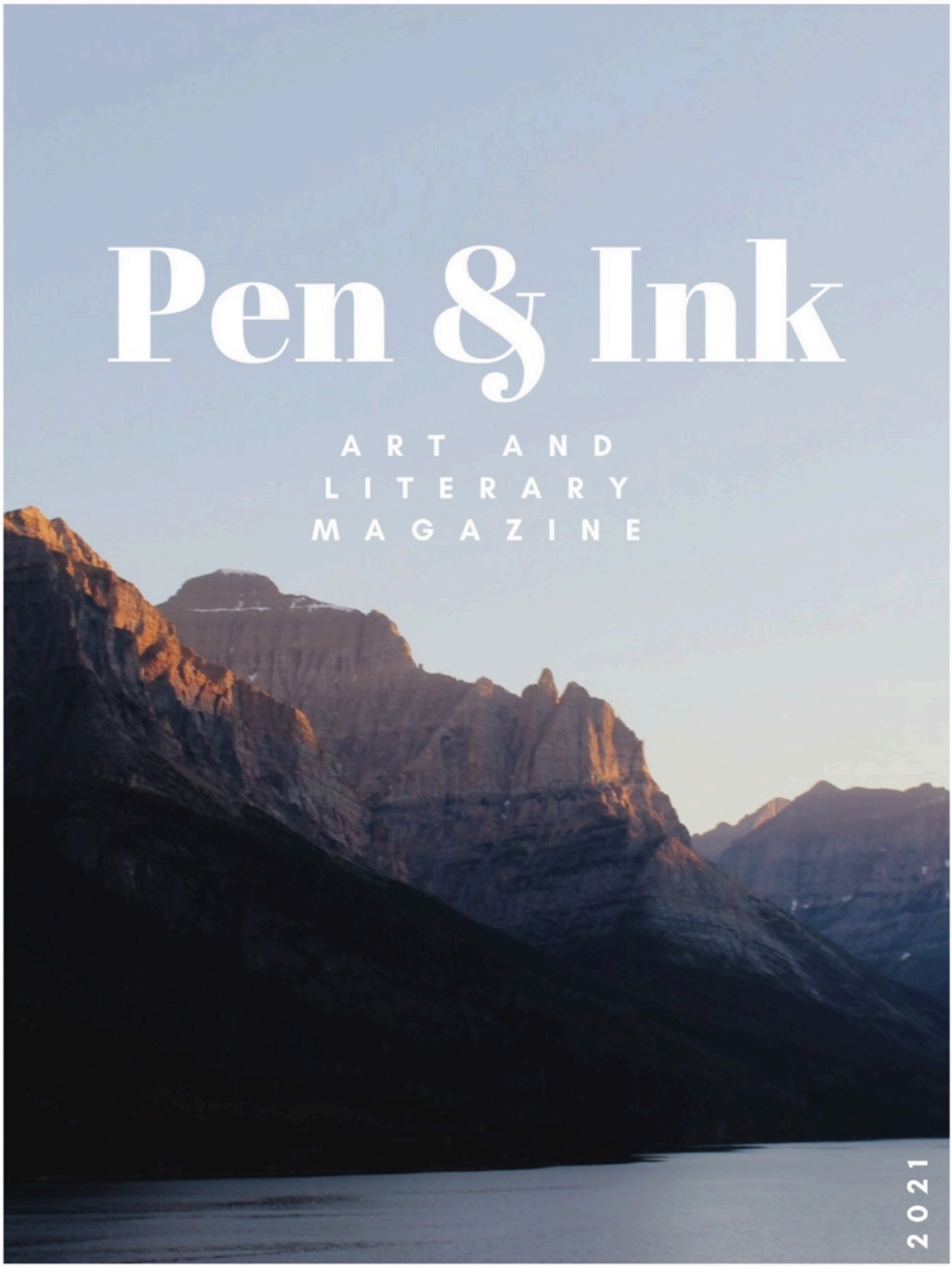

Pen & Ink
ART AND
LITERARY
MAGAZINE
2021

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Poster: Ella Rowland

Harrison Writing Award Winners

Angelo Bender	"The Pale White House With a Red-Brimmed Door"
Rebecca Smillie	"A House That Is Silent"
Andrea Stalnaker	"Thank God for Christmas Lights"

Pen and Ink 2021



Garrett Glazier

Celebrate Good Times C'mon

By Brenna Holgate

Nothing quite lights a fire in the pit of my belly like when someone says they don't want to celebrate their birthday the older they get
We are made of the same stardust that created the cosmos
And we are made of the same stardust that will destroy the cosmos
Each year we gain new secrets and forget old ones
So let the boredom and the guilt be damned
Enjoy the cake and the glitter and the company
Because when we are worm food and supernova fuel,
The celebration better be worth something more than turning older

Spring Tune

By Ella Shropshire

I think of a little house

In a green flower field

And you under the thatched roof

We paint on the white walls,

We make the past into fairytales

Our world to the tree line-

We need nothing past that.

Close your eyes,

We'll lie naked in the shallow rocky creek,

The currents will braid our hair,

We pay them in regret,

Washed away in the water,

They run with it far, far away.

We'll wear dresses and skirts a bit too big

Eat mushrooms and sundrops

And someday, when the weight in the pit of our bellies,

Our despair, our guilt, our regrets,

Has been sold to the rivers and trees and flowers

We'll link arms

And walk straight into the dark woods,

Unafraid.



AnnaBelle Robinson



Nikki Backeberg

Pen and Ink 2021

Stars

By Benton Lehman

Stars glisten like ice; dark, wispy clouds float by like ghosts. The tall grass undulating in waves like the ocean. The gentle creaking of pine trees like distorted screams from the ominous forest bellow. The moon casts flickering shadows that play games with my eyes while the icy breeze bites into my jacket. My hair is rigid, my skin ripples with chills. My feet cemented to the ground. With a jolt from behind, her arms wrap around me. Her breath warm on my neck, waking me from my trance. I whistle to Ash, leaping from the tall grass like a dolphin as he bounds towards us with a flailing tail. I turn back to face her, and reaching out, I grasp her hands. Her eyes reflect the moonlight, and her smile is soft and warm. She softly speaks as she turns, "Come on, let's get out of the cold." As she pulls me towards the car, Ash is weaving through the grass in front of us. The car's light is warm and inviting.

The ride back is quiet besides the occasional talking and laughing. It is peaceful, and I am happy. Soon it begins to snow; big white flakes flash past us as if we are entering hyper speed. Quickly, the snow turns to blizzard; all I can see is white. I grip the steering wheel harder, my knuckles white as bone. Despite all this, she is calm beside me with a soft smile as she assures me everything will be ok. I relax a little as I take the next turn, and two bright lights fill my vision as pain shoots through my body. Everything goes black.

I jolt awake in a cold sweat. I gasp for air. After calming down, I rest my head back on my pillow, slowly turning to find the bed empty. A lump at my feet begins to stretch. Rubbing my eyes, I sit up; my muscles aching with every movement. A pair of eyes dark like river rocks stares at me from a mass of fur. Reaching out, I scratch the top of Ash's head; his tail comes alive. Slowly, I stand to get dressed. As I pull a shirt over my head, I glance around the room; it's empty except for the bed and some boxes. A ding breaks the silence. My phone lights up with a notification. Shit, it's 9:40; I am going to be late. Quickly, I pull on a pair of jeans and I dash out into the hallway and through the maze of boxes to the bathroom. Hastily brushing my teeth, I look into the mirror: a pair of steely grey eyes stares back. My mop of chocolate hair stands in every direction. I try to brush it down with no success. I decide to shove it in a hat. I grab an apple as I rush out the door.

"I'm sorry. I know I'm late," I say, taking a seat.

"At least you're here," she says, smiling. "Shall we continue from last time?"

"Sure." My fingers twitch across the velvet chair covering. My eyes dart across the books on the shelves.

Opening her notebook, she says, "How have your dreams been since our last meeting?"

My attention is now on the window. "It hasn't changed. It's been the same dream every night. Some nights I don't sleep just to escape it." I bring my attention back to her. "My visions when I close my eyes have definitely dissipated, but they still happen."

"I see. Has there been any change in the dreams, any alteration at all?"

Staring out the window again, I'm focused on a man and a dog across the street in my head. I can hear her voice and see her smile; they begin to fade. The therapist's voice comes again.

"Hello, Leo?"
"Yes, sorry, for the most part they stay the same, but last night it was the most vivid it's ever been."

"I'm sorry, I understand how painful that must be for you." She looks up from her journal at me. "Have you gone to see her?"

I fidget uncomfortably. "No, I can't bring myself to do it."

"The accident was ten months ago; you haven't gone once. We talked about this in our last meeting." Her face is now full of worry.

I can't look her in the eyes; I avert my attention to the books again. "I know, I'm just scared of what will happen, of what I have done."

"It's not your fault. You had no control over it; besides, it's in the past believe seeing her might help you get over that."

My eyes glaze as I force myself to focus back on her. My body just wants to crumple. I shift in my chair. "But what if she wakes up and doesn't know who I am? What if she forgets everything we've done?" My heart sinks as the words leave my lips. The weight of the sentence hangs in silence in the room.

"That's why you need to be there for when she does awaken; she's going to need you."

"I will try this week, I promise." Looking at the clock, she closes her notebook. "Looks like we are out of time for today. Does Friday sound good for our next meeting?"

"Yeah, sure. Could we possibly do it later in the day?"

"Sure, I'll find a time and let you know."

"Thank you. Have a good day." Standing, I feel lightened as I walk to the door.

My walk home is faster than normal. My mind clouded with thoughts. I don't pay attention to the world around me like I usually do: all the details are just blurs. Ash snapped me out of my trance as soon as I opened the door. Kneeling to scratch his ears, he goes straight to my pocket. Feeling it, I found the apple from this morning. Not being very hungry after today's session, I walk to the kitchen to put it back, Ash in close pursuit. In the kitchen, I was suddenly filled with loneliness as I stood there in silence, surveying all the boxes, and barren walls. Not being able to take it anymore, I moved to the living room. Turning on the tv, I flop onto the couch. Ash is quick to follow, curling into a ball at my side. Again, a wave of loneliness washes over me. I feel small in the empty room, looking at the walls just imagining them covered in her art. Closing my eyes, I picture the day we moved in.

Trucks full of boxes that contained our whole lives. She was wearing overalls over a brown wool sweater and a yellow bandana to keep her hair up. Her smile was like a ray of light as she swept from room to room, explaining the possibilities of each one. That evening when she had to go to work, I promised her I would only unpack when we were together. It was that night, the night an hour before she was home that I made plans to surprise her with a star gazing dinner to celebrate our new house.

I can't bear to think about it anymore. Sitting up, I glance around the room one last time. My eyes stop at the front door; a small white envelope is shoved into the pile of shoes. As I walk over, I'm overcome with dread; I can make out the red letters of the hospital's logo. Picking up the crumpled, slightly muddy envelope, my hands began to shake. It must have been delivered this morning and in my rush, I didn't see it; the door must have pushed it aside. Taking out the letter, I quickly scan the message, my eyes darting from word to word until they stop on one sentence. Quickly, I reread it just to make sure. "She's in stable condition, her brain has been showing more activity, she's expected to wake up soon." The letter drifts from my hands. I don't know what to do with myself. My mind is a tangled mess of emotions. In the chaos that is my mind I know that I need to see her as soon as possible. Rushing around the house again, I quickly pull on shoes, and in the process almost topple over. Grabbing my jacket, I reach for the doorknob. I stop; I know the hospital is all the way across town and I don't have the time to walk. Looking at the key rack beside the door I stare at the car keys hanging from the hook. I've only driven one time since the accident. I promised myself I would never do it unless it was an emergency. I couldn't bring myself to sit back in a driver's seat, but right now, right now is important. Still, part of me hated it. Forcing myself, I reach out and take the keys. Quickly, I leave the house.

Pulling into the parking lot, I find a spot by the door, and the massive building looms in front of me. Fueled by adrenaline, I quickly walked through the doors and straight to the front desk. My heart was racing. The lady at the front desk was very kind, even though I'm pretty sure I was speaking gibberish.
Smiling, she said, "She's on the 3rd floor, room 18."

"Thank you." Turning quickly, I feel my heart rate rapidly increase.

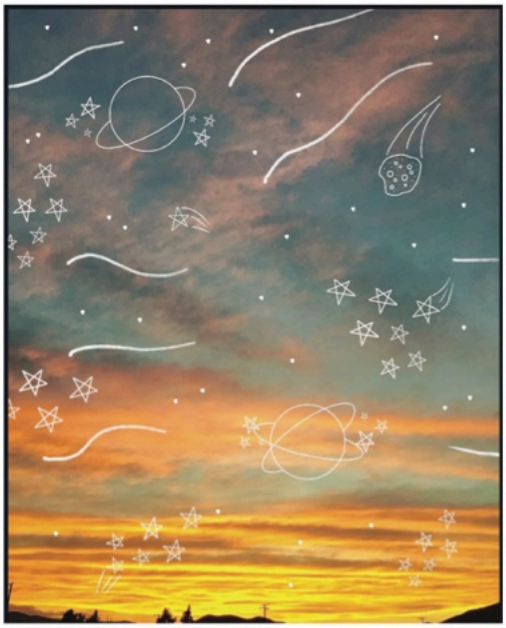
I shuffled to the elevator and got in. Despite being a large elevator, I began to feel claustrophobic. Luckily it wasn't long to the third floor. The doors open, and I stare down the white hallway. Frozen in place, fear grips my mind. The doors began to close. Quickly I shook myself from my trance and continued down the hall. As I got close, the room numbers stared down at me. 16... 17... 18... My heart skips a beat as I approach the door. The sound of the door echoes in my ears, holding my breath as I enter the room. My eyes lock onto her face. It's peaceful, devoid of emotions, but it's far from dead. Her skin is glowing in the lamp light. Walking closer, my eyes become glazed and my vision blurs. Reaching out, I grasp her hand; it fills my hand like a lost puzzle piece. I swear she's smiling but her mouth remains straight. Carefully I make my way to the chair in the corner, slumping into it. I begin to nod off. My eyes flutter, then shut, but this time I'm not standing in the cold on that hill. Now it's just darkness and a voice that warms my soul and soothes my mind.

"You're finally here..."

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Lauren Lysager



Ellie Doney



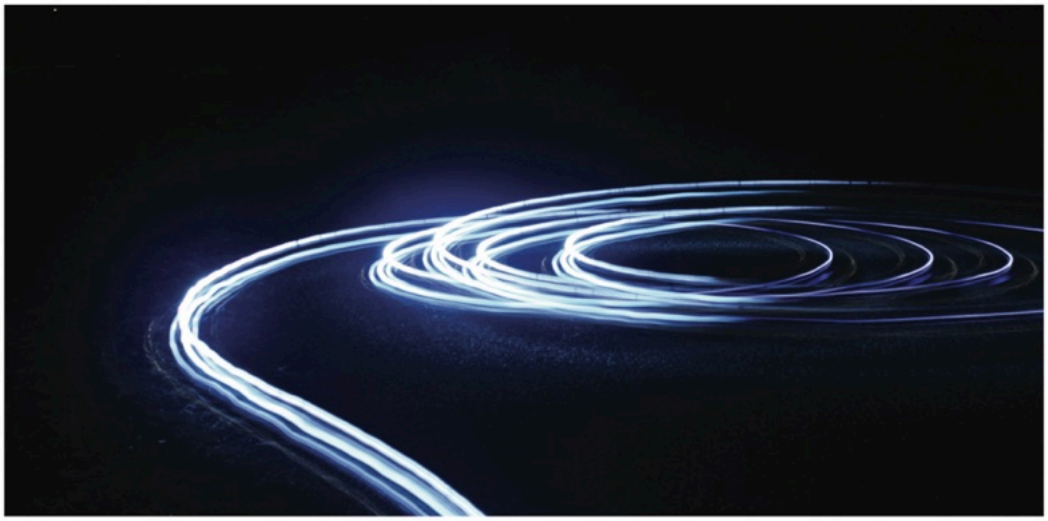
Cassandra Hawks



Olivia Davidson



Kaylee Stewart



Gabriel Sova

Wishing Well

By Rylee Reynolds

My hands were clammy as I approached the old and dilapidated well. I kept aware of the beaten-down path I tread upon as not to trip on the gnarled roots that littered the ground beneath my feet. The air was pleasant and warm, contrasting with the cold fingers of fear curling around my throat. A sour stench that I couldn't quite place lingered rancidly around the area. The surrounding woods loomed silently, almost daring me to escape into its dense expanse, knowing I would be lost in its clutches forever.

I continued closer to the well, as I grew nearer the air seemed to buzz with tangible anticipation, but for what I did not know. The sour smell and a new scent of decay and mildew became overwhelming, drowning out my other senses. Every atom of my being told me to turn and flee from the well, and the townspeople's warnings to stay away only solidified the feeling; however, the enticing promise of a wish urged me on. I needed the wish, for what was unimportant. Steeling my nerves, I finally reached the well, close enough now to see the detailing of the damp stone that made up its circular structure. I placed my hands on the outer edge of the well, feeling the cold and slimy algae that covered it and peered over the edge. The well was filled with murky green water and patches of scum floating on the water's surface. My blood grew cold as I caught a glimpse of my reflection in the murky water only to see a face that was marred with repulsive warts, skin a sickly shade of ashen grey, and its face split by a gruesome smile reflecting only malice. I gasped and jumped away from the edge of the well. Fearfully I pulled out a small pocket mirror to check my reflection, afraid of what I may see. I sighed in relief to find that my ordinary hazel eyes and freckle speckled face stared back at me in the small reflection of the mirror. Hesitantly, I peered down into the well's water once more and was once again met with the monstrous reflection, confused I reached out to touch the surface of the water. Small ripples spread across the surface, but the reflection remained solid, unaffected by the rippling water. I gaped at the surface of the water as the hellish reflection seemed to rise up. I didn't understand what was happening until the creature's slimy arms wrapped around my throat and dragged me beneath the surface of the water, down, down, down to the depths where my bones would forever rest, among the others of past victims seduced by the promise of a wish.

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Do Not Weep For Me

By Rylee Reynolds

Do not weep for me

Here liquid words flood my ears

Plunged beneath the sea

I close my eyes and embrace the serenity

All at once there are no longer tears

Do not weep for me

Suspended in my own melancholy, there is clarity

Here all woes disappear

Plunged beneath the sea

I scream within the solemnity

But am no longer controlled by my fears

Do not weep for me

Submerged for all eternity

Here all hope reappears

Plunged beneath the sea

There is undeniable divinity

And under the sea it appears

Do not weep for me

Plunged beneath the sea



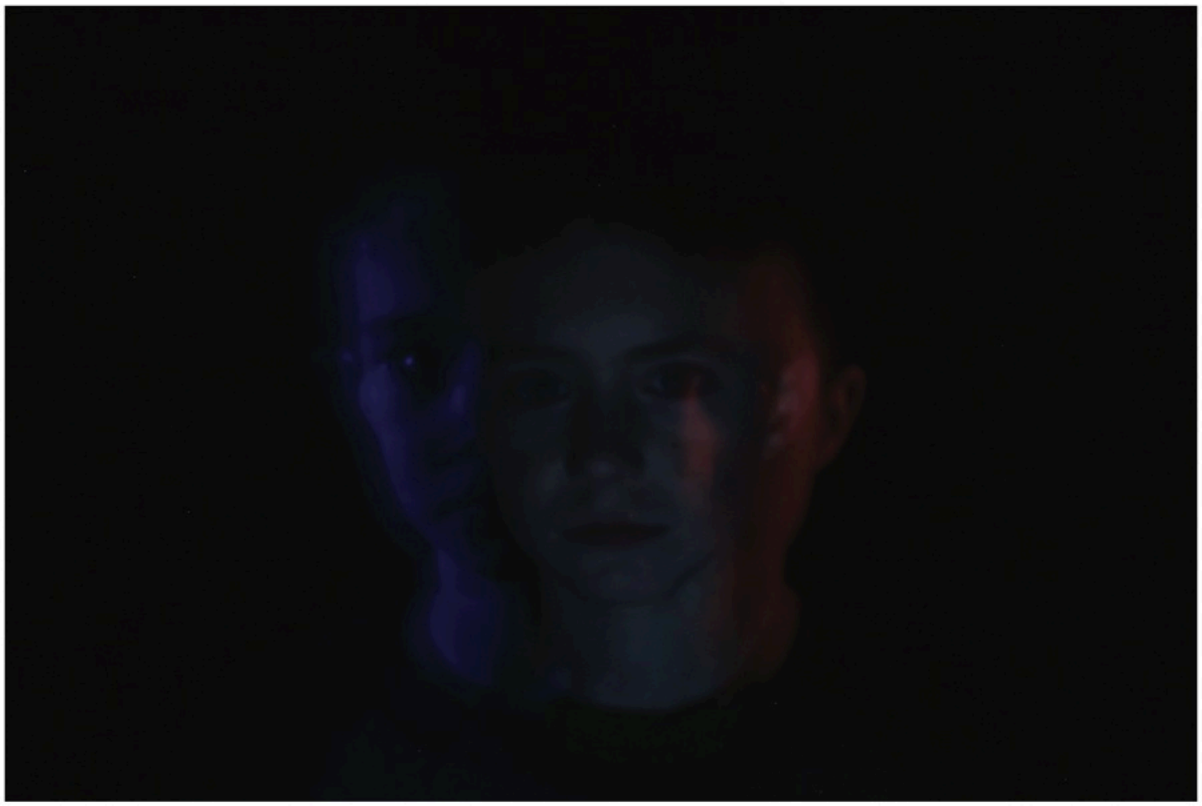
Nyeala Herndon

Pen and Ink 2021

Am I Not Good Enough?

By Lillian Ware

I try, and I try to win this argument that is in my mind. The voice keeps telling me that I am not good enough. All I can do is ask myself... am I not good enough? I keep asking myself this question that I haven't figured out the answer to; that I am destined to know. I feel like I am drowning in the negativity that is in the statements you say. You tell me I am fine, and that I shouldn't worry because I am feeling nothing, but emotions, and stress; to me I feel like my demons are trying to free themselves. That I am being a burden, but I am not a burden on trying to figure out how to save myself from this war that I may not survive. You tell me that I am nothing, making me feel like I was just stabbed in the back by a dagger that is as sharp as the words that I would describe the war that I am in. You tell me that I am a failure, which sinks in like the Titanic after it hit that iceberg and sunk to the bottom of the ocean. I feel as if I am not good enough to go to school, which I need to educate me for the future. I feel as if I will fail at everything, causing me to get Phobophobia, the fear of failure. Every word you say tells me I am not good enough, but the words and memories that I pushed in the farthest part of my brain resurface. They show me I am good enough, and that I belong. I ask again; am I not good enough?



Gabriel Sova



Megan McCauley



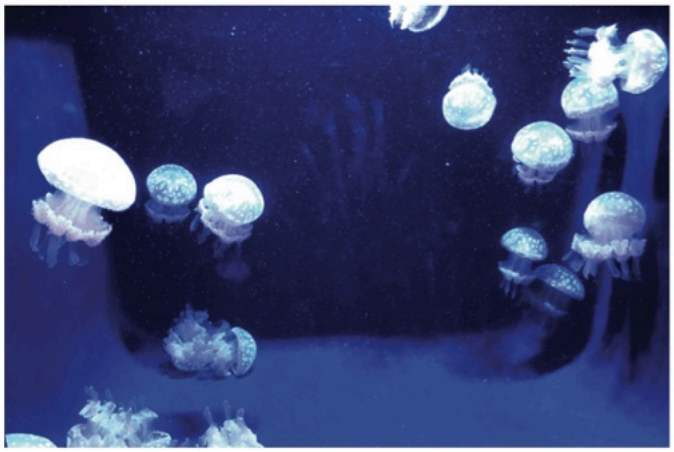
Elsa Grebenc



Ethan Martin



Allison McJannet



Shea Thronson

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Lilacs and....

By Angelo Bender

There is a lilac bush to the side of my house, just a little down the way.

It is a long, narrow path constructed of youthful bramble and lifely hopes.

Wild creatures of the land roam freely in this little trial. Frogs sing the songs of nature just a little down the way at a river nearby.

A haven to all, that gentle lilac bush.

There is a lilac bush I can see from my window.

Nights when the moon's light illuminates all and a gentle breeze sways that lovely purple dotted bush, and its scent travels a little way down the way, up and through my window, hugging me tightly as I lie awake each night deliberating my actions.

Even when not in its presence, it gives to all, that gentle lilac bush.

Off to the side of my bricky, red house
Lays a gently sloping hill with streams that meander their way through,

All meeting at that gentle lilac bush.

An oasis to all.

Purple petals dance around that sweet, green shrub like fairies on an autumn's full moon.

So warming; so endearing.

A place of rest and ease, that gentle lilac bush.

For,

you see,

There is a lilac bush a little way down the way that fills my days with lovely smells and pleasant sights.

Surely,

for you too,

there is a lilac bush just a little down the way.



Elsie Ambrose



Raelynn Staley

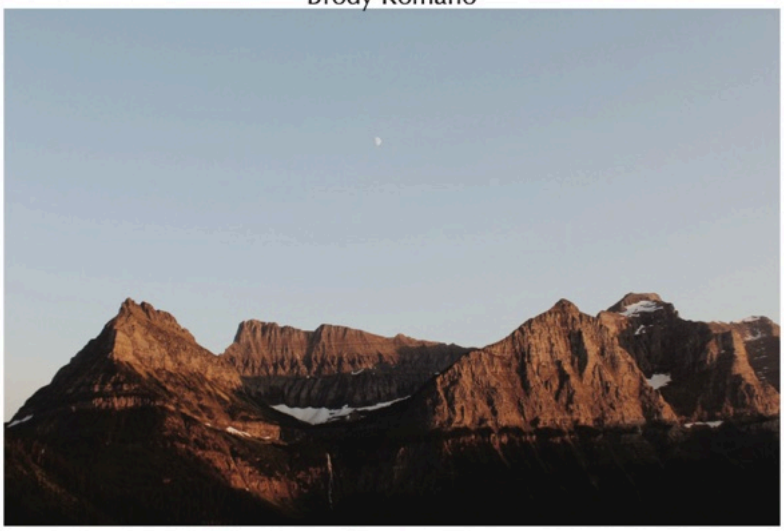


Isabel Sutherland

Pen and Ink 2021



Brody Romano



Holly Peterson



Hailey Cox

The Army of the Sky

By Ethan Hall

There is said to be billions of them. They fall from the sky, seemingly out of nowhere. They kill all the living plants in the area, and make all the animals go into a deep sleep. Each little soldier is a cold killer, at least that's what I've learned from my Papa's description. My Momma says that they're beautiful and bring joy. Momma says the little soldiers aren't soldiers at all, but little angels kissing our cheeks as they fall down to earth and give plants and animals time to rest after a hard year. I've never seen these little guys before because my Papa said they are afraid of Texas, but Pa said he saw the TV lady say they're coming tonight!

I'm not sure if I should be excited or scared, but I am prepared for either! I have my big ol' coat on for protection, but I wish I had Sadie to protect me.

It was almost bedtime, and as I was watching my show I heard my Momma shout for me in excitement, so I tuned out Tom and Jerry and made it to her. I have to say that I did scream as I ran to Momma, but she said not to worry. She says that, but then has me put loads of armor on for protection! I felt like a big ol' knight; she had me put on huge pants, mittens, the biggest coat I've ever worn, and even two pairs of socks! I then felt safe, protected, and ready for battle. I still felt scared since Pa seems to hate this, but I trust Mom. She says it's time to go outside, but I begged her not to; however, it was too late. Mom says, "It'll be ok" and I prepare for war! I squeezed my eyes shut and held on to Momma's arm as she walked us outside, and I hid in her arms from the little army. I could feel their cold powers all over and tickles on my neck which makes me open my eyes.

Papa was right, there were billions of them all over the place. The tree house was taken over; the barn and Sadie's old dog house were all covered. Then they start sticking to my armor! I jump back to Momma, but this doesn't seem evil; it's pretty. These little guys aren't hurting me, maybe these are little angels. Maybe it's Sadie saying hello! They stuck to everything and just laid on the ground. We played and ran around; it felt like I was in Star Wars with all the stars flying past me. Momma and I jumped in and then she threw some at me! It hit me right in the face! Then it bit me! It was so cold and my cheek felt rough; she said it turned red as well! I ran inside and Momma followed me, saying it's ok. I told her I didn't like the bad guys hurting me, and she laughed at me. "Oh, Sweetie, that's not an army. It's snow." This snow thing was scary but fun, and I want more of it. This was an army, an army of angels and they are both beautiful and fierce. Momma says we gotta stay inside and have hot coco before we can go out again, and that's a deal I can live with.



Aria Malkin

Pen and Ink 2021

HIS NAME IS RAY

By Eowyn Malcomson

HIS NAME IS RAY

But my mother disagrees

She doesn't understand

To you I guarantee

and she doesn't try to either

Every time she said "she"

My stomach shriveled up

She said that "she" was crazy

I just wanted to interrupt-

HIS NAME IS RAY

I wanted to fall into the sink

Drip away with the soap bubbles

Maybe if I was made of cleaner stuff

I could wash away all my troubles

But I know if I'm floundering in a pond

He's drowning in an ocean

I'll find him downstairs

And then I'll apologize

"I'm sorry she calls you 'she'"

"I'm sorry I couldn't meet her eyes"

For you

Even if it's just a phase

I'll still call you Ray

Just because you're young

Doesn't mean you're insane

HIS NAME IS RAY



Jared Nelson

Monster Blood

By Tony Martin

I'm a hideous monster, a reject from my own kind

All I can think about is the life that I've left behind

I walk the halls with my head hanging low

I feel like I'm buried 10 feet under snow

My screams stay silent, my pain hides away

I'm told to be her, I'm told to obey

What can I say when I'm told to behave?

Shut up, sit down; that's all they can say

My demons, they haunt me every single day

Maybe they will love me tomorrow

Or will I still be stuck in this life of sorrow?

I wish I could just take a break

Breathe

I don't care anymore

Can you hear me now?

That isn't my name nor my pronoun

Respect is earned not given

This is my right to be me and to be free

So, hi I'm Tony

And I love Halloween

Pen and Ink 2021



Jenna Rahn



Myha Fayant



Karis Malkin



Ella Shropshire

The Voyage of the Coppered Dragon

By Robert Stimpson

The wind howled overhead, whipping the ship's dragon-marked flag about as her narrow hull sliced through the growing waves conjured up by the storm. The sailors below tugged on the ropes, trying desperately to pull the sails back against the wind so that the ship could better catch the powerful gusts as they were showered by briny spray thrown up by her hull. The Captain furiously barked orders to the Helmsman as the poor man did his best to drag the wheel to port, against the way that the ship wanted to go. He eyed the shore, moving past at a frightening rate no more than a hundred and fifty meters off the starboard gunwale.

Meanwhile, the Captain eyed the other danger, nearly directly fore. At the very edge of his vision, hidden somewhat by the sheets of rain but ever growing nearer, was a row of large and sharp rocks. The near-perfect arc of craggy, pointed rocks reminded him of the maw of some gigantic predatory creature, a kraken maybe, although he was almost certain that they didn't come into water this shallow. However impenetrable the Red Rocks looked at the moment, he knew that there was a path through them, although it was only thirty meters or so wide. Only two ships had made it through this passage before that he knew of, both with far more experienced crews than his. Nevertheless, the cargo needed to be delivered, and he knew his duty. Once they made it through the rocks, they would have cut three days from their journey, and then they would have a straight shot to Luskan.

He glanced around, then up at the storm above them, and wished that it would abate. Such a storm hadn't been seen in this area for a good twenty years, and it made the worst possible conditions for such a run. Here in this passage speed could be the death of them, but in such a storm it was impossible to not go fast. Additionally, the Helmsman would have an even tougher time steering in such powerful winds. He looked over at the Helmsman, whose face was knitted with worry lines, despite his young age. In fact, at that very moment, the entire crew was beginning to realise the reality of the situation ahead of them. A figurative wave of furrowed brows and squinting eyes swept over the ship, just as she collided with a massive literal wave, sending crates and men alike flying. The Captain stumbled and fell to the deck of the aftcastle, and the Helmsman held onto the wheel as tight as he possibly could, barely managing to remain upright. The crew got to their feet slowly, and the Captain did a quick headcount and checked the water behind them, ensuring that no one had fallen overboard. A bolt of lightning arced through the sky, and the boom of thunder rolled over the ship as she raced onwards, towards the Red Rocks.

The Helmsman jerked the wheel to starboard at the Captain's order. The ship was now less than thirty meters from the rocks, and the passage through them was visible now, if worryingly small. The wind still whipped behind her, and she raced along, faster than the Helmsman and the Captain both knew she should. But there was nothing to be done about it now; if they tried to raise the sail to slow her down they would be liable to lose the sail in the process. The Helmsman gritted his teeth and slowly dragged the wheel a bit to port, which was more difficult than turning starboard as the wind was pushing the ship to starboard. The ship dashed between the first two rocks of the gauntlet, and the crew let out a cheer, half to celebrate making it in, and half to pray that they would make it out. The Helmsman relaxed a bit, the good thing about this passage was that it was basically arrow straight the whole way through; as long as he could keep her straight, they should be through the red rocks in a few hours.

The Captain, however, was nowhere near relaxation. As the crew talked and laughed amongst themselves, he looked around, training his eyes on

the rocks surrounding them; was that a bone on that rock over there? A piece of a plank on that one? That one definitely had a bit of a sail draped over it. The crew had heard the legends of the nimble ships and their brave crews who had made it through the passage and the doomed vessels who had been slashed to bits upon the sharp rocks. But he knew the name of every vessel who had tried at this passage, exactly how many men had died here, not just to the dagger-like rocks and the sharks, but to the deep, cold waters and swift currents that carried sailors for miles and dashed them against rocks, even if they escaped the sinking vessel. He had known some of the captains who, through folly or necessity, had tried at this passage. Their deaths had not been glamourous sacrifices in the name of duty or exploration, but awful tragedies, brutal murders carried out by the unforgiving gods. The Captain knew the fate that almost certainly awaited them, and he was terrified of it.

The Helmsman looked over at the Captain, and saw his hand shake as it rested protectively on the hilt of his longsword. He had never seen his Captain look so deeply scared; the man's face was three shades paler than normal, and the worry lines crossing his face might well have been painted on with ink. This Captain had helped him and the rest of the crew through a lot of hard times on this boat and had been a stalwart pillar of calm for his whole tenure aboard. If the Captain was worried, that made him worried too. The Helmsman heard a shout from the deck, and whipped his head around. The ship had drifted worryingly to starboard, and he instantly reacted, wrenching the obstinate wheel to port. She slid back onto a straight path, and not an instant too soon. One of the crewmen threw him a rotten glance and remarked that "kid did a bang-up job scraping the barnacles off 'er hull." The crew guffawed and returned to their stations as the Helmsman looked away, the blush coming over his face visible even in the low light of the storm.

High above the ship, a Blood Hawk soared through the storm, slightly buffeted by the crosswinds that had sprung up as night fell. It looked down at the sleek, black hull and the massive tangle of rope and fabric above the ship, watching as the sails billowed out and pushed her ever forward. The ship's sleek hull sliced through the waves, allowing her to travel fast, too fast. The Blood Hawk is a wise creature, and it has seen this exact scene before. A ship, going too quick for her own good, dashing to her end. This ship had made it farther than most of the others, and she was rather nimble in her avoidance of the rocks that enclosed her on two sides, but the Blood Hawk was sure that she would eventually meet the same fate as the others. The Blood Hawk accelerated to keep pace with the ship; maybe the sharks would leave it some of the coming feast.

The Captain watched the water ahead of them with the squinted eyes of a hardened soul. He did his best to see past the bow, but the sheets of rain combined with the lightning branching across the entire sky every few seconds made it difficult at best. He paused his train of thought and took a second to squint up at the sky above the ship, the maze pattern of the last lightning bolt still burned into the back of his eyeballs as the next blast of light nearly blinded him. This storm sure did have an unusually high amount of lightning. Maybe the gods did hate them after all; no, it wasn't them the gods hated, it was Him. After all, they were the only ones that could know of what he had done, and retribution had to come somehow. He glanced around at his crew; he wished that they didn't have to be involved in all this. They may have been a salt-stained, foul-mouthed bunch, but they were still far too innocent to be mixed up in the Captain's affairs. Especially the Helmsman. Hell, it was doing him a disservice to even call him a man, the kid was barely out of school. The Captain wished for his sake more than anyone else's on the boat that they made it through alive. Even the Captain himself wouldn't mind finding his rest at

sea, attempting the most dangerous run on the Sword Coast, but for the Kid and the Client they had to make it through.

The Captain glanced up at the sky once more, and between two flashes of lightning, he saw something. The strange pastel streaks of light that graced the night sky of Toril--thought by some to be the manifestations of the Gods and their realms--had shifted. The pale arcs had all turned to point slightly towards the starboard side of the ship. The captain may not have been a religious man, but he knew when the heavens were telling him something, and he knew what to do.

The Helmsman nearly jumped out of his boots when he felt the cold, gloved hand on his shoulder. The lightning, the thunder, the rain, the scared looks in the faces of the crew had all set him on edge, and when the Captain tapped his shoulder, he would later swear that he felt his soul leave his body for an instant. "Sorry Kid," he heard uttered in the low, monotone voice of the captain, "Can you take us twenty degrees or so to starboard?"

"Are you sure, sir? I can't quite see but I'm pretty sure the shore's in that direction" he asked, preparing to allow the wheel to slide a bit to the starboard.

"There's danger in every direction, kid, trust me" the Captain replied. The Helmsman let the ship drift a bit to starboard. After all, the Captain had been at sea for longer than he had been alive and certainly knew best. The crew looked up at the aftcastle, clearly confused, but saw the Captain looking as steady and sure as ever, and returned to their tasks grumbling.

"When should I straighten her out, Captain?" The Helmsman asked, his voice starting to quaver, just a bit.

The Captain didn't even look back down at him before answering, "I'll tell you when kid, don't worry." The Helmsman turned back toward the bow, not exactly reassured. He tightened his grip on the wheel as his tension grew, his knuckles growing paler almost instantly. He and the captain both looked on, his face showing nothing but fear, the captain's nothing but stiff resolve even as it masked a much deeper dread. After all, the Helmsman was still young, and his youth gave him some kind of sense of immortality. Compared to the Captain, at least on the inside, he was positively calm.

They both stared forward in the oppressive silence, pretending there was anything to look at other than the bow of the ship and the endless expanse of fog, populated only by the raindrops. The Helmsman wasn't quite sure, but he thought they had been headed towards starboard for a bit too long. He was about to speak up to ask the Captain if they should turn back, but just as the words began to form, they stopped dead in his throat. He froze as the second worst sound one can hear aboard a ship (behind only the quartermaster calling that they were out of grog) hit his ears. The dragging screech as the ship rubbed up alongside a rock, that very first crack as the hull was pierced, the seemingly ages-long moments as the grinding noise continued, the ship's momentum dragging it along the rock. Screams filtered up from below decks, and images of what might be going on down there filled the Helmsman's head. The tension that had filled the vessel moments before shattered, as the crew abandoned their stations and ran. This was fruitless, as there was nowhere for them to go. The Helmsman froze, his hands still clamped onto the wheel as he glanced around, feeling the ship quake and vibrate through the wood. He saw as the crew ran about in a panic, stumbling about as the ship lurched on. He looked behind him and saw the captain stumble, and fall.

The ship's inertia carried it forward, off of the first rock. However, it continued on careening towards another, much larger rock. The captain fell, catching himself upon his hand, but before he could steady himself a jolt of pain shot up through his arm, forcing him to fall to the deck. He saw the Helmsman finally unfreeze and

jerk the wheel to the side in an attempt to avoid the other rock, but it was no good. The ship was already too damaged to make it, and they had left the safe channel and were now in the thick of the rocks. The ship slammed into the rock, its near unstoppable force meeting the totally immovable stone. The rock won. There was a crash as wood exploded and shards flew in every direction; the entire front section of the boat crunched and shattered. The captain saw men in every direction falling or leaping off of the boat, and looking down into the water they were leaping into filled him with dread as he saw fins moving about. Other men were still on the remaining section of the ship, but only because they couldn't move, impaled by the flying shards of wood or the broken sections of railing, covering what remained of the deck with a slick red film. He saw one man screaming in pain with a wooden shard impaled directly into his left eye, stumbling about the deck before tripping and falling over the railing, into the sea below. There was an audible crack in the instants after the ship made contact with the rock, as the mizzen-mast broke off due to the strain, and seemingly in slow motion began to fall, directly towards the captain.

The captain maneuvered his arms under him and attempted to push himself up onto his knees, but the pain in his arm was too much and he fell back down onto the deck, landing on his side this time. He saw the Helmsman -the innocent kid who shouldn't have even been here- take a running leap off of the side of the ship. One benefit his youth gave him was that fearlessness and strength; and he hit the rock, scrabbling up the side of it with the help of its coarse, granite surface. The captain rolled back over onto his back and looked up at the sky. He watched as a large Reddish Hawk circled overhead. And then, his vision was obstructed by the falling mast as the world went black.



Kendall Schlosser



Ethan Martin

Mind of Darkness

By Lillian Ware

A As the waves crash along the rocks,

B Below the foams of the ocean, with life that,

C Calls out to me, and saves me from the thoughts in my head,

D Darkening my imagination from reality when,

E Every outcome and possibility are flying at me,

F Following my every movement,

G Giving me this feeling of discomfort,

H Holding me back from my future, and my dreams,

I I try to get away from the fact that I am trying to survive,

J Just let me survive through the rest of the day,

K Keep me from laying on my deathbed that my mind has made for me,

L Let me open my heart to other people so that,

M My mind does not die out,

N Now help me find comfort, and reassurance,

O Only my mind is holding the rest of me hostage,

P Please save me from my mind of darkness, and fire so that I do not,

Q Question my existence,

R Release me from my mind, and soul,

S So that I can be free from my dark and evil ways,

T To show people that I care,

U Use me to show people that they can change,

V Visit me when you can so that I will know who I am,

W Why do I have to be so dark, and closed off,

X X-ing myself out of conversations,

Y You need to save me just like people save,

Z Zebras from going extinct



Paedyn Miller-Wollenberg

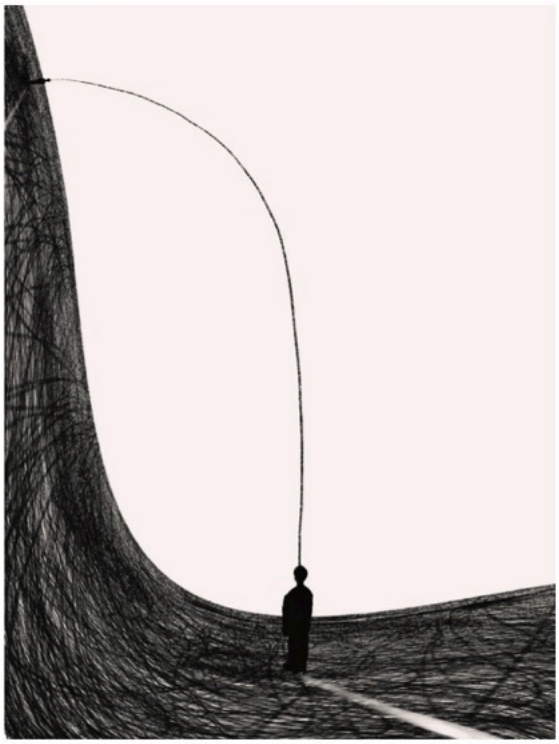
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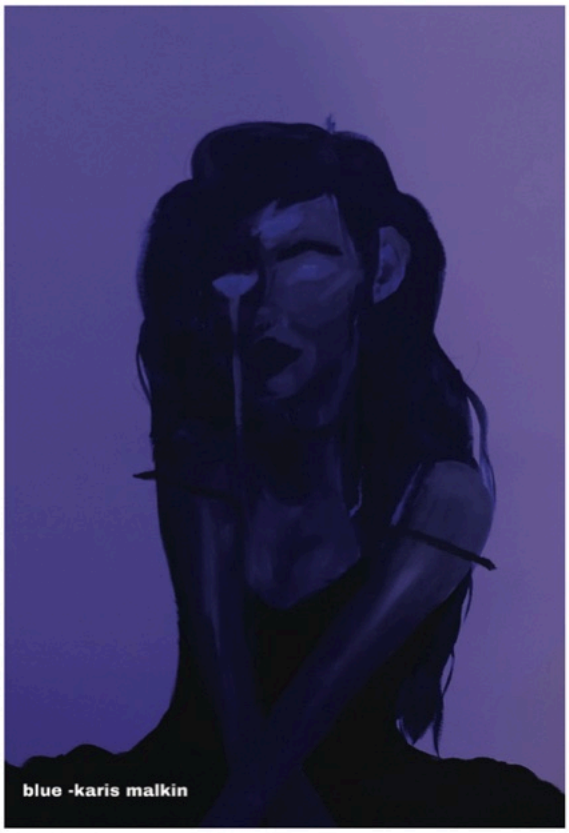
Nyeala Herndon



Kallie Lahti



Aria Malkin



Karis Malkin

Real Pain

By Lillian Ware

A All the words you say to me get trapped in my,

B Brain covering up the positives, only showing the negatives,

C Closing up the wall of my mind into reinforced steel,

D Damaging my will to live the will that has kept me alive,

E Every time I hear a word that you throw at me like a,

F Flying frisbee that is made from negative atoms,

G Gravitating into my ears all the way to my brain and staying there,

H Holding me back from the things I love the most,

I I try to escape from this cage of hatred, but I cannot, I am,

J Just trying to hold on tight, for the rollercoaster of life that,

K Keeps going down, and never up,

L Leaving me to worry and feel left out or even alone,

M Making me go up to the surface to breathe,

N Never leaving me alone, and just sticking,

O Opening up my mind to negativity instead of,

P Positivity, that will lift my spirit instead of lowering it,

Q Queens and Kings are who you are, and I am the peasant that,

R Reads your life story and tells you that you need to,

S Save us from ourselves, but no we are not allowed to be,

T Trusted, while you get to be, you're never able to save,

U Us from our minds, and even ourselves,

V Visiting us for the money and the greed,

W Waiting until we are paralyzed from your comments until we are,

X X-ing ourselves from reality, and as we all do all,

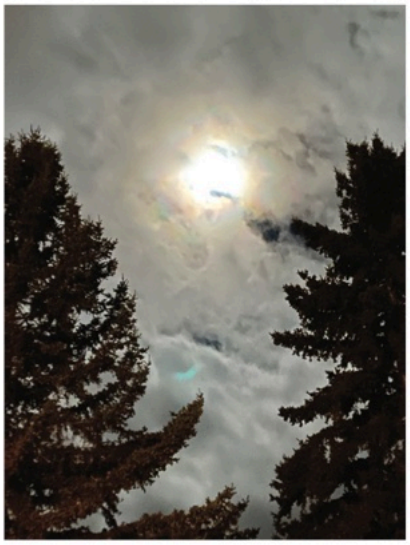
Y You do is watch us as we are trying to survive, we keep killing ourselves until there are,

Z Zero of us alive for you to destroy, this is real pain, not pain that you feel after an injury this is real pain.

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Kylee Hamper



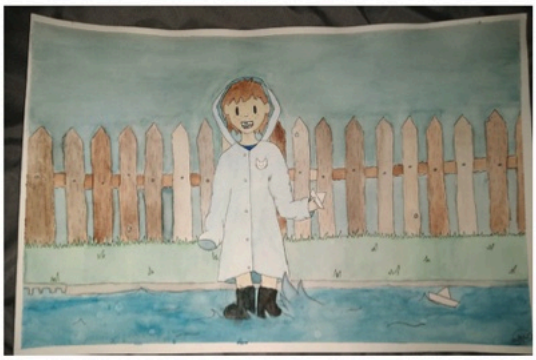
Tizer Kazmierowski



Ashley Boyd



Katie Eanes



Katie Loomer



Cassandra Hawks



Isabel Sutherland

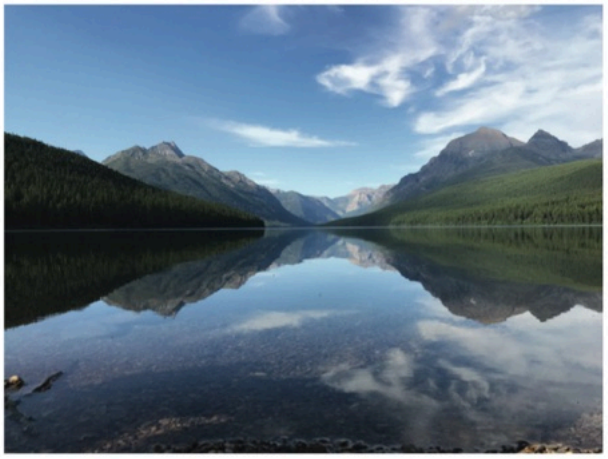


Isabel Sutherland

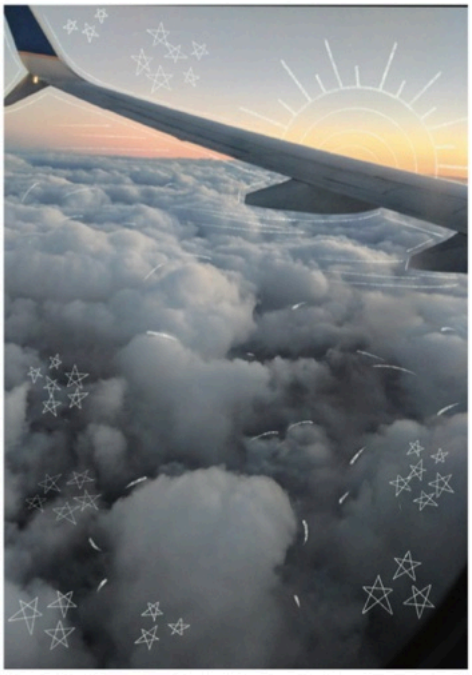


Summer Palmer

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Holly Peterson



Ellie Doney



Allison McJannet



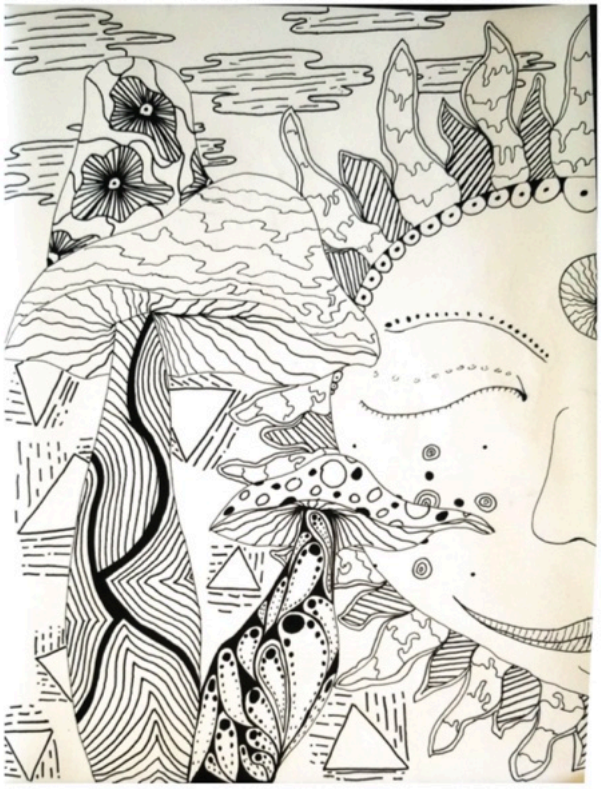
Nikki Backeberg



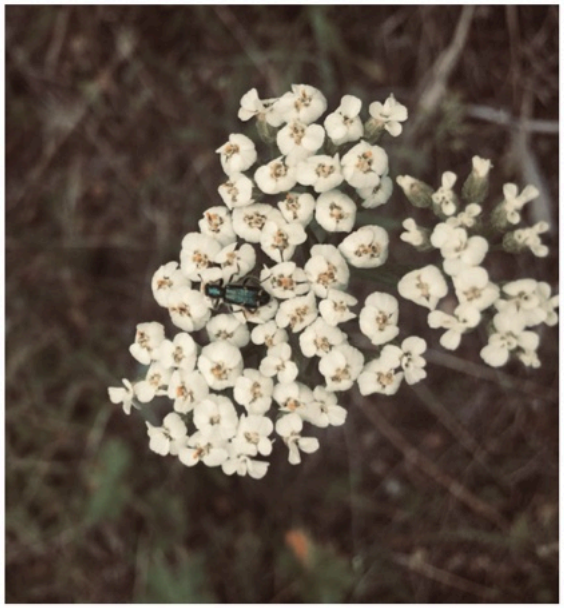
AnnaBelle Robinson



Ella Rowland



Kjehl Campbell

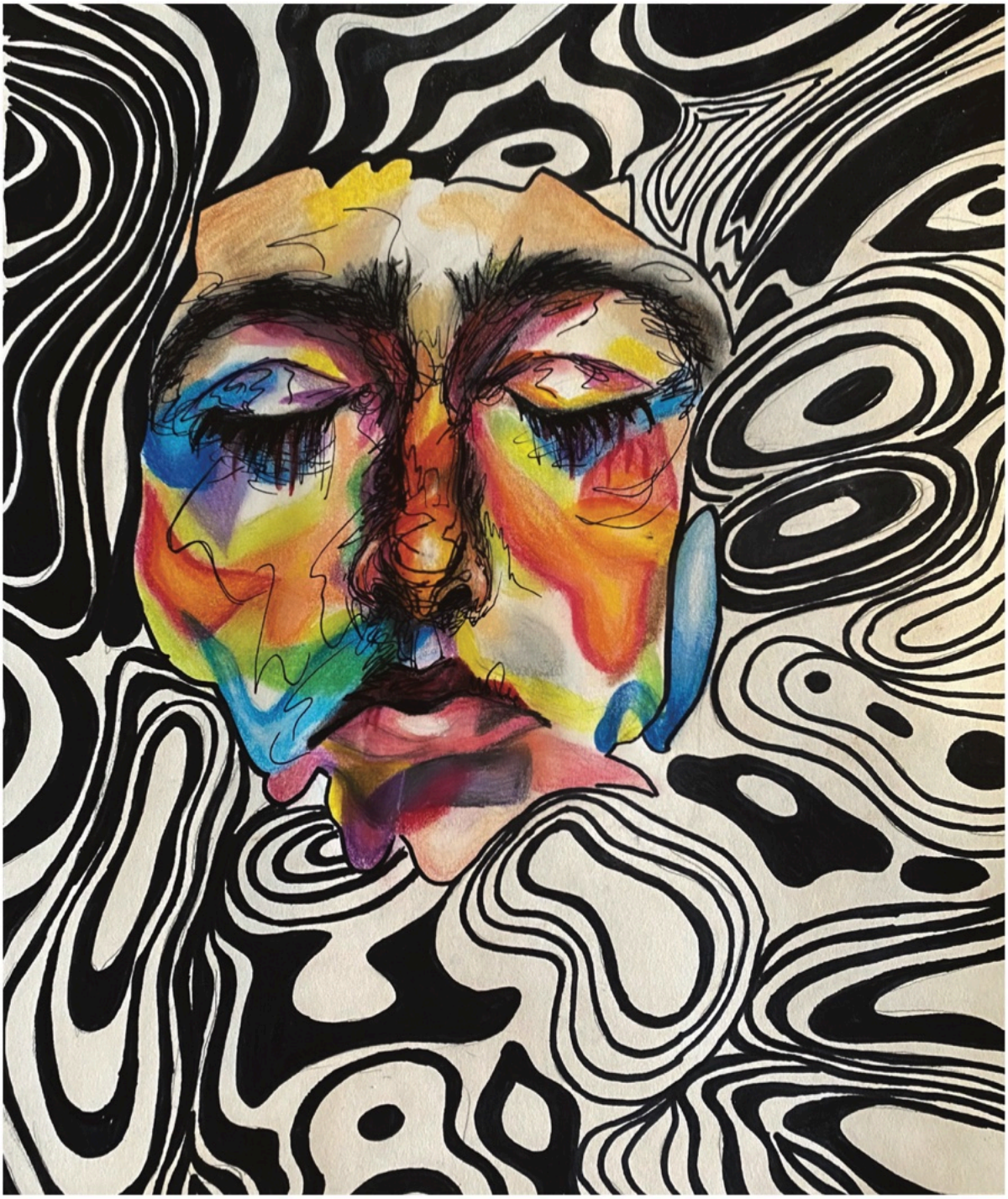


Kylee Hamper



Hunter Redfern

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Avery Schlosser



Holly Peterson

Mirror

By Eowyn Malcomson

I was looking at myself in a two way mirror, with the world looking at me from the other side. But the only thing I saw was my dirty reflection in the old mirror before me. Alone and staring.

You hit the window from the other side. The reflection cracked. Some of the dirt was shaken off. I blinked. I couldn't see you, but I wanted to. The first thing I wanted in forever.

Thank God for Christmas Lights

By Andrea Stalnaker

"Did you see the lights on that one?" Excitement radiated off Niki's voice.

With my eyes still glued on the tunnel of light around the dark road, I plainly replied, "Yes, just like the last two houses."

"But that last house had a blow-up Frosty the Snowman!" she whined.

"Oh, thank God for Frosty," I laughed.

There were no other cars on the road. It was past midnight; the only reason Niki and I weren't in our beds was because we came from Dean's holiday party at his house. He and his roommates went to college in another city, so it took us at least an hour to get back to our campus. Niki convinced me to go; I only knew Dean through Niki. It was a fun party, until someone drank too much spiked eggnog and threw up all over the kitchen sink. That's what told everyone that the party was over.

"Are you sure we should have left them? I mean, couldn't we have helped them clean up?" Niki glanced out at the dark window.

"It's not our fault that the kid couldn't handle his booze, it's their house, they get to clean the puke off of their sink," I told her.

"Who brought alcohol to the party anyway?"

I slowed down a bit just so I could just look at Niki because of what she said. "Seriously Niki?" turning my head back to the road, "We are college kids that went to another college kid's party, of course some numb-nut is going to bring alcohol."

"But you and I don't drink, Casey," she answered.

"Yeah, but everyone else pretty much does."

It was quiet for the next twenty minutes. The snow started to fall as we left for home, it began slowly and gently. The sky was orange and gold like champagne bubbling over a glass, sweet and chilled. Then snow fell harder and faster down the road as the sky got pitch black in what felt like only a second. The wind brushed snow on the asphalt road as if someone was trying to sweep something away. Houses were only visible every few minutes in the almost vast winter wonderland; the Christmas lights on the roofs and fences whispered, glowing light flashing through the flurry of snowflakes coming from the sky.

"You know what the road ahead looks like, Casey?" Niki asked after thirty minutes of silence.

"What?" I thought, amused at what she would say.

"Like we're going Warp-speed, like, in Star Wars?"

That was true; all the large snowflakes tumbling on the windshield and dashing past the windows looked like stars trailing past us and then disappearing behind us. "I was thinking more Spaceballs than Star Wars," I chuckled.

I knew that Niki would be excited about that reference. The first three weeks I moved with her into our dorm she started making movie references, and when I said I didn't get them she told me what kind of rock I was living under, then showed me all the movies she was referencing on weekend nights. Spaceballs was one of the first movies we watched. I had never seen it before. It was kind of stupid, but pretty funny. After finishing a movie, Niki said now I could get all her references.

"I didn't think you liked that movie." She gave me this big smug smile leaning closer to me like she had the upper hand over me.

I took one of my hands off the wheel so I could push her smug face away from my vision. "I liked it; granted, it was pretty dumb, but also a lot of fun to watch. Kinda like watching you try to do a backflip at that

trampoline park we went to with Achu. I just wish one of us could have recorded it." I burst out laughing, then felt a playful punch hit my shoulder.

"You are such a smart-ass, I can't believe I tried my hardest to impress you and Achu! Only for you two to ridicule me. And to think I got you both awesome presents this year," Niki scoffed like she was in a dramatic movie. I kept laughing at her goofy antics until I could see the city lights up ahead.

We were getting closer to the dorm. Arriving in town, all the lampposts had wreaths on them with red bows with gold trim. Streetlights damp with sleepy yellow lights flickering in them. All the stores, apartments, and traffic lights reflected off the wet black road. It looked as if the car was driving on ink. Yellows, blues, and pinks shone in the little puddles and tiny streams flowing in the veins of the road. The sky was still black with snow drifting down, but everything around it wasn't as dark and scary as it had been leaving Dean's house party. All the lights stretched out as far as they could go, leaving the edges of the city looking black and ominous. It was like the whole city was a snow globe resting on the shelf in a Christmas movie.

Downtown was easy to drive through. No cars, roads were snow plowed, and you could see everything around you as you drove. I looked over at Niki when we were at a stop light because she hadn't talked in a little while. Her head was droopy over her shoulders and her arms were crossed in a slouched manner. Her closed eyes flinched like she was dreaming.

"Hey," I shook her shoulder, careful not to startle her. "We're almost there."

Her sleepy brown eyes looked at me, in a dazed way, I probably woke her up from a hazy dream. "O-ok," she yawned, "Are we just pulling up to the parking lot?"

"Yeah, you're going to have to stay awake, because I'm not carrying you up four flights of stairs, got it?" I pulled it into an empty space and parked it. A short, tired snort told me Niki could carry herself up the stairs.

We made our way up the stairs of our building and walked down our hallway floor to our dorm room. As I started to turn the key on the worn-out lock that's been there since the 70's, Niki rested her head on my shoulder and asked, barely awake, "Do you think he'll call you?"

I finished unlocking the door, brushed Niki's extremely dark chocolate colored hair out of my left eye. "I don't know, Niki." I was still looking at that battered doorknob from the 70's. "I'm not sure he'll ever call again."

I pushed the door open, with Niki's head still on my shoulder. I wrapped my left arm around her and we both shuffled into our room like two penguins walking together in the snow. Niki walked up to her loft bed and climbed up, planting her face into her Scooby-Doo pillow. I crawled up onto my bed, sinking a little on top of my lavender colored blanket. I laid down on my Garfield pillowcase I got from my mom, and I tilted my eyes to our one window in our dorm. Niki and I hung multi-color Christmas lights all over the dorm. It gave the room a more, Christmassy feel to it. Looking out of the fogged window, I could still see it snowing outside. The sky wasn't dark as it was during the drive, the glow of all the Christmas lights in the city pierced through the darkness.

"Hey Casey?" I looked at Niki cuddling a Hello Kitty stuffed animal. "It's not your fault."

I raised a tired eyebrow at her, "Are you sure you didn't drink that nog, Niki?"

"Yea, I sure, it's just... you seemed a little distanced lately since you broke up with him, like, sad a lot." She looked at me with doll-like eyes, sleepy and a little sad. Niki always thought if things didn't go my way, it was her fault. She was honestly like a six-year-old in a nineteen-year-old's body. Caring and sweet, but clueless at times.

"It is my fault though; I can be such a bitch to people that it ends up pushing more and more people away." Laying on my back I look at the posters on my side of the ceiling.

"You haven't pushed me away."

I laughed without opening my mouth at that remark. "I couldn't push you away even if I wanted to. You're just so damn happy all the time. You're a lot like my mom, always dragging me along to try new things and to play with the neighborhood kids."

"Your mom's right, you know. And look at all the friends you've made so far. You are basically friends with everybody on our floor! You are so frickin' cool! You can do ballet! That's awesome!" Niki got excited again and she sat up during her speech, still holding Hello Kitty in her arms.

"Where does all the energy come from?" I yawned, closing my eyes but still listening.

"Sugar, most likely," she replied. "But you are one of the coolest chicks I know, Casey. You'll be just fine, and if you really feel bad about hurting people, a good-hearted apology can work."

"If only it was that easy." I started to doze off.
"Well, it's always worth trying, even when it's impossible." Niki's voice became heavy with sleep.

"Maybe, oh and you're wrong about me being the cool one, it's you."

"Thanks, old buddy, old pal, old friend." Niki gave one last sleeping yawn.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah... you're welcome." I quietly remarked.

My body felt lighter, my mind went dark, and then everything went soft and warm. Knowing that all the Christmas lights were still twinkling in our dorm room, all throughout campus, in the city and the houses we passed on the road from Dean's house. And as I fell into dreamy slumber, I thought to myself, thank God for Christmas lights.



Myha Fayant

The Elevator

By Haley Ingraham

I took one last look at my nearly vacant apartment and its clean white walls and slightly dusty floors, a shaking sigh escaping my lips. The memory of my landlord yelling at me kept replaying in my mind. He was a small, but oddly terrifying man when he needed to be. He had finally come to tell me that before Monday I had to be out of the building, since I was so behind on payments. It's not my fault I was having trouble finding a new job.

Scrounging up my last bits of determination, I rolled my shoulders and stood taller. This interview would go well and I could still find a way to successfully live on my own. I walk forward, stopping at the elevator doors, and somewhat aggressively jab the red elevator button to go down. With a quiet whir, I heard it come to a stop at my floor, the sixth to be precise, and when the doors opened, my heart sank. Maybe I should've just taken the stairs today.

There are four people already in the elevator, which is no big deal, but one of the men in particular stuck out. He was tall and had long, shiny black hair past his elbows. He wore a strange outfit, almost like he was straight out of a book of wizards and witches. A brown tunic donned his upper body, along with armor plating covering his arms, chest, and hands. His back was covered by an ebony cape that seemed attached to the armor on his shoulders. The dark pants he wore were simple, and seemed ideal for moving about. Quite the interesting design. Ah, that's it! Maybe the man is cosplaying and heading to a con nearby? The thought made my suspicions ease quickly, and I stood behind him and scooted to the back of the elevator, bumping against the cold metal railing. Good to know he might not be some mad man. Curiously, I glanced at the other three people who looked much more normal. Two other men, and one woman, who seemed glued to the back corner of the elevator. Can't say I blame her. The ride down was quiet, and the awkwardness radiating off of everyone was almost tangible. It was the kind that would make someone internally scream, just like I am. However, I pushed my hair back out of my face and placed my hands on the railing behind me, continuing my observation of the cosplayer. He seems a little fidgety, shifting his weight and seemed to be glancing around from the way his head slightly turned each time.

Alright, maybe we do have a crazy cosplayer on our hands. I look at the girl to my right, and try to give her a nice smile. She attempts one back and tucks her hair behind her ear. However, her smile falters and she looks away again once more.

Suddenly, the long haired man steps forward and presses the emergency stop button. We're all caught by surprise and lose our footing, and I find myself to be quite thankful that I was holding onto the railing. I look up in confusion as the lights flicker, and he turns around dramatically.

"Now, you all might be wondering why I called you here today."

Everyone looks around in confusion. Is this man full on delusional?

"Um, what do you mean called us here? I don't remember getting a call," The man with blonde hair says, clutching his suitcase. Typical business man, I assume.

The cosplayer rolls his eyes. "No, no, not like that. But surely you people have never met in the same elevator like this?" he says, his oddly vivid green eyes searching each of our faces.

"I guess not. I don't remember seeing any of you before," the girl in the corner says, finally looking up, confusion written all over her round face.

"Exactly! That's because I used a little help of my magic to get you all here at the same time." He grins, opening his palm to show a little fragment of light before it disappears. "Now, my king wanted you all to come

back home since the old king, uh, died."

"Home? King? Magic? You're confusing the heck out of me," I finally manage, feeling a small headache starting to spread throughout my skull. It's one of those headaches I sometimes get, especially after I wake up from a dream or nightmare I can't remember.

He sighs comically. "Maybe it would be easier to show you all." Closing his eyes, he presses his pale hands together, and a random gust of wind starts to kick up, blowing my long hair around wildly. I force myself to keep watching him despite the alarms going off in my head telling me to run away or fight, or do anything but stand here.

The light from his hands grows until I feel as if I'll go blind from looking any longer. I shield my eyes until the wind dies down, and my body calms. My headache is only growing worse, so I grunt and crouch down, taking deep breaths to calm my anxieties about the situation.

I hear movement, and the man speaks again. "Ah, here we are. Home at last!" I can hear his excitement, but I'm not feeling the same at all. What does this crazy man mean by home? Hesitantly, I lift my head, and I can feel all the expression from my face drop. It's dark out, other than the light emanating from the moon that hangs in the sky. We're sitting atop a rocky outcrop on a mountain, overlooking a small forest. I'm dangerously close to the edge, so I scramble backwards, panic filling my chest once more.

"Where are we?" Someone whispers. "This can't be for real."

"Home! Or as we call it, Ilbryn," the magician says, and I squint my eyes, staring at his silhouette, the moon behind his head. It reminds me of the stained glass art in churches. For some reason, his ears look... longer?



Sammie Smith



John Cobum

The Pale White House with a Red Brimmed Door.

By Angelo Bender

When I was younger, I lived on my reservation. It was just on an offshoot of it less than a quarter of a mile away from some white town called Cutbank. As a child, I couldn't really distinguish the difference between the two, but I'm sure any adult from Cutbank could, and did. It was nice though, a lot of what I can remember at least. Going back to visit now is always strange seeing just how much things have changed for better and worse. I used to live in this house in the center of the offshoot called Seville. It wasn't a very big place at all, probably no more than forty houses making up this area. It is some strange cul-de-sac like place with an island in the middle with houses shooting out. I lived there, on the island, in the center of it all. It was like I was the sun of this little solar system. Just across the street, and I mean directly across, is what always had my mind in a bind.

There is this ghostly, pale white house with a glimmering red brimmed door that was just across from mine. Cracks and chipped paint showed its wear and age. The door, however, was untouched by the hands of time. It was this vibrant, bright apple red as far as I can remember. It was so alluring. Everyday my best friend at the time and I would stand outside of its chain-link fence and talk for hours about what could be inside. We came up with these grand stories about the most bizarre things lurking in there. It seemed like a world of endless possibilities. Over time, more and more children from around the block would come join us and offer their view of what could possibly be hidden behind that blood-shade trim. We had to know.

The summer of my 8th year, I found out that we would be moving away in February. It was sad for me and everyone else. There was only a few months left before I moved away. There was a time limit on how long I had to see what was behind that door now. It was the first time in my life that I truly realised how cruel time can be, and how proudly it marches. There is not a single waver in its step. Naturally, we all wanted to solve the mystery before I left in just a few short months. It took some preparation, and some courage. To a bunch of eight year olds, this house and its secrets were just as scary as they were enchanting.

We all finally mustered up the courage one frosty December day. We put on our warmest clothes, took some tools from my mother's vast collection, and one by one made our way over the chain-link fence. It didn't matter. We couldn't get the door open. Courage and might mattered not because we were all outsmarted by how doors function. You can't just unscrew the hinges from the outside like we thought, nor did we have the strength required to just bust it down. So after sulking for a while, we made our way back to our houses. All giving up on that childish dream we all carried for the past year.

Not long after that, I moved away. It was hard adjusting to a new school and people, but I got it eventually. Years passed by and I forgot all about that abandoned house. I would still visit my family in Seville and Cutbank, of course, but I guess I just lost interest in some dumb fantasy as I grew. I think that is something a lot of people can relate to. I think the next time I truly thought about that childhood dream of mine was the July before I turned seventeen. I was telling my two best friends about my reservation and trying to convince them to go there with me one day. It was Indian days that week, and luckily my close friend Mae wanted a dog from my aunt, who ran a rescue on my reservation. We woke up early the next day, quickly readied ourselves, and set out on our adventure.

It was a long trip. We spent the majority of the day driving from place to place. Three hours just to get to Cutbank, and another forty minutes to Browning, the capital of the Blackfeet rez. I spent the time mostly thinking to myself, gazing out into the

distance from the front seat of Mae's car. My best friend, Dylan, was sitting in the back. It was an extraordinary day, its beauty lingers in my mind even now. We visited my family once we arrived and headed on our way to see The Grand Opening of Indian days. We walked around the fair, and watched my sister, along with thousands of other dancers, dance. My friends were absolutely mesmerized, they have never seen such a sight before.

Before we knew it, the sun was already just beginning to set. We said goodbye to my family at the fair, and headed back to Seville and Cutbank to say our final goodbyes to everyone before we left. Mae picked out her dog from my aunt, we thanked her and were on our way. Driving around the island, I saw the house that always seemed to call to me a child. I had to yell at Mae to stop the car. I stood outside the chain-link fence just as I did as a child, best friends at my side, and looked up at that towering house. I basked in its beautiful horror for just a second, then jumped the fence. They both knew the story about this house as I had told them once before. They followed suit, and we just stood at the door. I once had the thought that I wanted to know what was behind the locked gate, that I had to know. I told them we should go get some tools, but Mae said to just wait there. She came back from her car moments later carrying the small lock picking kit she always carries around. We had used it multiple times before to unlock the door to Dylan's house when he was sleeping and we couldn't get in.

Mae fiddled with the lock for just a few seconds. It wasn't really anything difficult for them to open, and I think it was a bit sad that it wasn't more of a struggle. I've always been a romantic, so I told them to close their eyes and take some paces away from the door. I opened the door, my head turned behind me as I did. I ran to join them. Eyes opened, my back facing the door. I told them on the count of three we would sprint in; however, I never got to that final number. Everything in my body was telling me I had to go, so on two, I went.

Sprinting into the house, the other two taking a second to realise what happened, looked around in awe. It was exactly what I thought it would be. An empty, abandoned house with dust and cobwebs as decor. I don't think I felt disappointed in that fact, not as much as I thought I would. Being able to think it through a much older age, I knew what would be inside. That childhood dream of a magic world was long dead, so I was able to appreciate it for what it really was, to me at least. I was joined inside by my best pals. I was now hunched down crying because I finally got to know. I sat there for an eternity basking in the emptiness. I felt completed by it, or that I completed it. It was getting dark and I knew we had to go home. I said a final goodbye, looked back at the creepy room, and locked the door behind me. We stopped at my grandparents' place a few minutes away, we all shared a warm meal, and we were off.

That trip back was a quiet one. We were all exhausted from a long day, and my mind was too preoccupied to talk. One of my childhood dreams was now finally realised. I felt empty, and whole all at once. I spent the ride trying to figure out what it all meant, while looking at the beautiful sights that passed us by. Time doesn't stop for anything, it just continues to march forward. I couldn't go back and undo or redo that day; I just had to continue. It really donned on me then that maybe some dreams should just stay as dreams, but we never really know what dreams should just stay dreams until we go for it.

I can tell myself that over and over again, but I still don't know.



Tizer Kazmierowski



Shea Thronson



Ethan Martin

Pen and Ink 2021



Andy Williams



Quinn Belcher

Athazagoraphobia

The fear of forgetting, and being forgotten.

By Natalia Kelly

"Good morning, Cherrie."

"G'Morning," I said. The woman looked at me as I sat up in bed. She was sitting next to me, with thin reading glasses and a yellow book. She was... beautiful. Her face was worn by worry and exhaustion, but through it all I saw a young woman who'd grown up into a black-eyed, red lipped vision of my dreams. She looked at me like I was everything to her, and her biggest fear at the same time.

"Did you sleep well?" she asked me. I nodded. I thought I had... if I hadn't, I didn't know. Surely, I had to have slept because I was in bed.

"Would you like breakfast?" I asked. I felt ready to move throughout the day.

"We already had breakfast, Muffin," She said. I furrowed my brow. "This morning," she said. "We made toast and eggs, remember?"

Yes. Yes, of course. Right... toast and eggs. We eat that every day. I get the eggs from the chickens, she cuts the bread from the loaf, and we dance through the kitchen, and make our breakfast. Eggs and toast. Eggs and... what else?

I look down at myself. I'm not in bed anymore, I'm in a leather chair. The woman is still next to me. I look at her and she is beautiful. She looks in love with me, and I think I'm in love with her too. I'm confused. Weren't we just eating breakfast? Eggs. We always have eggs in the morning. She gets them from the chickens.

"It's entirely likely that this was passed to your children," a man says. "She carries the gene," the Doctor says. He is tall, but sitting down, and he's wearing a white coat. He's a doctor. Yes, I know this man. Doctor... Roy? Doctor Roy. He looks at the woman next to me and he is sad. I'm sad when he looks at her, and she's sad when she looks at him, and they're both very sad when they look at me. Doctor Roy and the woman keep talking, but I'm trying to think. Why do I make them so sad?

"Cherrie?" the woman asks. We're sitting in the car, she's driving.

"Yes, darling?" I reply. I would never miss an opportunity to make her feel loved. She looks like she loves me, and I think I love her, too. Her hand is on my own.

"Do you remember my name?" the woman asks. I should remember, yes. I know her. She lives with me, she loves me, we make breakfast every morning, she drives me to doctor appointments with Doctor... Rogers? I love her, and I love her name. I loved her name. It was... we're married, and it was in our vows. I know her name. I know her. My wife.

"You're my wife. I know your name." Now we're in the kitchen. It's dark outside, we're at the table with only some candles. It's raining out. The power is out, I deduct. She's holding my hand now, and suddenly I feel so young. We're newlyweds and we're so young, and she loves me in my youth. But when I look at her again, she's miles away.

"Will you say it?" she asks me.

"I love you," I speak. It hurts. I feel my eyes burn, and I think I'm crying. I look at the woman, and she's crying, too. I close my eyes and think. It hurts so bad to not remember. "Vanessa?"

"Vanessa's our daughter. I'm Cynthia," she says, and she sounds so far away.

"Cynthia." It sounds so perfect in my mouth. Like I've said this name and written this name a thousand times. Cynthia. Cynthia. I love Cynthia. I married Cynthia. We have a daughter. "Cynthia and Cherrie."

She was quiet. She looked up at me and smiled.

"Cynthia and Cherrie."

I look at the candle beside us, with Mary printed on the glass, and when I look back at Cynthia, I see Doctor Rogers.

He is telling me that I'm past the point of treatment. I frown, even though I don't know what that means. Vanessa is here. She looks at me and she is sad as we all sit in the doctor's office in silence. I'm trying to rememer where I was before. Me and the woman, we were sitting

in the kitchen. We were talking. Her name...

"Are you sure?" Vanessa asks. She looks so scared. She's holding my wife's hand. The woman, my wife, is crying. She looks so scared. I am so scared.

"Wait a minute," I say, "Doctor Roger--"

"Doctor Reyez," he corrects.

"Reyez... I-I feel fine." Suddenly the beautiful woman is next to me, putting her beautiful hand on my shoulder. She shakes her head as if she's dissuading me from continuing. I've seen this expression before. I quiet myself.

"She has a few more months before she should stay in-hospice," Reyez explains. "My condolences, really."

I look down at my shaking hands and find that they are fists. My nails puncture my palms, and a slow trickle of blood has spread on my pants. I shut my eyes. When I open them, I'm home again.

At least, I think this is my house. Why else would I be here?

Vanessa and the woman are walking with me inside. They're speaking, hushed, while I follow behind. The woman looks at me sometimes, with a sad expression. She is so beautiful.

When I pass through the door, it's suddenly night time. I'm in the living room, and there's a cup of something in my hands. Music is playing from the record player. I know this song! Midnight, The Stars, and You by Al Bowlly. My wedding song.

I'm married, I think, because I know this is my wedding song. I danced to this with a beautiful woman, and we had just married. That beautiful woman is coming from the kitchen now, with a defeated look on her ethereal face. She smiles at me just a little, as if goading me to speak to her again. Have we spoken lately?

"Hello, darling," I say, because I know I should. I love this woman, and I think she loves me.

"Hey, Cherrie," she responds. She comes and sits on the arm of my big leather chair. She is beautiful.

"I know this song," I tell her. I think she'd like to know that.

"Oh, yeah?" she says. Her voice is breaking, and I know she's crying. She's turned her face away from me, looking down into her cup. It smells like tea. The kind I make in the morning.

"We danced to this once. We... Midnight, The Stars, and You. You chose it."

"I did. It always reminded me of you."

"Well, it reminds me of you, too," I tell her, and she remains silent. "My wife. You're my wife. We danced to this."

"Yeah," is all she seems to manage. She stands with her drink, and she is so beautiful right now. She's so sad, and I think she's so beautiful. She begins to walk away, but I don't want her to leave. I love her, and I think she loves me, too.

"Do you remember the dance? We—it was a waltz." She stops walking now. With great resistance, she looks back at me.

"Of course I do," she says. "Do you?"

"Vividly," I say. "Like it was yesterday." Her disbelief is apparent. Do I forget often?

"...Would you like to dance?" she asks. I stand up, and we both place our drinks down, meeting in the center of the living room. She's taller than me, lean, with a thin face and dark hair and eyes. She loves me, and I think I love her, too. She takes my hand, and I place my other on her hip. Hers is on my shoulder.
I sing along to the lyrics as they follow us through the room. It feels right.

"... I know all my whole life through—I'll be remembering you, whatever else I do..."
I feel the beautiful woman sag as we dance. She's sad, I know she is. But she looks at me and she's in love with me, and I'm in love with her too. Together, we sing, "Midnight with the stars and you."

She kisses me so softly. Her face feels wet, and I think she's been crying. And I think I've been crying, too.

"I love you, Vanessa," I say.

"Cynthia," she corrects.

"Cynthia," I affirm.



Samuel Schnackenberg



Carson DesRosier

Pen and Ink 2021



Quinn Belcher



Hailey Cox



Kamera Taylor

Pen and Ink 2021



Rebecca Smillie



Elsie Ambrose



Samuel Schnackenberg



Jaida Green

A House That Is Silent

Rebecca Smillie

Some houses speak,
They moan and sing and creak.
In the day and through the nights,
Under the floorboards and through the pipes.
Within the attic and between the walls,
Sounds echo through their wooden halls.

But other houses are silent,
Not a sound escapes their doors.
Their bricks are blank and speechless,
Wordless are their cabinet drawers.
Their rooms are cold and mute,
And even in the day the silence is absolute.

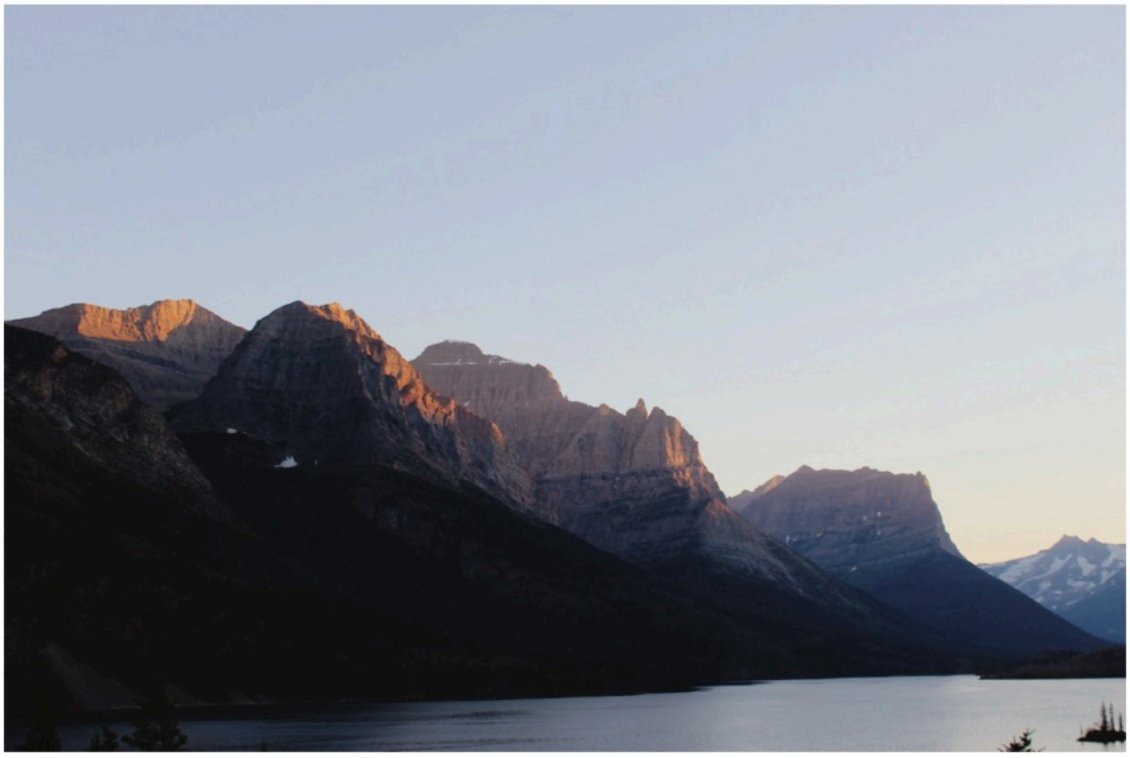
To some a noisy house may seem disordered, violent,
But what troubles me more is a house that is silent.



April Thompson



Garrett Glazier



Holly Peterson

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Lexi Culwell



Ashlyn LaFave



Ethan Hall



Raelynn Staley

Pen and Ink 2021

How well I know a stranger

Marley Claeys

I know your middle name, and your favorite cereal.
I know the words to your favorite song, and your phone passcode combination.
I know the piece you use in Monopoly, and where you hide your secrets.
I know where your birthmark is, and your mom's coffee order.
I know you hate your birthday, and that you don't like to read.
I know what tattoos you want, and that your brother likes to draw.
I know you want three kids, and what store you buy your shampoo from.
I know what you want to be when you grow up, and that you hate to drink LaCroix.
I know your favorite shade of green, and that you don't believe in God anymore.
I know your biggest fears, and how to make you smile.
I know you don't like surprises, and that you chew on your sweat-shirt strings.
I know you sleep with a window open, and that you're really bad at math.
I know you love the snow, and what you like on frozen yogurt.
I know that you've lied, and that you'll never tell me why.
I know that you can't make up your mind, and that you'll only make me wait.
I know that I'm too good for you, and that you'll probably never change.
I know that you could call me now, and then I would be in your arms today.



Megan McCauley



Elsa Grebenc

Pen and Ink 2021



Mia Brinton



Mia Brinton



Jaida Green

Pen and Ink 2021



Aleksandra Shkurigin



Hailey Cox



Myha Fayant



Aleksandra Shkurigin



Mariaha Murray



Victoria Summers

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Megan McCauley



Samuel Schnackenberg



James Byron



Kahlela Thornton

Let it out.

Angelo Bender

Hush now,
Climb.
Make your way from the bed to the shower.
Inch by inch --
Step by agonizing step,
Be on your way now.
Hush now,
Turn.
Let the water flow around you.
Be enveloped by its cleansing mist.
Breathing in the stream,
Let it pierce your lungs,
Let it soothe your body.
It will all be okay from here.
Hush now,
Cry.
Let your tears be taken away.
Flowing with the boiling stream that cradles you,
Be taken by its loving embrace.
It is okay.
Cry.
Let it all out.
Wash your mind as you do your body.
This is your tearful palace that leaves no trace.

One last deep breath,
Turn the knob slowly,
Make your way out of the palace.
Get dressed, prepare yourself, your day has just begun.
The hardest part is done.
So, go now:
Begin.

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Jaida Green

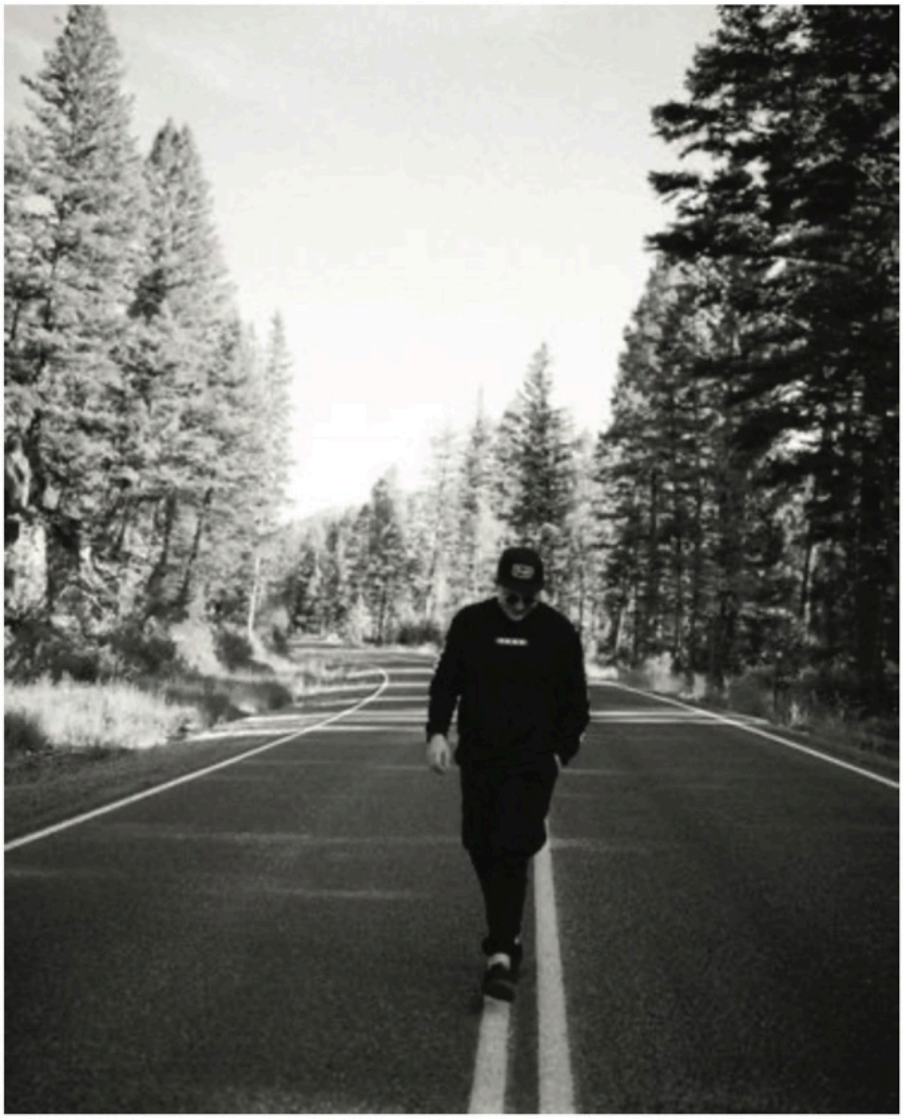


Jacob Curry

Lemon Roll

Natalie Winward

The sweet bread I hold
Clings to my soul,
I then wonder my goal
What in my life makes it meaningful
Is it the little pretties in life, that don't go dull
Flower fields, and tulip bulbs
Sweet treats of candy bowls
The special love family holds
The full aspect of life makes you wonder no less than from a lemon roll.



Taetumn Baiiley

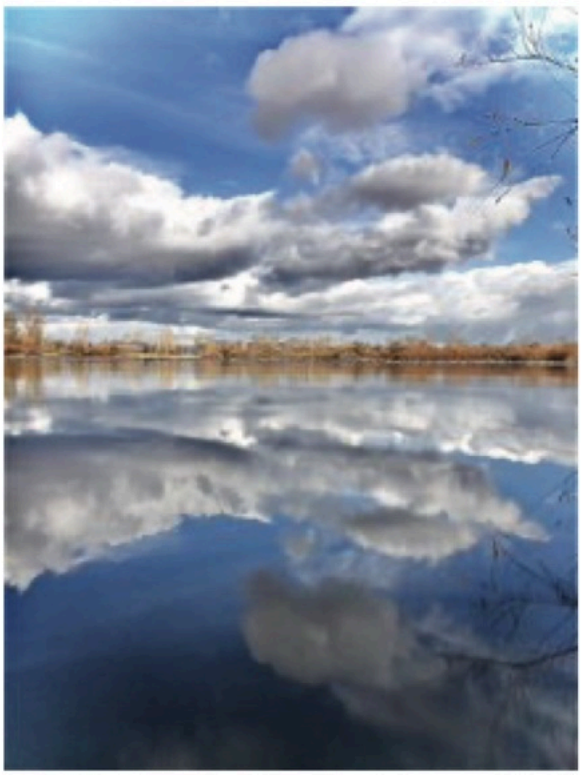
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Garrett Glazier



Lilyan Carlson



Lilyan Carlson



Emma Randash



Hadley Pearson



Makayla Cogley



Ella Shropshire

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Ella Rowland



Ella Rowland

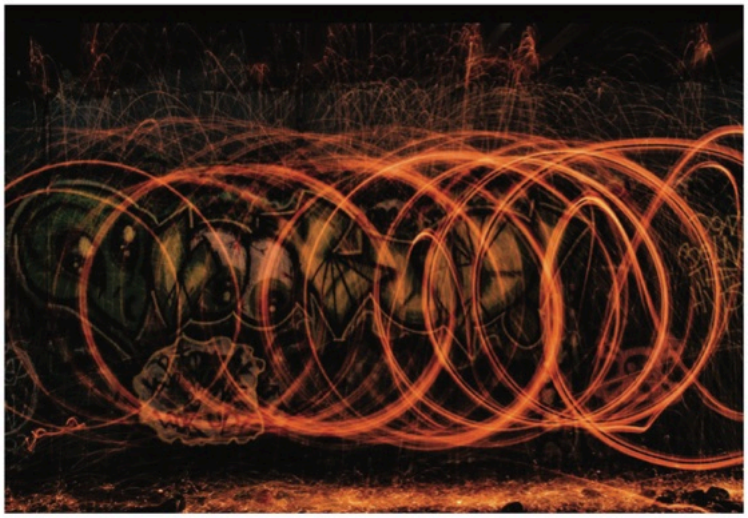


Kallie Lahti



Raelynn Staley

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Jason Callins

My Father

Piper Davidson

You left me all alone to wonder if
I was the reason you "forgot" to call.
You left me hanging on a daunting cliff
To ponder if you ever cared at all.

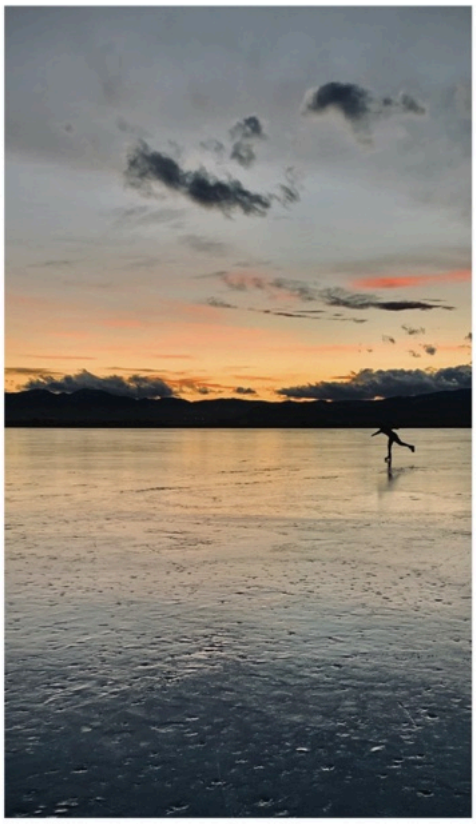
Somehow you pulled me in with all your charms
I thought you were the one that I could trust,
My friend, my guard, my knight in shining arms
Yet now I know that armor's left to rust.

But now I see the rust's began to lift
Dissolved through your attempt to make things right;
You have become the dad that I have missed
You have regained the title as my knight

I am so glad that you are in my life
And our relationship is void of strife



Nikki Backeberg

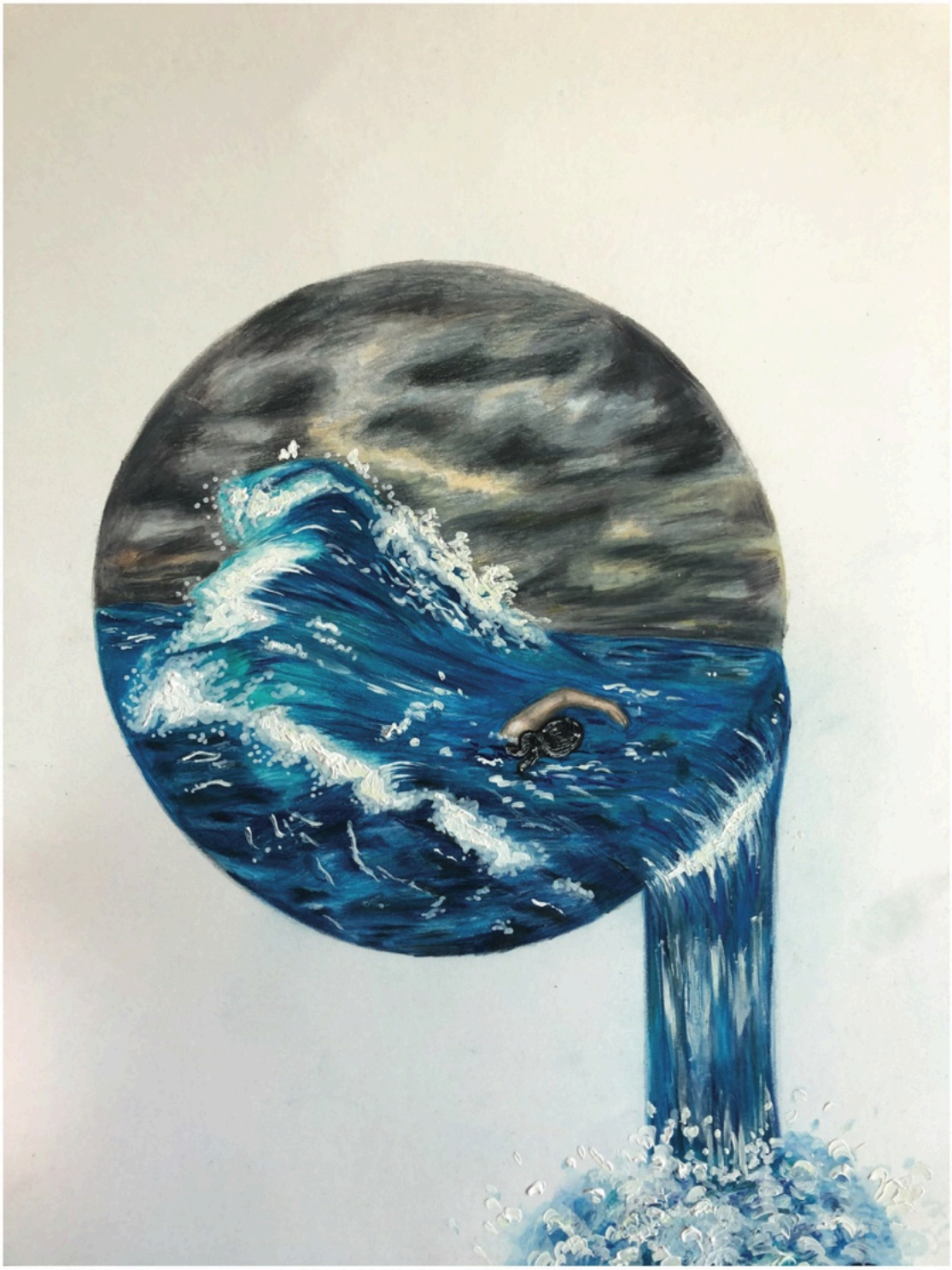


Andy Williams

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Lauren Lysager



Ella Rowland

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