

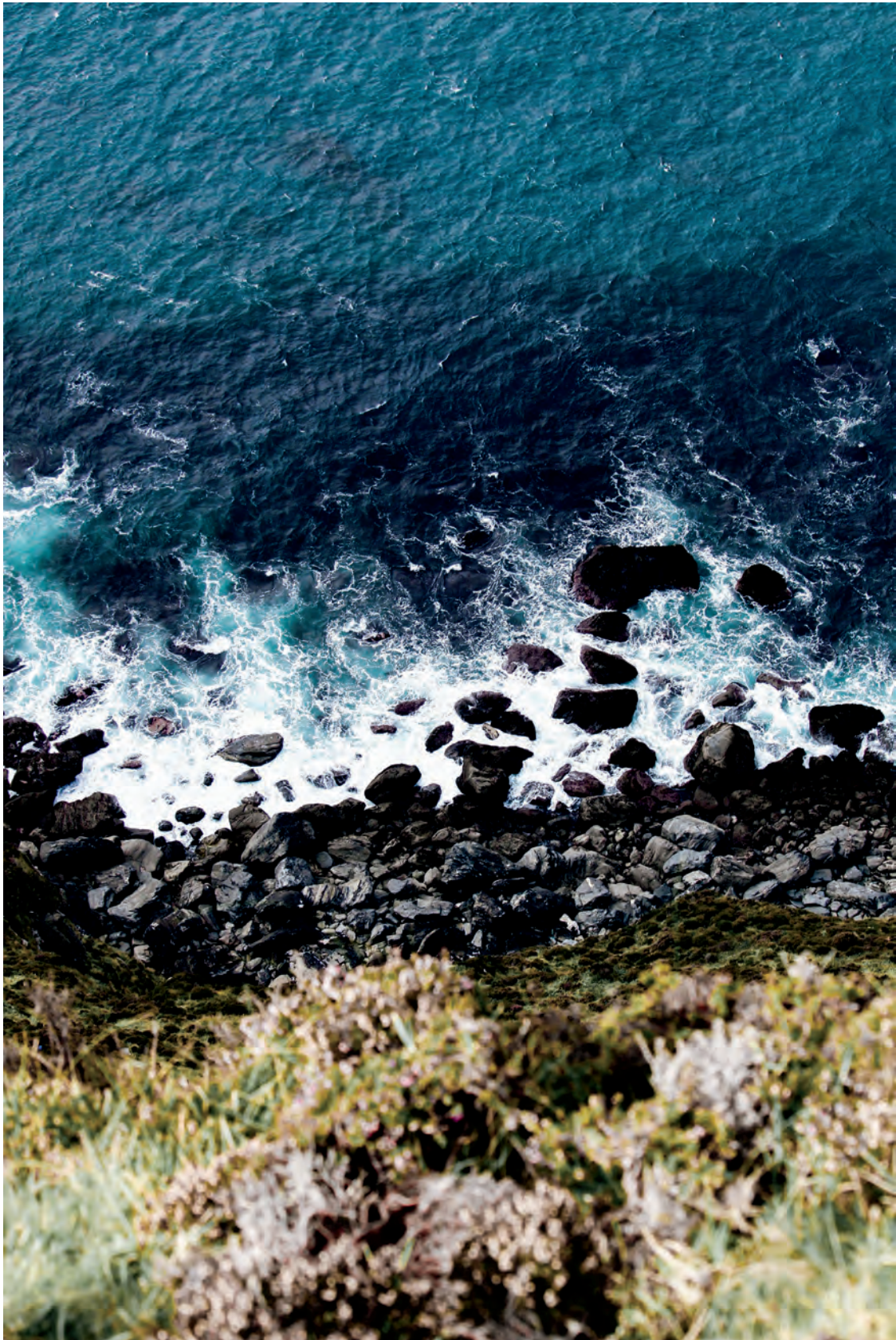
Congratulations to the 2019 Harrison Writing Award Winners:

Jordan Bird's "Excerpt From Dinosaur Nerd"
Meagan Broussard's "Manipulation With Pink"
Natalia Kelly's "Uhhhh"
Kate Loble's "It's Moderate to Severe"

We are honored to publish your work!

Special thanks to
Helena Education Foundation
Reach Higher Montana
Christensen & Prezeau Attorneys at Law
Ron and Connie Bergum

2019 Editors:
Clara McRae
Amanda Penley



by Lydia Fife

An Excerpt from Dinosaur Nerd

by Jordan Bird

[This is an excerpt from my book of personal essays based on true stories]

It all began back in California. I was part of a Military family, so we moved a lot during my childhood. We happened to be stationed in a remote, desert area of central California during my preschool and Kindergarten years.

I don't remember much about pre-school other than the fact that for some reason we had a professional photographer come and take pictures of us. It was one of the only times of my life I was actually cute and photogenic. Kindergarten, on the other hand, I remember. It was here that I learned that I wasn't a stereotypical girl. Back in the day, I would've been called a "tomboy."

I was different. I wore pink AND blue. I played with dinosaurs. I liked to get my hands dirty (oh, how times have changed). I also had no friends. Ok, maybe that's a bit of an exaggeration. I had, like, two friends. It was complicated. The girls didn't like me because I played with boy toys, and the boys didn't like me because I was a girl. I didn't really care though.

It was in kindergarten that I began my obsession with Dinosaurs. See, here's where my obsessive personality comes in. I have no idea how it started, but I fell head over heels for the dead reptiles. I had to know EVERYTHING about them. By the end of the year, I had an entire box full of plastic dinosaurs, seven dinosaur movies, and countless dinosaur books. I could pronounce their names (which was an impressive feat for a five-year-old) and teach the other kids about them. I even remember my favorite: Xenotarsosaurus. I was also confident that I was going to be a Paleontologist when I grew up (sorry, little me).

This obsession carried on into primary school. By now, my family and I were across the country in Virginia. I had new kids to scare away with my extensive knowledge of Mesozoic life. I kept pretty quiet about it in first grade, but it was second grade that I really got out there. I think it started when I found a dinosaur book in the little classroom library. I called over my teacher to ask her about it.

Teacher: Yes, Jordan? What do you need?

Me: [audibly excited] Are we going to learn about dinosaurs this year?

Teacher: No, I don't think so.

Me: oh...okay...

Teacher: Maybe later in the year I'll let you teach us something if you want?

Me: YES!

Little me really liked to show off. Cut to a half-a-year later, and I'm standing in front of the classroom lecturing my classmates on everything I knew about dinosaurs. They're raising their hands and asking questions, and my little ego is sky high. I went over everything, from the characteristics of a Pachycephalosaurus, to how a Pterodactyl was not a dinosaur, to the extinction. Out of the corner of my eye, I was pretty sure I saw the teacher recording my speech, but I doubted it was anything. I was just happy to talk about dinosaurs.

That next week, I was getting off the bus to school, and I was stopped by a fifth grader. Now, as a scrawny little girl in second year, that's the last thing you want.

Fifth-grader: Are you the Dinosaur girl?

Me: uh...what?

Fifth-grader: Did you do that speech about dinosaurs? You were like this-

He mimicked the dramatic hand motions I had done during my lesson. My cheeks flushed in slight embarrassment knowing full and well that he was definitely talking about me.

Me: oh, yeah...that was me.

Fifth-grader: Haha, I saw the video. You did pretty good.

And with that, we went our separate ways. I never saw that kid again, but to this day I still wonder about that interaction. Did my teacher record the whole thing and post it to some school website? How did this kid find it? Did anyone else see it? Why did he laugh when I told him it was me? Why did he feel the need to ask me about it? Will I ever stop overthinking it? Will I ever realize that he probably had said it in a kind, not demeaning way and that I'm probably just blowing the whole thing way out of proportion?? Who knows.

I think that was the last time I really nerded out like that in school. Over time, my obsession toned down, but deep down I know it's still there. Every time I go to the Museum of the Rockies and look at the beautiful T-Rex skeleton named Big Mike that roams the front lawn, I

can't help but feel a wave of happiness. Every time I walked into my Paleontology class in Sophomore year of high school, I think of little me, and how she would have been the happiest gal alive. So, thanks, little me, for giving me a nerdy childhood and making me into the nerd I am today. I hope you're proud of me.

Manipulation with Pink

by Meagan Broussard

The first use of the color pink in prison cells was in 1976, following a study by Alexander Schauss. The study showed significant results that the color pink was effectively reducing the muscle strength in participants who looked at the color for any set amount of time.

These results came in when, after the participants had looked at the color for a set, unknown amount of time, and then attempted to resist the experimenters pushing down on their raised arm, they could not.

Nearly following this study, two wardens at the U.S. Naval Correctional Center painted the cells where new inmates stayed for processing. They reported a significant, in fact 100% drop in inmate violence and resistance. The color was seeping the strength from the inmates, both mentally and physically.

This began the race for manipulation of the human psyche to reduce the not so likeable traits of the population.

Schauss concocted a shade of pink that he called "Baker-Miller Pink", after the two naval officers who helped him with his study, and he claimed that it was this specific shade that had the restricting effect on the psyche of humans and animals alike.

The color, in fact, was seemingly too strong. Dr. Paul Boccumini, the Director of Clinical Services for the San Bernardino County Probation Department, said that similar, concerning results were being reported at their Kuiper Youth Center, and that the staff there had to restrict the delinquents exposure to the color, "because the young-

sters became too weak.”

However, upon repeat studies, both of these experiments were proven by the same experimenters to have incorrect results. They no longer saw the loss in strength or aggression that they had before. They actually began to fear the color would have the opposite effect: more aggression.

30 years later, psychologist Oliver Genschow and his colleagues repeated Schauss’s experiments. They found that the color had no effect on aggressiveness. The discussion had seemingly come to an end, with no results.

However, in 2011, Swiss psychologist Daniela Spath began writing about her own experiments with a different shade of pink calling it “Cool Down Pink”. The shade covered the walls of ten prisons in Switzerland, and again, prison guards reported results of decreased aggression and violence among inmates.

Some say the results are due to the feminine connotations of the color.

Before World War II, the color pink was not classified as a feminine color, nor was it perceived as weakening. Mothers would dress their little girls in blue, and their boys in pink, and the colors were interchangeably worn by both genders. Now, beautiful baby girls are assigned pink clothes and blankets, while bouncing baby boys wear baby blue. This is because, similarly to the color yellow being assigned to the Jews by the German Nazis, the tell-tale color pink was assigned to gay men, forever leaving the color with the connotation that it is less masculine. Therefore the females were “given” the color to represent their gender.

Some psychologists believe this is the reason behind the manipulation of the human psyche that achieves the reduction in violence. The color radiates femininity, and makes the prisoners believe deep down that they are more feminine, and therefore have less strength.

Others believe this manipulation lives on with the continuing tradition that women and baby girls are given, told, and shown that pink is their color and they are to stick to it.



by Keelin Connolly



by Kylee Havranek



by Anna Lowe

Uhhhh

by Natalia Kelly

Hell is an office building. No, I'm not kidding you.

As a low-level saleswoman there, I couldn't make that into a joke if I tried. I speak only from the deepest and most regretful sanctions of my heart when I say, that selling my soul and becoming a demon only to be paid just above minimum wage and deal with the same customers who would kick you in the balls at McDonald's was not my wisest choice. Granted, as a weedy little 21-year-old, my other options weren't much better than this, but now I'm an 804-year-old, and I would gladly have just lived with grease burns and acne.

Oh, another note.

SATAN IS A DICK.

I'd like to warn all the budding Satanists out there that the demon of their dreams won't let me take vacation time with my wife, and hasn't given me a raise in over seven centuries. Many brown-nosing employees in our complex would like to call him the Michael Scott of the netherworld, but he's more like Ryan Howard without the crack addiction.

I am entirely risking my employment among the fire and brimstone by starting this way, so I'll give you a run down of my schedule here.

I wake up at the ass-crack of however time works down here, shower, dress, apologize profusely to my spouse about these ungodly hours, and take off for the office. When I arrive there I flick my coffee straw at the receptionist, that absolute bastard. His name is Kent. Yes, Kent. Among the Beelzebubs, the Pazuzus, and the Asmodeus', Kent is his real christian name. Now, you might be wondering why, after years of working under Satan's clawed fist, why hasn't he earned a proper satanic title.

It's simple: Kent is the worst name he could have.

Nothing packs a worse punch than Hell's receptionist-- Kent.

I should probably introduce myself before I go off on that milksop.

I'm Zorroras, but don't even bother remembering that. My name previous to the extraction of my soul was Zoey, but I rightfully earned this demonic name by working my red-colored ass off for most of the current eternity. Call me Zoz, if you're really concerned. You already

know my age and place of employment, so I guess there's not much more you need to know before you can use me to catfish men on Tinder. I look like the demons you've probably always imagined, red skin, horns and a forked tail; although, I don't carry a pitchfork.

However, I do carry a briefcase filled with sales reports.

You're probably asking, what does a demon from hell sell? The answer is simple, my friends: goods and services. What kind? I'm glad you asked.

The same way I got my start down here is the same way we rake in the bank. People contact us and if they're older than 16, we can strike a deal, and yes, a lot of humanitarians in our ranks think that 16 is too young. I say, if the client is old enough to be sat down and forced to sign their life away to education, they might as well be allowed to do the same to the Devil. In fact, I spent my soul to graduate college, so, the two can coincide.

It's an easy process from both ends of the line. Someone, by some means, comes across our contact information and gets in touch with Kent. Kent, then transfers their line to one of our sales associates, and we start making offers. We ask our typical interview questions to make sure they truly want to commit to this. We aren't a pyramid scheme. I guess you could say I've been doing this for a while, and I've seen all the walks of life that I pick of the receiver to. I've seen the desperate, the angry, the tired, the unfocused, the lazy, the curious, but I've never seen someone like this.

It was early in my work hours, too early for me to be properly awake. I was drinking my coffee, which was entirely too thick to not be tar, and organizing reports. I scanned the dates as my thumb flicked over them, making sure none were improperly categorized. My office door creaked lazily as a faux breeze rolled through the halls, the scent of burning coal and tobacco came along with it.

"Hey, Zoz, you've got a call coming in on your line," Kent called through the intercom, "the guy sounds pressed." I gave him little response as I picked up the receiver, and accepted the call with the button-press of my clawed finger. There was the sound of shaky breath coming in through the other line, and I sighed to myself. Holding the phone away from my mouth, and covering it gently, I pressed the intercom call button.

I complained to him bitterly, not masking my distaste. Upon my original entrance to the company, I worked with Satan breathing down my neck all the time. Kent, being the complete ignoramus that he is,

always put the emotional ones on my line,

“Hello,” I started, “may I ask who’s calling?”

“I’m James,” he replied, sounding absolutely overwhelmed, “James C. Stierwalt.”

“Might I know what the ‘C’ stands for?” I asked, having needed his full name to put down on any potential records

“Caleb.”

“Thank you, James. I’m your partnered associate for today. How can I help?” James was silent on the other line for a while, and I told him to take his time and awaited a response. In the back of my head, I knew he wasn’t going to drop the call, so I turned to my desk computer and searched his name. It was a whole lotta nothing. He was 45 years old, had a wife and a middle-school-aged son. He lived in Nebraska, went to college for a degree in mathematics, was a Catholic-ish agnostic. He looked the part too-- greying brown hair with a shiny bald spot forming at the crown of his head. I found his Facebook and scrolled through his pictures. He took a trip to Alaska last summer with his wife and went ice fishing. There didn’t really seem to be much wrong with him, although I did notice that he never smiled in pictures, which I found odd. Even the saddest of people could rightfully find a place in them to fake a smile for the sake of a photograph, but apparently not James. I searched harder, growing perhaps a little too invested.

Near the beginning of his timeline, I saw that his mother had passed away of pancreatic cancer, but even in the photos before that unfortunate event, his face was as statuesque as slate. Before I could bother to find him on some other platform, he coughed into the phone and finally spoke to me.

“Yes, sorry, I got sidetracked,” he said and I heard the sound of him scratching his face as he hummed his way to the next sentence, “I was hoping to make an exchange.” My brow furrowed in curiosity.

“An exchange?” I chuckled and thought he might not know how things really work down here, “Yes, I figured you called to do business, not to loiter. What did you need provided?” The line was quiet again and he sighed. I swear I could hear the cogs turning in his head.

“I’d like to request a soul.” He said flatly.

Now that was a surprise.

Many customers have qualms with the idea of not having a soul, and often ask if they’ll ever regain it. The answer is yes, although the process is strange. A demon, such as myself, indeed has a soul, but it’s not the one I was born with. You see, when a deal is struck with a human, we take their soul, do whatever they exchanged it for (barring a few things, of course,) and they go about their lives-- soulless. A person with no soul is nearly the same as a

regular person, just without the emotion or fleeting motivation. A soulless person has morals they can abide to, they aren't zombies, but they often don't feel any spectrum of feelings. Once they die, they become a demon, and get a whole new set of sentiments.

Of course there's rules to what we can and can't do in exchange for someone's soul. We can't grant immortality, we can't bring back the dead, and we can't bestow someone with weird, supernatural powers, but those are obvious. We also don't act against children, and we can't interfere with warfare. Those boundaries are well-known by every employee, but the prospect of returning a soul was new, and definitely against the rules.

"Ah, c-could you repeat that?" I asked gingerly, ducking beneath my desk to look through my customer records.

"Yes, er, could I get purchase a soul?" I set down the phone next to the port and thumbed over folders filled with past customers, my eyes scanning through them.

"Can I place you on hold?" I inquired, and he replied with a quiet 'sure.' I made true to my word and started looking for any indication of a record that would prove a past deal struck.

I swiveled back from my desk, breathing in deeply. What the hell, man? I stood, walking with purpose to the Boss' office. God, I hated taking my problems to him, the patronizing bastard. He always gave me the same over-sympathetic eyes and cooed at my misfortune. The guy likes to think he's being sweet but he's really just a colossal dick. Despite this, I extended my hand to knock on his door. Office number 666, because he's terribly creative, if you could call it that.

"Come in!" His voice sounded from inside, seemingly incredibly excited to receive a visitor from the bottom floor. I entered, the door creaking, his red-lit office. Between the wall sconces, the brick walls, and the assorted gothic paintings, I have to admit this is exactly what you think Satan's office would look like. Although the abundance of '1# BOSS' mugs assorted on his shelves happened to dampen the atmosphere. "Well if it isn't my favorite saleswoman! Zorroras, how are you, buddy?" I forced a grin, my face feeling tense.

"Hiya, boss. Ah, I've hit a bump in the road with my latest client." I explained, taking a second to think, "You see, err, he requested to purchase a soul--" That made him jump.

Satan sprayed a thick string of unsweetened coffee directly into my face, clearly about as shocked as I was. Although, I didn't spittle all over my inferiors.

"Purchase a soul!? Whatever for?" He demanded, and I shrugged.

“I ended up leaving him on hold. Figured I could use your expertise.” Satan sighed, pressing the intercom and requesting that Kent transfer James’ line to his, which he did swiftly. He took him off of hold and made himself present.

“Eh? Hello?” James asked cautiously.

“Yes, hello, me and my associate were incredibly curious as to why you requested to purchase a soul? That’s unfortunately against our code and regulations.” James chuckled flatly into the line.

“Well, I was born without one.”



by Hannah Simonson

It's Moderate to Severe

by Kate Loble

When I think of you
I don't think of a poem
I think of Saturday Night Live
And really awkward wedding toasts

I think of memorizing Steve Martin banjo tracks
And tripping on flat surfaces
I think of perfectly timed insults
And the way you look when you're mad

When I think of you
I start to uncontrollably snicker
At inappropriate times
When I think of you
It feels like laying on really green grass
And rolling around like an idiot
Like you taking a shower while I sit on the toilet

I think of our nicknames
And our hours together
And our brief corrals
And how other people usually don't understand

When I think of you sometimes I cry
I think of all the times I haven't been with you
All the times you wanted to love me
And I just wanted to be alone

But I don't stay sad for long
Because when I think of you
I think of Extreme Boxing
And the introduction to the next segment
And "taking a spill"

I think of your man hands
And my huge ass forehead
Laundry baskets + stairs
And pals' eggs
I think of spilling water on yourself in the middle of the night
And the way you broke your chair
I think of your laugh
And it makes me laugh

I think of you so much
But every time you slither into my brain
I don't think of a poem
But I hope you like this one

Untitled

Aleigha Rosencrans-Drynan

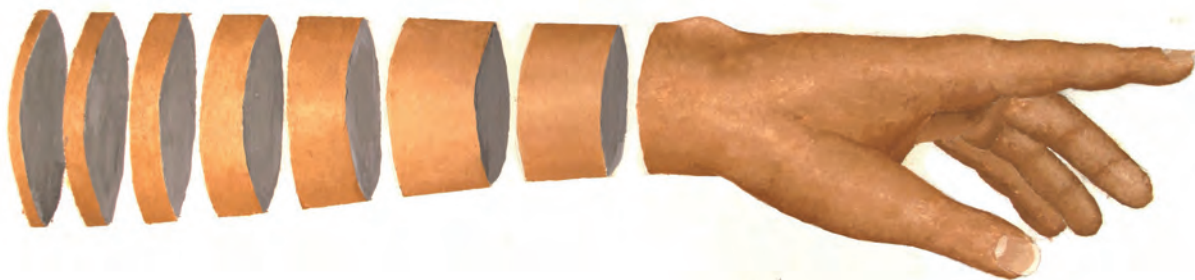
There were no yellow rays to beat down on us that day. The earthy smell of petrichor clung to my sweatshirt as I yelled for him. He walked so quickly all I could see was a white and red streak in the air, and suddenly he was in front of me.

**A FEW SMALL FACTS ABOUT HIM
HIS NAME WAS MAX.
HE USED TO BE MY NEIGHBOR.**

The cream grey sky threatened to rain on us again. We sat on a woody porch and ignored the bronze slivers we were getting. We talked about anything and everything as the cold evening left bite marks on our dry skin. His laugh was bubbly like a gushing stream. As the day got dark and starry, we said a short goodbye, a goodbye I wish I could do again. If I would have been aloud, I would have added more warmth and passion to my last farewell. I expected every day afterwards to be the same, the smell of grey clouds but it wasn't. The blonde sun still rose and pulled the sky up with it. The cycle didn't end like I expected but it's okay now because I know he looks down on me and lets the sun shine through his glowing smile.



by Kaley Lightner



by Emma Niederstadt

Memory Box

Elena Gonzales

A single memory.

As I pick up a baby blue ball and it smelt as fresh as the body wash that you pick up and smell in the seventh isle of target. The perfect summer breeze that sits in your palm as you shower. It is the kind that comes out of your drier; warm, looking brand new and looks as soft as it does when you touch it. I turned on the hot water and sit in silence listening to the sizzling of the blue ball as it dissolves in my hand. The water starts turning baby blue with a tint of a soft purple, the color spreading all over my body from head to toe. I dunk my head in the lukewarm, coloured water and think to myself "if we can't see air can fish see the water that they breathe?" I lift my head up from the water and look at the center of what once was a blue ball. In the center sat a plastic ball waiting to be opened with a key chain of the Earth we live on. My hand cracks the ball opens as I lift up the chain. My eyes mesmerized on the object as it swings back and forth. Its cheap beauty hypnotizes me as I sink back into the water. The warm, bubbly feeling I get when I open the big, bulged book and go to page 83.

The tan pages of the book stained by this once beautiful and alive thing. In it was my pressed flower still looking as strong as it could be. A perfect, circular, yellow sunflower; the scent as strong as the smell of my moms homemade tortillas. A single pedal, delicate to the touch. Nothing a mind could ever take back in a moment. I could still hear the 'pop' of the flower coming off the stem as I lift it and grab the nearest book. The slamming of the cover from page 83 and the individual pages falling before the slammed on my table. The gentle touch of my fingers and hand lifting the book and placing it on an empty shelf. Just like the pink folder from long ago, my first alphabet I wrote. It brings me back to the moments that my great grandmother held my hand helping me write my first letters. A for apple and B for boat I never want to forget the C, for cuddle because my great granny always gave the best cuddles. Always warm and full of love. Her touch was so fragile. I miss her so much but I only hope her cuddles are as gentle as the clouds that we see from the ground. Something for crying only takes me back a few months ago the water running and tens of hundreds of pills swallowed. It's nothing like candy but of course I treated them like a bag of skittles. I was like a little kid who had their first taste of candy, all I could do was scarf it down. The high I got off hydrocodone but the sickening feeling from the Aleve. I cry at the thought of failing once again because all I do is let myself down and my loved ones around me. My life is 'important' says the bully who was a friend she never saw me struggling, I denied the fact that 'i'm okay' until what I thought would be the end. A simple tickle or squeeze anywhere you touch my skin. I laugh and giggle at the thought of being poked even a stroke from my neck down. It's funny the simple reflex in the laughing touch. I scream when I see you move your hands towards my hips and I fall to the ground with the widest smile. But something as precious as gold and close to my heart, is the simple lock of a pinkie and thumb promise concealed with a kiss by my one true love from the bottom of my heart.



by Shiloh Corcoran



by Arial Van Daele



by Thomas Melgren



by Allison McJannet

My Songs

by Jaycee Hamlin

Dejection
Isolation
Vexation-
Are all things I have felt,
Sighing to me on more than one occasion,

Through it I will travel,
Through it I will go,
I will sing a song,
While wrestling with this foe,

I will sing the song of grief,
I will sing the song of distress,
I will sing the song of pain,
But I will keep singing nonetheless,

Though I feel this way,
Though it is a tough situation,
I cannot allow myself to forget,
I will not get lost in the damnation,

Joy
Relief
Jubilation-
Maybe I will make it- I have a belief,
For these are songs I used to hum,

I know how far I've come,
And for that I sing,
Life is an enigma,
Nobody knows what it will bring,

Progress
Recovery
Healing-
Careful to avoid damaging your new priority,
The process is like building with dominos,

I begin reconstructing,
In hopes my hurt is not in vain,
These are the new songs I will sing,
Believing that some day I will feel that way again

Unsure by Alyssa Tompkins

I'm not quite sure where it all went
wrong,
I've been studying the maps for
months.

Desperately trying to understand
why the world as I knew it col-
lapsed.

The seas rose and land sunk.
Did it sink or did the waters just
rise to make it feel as though it
sunk?

I'm not sure, no one is.

All anyone is sure of now is the
weight,
The weight of the world now rests
on the shoulders of those remain-
ing above water.

A new life needs to be forged by
those who could swim in the tides.

But how can this life be made?
Only corruption, despair and anger
exist above the heavy water.
Who could be successful in these
times of insecurity?

I have no answers for those trying
to brave the waves,
I sincerely wish I had some to offer.
All I am sure of is the need to drain

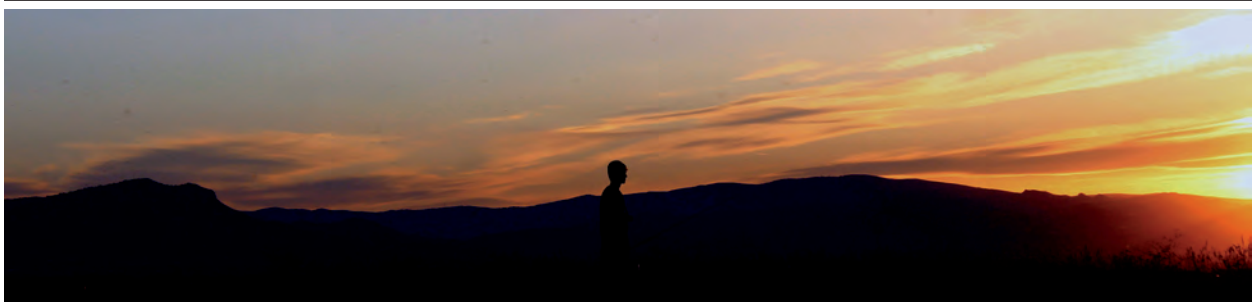


by Kyra Robinson

Restless

by Nina Bracht-Bedell

I was born to be restless.
My spirit has never been content with daily life,
Or, once it is, it doesn't last very long.
There is always a tugging, deep craving to be somewhere I'm not.
It's not that I don't appreciate my life, I do.
It's that my soul never quite feels complete.
Deep, disguised behind my smile, there is a persistent, unwavering pull.
A pull to the desert.
The celestial patterns of scorching red rock and oceans of golden sand
grains.
A pull to the mountains.
The snow-topped, apathetic peaks that are gracefully, beautifully de-
structive.
A pull to the forest.
The verdant blanket that encompasses your senses and traps an ancient,
earthy smell, only letting the occasional light shard penetrate.
I ache not for comfort and ease, but for pain and fear.
For bleeding cuts, indigo bruises, and sore limbs.
For the kind of satisfaction and exhaustion that can only come after a
soul-wrenching endeavor.
I've always been drawn to maps and globes.
There is a certain magnetism that hides behind the infinite multi-col-
ored lines and multifarious borders,
An overpowering, primitive desire to explore every inch of this planet.
But, you see, there is an edge of sadness behind this nomadic desire.
For it is not just a global yearning, it is an existential, soul-igniting desid-
eratum.
How can you be complete when your soul is scattered throughout the
world?



by Sloane Chapman



by Maya Mulder

Where I'm From by Nina Bracht-Bedell

I am from suitcases
from tents and skis
I am from the piles of running shoes
(well-used, well-loved, never left behind)
I am from the mountains
the rugged, naked beauty
that seduced me from the start

I'm from dizzying heights and adrenaline,
from backpacks and blood
I'm from the adventurers and travelers,
the always-moving and never-home
From Be Strong! And Don't Stop!
I'm from Sunday morning hikes
from prayers for fresh snow and sunshine

I'm from those born with dirt in their blood
unwashed hair and blistered feet
From the freckles and tanned skin,
the smile-lines and sweaty faces

Hiding in the cabinet are the maps
whose paths run across the pages and into my veins
I am from the memories
the travels and the trees
and the endless explorations

There's Somewhere I'd Rather Be **by Kylie Hanson**

There's somewhere I'd rather be at this very moment
But right now stuck in an undersized chair catching a cold from the 20
degree weather outside
I'd so rather be sitting in a crippling lawn chair catching a tan near the
shore of a lake
The weather? Definitely 80 degrees. No wind. No clouds.
It tastes like orange soda and skittles
The lake with the sound of a waterfall crashing onto the surface of the
glassy water
The air smells crisp with 100 foot pine trees emanating their fresh air
I'd feel better here, happier here
Where's this place I'd rather be at?
I truly don't know
All I know is there's definitely somewhere I'd rather be



by Madison Stewart



Lemon Boy by Quincey Newman

by Madi Taylor



Unperceivable

Erin Maxness

The world is comprised of an array of colors
But what if I told you what you see is false.

Why that is not possible mere child for we are at the top and therefore we
are correct.

But what if I told you that there is so much more than what you see, and even
what I see?

Imagine a sunrise.

The beautiful pinks, reds, and oranges slowly cascade across the ragged
mountains to create the perfect backdrop to every morning.

Arguably, being one of the most beautiful creations of Earth.

Eyes perceive light through rods and cones, which let us see the three basic
colors: red, blue and yellow.

This is only three colors and their variants, a fraction of what Earth is capa-
ble of.

Now what if I told you that there is something that can see 13 more colors
and all their byproducts that humans can't see.

The Mantis Shrimp was granted a very special gift, the gift of viewing the
world in way that no other species can even comprehend.

Imagine that sunset once more.

This time try to imagine it with 13 new colors and all the colors in-between.
You can't. Try to imagine all of Earth's famous paintings with 13 new colors.

You can't.

Now try to imagine a field bursting with the new flowers of spring with 13
new colors.

You can't.

We live our lives through blurred lenses; surrounded by a world that we be-
lieve to be ours, but in turn is foreign and unknown.

Why did the Mantis shrimp, out of all the creatures, get this gift?

Does the Mantis Shrimp even realize how special it's view of the world is?

And can Mantis Shrimp even perceive all of Earth's possible colors?

Could there be even more colors out there? Perhaps a handful more?

Tens, hundreds, thousands more?

No, try millions upon billions more.

Can you imagine a color you have never seen?

Can you imagine a world filled with a billion more colors?

Now the Mantis Shrimp is beginning to seem puny against this unimaginable
world of color and us humans even smaller.



by Caroline Southworth



by Benton Lehman



by Chelsea Cox

The Occument

by Ella Shropshire

I have lived now.
I have lived, and had all the adventures of a voyager,
I have felt the heart break of the sailor away from the sea.
I have loved,
Loved a place, only to be torn away from it.
Loved a family,
Loved a new one made of memories.
I have felt the joy of coming home,
I have lived.
And I will live for many years more.
But to know that you have lived,
Is to know you are ready to go,
And to know where you will go.

When I go,
There will not be gate ways of pearl and gold.
There will be no clouds,
No sterling staircase.
When I go
There will be no fiery torment,
No eternal pain.

When I go,
I will not find an angel above me,
Welcoming me to eternity.
I will find gulls.
They will begin to fly,
And then they will stop and wait.

When I go,
There will be no silver staircase.
I will start to walk.
I will walk over the plains I once hated,
And I will understand them.
I will see my family's past,
Clearer than ever.

When I go, my old friends,
My family will not meet me at the top of the gate.

I will walk.
I will walk through the camp that harbored my soul.
I will walk up, to the gray lake.
I will go down again, to the small house
Where adventures had no limits.

When I go,
There will be no golden pearl gates,
No family to open them for me.
I will walk through the silver city,
And there,
The veil will open.
All that was lost will be returned.

When I go,
I will not cry tears of joy,
as I look upon my perfect afterlife.
I will walk with spirits that tag along,
I will walk through my heartbreaks,
And my happiest days,
Until I float over the hot midday sand.

I will not close my eyes and be at rest,
As heaven elapses around me.
I will walk upon the clearing where the tree still stands.
I will stay here.
When the night falls,
I will sleep under the reeds,
Curled in the sand.
When morning comes,
I will dance with the waves,
And the gulls.

When I go,
There will be not treasures.
There will be not sparkling god for me to pledge to.
But there will be the journey,



by Clara McRae



by Sami Hill

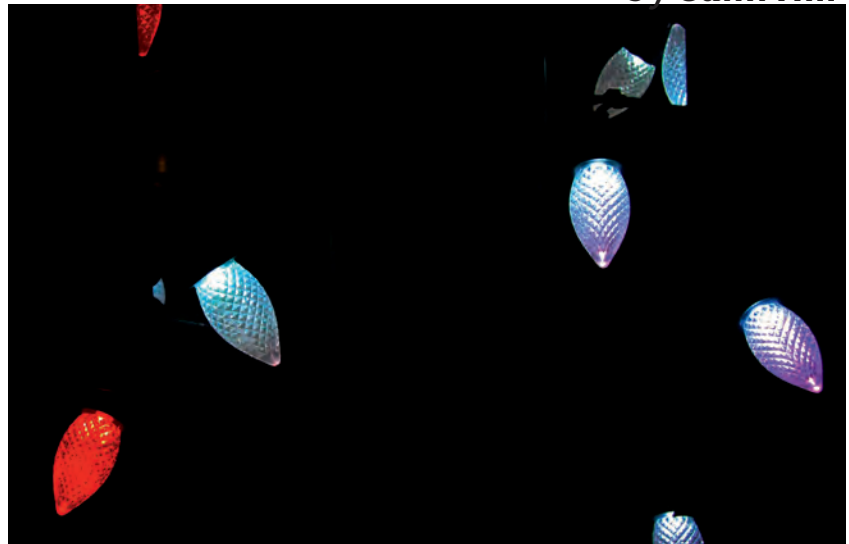


by Elsa Grebenc



by Teagan Gulan

by Sami Hill



by Clancy Olson



The Goddess of the Twilight Hour

by Emma Ackerman

She walked through the park and the trees seemed to bow in her wake. Her white canvas Keds softly kissed the paved path and the soft summer wind ran its fingers through her lengthy, wavy brown hair. She looked like a goddess, her skin and aura illuminated by the full moon in the star speckled night sky. She walked to the clearing the center of the park and peered up. As she scanned the sky, she mapped the constellations; she basked in the light of the moon. She closed her eyes and memorized the crickets song.

Then, she opened the glass jar in her hands and held it close to her chest. Slowly, one by one, the star trickled out of their place in the sky and into the jar. The gave off a comforting heat that warmed her hands as well as her heart. Once every star had been collected, she peered in at the warm light, warming her face one last time before she twisted the jar shut.

She sang to the moon as it sat alone in the sky and it grew closer to her. When it reached her, she wrapped her arms around it. The moon melted into the girl, now illuminating her from the inside. She radiated the tranquility of the night. Her dark eyes twinkled with the light of the moon.

Finally she walked to the corner of the sky. Alas she knew this moment had to come. A single tear rolled down her cheek, down her chin, down her neck. She looked up and took in the massiveness of the dark sky in the absence of the moon and the stars. And then she grabbed the edge of the curtain of night and drew it back. The first light of day kissed the earth and the girl shattered.

Morning has broken.

by Leigha Carter



Wax Figures

by Cas Sakura

I am made of Wax
As a Candle or a Crayon
A Bust and Icarus's Wings
I burn myself out
And melt away
To give you Light and Imagination
Hope and Freedom
I have many purposes
Fulfilling a role
Wherever I am needed
Shaped and moulded
To the will of those Hands
That I have given myself to

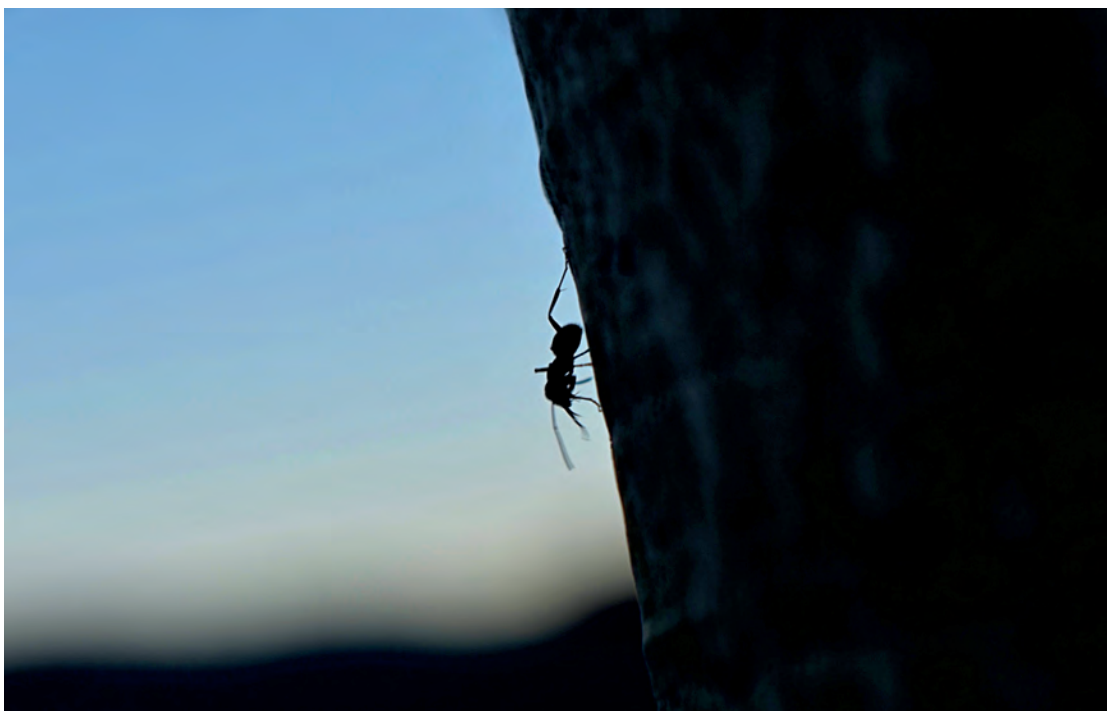
But as all Good and Useful things
I must come to an end
Dripping away
And bringing you with me
Closer to our Unavoidable Fate
Because Candles burn out
And Crayons are used up
Busts crack and break
And my fear is that one day
Like Icarus
I will inevitably let you Fall

by Abi Shirley

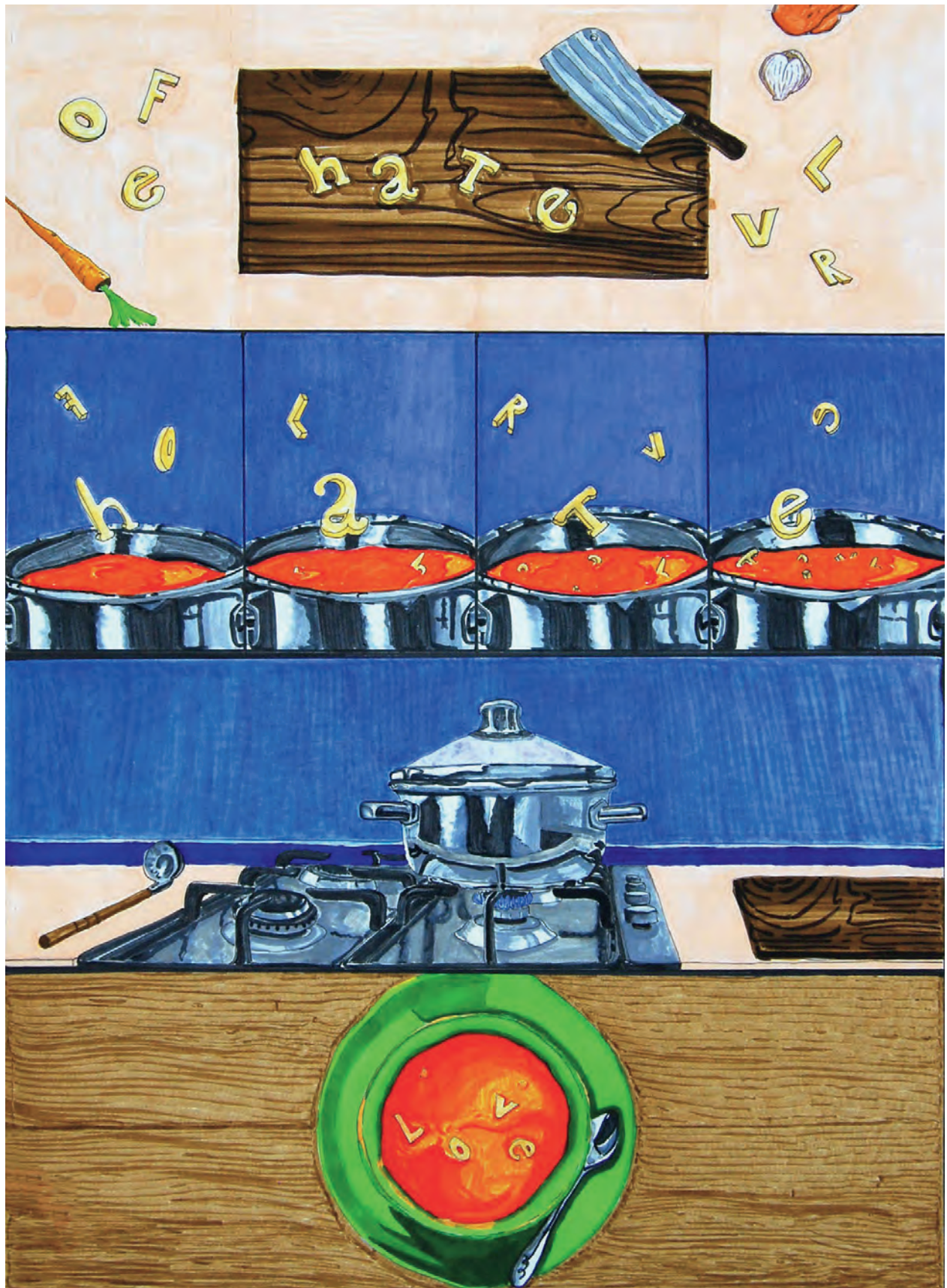




by Elsa Grebenc



by Shiloh Corcoran



by Noah Brooks

Untitled

by Anastiasa Christianson

I do not feel
Worthy enough
To write these words
Cut out my tongue
And take my fingers
Away from me
Because
I have no royalty in my blood
Only poetry
And poets only live
Off the water in the bottom of wishing wells

Woe to the poor kids in America



by Korben Kerby

Untitled

by Cassie Smith

Fly back to me
Let your presence pollinate joy
Let your company be my muse
Inspiring me to write such
Sweet things about
You

Let beauty bloom from your friendship
For you are what helps the world appear delicate,
Frail even
You are innocence to the eye
For those who take time to look

People like you are similar to bees
Dangerous if you get too close but
Nurture all good in the world

Give this bee its freedom

by Jessica Wilson



Dawn Song

by Sarah Sizemore

Linger not on hearts of ash
And carry not my ashes in your soul
My light dims fast in the waxing dawn
So let the sun rise again
And feel its dappled warmth
I am old

Time seems shorter to the old
Who have seen others turn to ash
In its grip. So what use is the warmth
Of youth? Rend my soul
And let me rest again
I cannot bear to see another dawn

Watch the dawn
You children of old
Who have seen it again and again and again
Who have seen so much of its light in the boughs of the ash
And in your souls
Can you still love the morning warmth?

Children of youth, can the warmth
Of hated flame match the warmth of the dawn?
Can it be a balm to the ice in your soul?
You feel old
And your eyes are ash
So, seeking comfort, you light the fires again

Come, wild phoenix again
On your wings you carry warmth
And in your feathers of ash
Comes a harbinger of long-awaited dawn
Rise, again like the days of old
And kindle something in my soul

The ashes of me within your soul
Can never be kindled, or burn you again
Grow old
And never know my sting nor my warmth
Watch the dawn
And cradle my effigy in ash

Untitled

by Molly Brandt

“I never stood a chance, did I?”

The stage lights burned into his pale skin. He looked so handsome, the heavy makeup making his jawline stronger than normal, his deep chocolate eyes twinkling under heavy coated eyelashes. I could see the small mic poking out from underneath his brunette curls, picking up his smooth tenor. We stood, face to face, the packed auditorium holding their breath as I spoke.

I stepped forward, the blocking cautious. He moved backwards, the sound of his polished dress shoes echoing, the thick silence interrupted by the heavy knock on the wooden stage.

He shook his head, and I could feel the heavy orb form in my throat, constricting the sides of my windpipe. It hurt; crying was the hardest thing to do when we were acting.

Yet, I knew this was not us acting.

It had come on slowly, my love for him. We had met backstage on a rainy night, the rich velvet curtains framing his figure in a fresh-pressed navy suit. He stood, the floodlights casting an almost ethereal apparition against his features. He watched the dress rehearsal in front of him with such concentration, a small crease forming between his thin brows. It looked like a scene from an old movie, where the dashing hero is introduced, sweeping onto a smokey train platform, or emerging from a shiny, old automobile.

As the musical number ended, he turned, looking down and adjusting his cufflinks, then met my gaze. I remember how my breath had caught in my throat, how my pulse rang in my ears as we stood in the darkness, surrounded by the rigging and heavy curtains, the sounds of the auditorium melting away.

He stepped forward and introduced himself, his voice like caramel; coppery and bright, but smooth and sweet at the same time, his british lilt making him even more handsome. He took my hand, holding it in his so delicately, like I was a butterfly whose wings could never be touched, and smiled. How magnificent that smile was. It seemed to make every corner and shadow fill with light; it felt so real.

We found that we would be co-starring in the musical *The Pajama Game* together. We rehearsed and sang and danced, swirling through months of companionship, pulling closer and closer together.

We performed together, bringing each line of the play to new heights, taking the London stages by storm. After each successful show, we would go out on the town with the cast, our company running through the rain to the nearest pub, settling in for a long night of merry-making.

I would order a small glass of scotch, and laugh as the company would raise their glasses and belt various songs from any number of musicals, clapping along when the melodies picked up. As the night carried on, I would catch his eye, and he would give his magnificent smile, laughing when someone always managed to spill their stein all over the old wood floors.

He would cock his head toward the doors, a twinkle in his eye. He would stand and grab his coat, clap the ensemble men on their backs, waving goodbye to the cast, ascending the steep stairs up to the rain-coated cobblestone streets. I would finish my drink, setting four pounds by the short glass, and say my goodbyes to the company, spinning my thick wool coat around my shoulders as my dancing heels clicked up the worn steps.

He would be standing there, watching as groups would pass, waiting with his umbrella over his head, distant jazz accompanying the sound of laughter. I would open my white umbrella and tap his shoulder.

“Ready?”

“Always.”

We would walk through the rain, side by side, watching as groups of teenagers frolicked amidst the shower, couples passing by hand in hand, old workmen traveling home from the factories with their heavy canvas jackets and metal lunch pails.

We would pass under the streetlights, and I swore I could hear the soft melody of a small string orchestra. A bouncing, legato tune that sung through the air, blocking out all the other noises around us, flowing through every alleyway and down each street, making the streetlamps twinkle and the rain dance on the shining cobblestone.

We would walk down to the river, wandering along, watching the boats pass by, their warm lights casting brilliant sunny nymphs into the water, dancing alongside the party-barges with unparalleled joy.

We would arrive at the small restaurant before I could even realize it; its unassuming brick facade and heavy oak door hiding the greatest Italian restaurant in the whole of England.

He would hold open the door, and I would step into the dimly-lit paradise, the smell of fresh made sauces and nutty cheeses overwhelming my senses each time we came, no matter how many occasions I had been before.

Eabrizio would always emerge from behind the great velvet curtain that covered the entry to the kitchen and smile, eyes sparkling and his rosy cheeks burning, constantly carrying the smell of cedar and lasagne with him.

“My children! Benvenuto! Fatevi a casa!” He would dash for a match and a set of menus, setting them down on the table that we always claimed. It sat in the back corner of the room, next to the entry of the kitchen, with the perfect view out the front picture window and out to the glassy river. The coppery red brick of the walls were covered by the largest velvet curtains I had ever seen, thicker and richer than those of the theatre that we called home.

Eabrizio would light the match and transfer the flickering flame to the tall chianti candle, sending a warm glow onto our faces. Then we would sit, listening to the soft chatter from others around us as the piano player’s fingers stroked a gentle waltz.

I swear, we could sit like that for years, watching the people around us, enjoying each other’s presence, occasionally sharing banter with Eabrizio and his charming partner Luca. They would always bring us the nicest wine they had in stock, chirping “Do not worry, sei una famiglia!” as they poured two glasses and left the bottle on the table, telling us to hold on if needed.

And then we would talk; about nothing to everything and anything in between.

He had a way of seeing the world that I could never fathom. He was so open, so embracing, so loving and understanding. He always had a childlike wonder of the world around us, like he experienced everything anew each day. His laughter rang out in the little tavern, a boyish thing that warmed you up like a mug of hot chocolate when you heard it, drawing you into his happiness. He would laugh at every stupid joke I made, and would listen intently to each of my serious problems. We would share wine and let our worries slip away. So I wonder, looking at him now, how things could have gone so wrong. I reach out my hand to him, but flinch away when his eyes fill with fear and something I cannot fathom. His eyes well with tears, and I realize just how much I love him in that very moment, no matter what had happened in the past. And I would always love him, his handsome visage, his beautiful mind, his wonderful voice, and all his glorious dreams.

“That’s the sad part- you did once.”

Maybe You Shall Hear My Heart **by Megan Cuddy**

I believe in life beyond the stars
And lives after death (finish and repeat).
I believe in a God with many faces,
But I don't believe bowing is necessary.
I believe in girls, boys,
All of the above, and none and in-between
And I believe they are all beautiful.
I can't trust a mother's love
Or put my faith into a could be,
But I can wrap myself in night
And know that tears are comforting.
Music is the one thing that should be constant
And love is a dance made only for two.
I will never roll dice or waste money on death
But I will believe in the possibility of a soul mate.
I believe in the endless calm of words and
I believe that some things will always be

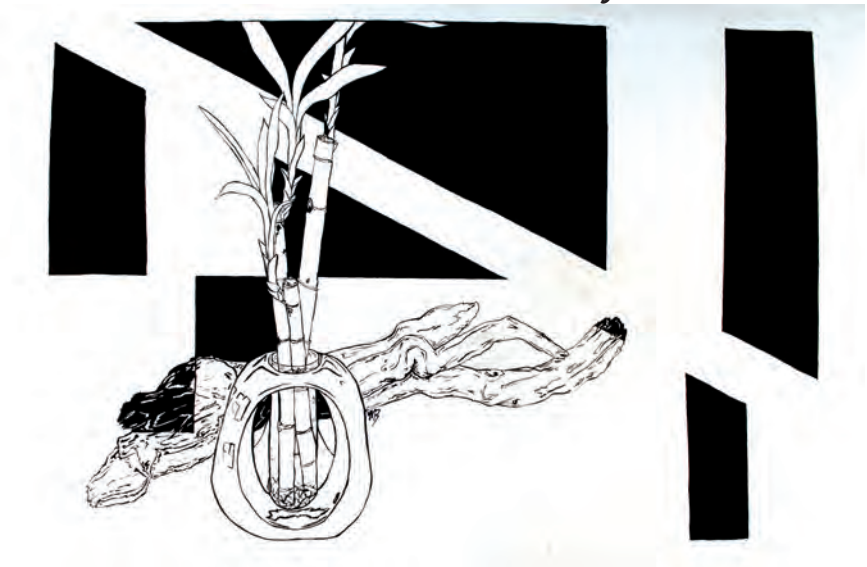


by Bella Mardis



by Aiyana Marcum

by Madi Beason





by Raegann Ballard

The Teapot

by Emma Ackerman

I am in a lovely relationship with a teapot whom I love. She is the sweetest entity I have encountered. She is short and she is stout and she has lovely flowers painted on her exterior, which have started to peel since I brought her home. She is rough around the edges and she has rusted slightly on the bottom. She sits silently, pleasantly, in the hutch, staring out at me through the glass. Her soft white complexion glows, urging me to take her out, to fill her with water, and to appease myself with a hot cup of tea. She is always tempting me. But she is my queen.

Saturday mornings are our time. I wrap my rough yet loving hands around her soft and voluptuous curves and pull her near to me. I admire her beauty in warmth of the morning rays. She seems to glow as the Saturday morning essences surround her.

She is beautiful. She is perfect.

I fill her with water, place her on the stove, and walk away for a moment, not thinking anything of my absence. But in the moments I am gone, chaos ensues. I am startled by the sound of my love screaming from the kitchen.

“I’M DONE!”

“PAY ATTENTION!”

“LISTEN TO ME!”

She is beautiful...She is perfect.

I pull her off the stove and she immediately calms down. My fingers wrap around her handle, firmly but lovingly. My touch seems to sooth her as her scream quickly dies to nothing but an echo off the kitchen walls. Steam rises from her mouth. It’s nothing but hot air and I pay it no mind, offering her time to cool down a little bit.

When she is ready, I pour her hot water into my mug, fully saturating my tea bag with her. A small ribbon steam is still being released as we sit at the kitchen table. I place her on the table across from me and I sip on my tea as her water cools. I never break eye contact.

She is beautiful. She is perfect.

Untitled II

by Anastiasa Christianson

The moon goes up, up, up as she goes down on gentle carriage of skin that held the world together. The tide, that is. First she swelled and blossomed and flourished, as dazzling as the eyes in the sky. Sudden as fireworks, fizzling in the reflection of her who is caressed by the hips of the beach. Then, as the moon passed its climax, she started to slowly creep down the soft skin that lay on the Earth.

The sound of tender kisses filled the air, taking up what space was left after the charade performed by fireflies and the desperate sunrise. As the sun rose, she started to recede, drawing back, affection fading with every last breath.

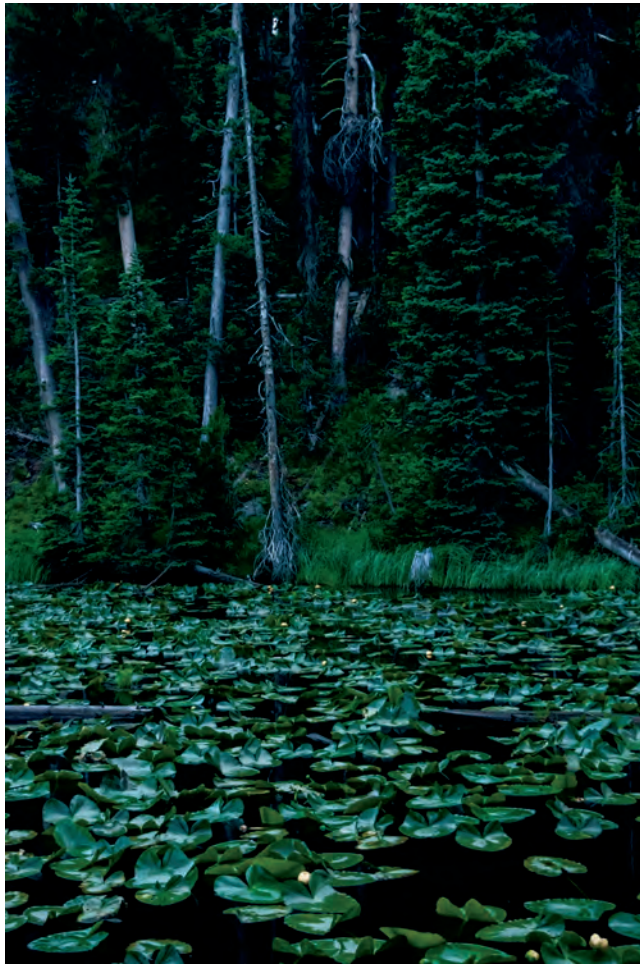
The shells on the beach wept for her, longing for her touch as they dried up in the sun. The tide holds them only for a brief time, cooing at every inch of the plump dimensions that cascaded over the land. The sand sat and waited while the final tingle of her kisses evaporated from the skin that saw no end.

Suddenly, the sky began to fall, bringing tantalizing turquoise skies who house purple pyramids and baby pink clouds who stand on their tippy-toes to be seen. The sand gasped, seeing a shadow start to approach the shore. The sand thought, "Finally, someone to love me. I have been alone for so long."

At first their kisses were gentle laps at the bay, but then turned into violent crashes against each other, mightily fighting the passion that consumed from within. "This one will stay, I will spend my future with her," the sand thought, as it swirled around the bliss that the waves brought forth. "This is the one, I will give my everything to her," the sand thought again. Every night the sand gives everything it has, taking the pushes from the waves, and maybe, just maybe, the moon won't go back down tonight.

by Leah Baranek





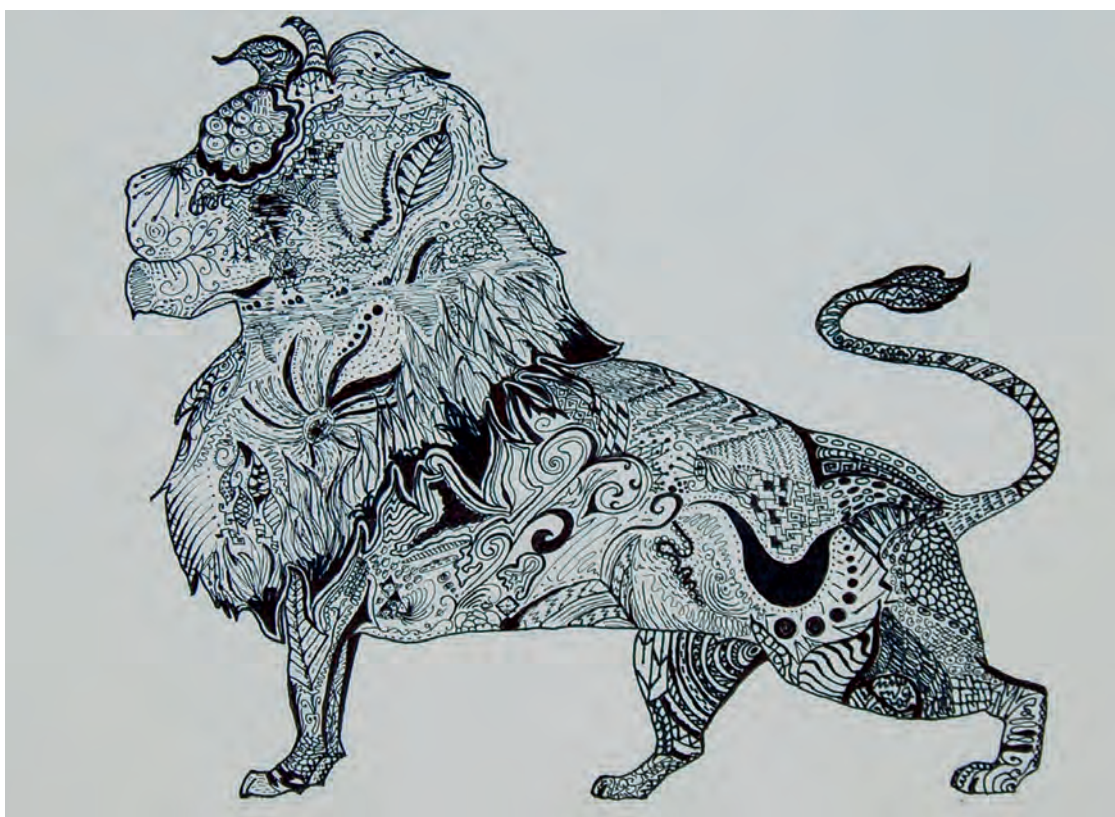
by Madison Blixt



by Anastiasa Christianson



by Ella House



by Lillian Hollibaugh

Your King and Country Need You

by Anna Boughton

I was seventeen when I enlisted in the British Army, two years under the legal age. When the man at the recruitment office asked how old I was and I replied honestly, he looked at me one more time and said, “Are you sure you’re not nineteen?”

After that, I assumed the identity of a self that was two years older. I was Pvt. William Morgan, born on the 15th of May 1895. That is the spiel I gave all the NCOs, that I gave to everyone except the other soldiers I trusted. For them, as long as I fought well and was a half-decent bloke, it didn’t matter that I was two years too young.

Training lasted far too long for any of our tastes, and by the time we were finally sent overseas to the Western Front, we were brimming with anticipation for what was to come. We were green and unaware of the true casualties of war, blissfully ignorant of what we would come to face. We were seduced by the concept of bravely serving our country, and it is that deadly allure that led us into those trenches.

The trenches were as unglamorous as the pigpens of the north, where the accent was thick and at times unrecognizable to anyone speaking the King’s English. Rain sputtered down at unpredictable times, creating pools that crawled up to your knees and turning the slopes into lazy waterfalls of mud upon which we continuously slipped. Amid our complaining, we caught snatches of older soldiers muttering amongst themselves, saying they would rather endure hours of rain than the last winters they had experienced.

The only aspect we encountered up to that point that was as terrible as the trenches was No Man’s Land. We had been sent to this part of the front as reinforcements after the fighting had died down, and the silence during the first few weeks allowed us to peer at the carnage, at the reason for our arrival. Bodies and random limbs were tangled in the barbed wire that spread across the expanse of the field, occasionally interrupted by a dead tree or a hole that had been blasted into the ground.

We prayed we would never be sent across there.

Especially when the gunfire began.

I never was able to figure out who fired first, but in that moment, it didn’t matter; neither side was willing to cease their fire. The repetitive sound of the guns drowned out everything except for the shouting of a nearby NCO. It became an instinct, an automatic reflex, to fire and obey whatever the nearest commanding office barked out.

From our position, we couldn't determine the number of German casualties. However, when we were finally provided relief from the firefight, we were forced to see those of our own. I turned to look down the length of the trench and saw several bodies slumped into the mud, guns discarded onto the ground next to them. NCOs walked over to each soldier, gingerly going through their clothing to find their identification tags.

"That could've been us," another private—Charles Powell—whispered. As I looked at him, I saw numb terror on the face of a man I always knew to be courageous in everything he did.

I could barely eat that night. The messy bed I had dug into the side of the trench felt too confining, eventually pushing me to lie out in the middle of the trench with just a wool blanket. Even then, I couldn't sleep. The stars above looked so distant and peaceful in the silent night, and I wished I was out there, suspended among those twinkling lights; anything else than to be hunkered down on the land scarred by war.

It became routine for there to be long periods of fighting followed by even longer lapses of nothing. After being jolted awake to the sound of gunfire for days on end, the sound of hushed talking and the distribution of breakfast was a welcomed way to be woken. I quickly became thankful for such trivial things.

Winter came with snow and frost, freezing us to our core. Spring couldn't come soon enough and was too short before we were sweating beneath our uniforms from the summer sun and were wishing for the chill of a nice breeze that would never come. As easy as the weather provided an approximation of the time of year, I only found out the exact date when eavesdropping on NCOs writing out letters to mothers and sisters and wives beginning with "I deeply regret to inform you..."

The movement throughout the trenches gradually lost its appeal. In the beginning, we were eager to move about and find some place new to inhabit for a few more weeks. However, as time dragged on, the only movement we appreciated was out of the trenches and to camps where we were given a few weeks to relax. There, we could unwind, pretend we were living the lives of regular citizens back in England, back in London and Birmingham and Manchester. It was at one of these camps that I found out Pvt. Charles Powell had enlisted at age fifteen; the recruitment office didn't bother to ask his age. With a cheeky smile, he informed me that his birthday was in a couple months. I told him his birthday wish should be for this bloody war to end. We shared a hearty laugh over it, and afterwards I quietly admitted to him that I had only been seventeen when I enlisted. I spoke it as if I were in a confessional

speaking to a priest and he was the only one willing to listen, the only one willing to care.

Those days eventually faded into the back of our minds as we returned to the trenches of the front lines. Some nights, when the mood was right, I would entertain myself by reliving them, seeking to temporarily think about anything other than the dirt and blood around me. In those moments, I could pretend we were still staring up at the stars, feeling safe under the idea that the fighting was too far away for anything to happen to us.

When Pvt. Charles Powell's birthday came, we all sang for him while he tried to hide his face behind his hat. We laughed and prodded at his sides, recycling the "wish for the war to end" joke until I'm sure he grew tired of anyone even mentioning his birthday. In the end, however, he did. The private stood as tall as his small stature allowed him and he loudly announced that he wished for this Godforsaken war to be over with. We all erupted in cheers; there was enough joy on that evening that the Germans must have heard us.

A week later, the gunfire returned, more violent than ever. Troops flowed through the trenches like a rushing river and in the distance, I could see brigades sent out across No Man's Land, fighting over the barbed wire while simultaneously trying to avoid being mowed down by German artillery.

A week after his birthday, Pvt. Charles Powell was shot by German fire.

I heard the distinct sound of a bullet striking flesh and out of the corner of my eye, I saw his body crumple to the ground. Against my better judgement, I abandoned my position and dropped below the storm of bullets to crouch down next to his body.

In the back of my mind, I knew the blood that was already soaking into the ground around his body was as clear of a sign as any. Still, I yelled, screamed for a medic until finally an NCO could no longer ignore my request nor force me to return to my gun.

I watched that night as they buried Pvt. Charles Powell at the spot where he died, leaving him in a grave marked without a tombstone. I watched the NCO write out the death notification, though I did not know who it would go to. I did not know who would receive a flimsy piece of paper telling them a part of their very being was gone, lost to a senseless war of death and destruction.

Pvt. Charles Powell died at the age of sixteen. One month passed without fighting. One month had passed since the death of Pvt. Charles Powell. One month later, on the 11th of

November 1918, we received word from a very ecstatic gentleman that Germany had signed the armistice.

The war was over.

We did not feel like victors. We had done what we had been ordered, and that was all. We had been sent into trenches crawling with rats and exhausted life and left behind a torn landscape littered with bodies.

They asked about the glory of it all, asked what the thrill of battle was like. They questioned why there was never any pride in it all. But I saw men too young to leave home die and killed many of the same.

There was nothing great about this war.

And though I was not religious, for I could not see how a God could exist and allow such atrocities to take place, all I could do was pray.

Pray it would never happen again.



by Sarah Pavsek



by Evan Zaluski



by Chris Eodice



by Hannah Simonson

The New George Bailey

by Amy Thompson

“Does it ever occur to you that Christmas movies exist all year? They don’t just disappear until December. They’re sitting in a box or a bin or a coffin or wherever and you could watch them all year but you don’t because everyone says that would be weird. But there’s nothing really stopping you from bringing out *It’s A Wonderful Life* during Cinco de Mayo,” I say, kicking my legs.

It’s a warm Summer night and the Princess and I are sitting on our usual boulder where the water is shallow. The saltwater tickles my feet, because the waves come up just enough without soaking us. The moon is bathing us in a pale yellow light and the stars are twinkling like crazy.

Her laugh is like sleigh bells, and she picks at the mosquito bite on her arm.

“You need to work on your object permanence,” she says. “And I’ve never seen that one. Is that the one with Carey what’s-his-face?”

“Grant? No, that’s *The Bishop’s Wife*, honey bun. I mean, that’s also a classic, don’t get me wrong. But this one has Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed and other people that are also probably American icons.”

“Those names mean nothing to me, Erika,” she says. “I don’t see many movies. It doesn’t pop up in the grand schedule.”

“Well, I’ll watch with you next time we see each other,” I decide, the light bulb blinking above my head.

“How? You know we can only meet here and there’s no Wi-Fi for miles. And you can’t drive me to the movie theater. People would stare!”

“Aw, let em’ stare,” I tease, fake punching her arm. “And we won’t even have to leave the boulder. I could bring a TV and extension cord. It would need to be, like, ten miles long, but it’s not impossible.”

“You’re ridiculous,” she says. Her face brightens, almost sporadically, like someone flipped a switch on the back of her neck. “I wish I could see the movie. Give me a plot synopsis. Give me a sales pitch I can’t refuse.”

“Oh, where to start.” I say, clicking my tongue. “Well, *George Bailey* is a guy that lives in Bedford Falls. The audience just sorta watches his life as it plays out and how he affects so many people. And when he gets in a bind financially, he wishes he were never born because, well, he failed everyone. An angel-in-training named Clarence shows him what the world would be like without George and everything’s terrible and he realizes that life is valuable and not the same without him, and everyone has a part to play.”

“Is there romance? I love romantic movies,” the Princess says wistfully.

“Oh, yes. A beautiful one,” I reply.

“Well, then. I’m sold.”

We spend a moment in comfortable silence and watch the clouds shift and mush together, and I think of something. But the Princess talks first. She obviously has something troubling her.

“This is nice. I wish we could do this more often.” She sighs deeply, like her breath could carry away any doubt in her heart. “We live in such different worlds, my love.”

I admit there’s truth in what she says. She is royalty, after all.

“Maybe,” I say, grabbing her hand, “but that just means our time together is precious and gives me something to look forward to. Just getting to hang out with you at all is enough for me, Princess.”

She wrinkles her nose.

“You know I don’t like when you call me that. You’re not one of my subjects. It’s just Maritime. Or Mari. Just not that,” she reminds me.

“Sorry, Mari,” I say, and she squeezes my hand to show that it’s okay. “But it’s true! Just sitting on this rock with you just might be my most favorite thing in the whole world.”

“You’re exaggerating! You could come here and sit with anyone anytime,” she says, her face turning adorably rosy.

“But I couldn’t without you, silly. It would be a sin. This rock has been forming for millions of years for the sole purpose of being a place where Erika and Mari can sit and chat about Christmas films from the forties,” I say warmly.

“I don’t think geology works that way,” she says, shaking her head.

She leans on my shoulder, and her hair is damp from swimming around earlier.

“In all seriousness,” I add, stroking her hair, “I have a portable DVD player. I used to bring it on long road trips with my family. It needs new batteries, and it’s not the same as watching it on VHS, but it’ll still be good.”

“That’s lovely news,” Maritime whispers, closing her eyes.

And just like that, our time is up. The royal bugle calls my princess back to her kingdom. Her face falls, and I touch her cheek to remind her that I’m still here. I pick her up bridal style and gently place her in a nearby canoe. This is always my least favorite part of our visits. I row us out to where the water is deep enough to swim without touching the bottom.

We share a kiss underneath the moonlight, and I never want it to end. But I have to place her in the water. She floats in place and still hangs onto my hand tightly.

“You’re my George Bailey,” she says.

Somehow, I know exactly what she means. I don’t bother pointing out she hasn’t seen the movie yet, and doesn’t know what she’s talking about.

“Right back at ya, babe,” I say with a wink.

She lets go, and I swear I see the stars reflect off her tail as she disappears beneath the rolling waves.

by Jorja Webb



by Colton Paige





by Holly Peterson

by Madyson DeFilippis



Among the Stars

by Tara Atkins

Her funeral is on a Wednesday. I hate Wednesdays, I think bitterly. I can hear her voice telling me not to visit her grave, begging that I don't go to the funeral at all. Of course I'll go. But today is only Sunday, and if this headache continues I'll stay here in the shadows anyway, hating myself for not saying goodbye. What would she do? I realize with a start that I don't know. Would she want to say goodbye to her oldest friend? Would she want the world to disappear? Or would she simply carry on?

She was a funny girl. A black hole in every sense of the word, she sucked the happiness right out of everyone she met. Everyone but me, that is. For me she was a lifeline, she was the only thing keeping me in reality. She was dangerous, a twisted and angry star that was always on the verge of flickering out. But she was, albeit reluctantly, my friend. After all, we went through the best and the worst of times together, and I couldn't help but respect her in the end. I might have hated her for most of the time we were together—hated her looks, her neediness, her stupid moods, her weaknesses. But all that is over, and she is gone. I'm afraid; that girl was my home, and there is nothing more frightening than losing one's home. For over twenty years, I lived knowing that I wasn't alone, at least not completely. So when half of oneself burns out like a red giant, can the other half ever regenerate?

I am blissfully unaware of the passing of time now; day and night blend together so beautifully, it's easy to get lost in it. I suppose I have her to thank for that. Or perhaps I should thank the sickness that stole her. The illness that made time feel like a great borderless sea, and our conversations like bits of disconnected flotsam floating around in it. The sickness that eventually separated us forever. I forget completely what day it is, which I don't really mind. But then I get a stirring feeling in my bones, as though the marrow has turned into a tiny collection of comets racing through my body. That's when I know it's Wednesday, her funeral day. The day I never thought I would see. And for the first time since she made the cosmos explode, I leave the shadows and step into the sun.

The churchyard is close to empty when I arrive. I can't say I'm surprised, she never had many friends. There are a few girls she used to know. I secretly hated those girls. I close my eyes for a brief moment, hoping for them to just leave her alone. There's also a boy there, sitting all alone to the side. I remember him from just before she died. I liked the boy, he was her closest friend. I approach him as he stands to leave,

but he brushes right past me, close enough for me to see his eyes are full of tears. He looks away. He doesn't want to see me without her. The girls follow him out, and suddenly I'm alone with her. I step forward to stand on the freshly dug grave, my hand on the cool stone.

"Hello," I whisper. I begin to shake as the weight of her loss cripples me. "How are you today, Olivia?" Her name feels foreign on my tongue. I pause, half expecting an answer. "I hardly know what to say to you now. You... Well. You always spoke for me. You always knew what to say, how to make people laugh—or how to make them leave us alone...

"I guess I'm not used to speaking for myself." My hands clench the stone, and I suck in a breath. Oxygen feels like dust in my lungs, and I begin to choke. And then I'm crying. "I don't understand, Liv. I don't understand how you got away and left me here. I need you."

My eyes are blurred as I lean against her cold marble rock. I trace her name, trace the dates inscribed below it. I want to leave this place. More than anything I want to flee back into the shadowy alleys where I've made my home. But I need to finish, to do what I came to do and get back where I belong. So I stand back up, and I stare beyond the grave to the silhouette of a weeping willow in the distance.

"But I'm not angry. You have to know that I'm not angry anymore, okay?"

I was mad before. I was mad at her for not growing old with me. We are all the same age as the universe, for matter can neither be destroyed nor created. "You were the fragile one, the one who always bore the pain. I can't be here without you for much longer. I just wanted to say, you did a really good job."

I feel my body fill with moonlight as I look down at my name in the marble. I feel every cell in my being morph into luminescence, my still heart becoming a tiny galaxy as I finally leave my body to be among the stars.



by Jaycee Hamlin



by Alex Fadness



by Lydia Fife



by Lynn Buelow



by Madelyn Romero

Index

Emma Ackerman (31, 43)
Tara Atkins (57, 58)
Raegann Ballard (42)
Leah Baranek (44)
Madi Beason (41)
Jordan Bird (3, 4, 5)
Madison Blixt (45)
Anna Boughton (47, 48, 49, 50)
Nina Bracht-Bedell (21, 22)
Molly Brandt (37, 38, 39)
Noah Brooks (34)
Meagan Broussard (5, 6)
Lynn Buelow (60)
Leigha Carter (31)
Sloane Chapman (21)
Anastiasa Christianson (35, 44, 45)
Keelin Connolly (7)
Shiloh Corcoran (17, 33)
Chelsea Cox (27)
Megan Cuddy (40)
Madyson DeFilippis (56)
Chris Eodice (51)
Alex Fadness (59)
Lydia Fife (2, 60)
Elena Gonzales (16)
Elsa Grebenc (29, 33)
Teagan Gulan (30)
Jaycee Hamlin (19, 59)
Kylie Hanson (23, 58)
Kylee Havranek (7)
Sami Hill (29, 30)
Lillian Hollibaugh (46)
Ella House (46)
Natalia Kelly (9, 10, 11, 12, 13)
Korben Kerby (35)
Benton Lehman (27)
Kaley Lightner (15)
Kate Loble (14)
Anna Lowe (8)
Aiyana Marcum (41)
Bella Mardis (40)
Erin Maxness (25)
Allison McJannet (18)
Clara McRae (29)
Thomas Melgren (18)
Maya Mulder (22)
Quincey Newman (24)
Emma Niederstadt (16)
Clancy Olson (30)
Colton Paige (55)
Sarah Pavsek (50)
Holly Peterson (56)
Kyra Robinson (20)
Madelyn Romero (60)
Aleigha Rosencrans-Drynan (15)
Cas Sakura (32)
Abi Shirley (32)
Ella Shropshire (28)
Hannah Simonson (13, 52)
Sarah Sizemore (36)
Caroline Southworth (26)
Cassie Smith (35)
Madison Stewart (23)
Madi Taylor (24)
Amy Thompson (53, 54)
Alyssa Tompkins (20)
Arial Van Daele (17)
Jorja Webb (55)
Jessica Wilson (35)
Evan Zaluski (51)

