowly.

A soft image of Adam manifested in the room; Adam smiled. Dave closed his eyes.

"We love you," he said. The image faded and Jason took his hand off of Dave's shoulder.

"What?" Joann looked quizzically, tears still running down her face. Dave let out a deep breath.

"I think he's in a better place now," Dave said, walking over to Joann and grabbing her in his arms. She sobbed once again.

Jason walked over to her and put his hand on her back. He let Dave's memories pass between him and her. Her tears worsened.

"He'll be watching you," Jason said. Her tears calmed. Dave and Joann broke their hug, and both of them turned to Jason and looked at him with eyes full of sorrow yet wonder.

"Thank you," Dave said. Jason jumped back and looked at Dave for a second in wonder. He smiled lightly and nodded. "Take care of our child."

"He's in the best hands possible," Jason said with a small grin, he wiped off a tear from his eye as he walked past them and out the door.

The sun was beginning to show itself over the community as he exited. Jason looked towards a small flickering light off in the horizon. He started his long trek towards it with a new hope and a new understanding.

Hey Lucy **(Fan Fiction for Fairy Tail)***

Reagann Headrick

Hey Lucy I remember your name
I left a dozen roses on your grave today

Natsu knelt before her grave. Four years ago today, he lost her. His best friend, his partner, his first love, his only love.

I'm in the grass on my knees, wipe the leaves away
I just came to talk for a while
I got some things I need to say

She died saving Natsu from a shadow mage attack. The attack was full of poison that had entered her system, and she slowly died surrounded by her friends and family.

Now that it's over
I just wanna hold her
I'd give up all the world to see
That little piece of Heaven looking back at me

Yes, she was his angel. Lucy was everything to the fire mage. When she faded into golden dust and floated away, he grabbed the specks of dust, praying that she would come back if he did. But she didn't.

Now that it's over
I just wanna hold her
I gotta live with the choices I made
And I can't live with myself today

Natsu wished he told her how he felt earlier than he did. He told her when he ran back to the guild with her in his arms. She barely mumbled back, "I love you, too." He ran even harder and always laid next to her, keeping her warm and holding her.

Hey Lucy I remembered your birthday
They say it'd bring some closure, to say your name
I know I'd do it all different if I had the chance
But all I got are these roses to give
And they can't help me make amends

Happy was with Carla and Wendy mourning. Natsu knew that Happy was never going to be the same either. He cried every night, and he said it hurt worse than when Lisanna was absorbed in the anima. Natsu couldn't agree more.

Now that it's over
I just wanna hold her
I'd give up all the world to see
That little piece of Heaven looking back at me
Now that it's over
I just wanna hold her
I gotta live with the choices I've made
And I can't live with myself today

Natsu wished he could see her again, but in the middle of his mourning, a scent appeared. One that was extremely similar to hers. Natsu stood up slowly and turned around to see a hooded figure standing behind him.

Here we are, now you're in my arms
I never wanted anything so bad
Here we are, for a brand new start
Living the life that we could've had

The hood dropped, and there stood the girl he thought was dead. She looked pale, but there wasn't a hole in her stomach. Her veins weren't black, and her brown eyes looked… dead.

Me and Lucy walking hand in hand
Me and Lucy never wanna end
Just another moment in your eyes
I'll see you in another life
In heaven where we never say goodbye

"L-Luce?"
"Hey Natsu," Lucy responded with open arms.
Natsu immediately ran into them and cried into her chest.

Now that it's over
I just wanna hold her
I'd give up all the world to see
That little piece of Heaven looking back at me
Now that it's over
I just wanna hold her
I gotta live with the choices I've made
And I can't live with myself today

"H-How," Natsu began.
"I'm not alive Natsu. I'm a ghost, but I wanted to come back to do something," Lucy responded and she pulled away from their hug.
"Lucy…"
The ghost leaned up and kissed his lips. She wrapped her arms around his neck and he wrapped his arms around her waist. The kiss was sweet, longing, and full of love. Lucy pulled away and looked into his eyes.
"Lucy, why did you jump in front of that shadow for me? Do you not know what you did because of that," Natsu said.
"I did it because it means you would be saved. I would do it all over again if you could live."

Here we are now you're in my arms
Here we are for a brand new start
I've gotta live with the choices I've made
And I can't live with myself today

"Natsu, it wasn't your fault. Enjoy life, bring laughter back to the guild. You'll see me again. I promise," Lucy said and leaned in to give one last kiss. "Natsu, promise me you won't get yourself killed on purpose."
Natsu was shocked; she knew he's been thinking of suicide? Natsu wiped away his tears and took her face in his hands.
"I promise."

Me and Lucy walking hand in hand
Me and Lucy never wanna end
Got to live with the choices I've made
And I can't live with myself today

"I love you Natsu. I'll see you later, okay," Lucy said with a small smile and she started glowing again.

Natsu smiled back and held her right hand in his, rubbing his thumb over her guild mark.

"I love you too, and yeah. I'll see you later Luce," he said with a few tears leaking down again.

Lucy completely faded away once again, but this time, Natsu was smiling. He got to see her one more time. His hand went up to his lips, and he smiled. Her lips were warm.

Hey Lucy I remembered your name

- *Song lyrics by Skillet*

Untitled

Anonymous

The day the color blue stopped caressing the sky, the skin around her fourth finger was sore and pink from the imprint of her wedding ring. It was a simple reminder of the band wrapped around her finger's circumference, teasing and angry and oddly raw without the presence of its body. Now it was just a remnant. But so was he, so it wasn't all that bad, was it?

Out of all the things she'd seen over her thirty-two years of life (ten of them as a married woman), none of them were red. Every other color in the wheel was one she'd familiarized herself with; sunflowers were yellow, her patio green, and specks of brown rested gently in her husband's eyes. But red was nothing but a shade of cool grey, and she only knew it by the absence of color in stoplights and lipsticks.

So that was *her* hair, that hussy, as it splayed across her perfectly made-up face in silver tresses – because of *course* it was his secretary, unassuming as she was, and on their tenth anniversary, too.

"Babe," he said, red tie slung crookedly to one shoulder as he ran a hand through his hair. She only knew it was red because he was there when she bought it for him. "It's not what you think. Okay? Babe, please, I love you, it's our anniversary—"

She didn't look at his face. She turned to the window instead, where the vivacious robin blue she loved had been sucked from the sky.

It was around then that she tore the ring from her finger and hurled it into his belly, where it clattered to the floor with a *clink!* under the din of her cursing. She didn't have much of a foul mouth, but life was full of surprises. And after the surprise he'd given her, she figured this was nothing in return.

So why not make it even, she thought, and put a surprise into each of their chests with the revolver she kept in the nightstand.

The crisp brown paneling was drenched with grey in an instant. It was an ugly color amidst the lively teal accents scattered around the apartment in various knickknacks and pillowcases – a picture frame here, a cushion there, the blur of the

ceiling fan spinning at the highest speed to ward off the summer's breath. Some of the walls, too, but now those were splattered with the same silver as the clouds outside. The dreary hue leaked from a hole in her husband's dress shirt and through the jacket of the disgustingly beautiful girl he'd taken home to their apartment.

The gun was black. She merely shoved it into her coat pocket and darted from the room, slipping into the elevator's confines as the first neighbor ran to investigate the gunshot.

The heat blooming in her chest wasn't regret. God, no. It was red. Because now she understood it for what it truly was, and suddenly everything she saw was red, the deepest shade she could imagine, flooding her ribcage in a torrent of anger. Maybe she'd paint it onto her toenails later, if she could remember how it felt by then.

"It's our anniversary," he'd said, before she wrapped her dainty little finger around the trigger and squeezed until it wouldn't any longer. When the police came, they'd be looking for her, she knew, but she couldn't stop the arc in her lips. Even if the world wasn't quite right yet, the sky was a sprightly shade of purple now, and she figured that was good enough.

Heart to Sail

Regan Sanders

What do you do when your heart is a wreck?
A ship that has sunk
A neuron forgot to fire.
Do you still say "I love you"?
Or do you stay quiet and hope the silence
The silence
That cold cold silence
Says it all?

What do you do when love is near and far?
Here and there
Now and then
Do you reach with hands, cold and clammy?
Or do you retreat further

Further
Oh so much further away?
What do you do when your passion is toxic?
Poison in coffee
Venom in bite
Do you regurgitate pleasantries and never let feelings show?
Or, do you relish in the acidic
Acidic
Impossibly acidic taste?
There are no easy options.
There are no second chances.
Do
Don't
It's all the same.

Salvation

Joseph Schwartz

Joseph's breath came in strangled gasps. His mind screamed for more just as his lungs screamed for air. Slowly, his shaking hand moved into his pocket. His fingers wouldn't stop twitching. He couldn't keep his eyes open.

Across from Joseph, the figure with the low hood kept its gaze on the ground. It seemed to lack any definitive feature. Baggy clothing, the characteristic hood pulled over its face, mundane blue jeans, it had the appearance of the stereotypical street hoodlum. A gloved hand reached out and offered a small gift.

Joseph lashed out, his hand taking the bag from the other. His left arm spasmed in erratic movement, and it took him most of his willpower to not flee with the package. Quickly, he shoved a handful of bills to the figure with its hood low. Agonizingly slow, it counted them one by one.

"It's good." Even the voice of the figure lacked any markers of femininity or masculinity. It just seemed to exist, but Joseph hardly cared. As the hooded character spoke he already moved away, knowing his payment was adequate.

Lights blurred by in a meaningless haze.

Up the stairs.

Around the corner.

Through the door.

Joseph went through his usage ritual rapidly. Scented candles around his apartment lit by his hand provided a cover for the smell of his Salvation.

On the edge of his bed he sat, and his still-shaking hands fumbled with opening the plastic package.

Little crystals.

Miniscule fragments of his joy.

And they would be enough. Joseph took the amount he'd received and packed it into his homemade pipe. His eyes stared blankly at the glass in his hands for a moment, and then he returned to what remained of his senses.

"Four, maybe five hits…" It seemed like so little to him after so long, but anything would settle this unspeakable agony his body felt.

Slowly, he began to heat the bulb. Seconds felt long, like miniature eternities before the heated glass released smoke. Joseph's eyes lit up. He felt his body tensing and the muscles in his body stopped their twitching in anticipation of the sweet, sweet Salvation to come.

To his lips, the pipe went.

Into his lungs, the smoke flowed.

Through his system, euphoria flooded.

The rush of energy he felt with taking in his drug of choice overwhelmed him. Joseph shuddered, his body shrieking for more as he exhaled the first breath of smoke.

"Ohh, yes." There Joseph sat, his eyes closed while his body shook nigh uncontrollably yet subtly in the dimly lit room. Only the few candles he'd lit illuminated his actions. In the darkness he sat, reveling in his sin.

Up to his mouth again, and Joseph inhaled. But it felt too good. He kept the smoke in his lungs, savoring that terrible feeling of the intoxicants in his system. He coughed into his hand, and no smoke exited his fragile lungs.

Blood did.

His hands, red with thick and oozing gore, trembled.

His lungs felt as though they were being torn apart. His very being betrayed by this substance he viewed as his savior. The reforming crystals in his lungs cut flesh like razors, spilling his blood and removing his ability to breathe.

More coughs, and Joseph dropped the pipe as he rushed to the bathroom. In the mirror he saw himself, his eyes sunken and his lips ringed with crimson.

"No." He muttered, but it only brought another bout of hacking and retching. More sanguine fluid escaped him and splashed in his sink.

Joseph bent low over the counter, his cheek resting against the faucet as he tried to steady himself. He coughed again, but he missed the sink and spread blood all over his arm. Forcing his eyes up, he saw himself painted in a gruesome light.

Wreathed by blood, and doomed by his greatest desire. Joseph sighed and gasped out one last strangled word, "Salvation…"

Scarlet lines closed in around his vision.

Blackness enveloped him.



Image by Wyatt Hunter

Do You Like Stargazing?
Trenton German

Do you like stargazing?
When darkness falls over the earth
And the serenity of the night sky
Over watches our lonely souls?
Does it do the same for you as it does for me?

Does the magic in the stellar illusion
Inspire your heart and soul for beauty?
Does the scene make you wish
That you could soar among the stars
And touch the glory that sparks a flame in my spirit?

Do you like winter?
When the stars fall from the sky
In small white crystals of ice
And collect on the ground in a blanket of beauty?
When snowfall and nighttime combine?

Does your desire match that of mine?
Where in winter you soar through a magic wonderland
Describing all you see as absolute pulchritude?
Do you want to sit with me under the stars in my blanket
My blanket of stardust that fell in frozen crystals?

Can this beauty be all it needs to be?
This beauty that surrounds and excites my soul
A beauty that electrifies and brings me to life
Even when I have sunk into darkness
Can this scenery bring my heart back to light?

If it can for me, it can for you
I wish for you what it does for me
This cosmic imagery that jolts my heart
It can mean the tie that pulls you together
And I'll be the pioneer that brought it to you.

So sit with me if you will
Do me the honor of showing you
The magic and wonder in store
Behind a breathtaking winter night
That I might resurrect your lost spirit

Allow me to enlighten you
On all the magic that falls down to Earth
And collects in imagery for our eyes only
So I have a question for you once more
Do you like stargazing?

Webbed Hate

Shania Roberts

Trapped,
by my own words
and by my own actions.

Fleeing,
but caught in the web
formulated by my own destruction.

The strings of malice,
stuck to me like a glue.
A glue that wasn't meant
to fasten me to my problems...

but rather,

fasten me to myself.

For I am my own monster,
my own nightmare,
my own inescapable doom.

The glue
holds my words and actions;
blinding,
as I stumble in fear.

I fear being me.

And I fear others finding me.

What godless creature
would they see me as?

What unholy being
would they burn me as?

Hide me from their noose.

But above all:
Hide me from a mirror.
For I fear I may find the flame,
the spark to burn,
before anyone else may touch me.

Hum In the Air

Sophia Coy

Children enter the cafeteria.
Their smiles enlighten as their moods brighten.
First lunch: there's a girl in a hoodie.
Her stone face and broken glance changes fast
As she's surrounded with the ones she knows.
Third lunch: a boy in black, slow and tired.
His friends come and radiate happiness.
Then you can see it, the hum in the air.
It's like they have both left their presence here.
Sitting behind the counter giving food,
And when they're gone I'm cleaning their tables.
The hum's in the air. It's like they're still here.
The boy wearing black, and the hooded girl.
I start to wonder if they feel it too.
Imagine if the two met each other.
Two revolutionaries change the world.



Image by Tomás Bernal

Evolution
Marirose Bernal

I don’t want to be your little animal anymore.
My infatuation with tongue and teeth an tirades
Is done; I’m sick of the claw marks on my ankles
from every entitled ex-lover. The thrilling
mindlessness bores me; feeling and frontal cortex
fight like daughter and mother-in-law;
I want out of this burning brain. I want out
of this snarling, against the wall lust,
that shoves me forward and grabs my hair and bites.
I have eyes that calculate and eyes that build.
I’m leaving, I’m running, I’m part of the night
singing back into the black where I began. I’m carving
my own towers from the dirt we walked across and I don’t care
if you’re coming. I don’t care if you’re coming.

Inspiration

Rhiannon Winch

For all of you that hurt
Walk with head down in shame
Been walked all over like dirt
And wear a cloak of blame

For those that sit in fear
Never saying a word
Negatives are all you hear
And keep you from moving forward

For those who struggle with confidence
Or live life with an illness
Afraid of living with a consequence
So you live in constant stillness

There is hope and there is a future ahead
You have someone who will always care
Though you seem misread
They will be there with you through your despair

For those who feel alone
Struggling with life in reality
Where home is no longer a safe zone
That suffers from a bully's brutality

For those who are not accepted
The outcasts in the shadows
Those who have been arrested
And have a secret everyone knows

For those with tattoos, and scars
The victims of racial or religious hate
When your feelings are expressed best by voices and guitars
And for those who are not straight

Life will get better in time
Show the world your smile
Being you is not a crime
So rock your style

You are an inspiration
A role model, a hero, a leader
Don't live in condemnation
Because you are a beautiful creature.

Eye of the Storm

Spring 2016

Interested in submitting your creative work?
Send your poetry, short stories, flash fiction
and artwork to jwoelfel@district70.org or visit Ms. Woelfel
at PWHS for more information.

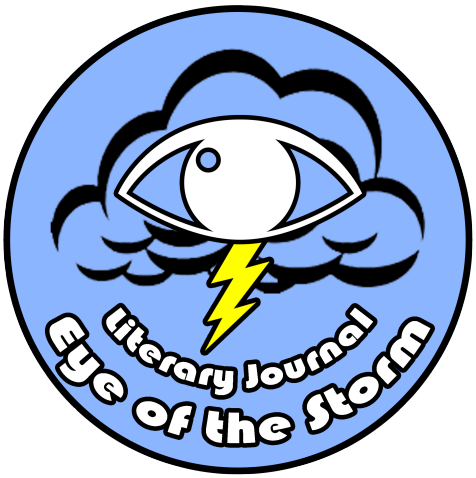


Image by Destin Bogart

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