



Journal

issue xiii



Dirty by Jenna Fackrell

cover art: Bang by Abigail Meyer

Passion

by Cassidy Anderson

It's fire
It's ice
It's steam

It's crowded
It's lonesome
It's good

It's life
It's death
It's purgatory

It's yours
It's mine
It's ours

It's love
It's hate
It's a fine line

It's a painting
It's music
It's art

It's a thought
It's a feeling
It's a heart

It's me
It's you
It's us

It's our lives
It's our drives
It's our passion

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Lynda Barry



Johnson County Library is honored to dedicate the 13th issue of *elementia* to artist and teacher Lynda Barry. *elementia's* writers and editors were particularly inspired by Ms. Barry's exercises for artists' muscles. We spent the year making space for truth, trusting our eyes and collecting our ideas in words and pictures.

Through her books, Ms. Barry guides us to bring passion along on a daily mission to enlarge the comfort zone. She writes and draws prolifically, showing us that working by hand with unself-conscious commitment is vital in building personal understanding of fascinating subjects.

A selection of books that sparked student work follows: *Syllabus*, *What It Is* and *One Hundred Demons*.

We thank you and we honor you, Ms. Barry. Now we know our hands, "the original digital devices," for the amazing tools they are.

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Passions

by Nicole Miller

Red and burning
Heart jumping
Pumping
A whisper of excitement
Concealed behind hesitant lips
Waiting to slip
Forget.

A smile etched
From words suppressed.
No one cares.
Circling like smoke in your mind,
The passions and thoughts you daren't speak.



They hide in the deep
And secret places,
The shadowy spaces.
Such heartache it is that so many hide that
which they love
For fear of being judged.

If our passion ran free
How brighter the world would be.
Free from chains
Of social restraint
Pain
And grief
Of loving that which is hard to love.

Dying to express,
Yet we digress
To the back of our shadowy minds
Where our passion is grown

Solitary and alone.



Tickled Truffle

by Lindsay Luchinsky

A thought may amble a bit 'til it trips to a halt,
'til it ticks up a halt and a half.

Slams to a door and whatever blue-black residue flirts with the hinges,
flirts with the hinges:

A hiccup frame for the ghost words you never said
because you slammed its door.

Naked if not with another thought or two or more
- No, not naked:

Stark and ghastrly in daunting and taunting tones of yellow;
pale yellow; pale dawn. A dawn too cold to be day.

But that blue-black residue that flirts with hinges and in the grass it does lay: but
in your front lawn and
in your church shoes and
in the musk of your "I swear he's a good guy" boyfriend's neck.

You can't pluck it up again, though someone else may,
for it slammed to a door

For just the blue-black residue resides behind your eye
or an I-owe-you.

Forever in Paradise

by Emily Steinmetz

Not all passion is love or an action,
it is a feeling and can be full of hatred.
The enemies of which we seek,
the monsters that we associate in our dreams are stuck within our heads.
Little do we know we could have hate with a passion as pure as beauty and as sincere as brutality.
Tell me that passion is all about love,
tell me there hasn't been a time in your life where you felt passion that was full of hatred.
Like the wars of the seas,
the fire that burns brighter than the sun.
Never ending will it go out till you are fused with understanding.
You must never give in to the monsters that fill your mind with darkness,
they are exploding with a fatal passion.
It isn't the kind we see through the people and couples that we pass on the sidewalks,
it is what is hidden behind closed doors.
I believe that passion is more than love and hate,
it is a feeling that we all have to face.
Never give in to the monsters of your life,
for passion you will grieve forever in paradise.



Sanguine Uncertainty by Anha Valdez

Midnight Light Switch

by anonymous

The initial absolute of "black"
fizzes out; reds and blues and shapes pulse
with every beat of your racing heart.
You can feel her hands, see the basic outline of them,
of her shoulders, her curved collarbone.
As you reach for her -
her chipped blue nail polish and her bright split ends -
as she smiles
you can feel it
and you find your arms wrapped around her waist like you know the way home
breathing her in, breathing you out.
You don't mind the dark so much - you'd rather dance like this,
hushed giggles, soft touches, tender kisses on shoulders
- than to never dance at all.
Her smell is burned into every pore of your body as you spin, uncontrollably toward the edge of nowhere
as you fall asleep with your long limbs intertwined
as she peels herself apart from you and dances alone down the sidewalk in the early dew of dawn.
Her smell will linger for hours,
beautiful lilacs embracing you when you wake.



Blue Olivia by Anha Valdez

you

by Cathy Wang

Things I know to be true:
I have black hair and brown eyes.
I love cashews and reading.
Being around people makes me happy.
I have a mom, dad, and one sister.
I am happy.
Some days I'm not quite so happy.
But that's okay.
I have you.
What are you passionate about?
You asked me that yesterday.
Out of nowhere you asked.
I think you were trying to be deep and thoughtful.
And I realized,
I didn't know.
And I thought about it for a while.
Sunsets and fall leaves,
I said.
Spending all day rewatching Harry Potter,
dancing in an empty house.

Short hair and thick framed glasses.
But that's not right,
I think.
I love those things.
What does it mean to be passionate about something?
Is it the same as love?
Is it feeling your heart race in your chest?
Feeling warm in the pit of your stomach instead of
emptiness?
And I realized
what I'm passionate about is you.
You and me.
Everyone I hold most dear.
I'm passionate about smiling and your heartbeat.
The lines on your hands and laughing.
Watching Christmas movies at night with my family.
Going on trips.
Acts of love.
The knowledge that you care for me.
That I care for myself.
Loving myself and you.



Signs of Life

by Julia Wakefield

The form of letters slop and curve on a page
like a human body.

White paper, bare skin.

The line of a belt below a belly button:
the line of a notebook just below a sentence.

Hold them in your mouth, with their own, subtle flavor.

They'll curl your tongue and pull you closer.

Words are kisses.

When you're alone, left and abandoned by the ignorant messes that are people,
take up a thick, solid book, open the pages, see the words.

Let them touch you, with a kiss as old as time.

Let them hold you, in a warmth too raw to be human.

Let them fill you, with their gentle, pulsing rhythm.

Words are lovers.



The Dreamers by Zachary Ruschill



The Writer by Zachary Ruschill 9

The Eyes of Mermaid Dreams

by Natasha Vyhovsky

On sad days,
his eyes tell me stories -
stories of pain,
of struggle,
of truth.
They hold within them soft, grey clouds after April afternoon
storms.

But the sky is bright without the
sun,
because it is never truly gone.

I smell the sweet,
wet,
fragrant earth
when those grey clouds surrender
to the storm in his soul -
the kind of spring that promises
sweet flowers out of frosted soil.

The grey clouds in his eyes . . .
they promise a raw truth I do not
know -
one of fresh spring somewhere
near
and of pounding afternoon
storms not long gone.

I feel a dull, panging nostalgia
when those grey clouds search for
me;
I remember walking barefoot,
catching worms from the rich earth,
feeling neither warm nor cold;
I feel peace,
and yet a somber note far off . . .
that this will not

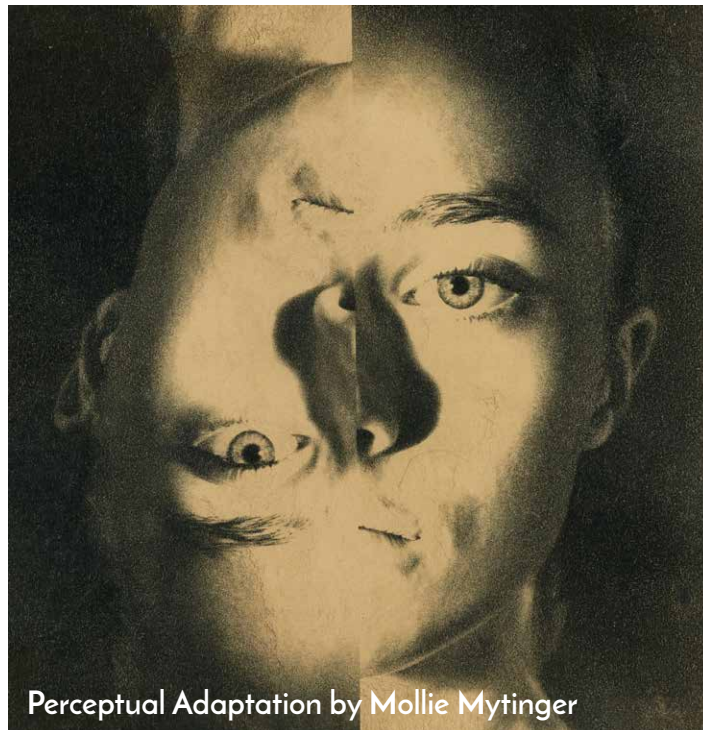
last forever.

On happy days,
his eyes pour into me.
They tell me stories of innocence,
of freedom,
of being alive.
I swim in the sparkling green lagoon in his eyes -
the depths of the thick,
bright waters,

endless and infinite.
I emerge from those waters
breathless,
humbled by sheer vastness.

An unidentifiable cool light
radiates from underneath,
deep left
and deeper right,
and sends glimmers of diamond
dust
into the air around me.

When that pure aqua lagoon
envelops me,
I am alone
and yet surrounded by gentle
love -
alone in a swirl of magic so full
of life.



Perceptual Adaptation by Mollie Mytinger

And in those eyes of mermaid dreams,
the world comes alive to me.

I feel it all.

The Girl with the Sunset Eyes

by Allison Glaser

The girl with the sunset eyes and the boy with hands like glass.

He fell in love with her because she was so beautiful when she cried.

He hated to see her in tears, but when she cried, streaks of blue and orange and yellow and pink fell down her cheeks.

She was always embarrassed when she cried and she thought she looked like a mess of too many colors. But he didn't see it that way. In his eyes, she was a work of art with just the right amount of colors.

She fell in love with him because he was gentle, as he made sure not to damage his glass hands. Sometimes he tried to hide his hands because he was embarrassed, but she always reminded him that glass is strong.

Then one day, the girl's eyes became faded and drained of all color. And the

boy's hands were becoming chipped and scratched.

They slowly drifted apart and the boy with hands like glass met a girl with fire beneath her fingertips. He fell in love with her because she could make art with her fingertips that lit up with bright streaks of orange and yellow, and sometimes blue.

She fell in love with him because he didn't seem to be bothered by the fact that the glass on his hands was chipped and scratched. He told her that he wasn't embarrassed of his glass hands because they were strong. But he didn't tell her that it hadn't always been that way.

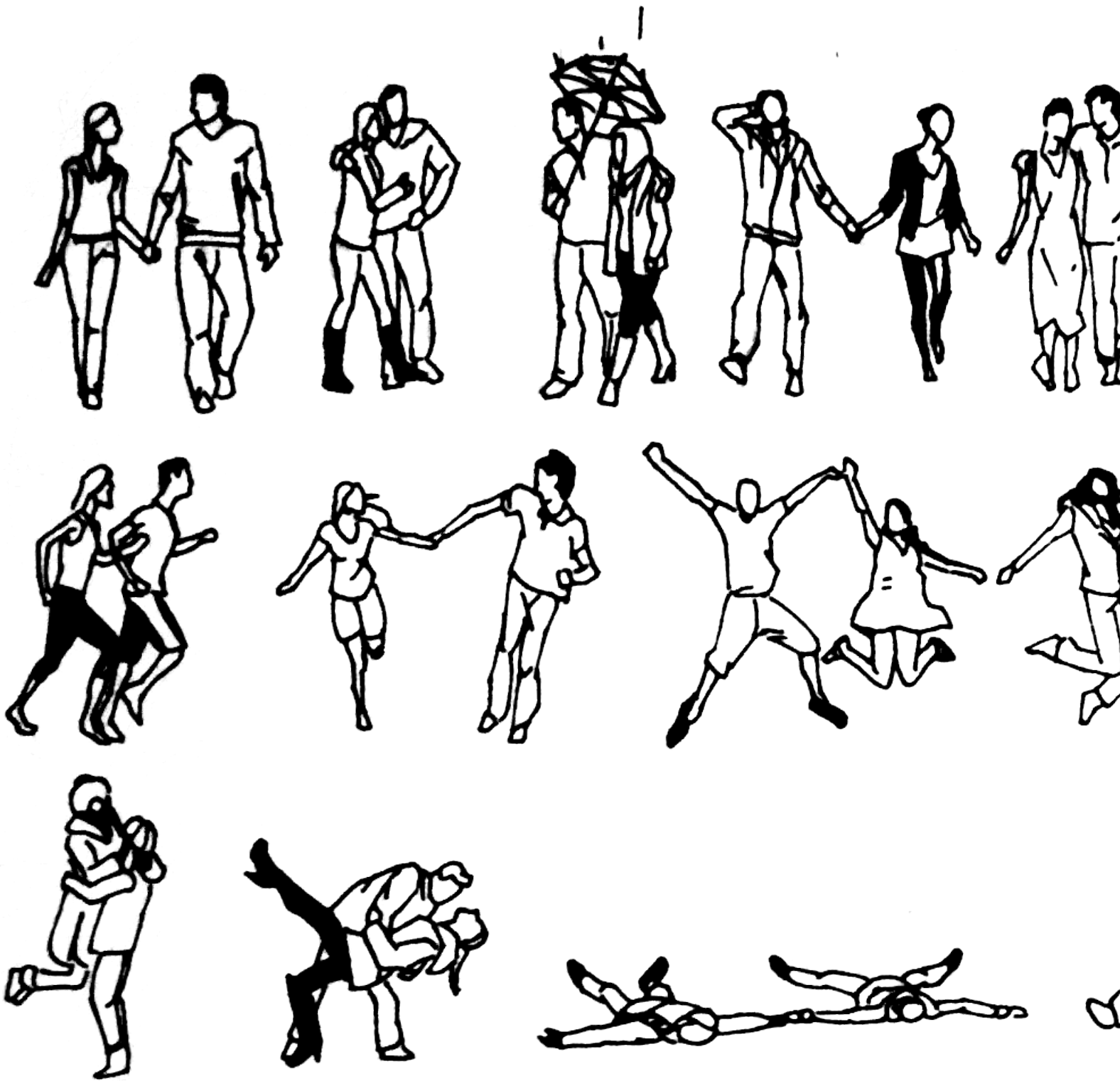
Then one day, she tried to hold his hand but her fiery fingertips began to melt his hands. Glass puddles formed all around them. She tried to put his hands back together but she only made it worse. His mother always told him not to play with fire, and he should have listened.

He stares at the puddle and he begins to cry. He thinks about the girl with the sunset eyes and he wishes that she were there to remind him that he was still strong, but he had never felt weaker.

The girl with the sunset eyes has met a boy with eyes like the ocean. She fell more in love with him every day because he was wild and unpredictable, like the ocean. He fell in love with her because, together, they created a beautiful masterpiece.

She was so mesmerized by the boy with the ocean eyes that she rarely thought about the boy with the hands like glass. She hoped he was doing alright. But what she did not know was the boy with ocean eyes wasn't perfect. He had thorns beneath his skin that someday she would find and they would cut her open like glass.





tidal waves

by Olivia Humphrey

Some of my hobbies include:

writing
and baking

and looking into your brown eyes until I fear that I just might lose myself inside of them.

A few of my favorite activities are:

drawing
and sewing

and watching your chest rise and fall as if you are an ocean creating tidal waves inside my mind.



Walk with Me by Zachary Ruschill

My interests are made up of:
singing
and dancing
and counting the freckles of your skin like some people count the stars of the sky.
My favorite things to do are:
reading
and sculpting
and memorizing our conversations like they're the lyrics to my favorite songs.
My passions include:
me
and you
together.

My Record Player and You

by Tasia Jewel

My record player - the warm sound of "Ultraviolence" circling through my room like nothing I've ever heard before. Connected with the music.

You look at me and you soon know my entire story, a story of sadness turned into bliss but only because of you - connected.

My record player - sitting across from me as I lay in bed. I'm in a state of peace and comfort but soon I am uneasy and distressed. Side A - done - sudden silence. Has twenty-six minutes passed already?

It's so soon but then again, it's not. Time is irrelevant when it comes to you.
You left . . . I turned my record player on. The lyrics and melodies clashing with any thoughts of you.

My record player - side B - a contrast from side A, but the same warm sound filling my room once again quieting my thoughts until they are lost but only for twenty nine minutes.

You reentered my life. I've found my home in you. How can I let something go that makes me feel completely understood, completely sound and completely harmonious?

My record player and you.



Self Portrait by Rian Stallbaumer

Beginning // End

by Allison Gliesman

Today, I am the only song you've ever known all the words to. I am the first person who ever meant it and the last thought you can manage before you close your eyes. You look at me, and all you see is light. You look at me, blinded, and you tell me you're the happiest person alive.

Today, everything is black. The sun is too heavy to rise, and you're wondering if this is the end. You sit in the dark and wait for something to happen, for some kind of light to find you. You sit in the dark and tell the moon that it deserves better than the sun anyway.

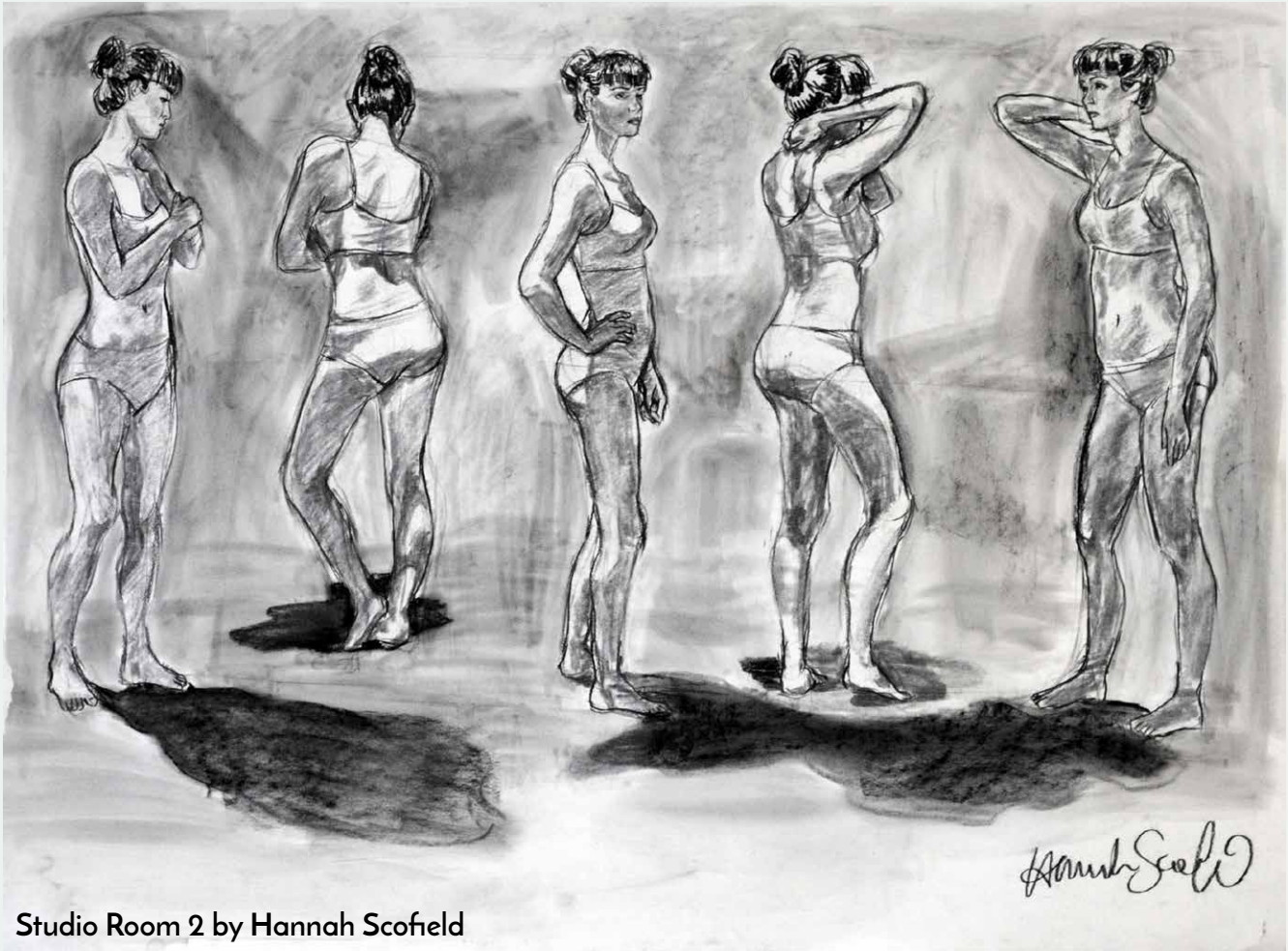
Today, I haunt you like a ghost that never quite made it to the other side. You're leaning over the edge of your mattress, clinging to every thought that isn't me, but I come back in lingering waves and overstay my welcome. You're begging me to leave you alone, but I never listen, I never listen.

Today, you remember me like falling asleep to a familiar nightmare. There's blood all over the walls, and there are monsters under the bed, but it's still home. I'm still home.

Today, you hear my voice and it's like remembering the words to an old song. We kiss and our mouths are fumbling, hearts racing, and it's almost like you never left. It's almost like we never met at all.



Queen Z by Ally Gillam



Studio Room 2 by Hannah Scofield

Hollow

by Emily Wilkinson

I am in love with a girl . . . who is afraid of breakfast,
who brews coffee in the morning like gasoline feeding
a starving engine.

Her fingers dance around the machinery of her waist
out of step with reality.

She wanders to the kitchen at night like an astronaut
clawing her way through the dark,
drawn to the frozen light of the refrigerator like a
moth to a flame,
counting calories instead of sheep.

I am in love with a girl who never sleeps.

I smile at her,
and she smiles back.
The mirror is cold, and her coffee sits on the
countertop, untouched and stagnating.

I am in love with a girl who doesn't recognize herself
in the mirror anymore,

and neither do I.

it's real with her

by Abbey Kelley

my laughter quieted
when she looked at me.
there hasn't been anyone else in the world
who makes me as still as she does,
because her eyes sparkle even when
she's frowning,
and she, I know she can see
everything good about me.

all of a sudden I am okay we are
sitting so close.

our hands are the same size
and I'm glad hers are just as sweaty.
fingers intertwined, she squeezes my hand,
telling me things words could not.

I realize then that I have never
loved someone as I love her.



Young Love by Zachary Ruschill



Fire and Powder

by Robyn Peterson

*"These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder,
Which, as they kiss, consume."*

- William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

Fire is warmth, whispers,
promises of preservation.
You reflect it; its flames
are red ribbons in your dark pupils.
But its smoke will scratch your throat.

Powder is harmless, hapless,
sifting softness.
You can watch it slip like silk
through your sieves of fingers.
But, aloof, static, it will make you itch.

Fire and powder
will, as they kiss, consume
breath, life, death.
They will whisk away these essentials,
replace them with
light, color, and sound.

Balcony Wishes

by Lauren Blood

The sky was an abyss of gloom,
As the trees billowed in the breath of the wind.
The stars sang secrets to the moon,
Above a castle holding lovers within.
An age-old monarch was outraged by his daughter's betrayal,
For he had found a young thief attracted by her alluring portrayal.

Two black birds sang in the dead of night,
But whom had watched them take flight?
The monarch's cherry-cheeked daughter,
Kate, the monarch's daughter,
Watched with a longing stare,
While weaving a thread of gold, through her copper hair.

She uttered a gasp as tears rushed down her face,
For she saw her love's life going to waste.
He emerged from the shadows trudging,
Trudging, trudging.
Her love came trudging,
To where his last breath would be traced.

On the monarch's face a long grin peaked,
For the sight of the young thief reeked.
He squawked for his guards,
To release him from behind bars.
The young thief bound to the guillotine,
Made their love seem like a dream.

The young thief put up a good fight,
He strained and struggled and gave a good shove,
But his hands were bound high and tight.
On the verge of his last breath,
He longed for his love,
To be with him in death.

Kate swung around and faced her balcony's edge,
Gazing at her love, now an empty soul.
She felt his faint touch shove her over the ledge,
Now not only her heart but her life had he stole.
That night two lovers, pulled apart by life,
Rejoiced when reconnected in a land of light.



Coffee Cups

by Maya Bluit

I'm not sure if the glass is half empty or half full.
Coffee shops leave me homesick for 8-minute drives to
your cul-de-sac, to your arms; you're always busy.
And although refills and ring stains hold a pointer
finger to pursed lips, I can't convince myself the same
when I tell you not to worry about it.
Between schoolhouse sidewalks and the pavement
outside of evening shifts, I seek to fill the cracks with
you.
You are my solace when coffee shops don't cut it
anymore.
And neither does tomorrow.
I wish you felt the same fire that begs you to come over
and hold cold hands.

And I don't mean to antagonize curfews when I ask to borrow
fifteen more minutes; I pray to a forever that I know doesn't
exist.
And when some higher power decides to admit to the creation
of cappuccino and October leaves, I hope he departs with us
still holding hands.
And if he decides that tonight is our finale, I hope that you
don't whisper of tomorrow morning.
I hope that twilight strolls confess inner extremities and
provoke a table for two at brunch.
I hope white sheets swallow limbs whole and leave us hungry
for each other.
I hope that whipped cream and espresso shots keep us in
overbearing chairs all day today.
But this is not a blockbuster.
And you don't even like coffee.



Coffee Splash by Jack Hatzfeld

when it all fell apart

by Abbey Kelley

he wouldn't meet her eyes
when he told her that he met someone,
suggesting they take a break to figure themselves out.

"but I love you," she said over the lump in her throat,
eyes burning with unshed tears.
"there's nothing for me to figure out."

"I'm sorry," he told her.



What If . . . by Grant Swank

Searching for Starry Night

by Guanghao Yu

When I look into the lonely night sky,
I am reminded of yesterday's passion.
Didn't the stars fill the sky last night?
Didn't your face reflect
The radiance of the moon?
We made music in the air, dancing
Under heaven's light.
Your hair was still flowing,
Your lips ripe and glowing,
Your touch sated my longing,
A song everlasting.

Oh starry night. When your eyes
Faded from my sight, I went searching,
Searching in the sea of the now-starless sky.
Yield me one tune, one sign, one glowing tear,
To take to her, when I've found her, in some
Distant starry night.

Last Dance

by Kaitlyn O'Neal

There are only three rules for survival: no contact with meat, dairy, or humans. He's already broken two of them.

The dairy was from before; a pint of ice cream lifted from 6B's freezer three days after they removed the body. That night, the TV confirmed what we all feared, and I dumped what little remained down the drain. I watched him for a week, but he showed no signs: no cough, no fever, no stumbling. Just the same freckled cheeks and wide grin. Luck, he said. Stupidity, I thought.

The woman was from after. She lives below us, and sometimes her ceiling fan shakes my bedroom floor. Two days ago, her coughing shook the floor instead. Over the past 48 hours, dry rasping evolved into nonstop hacking, into wheezing, into spluttering and choking and drowning in air. He and I have had no choice but to listen, laying in the dark and counting the seconds of silence between. We never got higher than two minutes. "Pneumonia," he said, rolling over and staring at the wall. "It sounds like pneumonia." I didn't bother correcting him.

He is a doctor, after all.

Which, I suppose, explains his actions this morning. The Hippocratic Oath, and all.

He's been down there six hours now, I think. The only working clock is the battery-operated one in the kitchen, but its pendulum seems to be swinging slower, slower, not moving at all. Hardly reliable. The last cough was five minutes ago, though. I know that for certain. I've been counting: three hundred seconds. No sound since then. A week ago, there would've been shouting, breaking glass, sirens and screaming. Screaming. I think the next-door neighbor shot himself Tuesday night (Wednesday? I don't know. 4,236 seconds ago. I think today is Friday. My phone doesn't work anymore, though. It died, and took my only calendar with it. When civilization falls, technology

goes with it.); we heard the single shot, but the noise stopped soon after that.

No, that's not right. Not entirely. The noise stopped, but the coughing didn't. He opened a window last night, and the coughing was all you could hear. So much of it: human static. And moaning, too. No birds, though. They were the first to go, dropping in midflight, landing in gardens and cars, covering the sidewalk. Cats were thrilled. People were terrified; Doomsday starts when the birds stop singing. The window was useless, anyway. All the fresh air smelled like rotting flesh.

360 seconds, and his footsteps creak the loose floorboard outside our door. He opens it slowly, and I stare at him, not moving from my chair. He closes the door and leans against it for a moment, sighing and rubbing his eyes with the back of one hand, before going to the kitchen and turning on the tap. When no water comes out, I see his shoulders sag as he braces himself on the counter, head dropping low.

"It stopped working this morning," I say. "Just before you left." He knows this already, though; I heard him curse when he first discovered it, watched his eyes glaze over when I asked him what was wrong.

"I thought maybe . . ." he trails off and shakes his head, shoving the faucet handle back into the off position. He thought what, exactly? That some brave soul at the Water One plant decided to

*A week ago,
there would've
been shouting,
breaking glass,
sirens and
screaming.*

risk exposure and go to work today, just to keep the water running? Just to save the rest of us?

I think of the woman downstairs and swallow. "Not everyone can be you."

He turns around and looks at me for the first time since he reentered our home. 132 seconds of silence. I lift my gaze to his, but his eyes are intense like the sky we no longer allow ourselves to see, so I look at the floor again. Stillness. "Did you touch her?"

His jaw works for a minute (69 seconds), and his left hand slowly clenches and unclenches. "She's dead." His voice is flat like roadkill, heavy like the seventh-day air draped around us.

"But did you touch her?" It's a stupid question. Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, after all.

"I won't touch you," he promises solemnly, then moves to our wall of framed pictures, back to me. His lips turn up in a smile as he says, "The health of my patient will be my first consideration." I don't need to follow his gaze to know what he's looking at. A calligraphy copy of the Declaration of Geneva has hung on our wall for three years now; I know what it says just as well as he does. His attention shifts to the medical license next to it, and he trails his fingers over the spiky path of his signature.

Anger surges over me. He worked so hard for that certificate, and hardly got the chance to use it.

He's using it now, though. Now, when it means . . . well.

"That's not worth much anymore." I'm mad at him, too. If he'd just stayed here, let that woman die like she was going to anyway, then we'd both still be safe. The back of his neck, once a constellation of freckles, is nearly as pale as my own. I want to strangle him. Maybe my fingernails can press the freckles back into place. Instead, I gesture to our belongings: his grandmother's couch, the garage sale TV we practically stole, the conch shell from our one trip to Florida, all the detritus collected by the storm of life. All plastic and posed and meaningful, fake things made real by our existence. "None of this is."

He just laughs. Laughs and laughs. For a good 200 seconds. He's almost hysterical, really. When he calms enough

to breathe, he exhales deeply and says, "We're going to die anyway. Might as well do some good." Then he coughs, and my heart stops.

It's just a small cough, more of a flutter than anything. But when he meets my eyes, his are big as the moon, and he knows. Not long now. Quick onset, the doctors said, back when there were still doctors to speak and TVs to broadcast. Most cases, less than a day. Just a few

*... through tissue
and muscle
and bone until
weakness and
blood-filled lungs
are all that
remain.*

hours from exposure to death. Eats a person alive, they said. Gnaws through tissue and muscle and bone until weakness and blood-filled lungs are all that remain.

7,200 seconds.

Shoulders back, chin up, he begins to pace. Back when he worked in ER, he'd come home and follow the same path two, three, twenty times a night; around the couch, between the chairs, into the living room and down the hall to the bathroom. Turn around, back again, again, again. I watch, pressing my fingernails into my palms and pretending it's his face, grinding my heels into the floor and pretending it's his face, biting my tongue and pretending it's his face. God, he's so stupid. So infallibly, wonderfully, reliably stupid. Once, he was a child who climbed 20 feet up a tree to save his neighbor's cat. Once, he was a teenager without a license who drove his drunk father home from the bars. Once, he was an adult with golden hair and a sunshine smile, and hands like the elixir of life. Once, he was, but will be no longer.

He was always a doctor, though. He always will be.

6,000 seconds.

As he paces, his coughing morphs into hacking, hundreds of boulders rattling around in his chest. For a moment, I consider running to my room and slamming the door, so he knows how mad I am, how much watching this hurts. Because we could've done it; I know we could've. Lived, that is. Survived. He never



The Introvert
by Mollie Mytinger

was much of one for just surviving, though.

When he next coughs, he draws his hand away covered in blood and collapses into a chair. He doesn't look at me. The smell from downstairs is thickening, and I can't bring myself to leave him like this. So I extend my hand towards him, fingers outstretched. He recoils like I'm the infected one, rasps, "Don't touch me," before doubling over and choking on his own tongue. Red spatters his jeans.

I grasp both his wrists and haul him to his

*He recoils like I'm
the infected one,
rasps, "Don't touch me,"
before doubling over
and choking on his
own tongue.*

feet, drawing him close to me; he's too weak to resist. Little earthquakes tremor through his body as I place his hand on my waist. "Dance with me," I murmur, shuffling our feet into something like a waltz. He sighs and rests his forehead on my shoulder; his skin burns so fiercely I nearly combust from the proximity.

2,000 seconds.

We sway. He stumbles. I hold him tighter.

870 seconds.

The coughing stops, but I still feel the rumble in his chest, the tightness in his frame.

"I'm sorry," he whispers hoarsely. "You were always so hopeful." Hopeful, synonym for selfish, synonym for denial. I lift my hand from his shoulder into his hair and say nothing.

He folds against me, a city collapsing, a marionette with severed strings. I gently lower him to the ground, trace his face with my fingertips.

60 seconds.

No contact with humans.

I lean over and press my lips to his.

His last exhale flutters against my cheek.



Shades of Blue by Caroline Kalmus

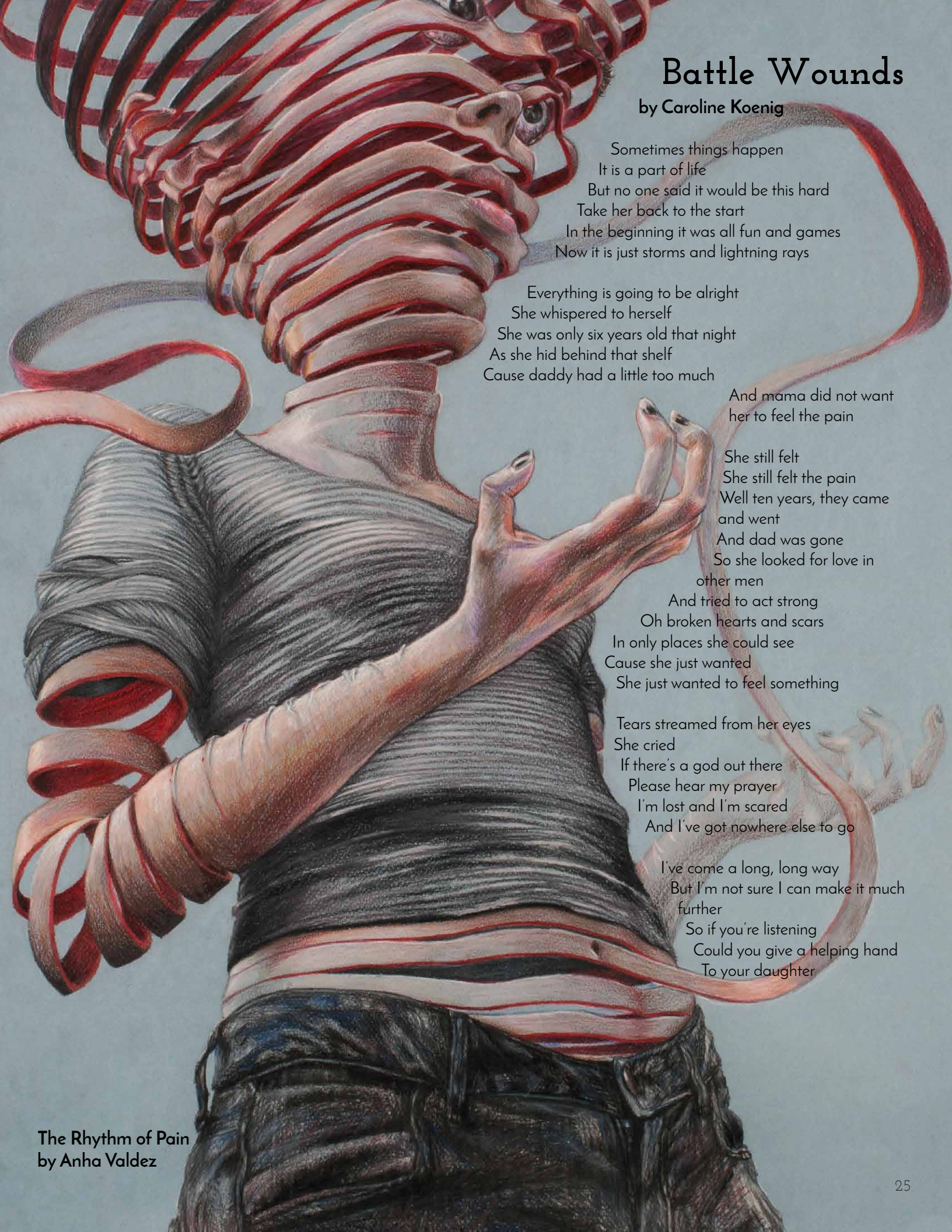
- P(h)ew

by Lindsay Luchinsky

This curving,
cynical back behind me, it's:
~~A warm bench,~~
~~A warm chestnut bench,~~
A warm chestnut. A cold foreboding pew.
Luster here has now turned bland:
contaminated with waltzing dust and
a reek of pages
not turned for a decade.
Maybe more.
Perched, I am, and surrounded by
glass expressions of royalty
stained with too-bright
rouge (my face)
And taunting.
Darkening milk walls
Rise up in an effort to protect.

Dearest, Each glance casts a new shadow.

In a whirl are your heads
Engrossed in spitting sentimentality
that is all too real, but
Explicit against us.
All the same, they are,
The Ones Who Sigh who say,
"I'm sure we've years to yearn to sit in pews,"
all the same,
which push you from their laps.
But you yearn to sit in pews!
the ones directly below
a Father I never met.
Outside is a light
casting on -
lookers and good -
doers.
But outside is a light
forcing colors of a virgin
to Thrust and Marry
into my sight.



Battle Wounds

by Caroline Koenig

Sometimes things happen
It is a part of life
But no one said it would be this hard
Take her back to the start
In the beginning it was all fun and games
Now it is just storms and lightning rays

Everything is going to be alright
She whispered to herself
She was only six years old that night
As she hid behind that shelf
Cause daddy had a little too much

And mama did not want
her to feel the pain

She still felt
She still felt the pain
Well ten years, they came
and went
And dad was gone
So she looked for love in
other men

And tried to act strong
Oh broken hearts and scars
In only places she could see
Cause she just wanted
She just wanted to feel something

Tears streamed from her eyes
She cried
If there's a god out there
Please hear my prayer
I'm lost and I'm scared
And I've got nowhere else to go

I've come a long, long way
But I'm not sure I can make it much
further
So if you're listening
Could you give a helping hand
To your daughter

The Rhythm of Pain
by Anha Valdez

A Snapshot Love Story

by Libby Rohr

A girl sits at a table in front of a coffee shop, eyeing the charming boy lounging next to her. They observe one another as if their friends don't exist, his eyes catching hers like a blue wave crashing on the beach. "Well, I'm not ordinary."

She glances next to him in the car, pulling strawberry delicacies into her mouth, but she can barely appreciate it. He has captivated her. "I mean how often do you meet someone and have this kind of connection."

She takes a deep breath, striding confidently into Barnes and Noble with her sunglasses pressed up on her head. He's brought his sister, and the cute blonde bundle of light does cartwheels around the shelves and he smiles coyly.

He strokes her hand softly, whispering sweet reassurances to her as tears bubble in her eyes. It's a beautiful, perfect, blue day, and once the ordeal is over, she feels confident and free and safe. He keeps his hand on hers as he drives and her heart soars. "I'm meant to help you overcome this fear."

She dresses up for him in a new plum frock. He tells her she's beautiful. They order the chicken fingers and they are crispy and golden and their conversation flows sweet and rich like honey.

Sitting on his bedroom floor for the first time, she closes her eyes at his command and waits for the surprise. Eyes open and he has her favorite album on vinyl. He remembered a comment she made. They have only known each other for a week, and yet he does the sentimental things already.

She feels herself falling fast and hard for him, in that dim bedroom, with that excited look on his face.

She rides next to him in a golf cart, surrounded by the topography of living green rising up around them as they soar through the hills on the small path. She confronts him and they disagree, but then they find the top of the hill behind the one length of white picket fence and under the moonlight they stop. Stop driving. Stop talking. And they stare at each other, growing closer, like plants to the sun, until his lips are on hers.

They go for a picnic. The lake shimmers in the morning light and the food tastes delightful, as it always does, but somehow they never focus on food. Too enthralled with each other, they talk about the future. What they want, what they insist upon, what they choose for themselves. "Nothing is black and white. The world is all gray."

They lay curled into one another like puzzle pieces, and she can feel his heartbeat resounding in her ear. His hands are strong and she traces the lines on them with her fingers. He tells her that he thinks she's important. He might stay in town for college to be with her. "I told him you're something special."

They wander around the golf course sharing the basics. She shows him martial arts and he laughs, impressed. It's all tinted with a sort of glow. "I talk too much."

They eat dinner and discuss the universe and God. She feels like an adult out with him on date night, discussing the big questions. They're not like the others at school and they know it. They talk about all deep things and all controversy and it's good-natured. It feels magical.

They sit on the bench, the smell of flipping burgers surrounding them, but she cries into his shoulder. He



Soulful by Abigail Meyer

explains how her best friend has betrayed her. He insists his sister heard the whole thing. She can't believe it, but she does. She trusts him so.

They sit on the rock wall letting their thoughts intermingle in the impish night air. Vulnerability has encompassed the conversation, both in action and in topic.

Sinking into the leather couch, they look at the ceiling, discussing the universe and the purpose of their lives. She knows hers. He does not. He can't contain the fire in his heart. "I think I have something to tell you." "Say it." "No." "I'll say it back." "I love you."

He appears bearing Panera and love letters. She feels at home - taken care of. He understands her and wishes her luck.

She finishes the test and he's there to meet her. Crunched into a crowded table, he sits arms folded and closed off. She searches for his light, but comes up empty-handed. He shakes her friends' hands out of obligation and remains retreated inside himself. Concerned and confused, she retreats next to him, wondering how he could be one way with her and the opposite with others.

He calls her every night in their absence. He learns her life story. He pieces her together like a puzzle and she feels he knows her, really knows her. He makes her laugh and laughs back. She feels wanted, maybe for the first time. He pays attention.

She drags her exhausted body off the runway, praying to God she looks pretty enough. And there he is, going wide-eyed when he sees her. He reminds her how gorgeous she is and greets her with a kiss. She bestows upon him a vanilla cupcake, and he takes her home.

They spend a lot of time listening to golf.

He kisses her aggressively, pinning her down, hands drifting, she pushes away, over and over. Wincing, she starts to cry. He finally stops, moving back. He pushes waves of guilt on her, validating himself through his so-called Christian purity and she believes him. Eventually, she gives in, and he goes on unwavering.

She forces herself to bear it, make do with what he wants. She will be strong; it's all she knows. She won't refuse. She loves him. She can't. It's her job. She feels dirty and she has to fight herself all the time, but she does it anyway.

They walk on and ride on the course. He hands her a club and tells her to swing. She asks him to help. He says no and laughs. She swings, and she misses. He laughs harder, and she giggles. She swings and she misses. He laughs harder, and her face falls. She swings and she misses. He laughs harder, and she's covering up tears.

He cries on her screened-in porch, explaining how his greatest offense is a terrible misunderstanding. He feels horrific about returning. He has her in his grasp. She strokes his face and hair. She has no idea.

She gives him a lucky gold elephant at 8 A.M. on the first day. He doesn't understand the significance of the gesture, shoving it to the back of his locker, and she tries not to let it bother her.

Miles away they fight because she doesn't check up on him enough. Every minute must be theirs. Every minute. She enjoys both experiences, but he insists upon the first. Together means one person, but he won't compromise to form the union.

She dresses up and they slurp up ravioli at the corner table, disputing jealousy. She refuses to buy into it, but he insists, pushing her until she caves, a pattern growing familiar to her. He charms her again, as he always does, sharing more pieces of his glorious puzzle of humanity.

He hands her the little bag. An adorable necklace to commemorate their love and a beautiful bracelet. And the tickets, the ones she loved and wanted. He doesn't like concerts but he would do it for her. She throws her arms around him.

His locker is covered in photographs of her. "It's like a shrine."

He begs her to stand up with him on the stage. He doubts her and she surprises him again, marching up because she would do it for him, expecting he would do the same for her. That's what love is: being brave and doing for others.

She relaxes, side by side with his adorable mother, sifting through a million photos to represent his life to his peers. He picks a few cute ones, and insists upon one with her. She rebuts but eventually gives in. She appreciates the gesture.

After a long fuss about nothing at all, a deal is struck. Like the adults they think they are, the couple tucks in her little sister, finally willing to rest in the promise of the two. The boy and girl talk sweetly to the young one, quietly thinking about having children of their own one day.

Tragedy strikes and she offers her assistance but does not cancel the night's plans. She hasn't seen her friends in ages, and this has been planned for so long. His grandpa is ill, he insists she stay with him. She's done so much staying lately, she insists she go, but offers to stop by. He thinks he deserves more. She says she'll do anything before but he refuses. Without a car, she can't see him. He tells her he might go see the girl who is in love with him. He sleeps as she freaks out. She hisses over a voicemail. "This is what very mad sounds like."

It's all a misunderstanding. Somehow it's always a misunderstanding. Once she's home he's yelling, over and over. She's broken his trust and feels sick all over. Did he go to her? He denies but she knows what he said. He changes history with the guise of alleged intention until she's so sick of the fighting she gives in. "It was just one night!"

She sits in the commons, atop a table with him and his twin and the other's girlfriend. "It's hard dating an Adkins boy. No one understands. It's an experience."

He takes her home with him, as another addition to the daily routine. She prays to stay downstairs. The kitchen is common ground for the whole family, but upstairs is his jurisdiction. She likes his philosophical anecdotes, his lips, his hugs, and his care, but he also has another side. Animalistic. Cruel. He undermines women they both don't like and yet she doesn't know how to respond. Boys will be boys? "She's a whore and you know it."

He pulls her up on the bed. She says no. He insists. He does that a lot nowadays.

He eats dinner with her family and a lady from Denver. Spirituality is on her mind. She tells him that she wants to teach the world to be happy and that takes priority, and that she doesn't know where it will take her. Sitting on the bench his baby blues turn cold like arctic ice and he shoves his finger in her face, chastising everything she loves. She doubts. Her mother drops in.

She reveals the autocracy in her life. She shows him how she wants to leave that other place but how she feels they are her family, like she needs them. He shakes his head and smiles at her. He promises her forever. "My family can be your family now."

They sit in the car. He's upset again. Their relationship needs to be private. He can't have anyone else influencing her. She complies. She wants him to be happy. He can support her on his own.

They stand around the island in the kitchen. Stromboli bakes in the oven. The older boys rim the edges, the brothers and their friends. The sisters pour in. She stands in the corner smiling at the scene. Everyone smiles, everyone laughs and jokes. She feels a part of something.

She's locked in his room with him, plugging away at homework. Anything to stall, but she thinks it's just for responsibility's sake. She denies her own needs. She can hear his brother and girlfriend outside playing with the little one. She wants to be like that, but he doesn't. He eventually decides he wants her, and she complies, going action by action pressing down the fear and self-hatred that flares up in response to this. But she ignores it for him, still secretly hooked on the soft shrieks of fun from outside.

They stand near each other on the stage, the unspoken connection keeping them together. She loves to hear his songbird voice. He sings beautifully and he sings to her.

They golf with the boys. All obnoxious; boys will be boys, but she is his accessory. He shows her off. The mood turns sour when she suggests they join the guys at dinner. He insists she doesn't try and doesn't understand his needs. She's so confused.

She stares up at him, trapped in his room again, breaking down because he's pushed her too hard. They order hamburgers and she spills more life story and he looks at her like an experiment, then assures her that her just loves her. He shares his God with her, a God she doesn't believe in, but she listens. She tries to understand.

He tells her he's the alpha and she's the beta. She guesses she understands. She thinks he should be still working on bettering himself, because anxiety is there. He insists it's mostly gone and will never fully disappear. She's the beta, apparently, and those panic attacks she keeps seeing are a figment of her imagination.

Appeasing her little sister is like dealing with the devil. He fulfills his end, letting her paint his face like a clown, or more accurately a queen. His love laughs from the corner.

They go to church with the family. He's excited to see what she thinks. She's unimpressed, but tries to make the best. She joins the clan at California Pizza Kitchen and they discuss life.

Theater grows more intense, and so do their fights. He's pushing her harder than ever these days. He needs her with him always. They need to go to college close. They need to believe the same thing. His God is better. His school makes sense. His life plan for her is practical. She can pick where they go to dinner.

They go to the concert, standing in the throngs of people and he's uncomfortable. They know they have to leave early but she's just happy there to be with him. He holds her and hugs her and she discourages him when he gets more inappropriate. She loves him in the flashing lights and musical heartbeats.

He wishes she'd be jealous, but she refuses. She believes that the trust is strong enough to excuse the variable of jealousy. Without the strong trust, they should not date, she says. He does not understand. He tells her he'll fix it.

They lay on his bed, and he tickles her tongue. Then starts pushing her head. She says no. He tells her not to be scared. She says no. He says not to be scared. He tells her to come on. He says she's the only one he could be with, so she may as well put out. She feels used, but she loves him.

They walk along the street at night, because when he walks he talks, and she knows it. He can't figure out why she's so anxious. He tries to get her to calm down. He asks her what's wrong. Over and over. What's wrong? Until he's begging her to explain. She digs nails into her arm, pressing red marks and breaking the skin. He tells her not to. She must. If she lets go, she'll lose it. She must restrain herself. Why, he asks. He tells her to just let go, so she does. She sprints off as fast as she can, wanting to die. He doesn't look for her.

He accuses her of being too flirty with another. She doesn't understand. She's just being friendly. Apparently, friendly is flirty.

He notices. He always notices. While she sits, refusing to eat, he's the only one who sees. He knows her like no other and insists. He tells her not to punish herself. She finally obliges, with an extended pinky, to take care of herself. He does care. He says he loves her. "Pinky promise me you'll eat. Promise. I love you."

She takes him to his favorite restaurant. The chicken fingers are piping hot and taste like home. Conversation is pleasant. They wander into Barnes and Noble and she buys him a record. She

loves to dote. She spoils him with presents, excited to express her adoration. He accepts the attention with pride and excitement. She's happy to please him. She feels enough. She does as he asks and he feels more powerful.

She's late and sits sobbing in the car. He asks her to compromise everything for him. She doesn't understand. It's never enough. She runs to the bathroom, skipping dinner to prepare herself to settle again. Anything for him. She said she'd die for him, but she never expected to feel it like this, to look at herself in the mirror and see the life slowly leaving her face every time she wakes up again.

Surrounded by pancakes, they're separate again and he's revealing more to her. She understands. It's dark and vague material, but she understands. They hold hands. She feels sweet and innocent and in love.

The rest of the world dons masks but he persuades her to stay in. She's crying again. Why is she always crying? He wants her to stop. He wants her to be happy. He wants her to love him. "Don't ever settle, okay. Not for me, not for anyone." They eat pizza and talk about life. It's one night they actually watch a movie and it's because he's asleep, but she can't stop thinking.

She lays alone with him over the phone. He's breaking, maybe for the first time. He cries about the others. Genuineness and how much he hates their recklessness and bad habits. He can't stand it. He can't handle it. He needs order. He needs control.

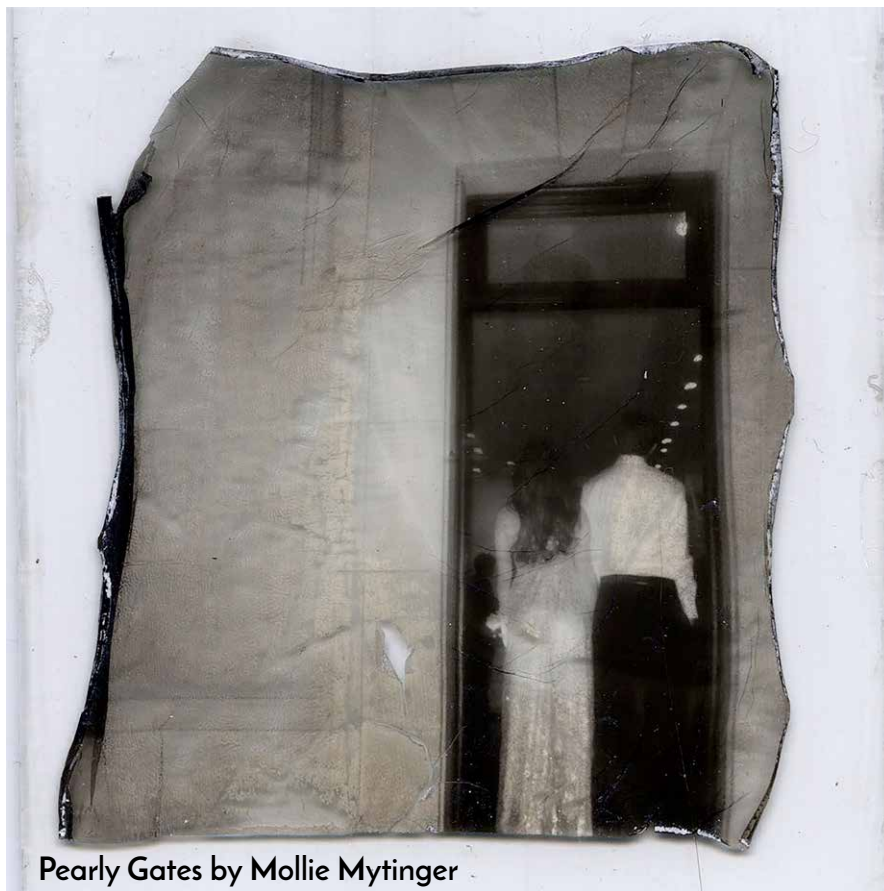
They go out for dinner. Disappointed that his first choice was no longer available, they scour the Internet and she tries to calm him, anything to keep him calm. He's wearing his baby blue sweater that brings out his eyes and she strokes his shoulders. They decide on a jazz club. Sitting directly in front of the stoned musicians, they are quieter than they've ever been. She strokes his back and they feel like an old married couple. She appreciates him, memorizing him: beautiful eyes, curving nose, full lips, high rosy cheeks, soft short hair, strong calloused hands, focused mind, clever will, his deep passion and hurt. She knows that this is the crossroads.

She sits on the couch with his parents. They all discuss future. She expressed her desires, and then her compromise. They seem pleased. She offers to help the girls, before departing, soaring down that country highway she now knows like the back of her hand.

She's absent again, and he insists disrespect. He can't fathom that she has other boys for friends.

Too far again, but this time it's worse than ever. She's shaking. She won't talk. He's broken her. She wants to die. She is frantic and yet unmoving. She wants to die. She can't handle it. She wants to die. He wants to be enough, but as she cries out for help, he doesn't let anyone in. After a two-hour fit, she's empty. She cleans herself up and goes downstairs. His brother tells her she's beautiful. She tries not to cry.

One more night.



Pearly Gates by Mollie Mytinger

They sit together. Her mother wants to talk. He builds her a battle plan. Instructs her on what to say. She is his. She is not her own.

She prepares for confrontation, ready to fight, but instead the parents tell her they're worried. That they notice. That they love her. That they want to help. That they want to support her, and the dam breaks.

The abuse. The force. The shame. The guilt. The conformity. The cheating. The isolation. The brutality. The lies. The terror. The breaking. She feels dead. And she cries for hours.

She takes the next day off to get strong. His jacket is in a pile with a letter. She still loves him, she just loves herself, too.

She reclaims her life, but he pushes. "So we're really done?" "Yes." He stalks. He creeps. He lies. He torments. He tortures. But she never gives in, but he never leaves her mind. She sees her first relationship from time to time in snapshots, frame by frame, like an old movie. Under a full moon, she sits on her front porch and she writes, reminiscing another time, where she was both wildly happy and desperately miserable, and the figure of the million different ways she saw him.

Hope Never Fades

by Mason Herrington

I am a strong young man
exhausted from my ways
I've been in eleven facilities but
nothing ever seemed to change
Until one day I felt his grace and
heard it say
Come to me my child and I will
take it all away . . .

I did it for my sanity but it made
me more insane
All I wanted to do was bring down
my anxiety and ease the pain
Cause you know it hurts so bad
when you're livin' in blame

And your whole family's ashamed but
your circle calls it fame
And your heart tells you to get out but
your mind's stuck in the game
Used to live life like it was day to day
lookin' back my heart's smilin' from all
that I've changed
And I thank god I didn't die in the
hospital that day even though three days
later
I was blowin' smoke back in his face . . .

But my drug days can be over
cause now I've been saved,
Through the one and only Jesus
Christ he took my anxiety away
Believe in his word and the pain
will go away just like it did for me
and it's amazing to say,
That I still have over 400 days in
jail but with him by my side I know
I'll be okay

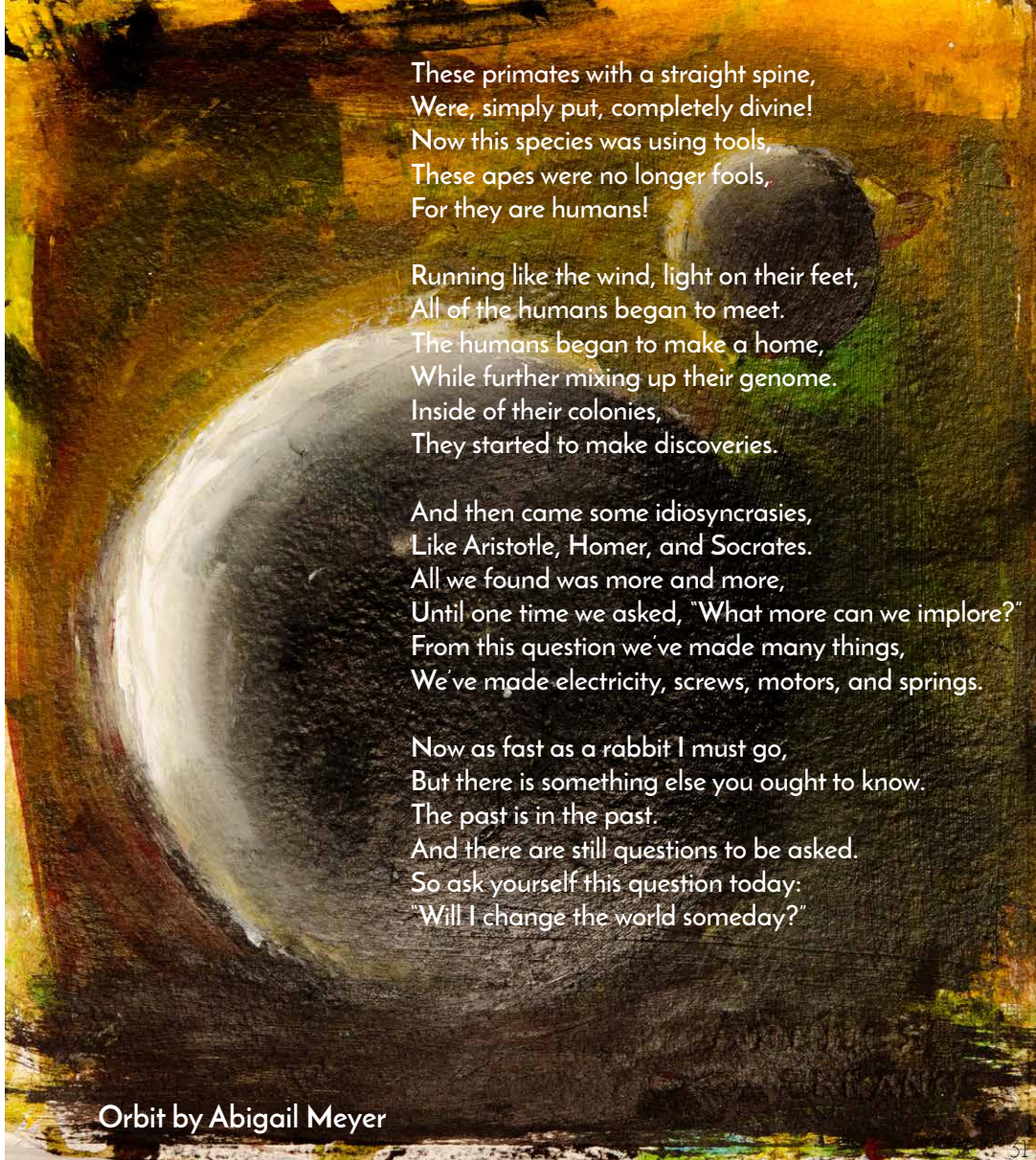
Evolution

by Richard H. Koulen

One star, a single shining star,
Made us today, who we are.
When rocks both smooth and coarse,
Came together with force.
When the galaxy was new,
Something in space was a brew!

Still long ago, but Earth has formed,
When all the large creatures swarmed.
The atmosphere back then was thin,
So Earth was sent into a spin!
When the meteor smashed the Earth,
There was not a single sound.
And not a single sound.

Very few lived through the big blow,
Even in life, they must hang low.
Slowly working their way around the fiery pit,
The animals began to grow some wit.
Then primates were born with something new,
Their back was no longer a slew!



These primates with a straight spine,
Were, simply put, completely divine!
Now this species was using tools,
These apes were no longer fools,
For they are humans!

Running like the wind, light on their feet,
All of the humans began to meet.
The humans began to make a home,
While further mixing up their genome.
Inside of their colonies,
They started to make discoveries.

And then came some idiosyncrasies,
Like Aristotle, Homer, and Socrates.
All we found was more and more,
Until one time we asked, "What more can we implore?"
From this question we've made many things,
We've made electricity, screws, motors, and springs.

Now as fast as a rabbit I must go,
But there is something else you ought to know.
The past is in the past.
And there are still questions to be asked.
So ask yourself this question today:
"Will I change the world someday?"

Orbit by Abigail Meyer



Dreamer

by Grant Mathews

A star-studded with nothing but dreams,
Walking the path she had laid.
Big things would come they say,
Nothing but lies through the doorway.

Alone, hungry and forgotten,
She had just hit rock bottom.
One more fix to stay alive.
Her gleaming eyes petrified.

Nothing but a shell beginning to crack,
Her skin tapered, fading to black.
She had stars in her eyes,
But no one cared when she said goodbye.

Untitled by Grace L'Esperance

Allez

by anonymous

Allez means go, and I go. Allez is his title but he has no name. We work well together, he and I. Born of trying times, our relationship is as strong as the aluminum forged in it. Flying across stretches of hard-packed cement is what we do. Many bumps, low-hanging trees, twigs, sharp corners, and slippery hills have temporarily torn us apart and quickly introduced me to the scruffy earth. We've come close several times to meeting the bumpers of texting drivers, but I can't say I'm paying much more attention than they are. When he's there, a wildfire spreads between the ears, behind the teeth, inside the helmet. Things tend to rub together in the everyday world and eventually this leads to electrical discharge. 135th, 123rd, 119th, 103rd: onto a trail these numbers get smaller. I fan the pedals and sweat begins to drip from my sunglasses. You won't see me cry. This time I spend rarely feels alone.

It Starts with Me

by Hannah Greer

The insistent decision that
The world is beyond repair because
No longer will
Human nature fix these things.
Negativity and pessimism
Invade the land of
Enthusiasm and assurance.
The problems remain
Because
People make choices,
Will remain idyll,
And negative changes
Grow into new dynamics
Our world can



My Inspirations by Gaby Kill

Not handle.
At least not without
The power of one,
Which can become
The power of many,
When we flip the script.

Our world can
Grow into new dynamics
And negative changes
Will remain idyll.
People make choices
Because
The problems remain.
Enthusiasm and assurance
Invade the land of
Negativity and pessimism.

Human nature can fix these things.
No longer will
The world be beyond repair because
The insistent decision that
It starts with me.



Refuge by Alexandra Berkowitz

Gold Medal

by Carolyn Nuss

The diver and the coach as still as a rock
Because the diver failed her dive because she balked
The coach's eyes were filled disappointment and fear
But do not worry she will better next year
She will be better next year

Next year came around and she was a gold medal
Hurdling the board with a graceful hop
She pressed down the board as if it were a pedal
Soon she was flying airborne, and then a sudden drop
KaPlunk was her splash
KaPlunk was her splash

The diver was finally ready for her first meet
But now she had a terrible ache in her feet
The coach rubbed and tugged with all her might
But the ache was putting up a really good fight
It was the diver's turn on the board

And the more she walked the more her feet sore
She tried to just push away the pain
And luckily to her gain
The diver delightfully dominated the meet
Which the coach thought was sweet
But she kept saying it's only the first meet
It's only the first meet

The next meet came and was full of thrills
The diver thanked her coach for making her do lots of drills
The diver could almost see the excitement in the air
When her name was called for gold and all was fair
Don't get her wrong she was having a ball
But the next meet was really worth it all

The final meet was a success and all her dives were perfectly done
But when her name was called for silver it surprised a ton
She almost felt the gold medal around her neck
She could hear the crowd gasp in awe
She could smell the bitterness of her coach's scowl
She could taste the sourness in her throat

No gold medal for the diver
She would settle with silver
There was a silence from the coach
And the diver shed a tear
But do not worry she will be better next year
She will be better next year

Crimson and Blue

by Gus Brandmeyer

There is crimson and blue on the floors,
Where the players shoot, shoot, shoot, and score,
In the stands the crowd cheers,
For all of Lawrence to hear,
Basketball is in our DNA,
Ever since James Nai,

Too many alumnus to think of,
From Phog Allen, to Paul Rudd,
A torrent of crimson and blue fill the air,
Allen Fieldhouse is always a lot louder,
They are so loud, it makes the games unfair,

The Basketball goes swoosh,
When the player takes the shot,
James Naismith was an inventor,
Paul Pierce was a legend,
And this school is like their home,
We had Mario who could shoot three,
And we had Wilt who was seven foot three,
Some of our players are tall,
And some can shoot the ball,
We always get the job done,
And along the way we have some fun,

Big 12 champs eleven times in a row,
That is why every team considers us foe,
National champs five times,
Big 12 champs too many times,
And so many legends it is unbelievable,

Overall KU is great school,
We represent the colors crimson and blue,
So as is said by all the fans,
Rock chalk Jayhawk,
Go KU.

The Walk On

by Daniel Markiewicz

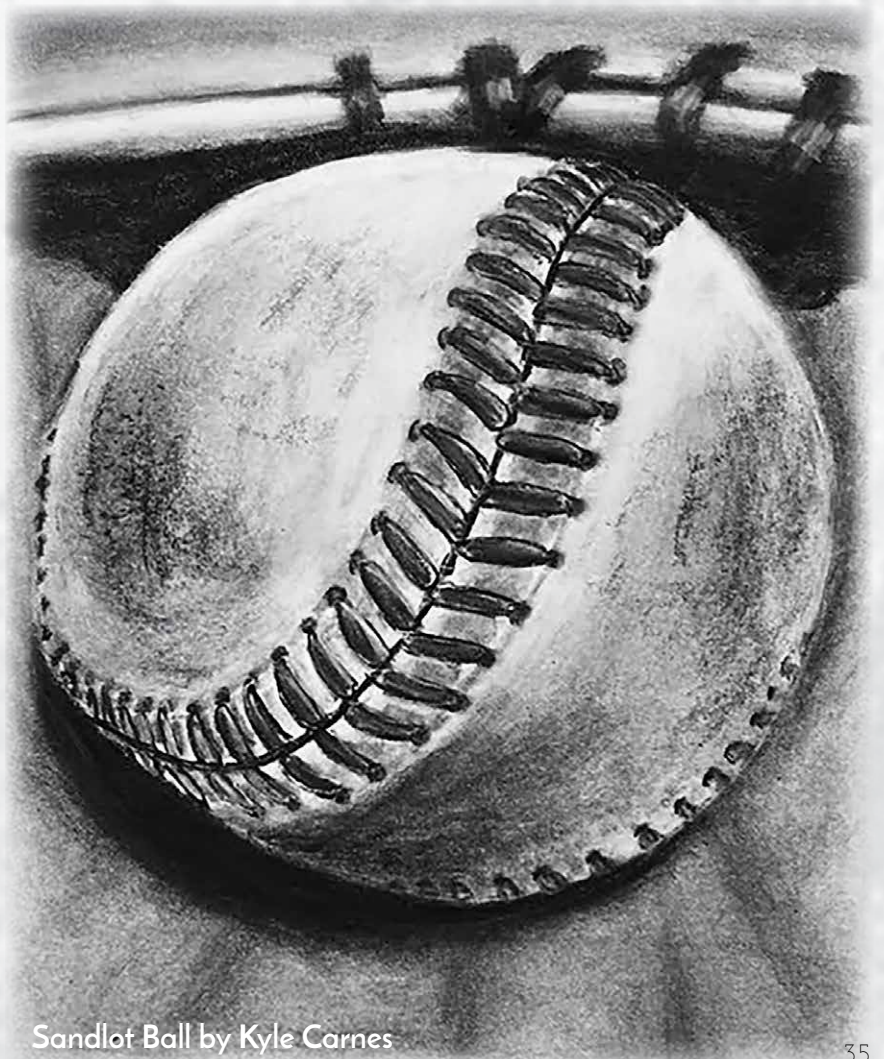
The fans knew it was the end
Their championship hopes were looking as bleak as a stormy night
As the star player fell down in fear
There was a crack that was clear
For his leg bone was fractured with an ambulance near

A new player who was skinny and scrawny stepped up
His legs were fragile chicken wings ready for air
"Boo!" said the crowd not wanting more
And the man turned red just wanting to score
The teammates were wanting a win most of all
The coach told the man to go out there, making the call

As the crowd yelled mean words at the coach
The player was determined to do many things
Determined to pass - determined to dribble - determined to score
Whoosh, as the opponent ran past the man
Scoring the ball into the garbage can
The man was embarrassed, letting the team down
As they were losing by one and he had a frown
His face was red as a tomato with determination and anger
He called for the ball, yet no one would listen
The coach filled with anger started to crack
As he just wanted to have his star player back

The man got the ball and didn't look back
He dribbled down the court, this was his moment
The light, loose ball was like his baby
He was not giving it up for anyone, not today
The lane was open his team down by one
And he seemed to be able to just get it done

With a burst of blazing speed he drives the lane
As he lifts up his body and neck like a large crane
He releases the ball but gets shoved down
The rim says no and rejects the ball
As the game's final buzzer makes its last call
But wait there's more! They all hear a whistle
The man got fouled and gets two free throws
Swish, as the first shot goes in the hoop
Silence-Silence, the crowd erupts as he drains the second shot
The fans are crazy-the arena goes nuts
As the coach sits back, thanking his guts



Sandlot Ball by Kyle Carnes



The Definition of Friends

by Caitlyn Mumaw

The dictionary defines a "friend" as "a person attached to another by feelings of affection or personal regard."

So are they homework answers?

Project partners?

A list of names?

None of the above.

New definition:

The recipients of ridiculous selfies that probably shouldn't have seen the light of day.

The responders to those selfies with an equally ridiculous one.

You shoulder to cry on, your second pint of ice cream, your back up, protector, knight in shining armor against the evil world of bullies and exes.

Your confidence, your conscience, your encouragement, your filter.

Your Google, your Goodreads, your dictionary, encyclopedia, and calculator.

Your wikiHow, your New York Times, your actual useful version of Web MD.

Your Staples, your Walmart, your grocery store, your bank.

Your self help guide, your diary, your therapist.

The twenty-minute drive to your house made in ten.

The siblings you never thought you wanted.

And even when the world is armed against you, they make you laugh although you are certain you can't.

The defender of your sanity, bringing you back down to earth when you start to float away.

The green light amongst flashing yellows and reds.

The destroyer of darkness, despair, and desolation.

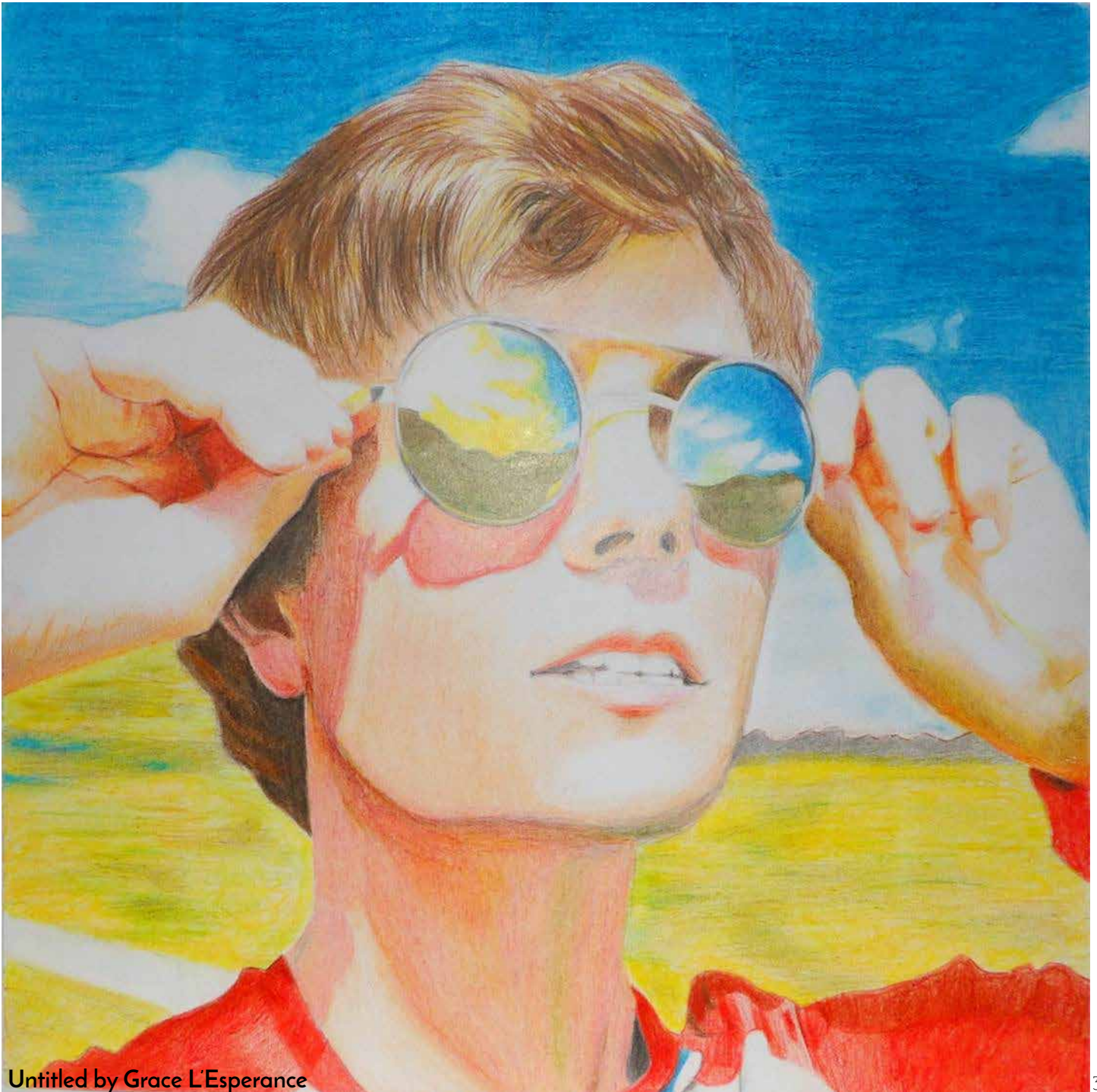
The recipients of all of this and more.

This is the true definition of a friend.

Praise Poem

by Ethan Herman

I believe that I am tasty Hershey Bar.
I'm 4'11" and, I think I'm as tall as the great big Redwood tree.
I'm as handsome as a daisy.
When fall comes it brings multi-colored leaves that are the best to look at.
I believe that I'm a great big shiny star.
I'm an afternoon person with a hint of sunset yellow orange.



Untitled by Grace L'Esperance

The Greatness of Maritza Paul

by Arthur Newby

I know you tell me to write about myself
But I am not the one who deserves to have his ego coaxed
My mom, Maritza Paul, is the one
The greatest woman that has ever been
Starting off with almost nothing
And rising to be the queen
Maritza Paul
Ruling over a kingdom that was in turmoil and is now peaceful and prospering
No one held her hand as she strode to the top to become the best
She brought her kingdom out of poverty and despair
And raised the demon baby no one else could handle
She may be a woman, but she has more balls than every man on her humble planet
When she dances the horses and monkeys come to join her
Infected by her perfect rhythm and beat
When she cooks even the great Alexander rises from his grave praying for a taste
Einstein asks her for help with his math homework
When she is not busy writing the greatest novel mankind has ever seen
Not so great
That she cannot talk to the common people in her kingdom
Not so great
That she cannot love you like no one else has loved before
I am surprised that I have not gone insane
Knowing the greatness of Maritza Paul



Self Portrait by Abigail Meyer



Finding Solace by Jennifer Fu

Hidden

by anonymous

I grow from a place
where emerald rain
pounds against the
land, painting the
hills bright green. I
paint, too, hoping to
leave my mark on the
world.

I live with a fear of
failure, hurt, or
embarrassment, like a
pale yellow
dandelion that hides
when the sun rises.

I would fall down if
my stem did not push
me back up again.

I run, not through
life, but from it, like
a bunny startled by a
sound. I hide, my
face glowing red, try
to change color, like
a chameleon.

I am a locked door,
and only some people
can find the key.



Abstract Stacks by Jack Hatzfeld

幽玄 (yugen)

by Catherine Strayhall

the moment that i lost him/i threw my belongings into my backpack/
grabbed my hiking boots, and headed/to the great appalachian trail/
where each step i took/over the dusty earth/reminded me/of growing
up//i heard my dad/in my best memories/speaking/breathing/as he
walked tall beside me/and constantly i felt/the raggedness of grief//but
the trees/the mountains/even the pouring rain/patched my open wound/
and kept me from bleeding out//and each night/i'd glance up at the
stars/flipping the silver dollar coin he gave me/and slapping it down on
my hand/to decide my fate//heads/stay the night//tails/keep climbing



Reflect by Mallorie McBride



Parting Gift

by Guanghao Yu

Give me an unagitated evening,
where I could sleep-walk
under a light rose-petal sky,
and arrive at your door,
40 miles away,
just in time for dinner.

Give me an absorbing darkness,
into which we'll melt together
and play like children,
lighting sparks with nictations,
accidentally singeng our fingers,
and cooling them with laughter.

Give me a Colorado morning,
where I could see the mountains
from my room - the golden light
filtering through the mist
like a snow globe, illuminating the peaks
where you could be beheld

like Beatrice, by her Dante,
for the thousandth first time.

Colorado Green

by Guanghao Yu

Have you seen her? You must have seen her,
she's one of the trees, with all the rain
that she can bear:

Eye color? Colorado green.
Hair color? The evening sun.
Don't mistake her voice
for the hidden opal stream.

I have dreamed her. I've always dreamed her . . .
she's one of the clouds; I tried in vain
to bring her here . . .

See her float down, alone,
nestle in a mountain's bosom.
If I could be that mountain,
I'd imbibe her every wisp, before she is blown.

I've come to meet her, I've longed to greet her:
she's one star away! I'll find again
in crystal air,

In the realm of her natural grace,
and mysteries of her hues and shades
the soul who wanders but never fades,
discovered afresh, in her dwelling place.

Colorado Mountains by Emma Arnold

Falling Asleep To the Brown Line L

by Catherine Strayhall

Chicago, my beauty;
Chicago, my heart.
Chicago, the deep breath of
Every morning I start.

Chicago, my summer;
Chicago, my light.
Chicago, the way her buildings
Shine in the night.

Chicago, my tour guide;
Chicago, my maze.
Chicago, with her river,
Lake, and sandy beach days.

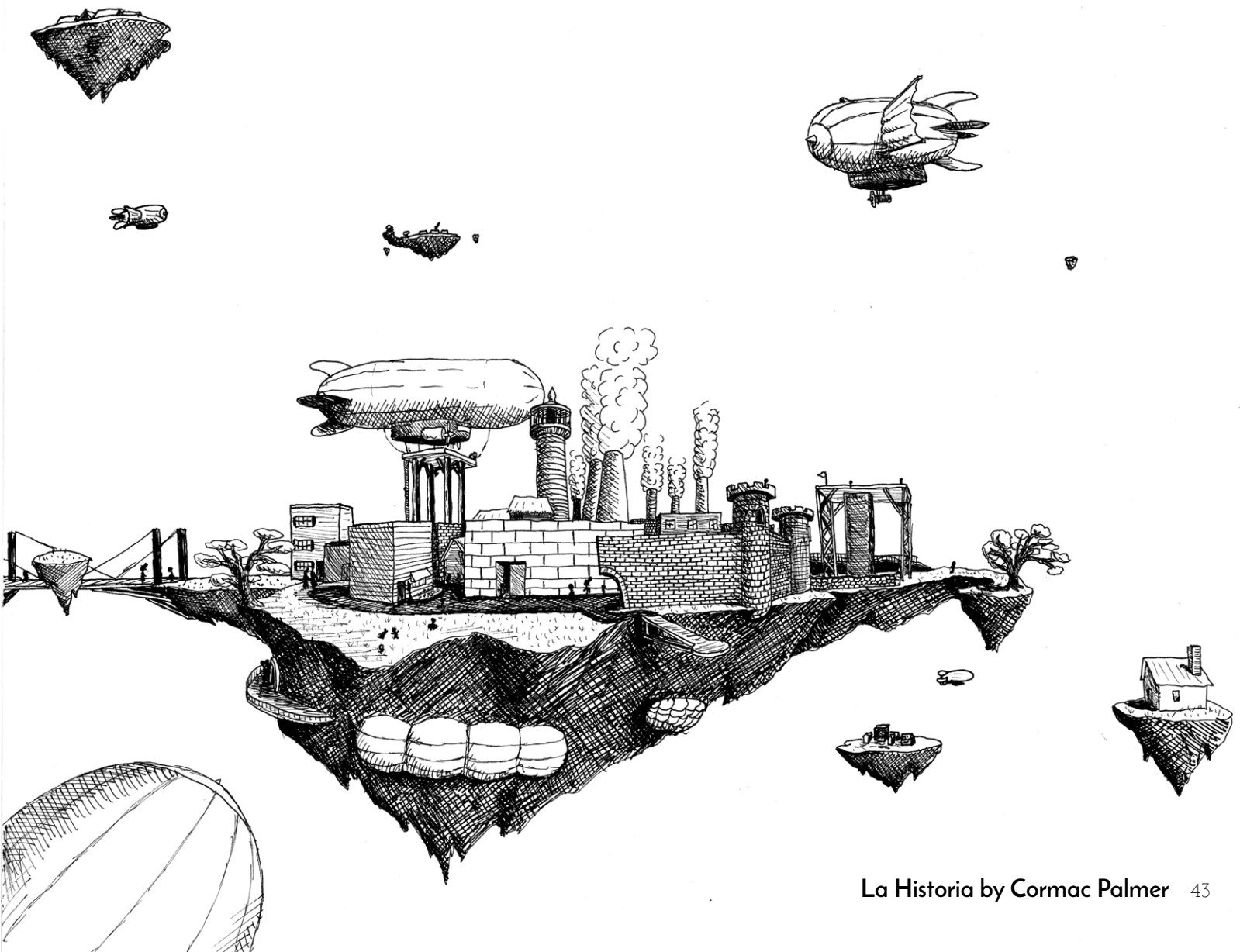
Chicago, my courage;
Chicago, my key.
Chicago, coming in just to
Sweep me off my feet.

Chicago my someday;
Chicago, my now.
Chicago, like a dream
As I swing round and round.

Chicago, my paradox;
Chicago, my friend.
Chicago, and the memory
Of her life, waves, and wind.

Chicago, my lighthouse;
Chicago, my wings.
Chicago as the rushing L
Lulls me to sleep.

Inspired by "a toast," by Wendy Vidlock;
Rattle Poetry: Poets Respond, Dec. 27,
2015.



The Day the Woodpecker Landed on Me by Isabel Nee

It was a scorchingly hot summer day in June when I walked up toward the house from the barn, heading toward the old cedar tree near the house. The tree had bird feeders hanging on it, and probably I was going to check the feeders to see how much seed they had in them. There were still some hungry birds around, devouring the food we put out for them. A few feet away from the tree, I paused for a moment, house on my right, tree ahead and to my left. At least, I think I paused – it is what happened next that really stays with me.

As I stood there, a shape swooped past the house and toward me. My brain had barely registered the movement, and its direction, when I felt something heavy thump into my leg, its weight pulling down on my dress. My arms were crossed over my chest (I have a tendency to do that), and I peered over them, down the length of my dress. Then I froze. Clinging to the fabric of my skirt, beak open and tongue lolling out in a pant, was a Red-Bellied Woodpecker.

For a few moments, I just stared, unable to do anything else as I processed what had just happened – was still happening. Then I got enough of my wits back to look the bird over critically. It was a big bird, probably about nine inches long from beak to tail tip, but not unusually sized for its kind. Its back and tops of its wings were banded with the usual black and white stripes. Its chest and belly were buff-colored, with a tiny patch of pink on its breast. I couldn't see its feet, though I could feel the sharp tips of its claws digging into my skin where they pierced through the light fabric of my dress. The bird's neck and head were the same creamy buff as its belly. A thick red stripe ran from the crown of its head to the nape of its neck. A female, then, I thought. I knew male Red-Bellies have a red stripe running from the top of their beak to their neck.

I continued to gaze at her, and she tilted her head, looking up at me with interest, but no fear. Her eyes were a deep orangey color, the pupils dark, black, and round. I gazed at her in wonder and amazement. I could still hardly believe this was happening – how many times had I wondered at the birds as they flitted to and fro? How many times had I wished I could hold or touch one just once? True, I was not touching those smooth, soft-looking feathers at the moment; but still, there she clung looking at me with her bright eyes. I could feel her weight dragging on my skirt, and feel her sharp claws just touching my skin. A real, live, breathing woodpecker was perching – or more, hanging – from my dress, and not seeming the least bit concerned about her close proximity to a human.

I looked her over again, trying to commit to memory every detail of her before she flew away. She had stopped panting for a moment, but started up again. Her dark gray beak was long, at least two inches, and tough looking. It was sharply pointed on the end, no doubt for drilling into tree trunks to extract insects. Then I noticed something else I had never in my life seen before.

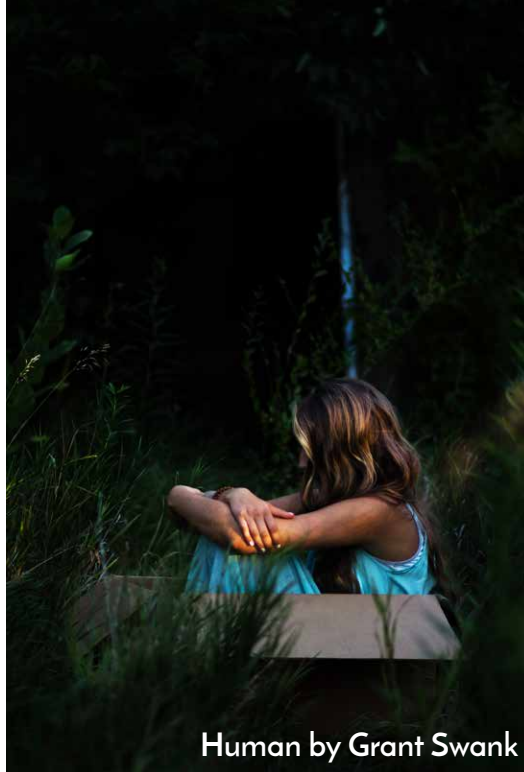
Her tongue, exposed by her gap-beaked panting was a soft red color for most of its length, but about three quarters of the

way toward the tip it changed to a dark purplish color. The texture looked different too, not soft and wet like the rest of her tongue, but hard, the tip as sharp as her beak. And all along the length of this part were vicious, bristly barbs. I felt a tiny thrill of fear cut through my excitement. I had previously been worried that my visitor might realize my dress, blue with pink flowers, looked (and felt) very unlike the bark of a tree where she would normally perch. Now, I hoped she did notice the difference because that thick sharp beak and pointy, barbed tongue (most likely used for hooking insects and grubs out of their tree trunk hideouts) could do some very serious damage to my soft, human leg.

She didn't seem to notice my sudden uncertainty though. She continued to cling unperturbed to my skirt, observing the surrounding area, me, and whatever else took her fancy. My fear dissipated, overcome by wonder and excitement again. I stood, hardly daring to breathe lest I frighten her off. I still couldn't really believe this was happening to me. I wished my mother was there to take a picture, or even just to witness this.

"Mom?" I whispered, hoping she would somehow hear me, even though she was nowhere nearby. No response. I called again, a little louder. My mother still couldn't hear me, but the woodpecker glanced up at me, her eyes impossibly intelligent as she watched me warily. I froze again, and stared back at her. She considered me for a minute, then seemed to decide I wasn't terribly dangerous. She went back to looking around, her little chest still rising and falling with rapid pants due to the heat.

I don't remember how long I stood there in the blazing afternoon heat, rendered completely still by wonder and excitement, but at the time it seemed like an eternity. In truth it was probably only a few minutes that the woodpecker clung to my dress before she stopped panting and launched herself into the air, moving with a suddenness and grace that took my breath away. Yet despite the shortness of those few moments with her, to this day they remain one of the most precious and surreal moments of my life.



Human by Grant Swank

Blank

by Kayla Wiltfong

It is a wall.
It is stiff, blank. Unmoving.
It guards the paradise
That she knows belongs there.

It is a stone
Waiting for her, the sculptor,
To make it mean something.

Sometimes it glows with urgency.
Other times it is dull,
Craving the contact of a human hand.

Most of the time,
It is white and silent as a neighborhood street
After the first snow of the season,
Untouched in the early morning by human minds.

She will make it become something.
Maybe it will be a mirror
To reflect herself back
At whoever comes near enough to see it.
Maybe it will be a portal
To a place that's far away or inexistent.

She will use her pen
To tear down the wall,
To carve out the statue,
To feed its hunger,
To fill the peaceful streets with energy and color.
To create.

For now they stare at each other,
Unwavering,
And, patiently,
They wait.



I DON'T WANT TO THINK



JUST CREATE

Anjum Syed

untitled by Anjum Syed

Excerpt from *Breed: The Girl of Fire* by Sarah Ault

I was age twelve when I first drew her.

She was something of a dream, fleeting and momentary, yet the few seconds in which I gazed upon her left an imprint in my brain stronger than any graphite mark could have left. She was unerasable, just as the ink that graced that sterile paper the first time. Her image spilled over onto the sheet in a dark stain, overtaking the white with a new black boldness and assembling that very dream right before my eyes. It was an unfamiliar sensation of pleasure, but unmistakably illegal.

And yet it was so inviting that I continued to reassemble her likeness out of the black stain, each contour and curve giving me a new hope that she might not leave so quickly. I wanted her there, on that paper, for as long as my soul desired. She made me think a thought so unfeasible that in its absurdity it might be possible. She made me think that maybe there were people like her out there. Maybe one day, I could become just like her.

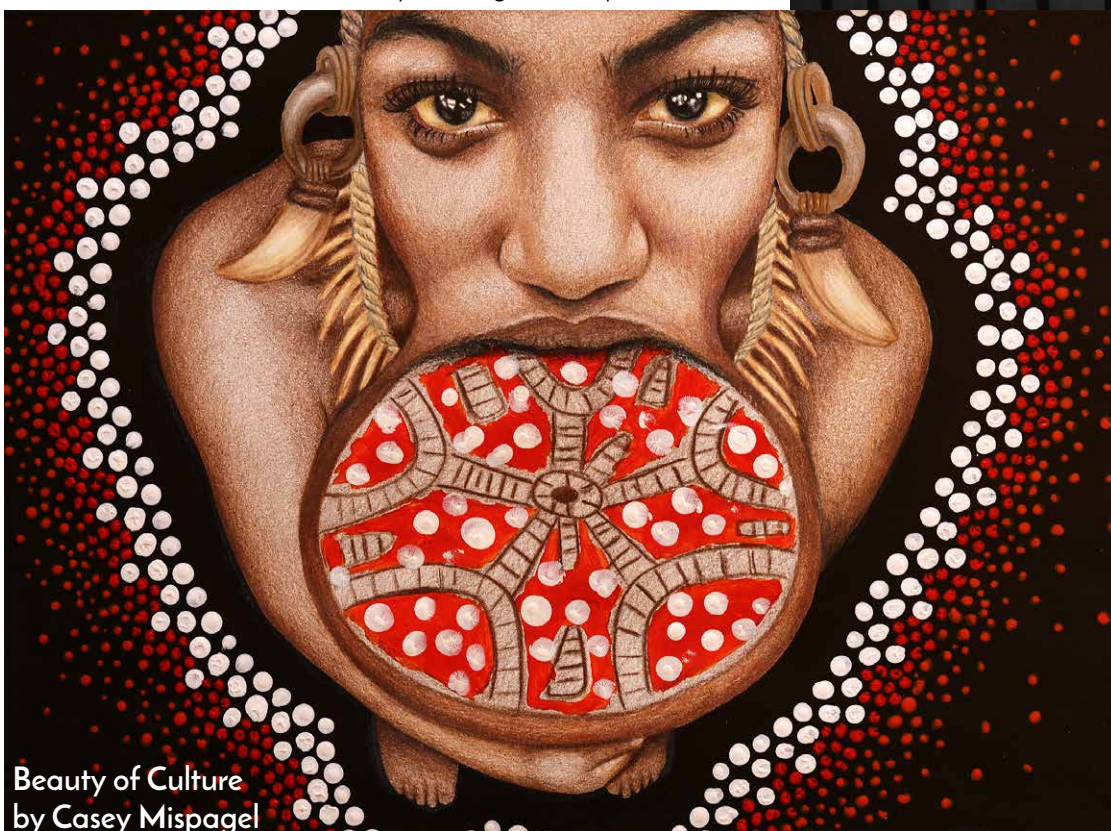
She was the girl of fire. She was vigor, passion, a great deal more powerful than the ink that meticulously crafted her each time. A fire so unstoppable that every passerby had to stop and gaze at her wondrous destruction. A fire so radiant that you might find solace in its warmth. A fire so inviting you might not mind being burnt or aflame if it caught on you. At times I was worried that she burned through the paper, branding the white surface below.

I wanted to tell others. I wanted to show the others around me just how wonderful a thing like her could be, I wanted them to find the same comfort in her heat. I wished her fire would spread, but there was no spark to be found. Eyes stared at me, blank, nearly any color to be found almost engulfed by neighboring white. I thought their beady black pupils might let her in, but there was too much white to see the wonder that the dark world presented. Perhaps it was for the better, for I knew if for one second if the wrong white eyes had glanced upon the black

I possessed was the ink. I blinked heavily, feeling my dried eyes snap back from a hazy focus. Releasing the pencil that was habitually woven between my fingers, I silently switched for the black ink pen that I kept sitting on the corner of my steel desk. My eyes darted from wall to wall, seeing if anyone cared to notice my change of focus. But they were consumed, blank. The usual. Their eyes stayed glued to the whiteboard which seemed to pour more valuable information to them, more valuable than a girl of infinite possibilities.

I sighed, already numb to the relief of never being caught. Turning to a sheet of paper that wasn't covered in row after row of informative lead, I watched as the black bled on to the surface. A delightful sense of control and power greeted me again as I painted another version of the girl of

fire. This time, I focused on the hands. Though I never remembered this from my vision, she had her hands tightly balled around clumps of sand. The sand weaves through the cracks of her fingers, falling back to the ground. I loved the dynamic power it gave her, embodying immense control. The grains were people, bending at her will. At times, I longed to be presented with such an advantage. Perhaps I was just one more grain caught in her grasp. One more grain I needed to draw



Beauty of Culture
by Casey Mispagel

and seen the true darkness it held, she would be extinguished. Gone. All that would be left would be the dream, if there was anything left of me.

So, she became my secret. And when the white became all too overwhelming, I delighted in her darkness. I recreated the same short dark hair, the same flower imprinted on her neck, the same eyes that glowed like a match. I imagined every delicate color, the symphony of a sunset, though there was only white around me.

Today was one of the days where the whiteness ran over, and the only weapon

Joy Still Left

by Ryan Mackey

A old man beyond salvation
slumps on the ground
and prepares for his end.
He starts listing what he doesn't have

any more,
He is

beyond the point of coming back
but he still has one joy.
He has a motivation to keep going

but not from himself or
anyone else that he knows,
but for the object he holds,
not a weapon or a tool,

but an instrument of pure art.
not a paintbrush or a chalk,
a guitar that can make one happy
by simply doing what it does best,

making noises that can warm a heart.

He strums the chords and
strokes the frame thinking of where it came from.
Funny how an object could hold such a memory

that itself holds so much sadness.

The old, sad man may be without a home
and a job and a family,
but he still has some joy left in him.

The Melody

by Saadia Siddiqua

Standing alone, solo
In the darkest shadows
She would pour her forte emotion into piano whispers
Although she is afraid now, her goal never blurs

Slowly she starts to crescendo, piece by piece
Her fear turns to flavor
And her whispers fade to white
What once was hidden talent
Is now her only sight

A trademark, one could say
And she loved being called as music
Her lovely name

A name she was born with but not everyone knew
A name she felt bonded to, but nobody saw it as true
She grew in the shadows and eventually outgrew them too
Creating her own depth, dimension and diversity
In a world of music
Playing pretend hour to hour end on end
An addiction to creating
A passion for feeling
Freedom in her own mind
The melody

Ode to Saxophone

by Ali Robinson

I awaken you from your slumber,
as I slide you out of your safe, velvet bed.
I ask you to help me play the tunes
that dance around in my head.
I taste the sweet cleanser that resides on your reed,
as I dampen it,
oh, ever so carefully.

I blow into your mouthpiece with ease
and feel your cool metal vibrate beneath my fingers.
Then emerging from your golden yellow bell
is a beautiful tone that lingers.
I begin to feel the rhythm,
start to feel the rhyme.
I love your music, Saxophone
Wish I could play you all the time.

Then after awhile I start to feel it,
a feeling I know all too well.
The feeling of total breathlessness that only you can give.
So I take a breath and allow my lungs to swell.
And then I say,
Saxophone, you take my breath away,
in the best kind of way.

A Writer's Rhythm

by Gabrielle Brazzell

Sometimes all it takes is
A lyric of a song
A fragment of a conversation
A moment captured in a photograph
Then suddenly there you are
Using whatever you can
Napkins, paper, your own skin
They become the thing
You inscribe your soul onto
The words flying above your head in a frenzy
Like gnats around your ankles in the heat of summer
Sometimes it's nothing more
Than an idea
A sentence
Or even a mere word

But then you take that
Idea
Sentence
Word
And sow within the rich earth of your mind
As words sprinkle down like rain to nourish it
You find that it's always there in the back of your mind
Your body being drawn like magnets to the pen, to the keyboard
Eager to set yourself into a frenzy

Letting the words flow from your fingertips like
water

Then one day
You look at that

Idea
Sentence
Word

And it has become so much more
Something beautiful has flourished in its place
A strange feeling comes over you as you stare
Weeks, months, even years devoted to this
flower

Then suddenly it's grown
No more can be done
And inside mingling with the pride is a sense of
melancholy

You'll never feel this way again you say
Until the day

You hear
The lyric of a song
A fragment of a conversation
Or see

A moment captured in a photograph
And as you grab for that pen
The cycle starts again



The World of Song

by Alice Crist

The world of song is like a gentle stroke of a paint brush on a canvas creating whatever beautiful creation you desire.

To sing is much more than what most people see at first impression. To sing is not what the audience hears and how they judge the artist, it's how the artist feels about the song in their heart and soul.

When you sing, and mean what you are singing, you can feel your heart lift and your soul float off into the distance.

You can see the magnificent colors of the song swarm around you and lift you off your feet.

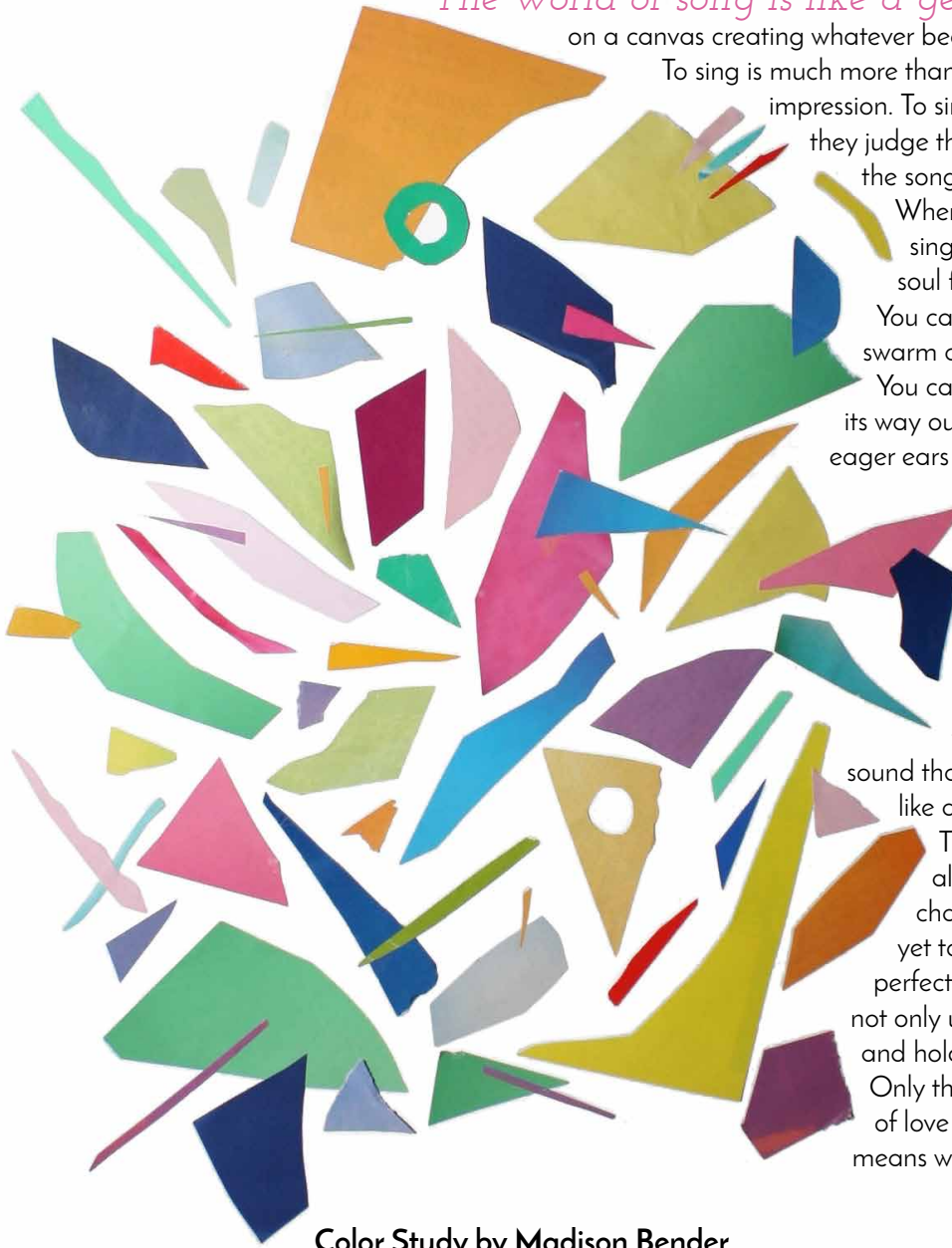
You can taste each individual word as it makes its way out of your mouth and finds its way to the eager ears around you.

You can hear the sound of your voice fill the room as you sing away your worries and sorrows.

Song is like a huge willow tree with your soul as the roots fueling the beauty of the song in its entirety, and each word a leaf that elegantly blossoms and flowers together and creates the heart-stopping sound that is your voice echoing through the forest like a gust of autumn wind.

The world of song is connected through all who have discovered the the life changing beauty of song and all who have yet to experience the heartwarming feeling to perfectly and effortlessly sing a song that you not only understand but a song that you cherish and hold compassion for.

Only those who have felt this extravagant feeling of love and understanding can understand what it means when I say I have visited the world of song.



Color Study by Madison Bender

If Only It Wasn't a Dream

by Christopher Moore

I can hear the loud silence
coming from the 100s of seats.
The pristine Steinway grand sits right in front of me.
I touch the black bench and feel its leathery surface.
I sit down and realize

dynamics and tempo are superb.
The crowd sits silent and in awe.
The voice of the piano transforms into
a deer hopping around a luscious green forest.
An enormous crescendo roars from the piano and

click the snooze button on the alarm clock.
It was all a dream.
A sudden depression hits me and I pull the covers over my head.
Maybe one day that could be a reality . . .

the seating arrangements are all right!
The crowd falls silent and I stretch my
arms out towards the milky white keys.
A wave of confidence crashes over me and
I start playing.
My fingers run over the keys fine and the

gasps from the audience emerge.
The sounds change into an erupting
volcano with magma oozing out.
The crowd starts to stand up and yells bravo.
I scale up the piano and a sudden
dinging noise fill my head.
It won't stop. I reach over and

elegance and harmony

by anonymous

my fingers rest above the piano
and their shadows trace my presence
upon its ivory white keys. i
inhale, my fingers rising gently, and i
exhale, pushing into the keys,
ringing several notes at a time.
if i press with more force, i'll bring about
life in the piano itself;
its voice sharpens at accents and
its breath quickens at staccatos.
it drapes the music around itself with elegance
and takes strides with its chin held high.

the piano depends upon me for expression,
and i depend on it for my
purpose and passion.
music becomes alive within me,
pacing my breaths and
counting my steps.
we're inseparable.
we take another breath.
we breathe out and harmonize again.



Prism by Madison Bender

One Step Closer

by Molly Langdon

It burns

It burns deep inside
every drop that runs down

your back as you ignore the pain
correction after correction
being told you aren't good enough
for it

it comes naturally
is what they say at least
why? some outsider may ask
Why the time and pain

the answer is simple
tears and sweat guarantee
you are one step closer to what you wish
and dream of
time and pain spent doing
instead of time and pain spent wishing

is 100% worth it

Leap of Faith

by Mary Rueschhoff

Twirling

Twirling-Twirling

Along with the shhing of the pointe shoe
on the stage

The smooth, sweet music playing to
her sharp moves.

Spinning like a little girl in the rain

Making it look so easy, but yet
so hard

The precise frappe out of the spin
Like a prancing reindeer in
the snow.

The lights as bright as the sun

Staring into them trying not to look at the audience too much,
In case of falling off balance
from nervousness.

Spinning

Spinning-Spinning

One extra turn and she would do it,

But now it's there and it happened

The judges had to have seen it

It was as clear as water

So broken she remembered . . .

Remembered-Remembered

Robby! The music man!

She had to get his attention so he could slow the tempo

So she could get back up and cover up her upsetting mistake.

One leap was it up

Up-Up

She went her legs opened and shut like scissors

cutting paper

She had done it and won

Dance is like life

It has an end and a beginning
and some mess-ups in between.

Subject: Passion

by Jessie Hovis

Breathing in. The lungs expand, chest tight. The air catches in my throat. Breathing out. The air slithers out, my eyes going, facing the paper. It is blank, void of anything but a red line and blue lines. My mind is already at work. What is it going to be? Will a boy find his life on the rooftop of a dilapidated museum, or will you write about a girl who fights? There are many possibilities.

Uncapping the pen, it feels like magic. The ink whirls onto the page, a flurry of words coming out. The only sounds are breathing, a scratch of pen against paper, and floating music notes.

The hand is cramped, the music is down, and I look at the paper. The ink is whorled, words unintelligible, scratched-out words glaring at me. But, smiling is appropriate. This work is mine.

Drafted

by Sasha Baldwin

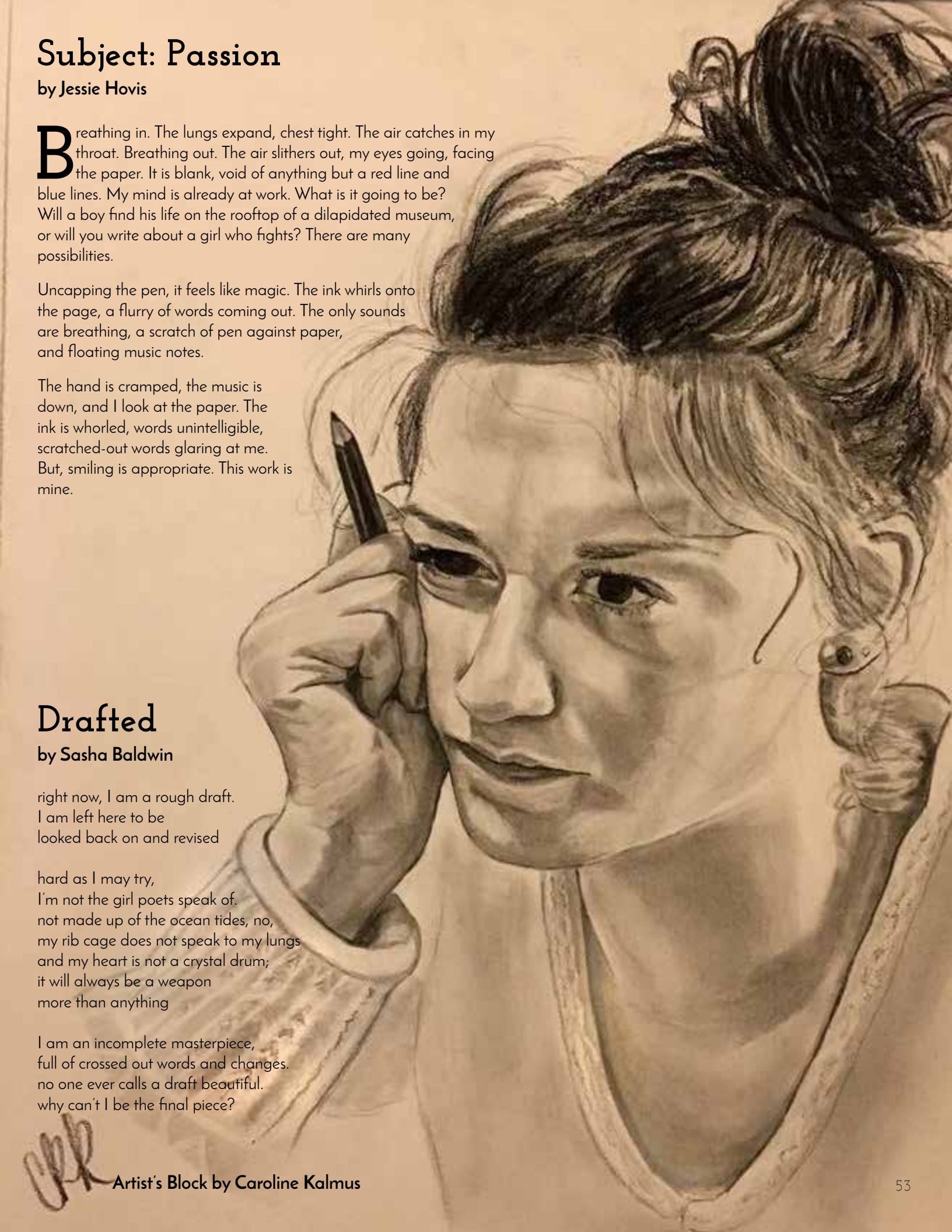
right now, I am a rough draft.
I am left here to be
looked back on and revised

hard as I may try,
I'm not the girl poets speak of.
not made up of the ocean tides, no,
my rib cage does not speak to my lungs
and my heart is not a crystal drum;
it will always be a weapon
more than anything

I am an incomplete masterpiece,
full of crossed out words and changes.
no one ever calls a draft beautiful.
why can't I be the final piece?



Artist's Block by Caroline Kalmus



No Graphite

by Lindsay Luchinsky

From his lips
To the paper,
To the teacher,
To the air,
To my mind that will not recall.

I will cower back, fall into my home,
Attend an institution with a constitution of prostitution,
And abide by a rule of hypocrisy in meritocracy.
Mine is set in a mindset we have yet to churn
But lay a competition in which we will burn.

See, though as I ignore a foreign wisdom,
We all believe we will encounter,
I let each grain of my skin fall with the fall,
And let them be carried by a wind I refuse to wind up in.
So follow blindly the path of an execution, the path I resent as my home.

Now tossed back to the air,
To the teacher,
To the paper;
Sealed behind his lips.

Sincerely, mine are too

Lisp

by Allyssa Herlein

Passion: A word I can't even say because of my lisp.
Inspire: Another word I can't say because of my lisp.
Things like this are the reasons many people lose hope.
We go in with a mindset of: "They are going to laugh at me."

Or

"They are going to think I am stupid."
We lose our passion because of the idea that society will judge us.
We search to find something that fits our restrictions -
Of who we think society wants us to be -
Of who we think we are limited to.
But why not we dare to dream?
Why not we take a chance of hope?
Why should we avoid the letter "S"?



Arcimboldo's The Librarian

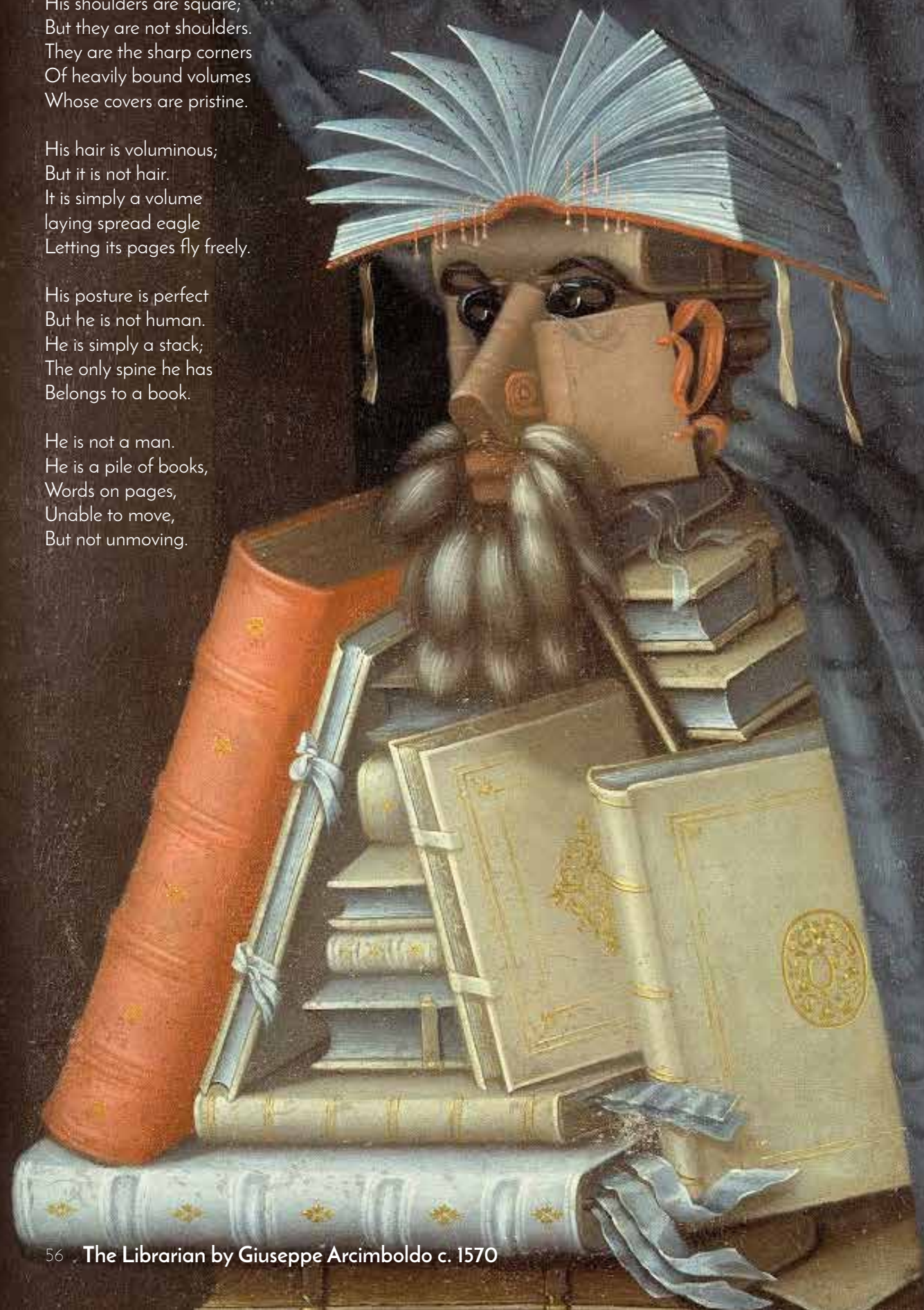
by Kayla Wiltfong

His shoulders are square;
But they are not shoulders.
They are the sharp corners
Of heavily bound volumes
Whose covers are pristine.

His hair is voluminous;
But it is not hair.
It is simply a volume
laying spread eagle
Letting its pages fly freely.

His posture is perfect
But he is not human.
He is simply a stack;
The only spine he has
Belongs to a book.

He is not a man.
He is a pile of books,
Words on pages,
Unable to move,
But not unmoving.





Keith by Rian Stallbaumer

Passion

by anonymous

It is the spirit that fuels the body.
It awakens fires long burned cold.
It restores the broken heart.
It heals the scars cut long ago.

From the sea of stars above to the lands of pleasant hills,
Towering stone, lively forest and silent streams,
It can be found.

Like a wind from northern vales it blows across the land,
Bringing leaves of stories that color the darkened world.
With the pen and paper it reveals secrets of the soul.
With paper and pencil it embodies fantasies of the mind.

It is the source of competitions.
It challenges the traditions of old.
It empowers men to fight.
It molds the boy into a man.

Sacrifice it values.
Oaths it honors.
Dedication and Pain it requires.

It is Passion.
It loves all people.
It paves roads for others to trend on.
It solidifies communities.

Passion is love that dwells in the soul.

Schools

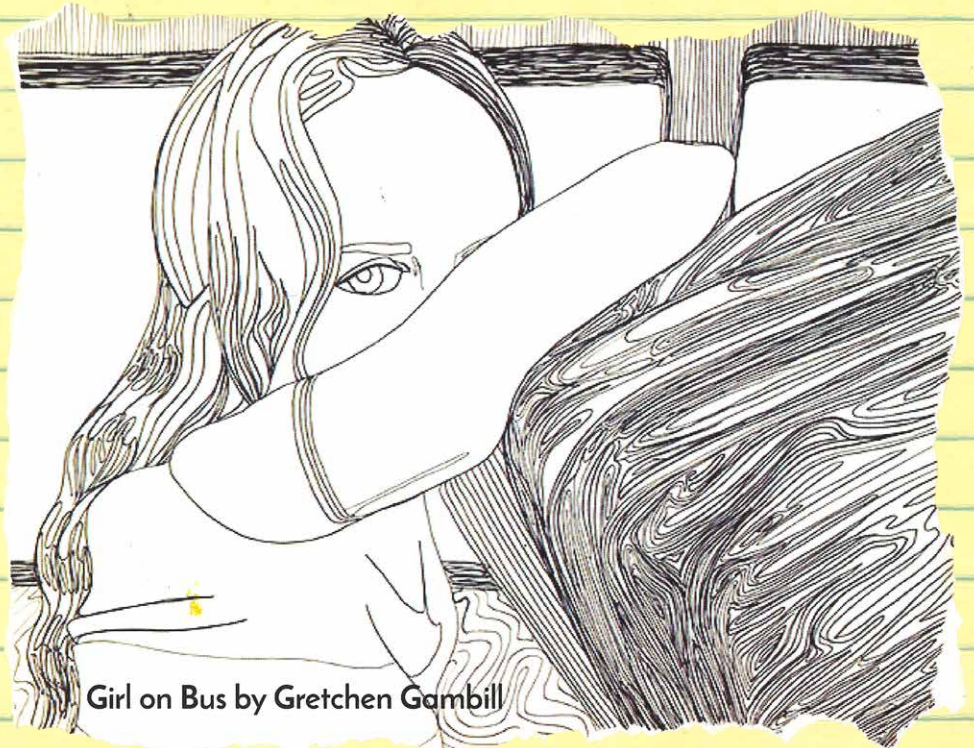
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Thank You

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Girl on Bus by Gretchen Gambill



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Maybe this is goodbye . . .

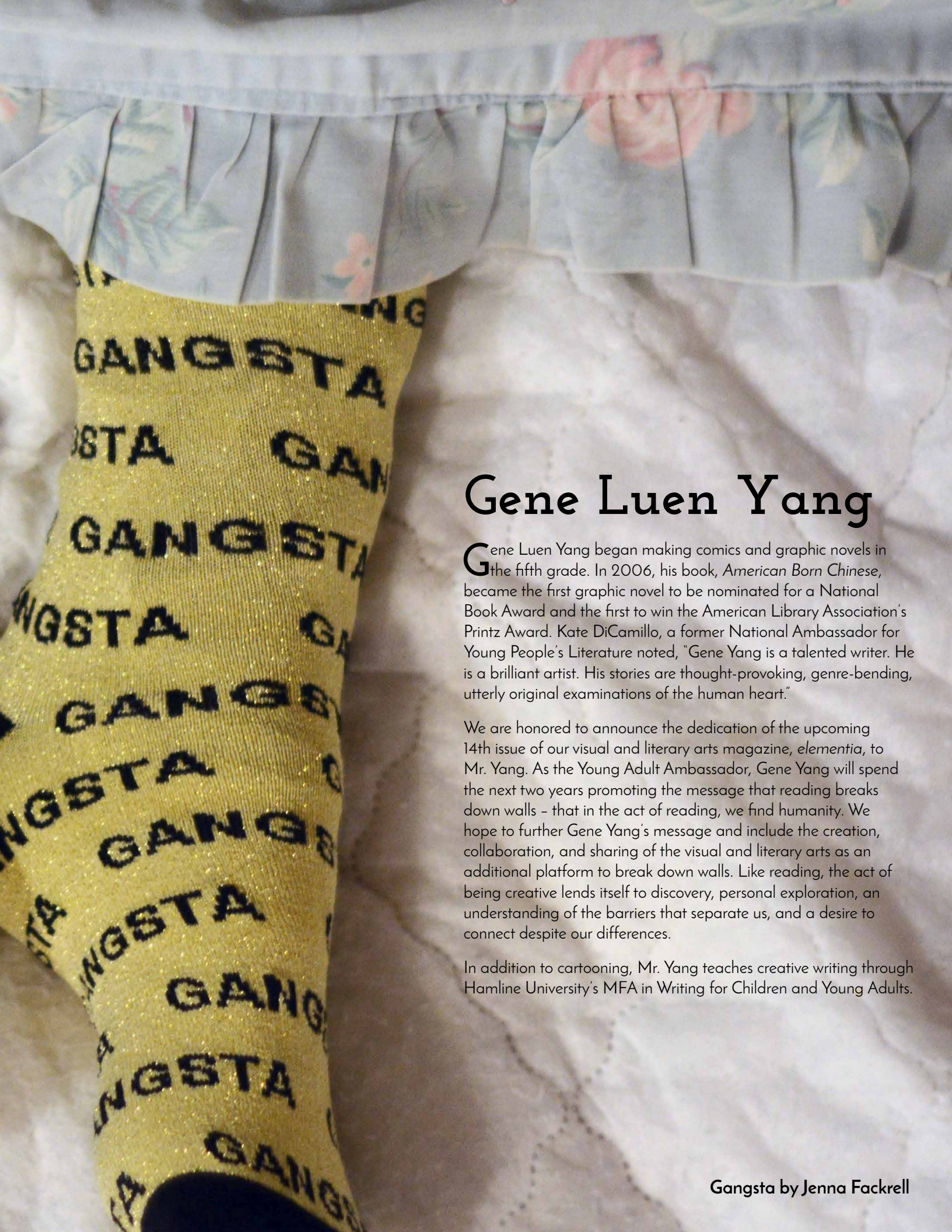
by Sasha Baldwin

Quite a lot to say but such little time,
We are all stuck in the crime of rhythm and rhyme.
Forgive my silence, my pen is running dry.
Don't know if I'll make it but I can promise to try.

issue xiv

In our next issue let's breakdown the walls of our own identity. While having a strong sense of personal identity can help us connect with others, it can also make connecting more difficult. Personal identity can be influenced by others. Our identity shifts depending on where we are or who we are with. Submissions should address contradiction, ambiguity or truth in identity. Identity can be more than a sense of self. A sense of community - the groups (race, religion, political party, nationality, etc.) to which a person belongs also factors in. Show your multifaceted, contradictory identity on the page.

submit at jocolibrary.org/teens/elementia

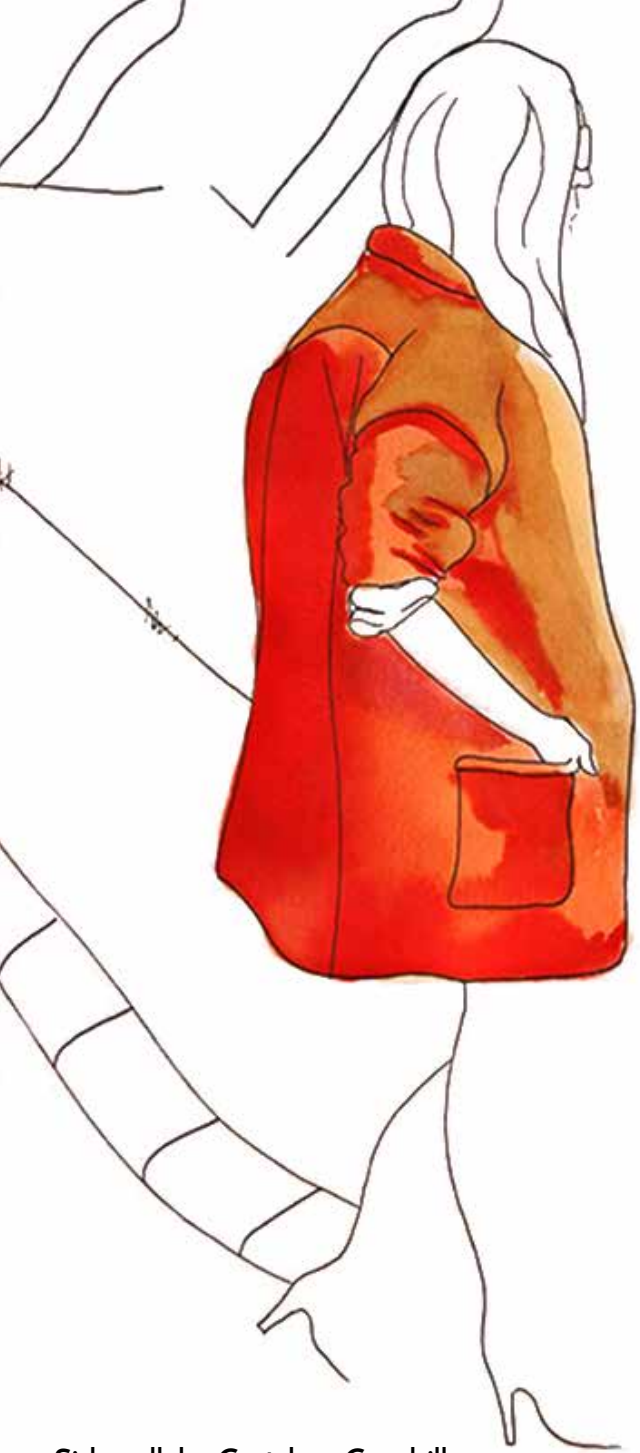


Gene Luen Yang

Gene Luen Yang began making comics and graphic novels in the fifth grade. In 2006, his book, *American Born Chinese*, became the first graphic novel to be nominated for a National Book Award and the first to win the American Library Association's Printz Award. Kate DiCamillo, a former National Ambassador for Young People's Literature noted, "Gene Yang is a talented writer. He is a brilliant artist. His stories are thought-provoking, genre-bending, utterly original examinations of the human heart."

We are honored to announce the dedication of the upcoming 14th issue of our visual and literary arts magazine, *elementia*, to Mr. Yang. As the Young Adult Ambassador, Gene Yang will spend the next two years promoting the message that reading breaks down walls - that in the act of reading, we find humanity. We hope to further Gene Yang's message and include the creation, collaboration, and sharing of the visual and literary arts as an additional platform to break down walls. Like reading, the act of being creative lends itself to discovery, personal exploration, an understanding of the barriers that separate us, and a desire to connect despite our differences.

In addition to cartooning, Mr. Yang teaches creative writing through Hamline University's MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults.



Sidewalk by Gretchen Gambill

Finding Passion

by Hailey DeWolfe

Hello?
I am looking,
Through windows and doors,
Looking at trees and between the shores
For that spark.
The little thing that ignites souls ablaze
Propels emotion to heights unknown
Cultivates thoughts hidden.