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ANALYSIS OF LOVE

we used to be in love,
and by "we" I mean the boy staring at the girl across the room,
who has no idea that she is being idolized in every sense.
and the woman who doesn't get off that run-down bus till his stop,
only to secretly watch how gently he flips the newspaper pages.
or the old man who anonymously pays for a woman's coffee
after noticing she has four little ones pulling at her pants.
"we" as in this world's population of love-struck identities.

we used to be in love,
and by "in love" I mean cheeks boiling and hands clammy
with nervousness and anticipation with a passing glance.
the stomach pains full of want that hurt so good.
and the tingling feeling in your extremities
when they lightly touch your hand. Even something that delicate
would hit you like oncoming traffic.
"in love" as in fully devoted and passionate about this one emotion.

we used to be in love,
and by "used to be", I mean approaching that curly-haired girl
and telling her she's beautiful just because.
getting away from the screens and the keyboards
to personally get to know someone.
allowing the fear of rejection to enter your bloodstream
because that risk is beautiful.
"used to be" as in what "we" aren't now.

poet's note: this poem is modeled after Philip Appleman's poem "Memo to the 21st Century"

KAREN

having company makes her anxious so she keeps to herself, but **you**
wouldn't notice if she spoke anyway. she's gotta
eating disorder, depression, and she fakes the flu to try
and cover up all the symptoms of her hidden diseases. she tries to
figure out why God made her like this, but she doesn't understand.
she draws on a smile and paints color into her face because she's gotta
be a good example for her sister. every night she unlatches the death-grip hold
her sleeping mother has on her Yellow Tail bottle and carries her to bed. on
the girl's bedside table, there's empty bottles of cough syrup. it's the only thing able to
quiet the self-loathing voices in her head. she's envious of your
untarnished life and how personable you are. she hears soul
in all of her music and holds to it tight 'cause
when she listens, it's the only time she can fade out of life legally. sometimes they'll
notice her, but only to whisper. it's the blood curdling whispers that truly crush
her. the static that plays from one mouth to the next: it
shows that they like her just as much as she likes herself. if
she was given all of the world, she'd trade it for a good night's rest. they
can pretend she doesn't exist, but nobody can fake it like she can.

Poet's Note: The last word in each line of this poem is from the song "Karen Don't Be Sad" by Miley Cyrus:

You gotta try to understand

Gotta hold on to your soul

'Cause they'll crush it if they can

A FISHY SITUATION

my fins were sore and tired today
so I decided to take a rest.
I swam on up to the top of the tank
with the sun beating on my chest.

hours had passed and I finally
regained some extra sleep,
as the tank lid slid and a hand
picked me up with a netted sweep.

the mesh grew tight and my gills went dry

as she plopped me in the bowl.

the place was strange, but I knew for sure

I was not going down that hole.

panic struck and my scales turned white

as the swirling water sped.

I finally screamed at the top of my lungs,

“hey, Dummy! I’m not dead!”

*poet’s Note: This tragic poem is read to the tune of “Gilligan’s Island” theme song.

TODAY

It wasn't her high school. Her demons hide in places that only she knows about. On the outside, she's a normal girl. She walks down the halls, sits in class, and eats lunch just like everybody else. She wears t-shirts and jeans just like every other teenage girl. But there's something different about her.

She holds knowledge that nobody cares to know. Nobody will dare to explore the depths of the engulfing sea that contains her thoughts, her dreams, and her aspirations. People can recognize her face, but don't know her name. She has yet to miss a day of school in her life, but her attendance sheet is the only one who knows that. She's always sitting in her seat, and is never a second late. She arrives punctually and vanishes the premises in the blink of an eye. You'll never see her at football games or house parties. She is her own best friend, besides her golden retriever.

Her brown, smooth hair is always tucked behind her ears and her head slightly lowered. She knows the tiles aren't laid straight and they smudged paint on the lockers. Her voice is imagined to be a pleasant, mild toned sound. It would be the kind of voice that is drowned out by the rest of the world, and you'd just kinda watch her lips move. The kind of voice that can only be heard when the rest of the room allows her to be heard. Although nobody talks to her, she listens. She listens to the drama being caused by the populars. How the world ended when Jenny's boyfriend cheated on her, but molded back together when Jenny started dating the football star. She listens to the gamers for what video game is sweeping the nation and that athletes spend hours in the gym hoping to make something out of themselves or to distract from the never-ending void of despair and sorrow. She listens to the scholars that are applying to Stanford and Harvard. All this listening to the diversity of high school, and she doesn't have one word to say. Or one word to say it to. All these people in one place, and not one will spark a conversation with her.

A shy smile is exchanged when somebody makes eye contact or says a simple hello. It's a painful smile that is forced from her lips. There's fire in her eyes that wants to be fueled by interest or desire, but it's smoldered when the moment is over when they keep walking. In the crowded

halls, her gray eyes are glued to the floor. Her feelings are kept deep in her soul in a place that not even she can begin to understand. She blends into the everyday chaos that occurs in the school and pretends to be okay. What it means to be happy is misinterpreted with what happiness looks like. She pretends that she's just like everybody else, when everybody is searching to be anything but that. Nobody wants to understand what's going on in her mind. Her endless questions, imaginary scenarios, and hilarious jokes are bottled up in a time capsule, waiting to be opened and shared with somebody. Today, I'm going to talk to her.Today, I'm going to be her friend. Today, I'm going to ask her how she is and what she's thinking.

Today, her seat is empty.

GELIDUS

Wellenstein's dog barks. it's a soulful bark, echoing throughout the half frozen forest.

Thoreauvian peace settles over the pond; a fleetingly quiet, bitterly cold period of existential silence chills me to the core.

Fall is waning every day; winter will be upon the Rockies soon.

cattails, brown and bent, choked to the stalk by the frozen and indifferent pond.

indifference.

that is what strikes me most about the scene before my eyes and pen.

no matter what we make of it, how we treat it, or regard it, the pond doesn't care.

it'll go on even when we're gone.

is nothing sacred?

the mechanical rattling of an industrial truck breaks the ephemeral silence.

invented paradise lost once more; a reminder of the modern world a few miles away.

I am reminded of Edward Abbey's timeless lament, "progress has come at last."

a snowy dust in the foothills to the south, silent pines stand sentinel over the indifference of the mid-afternoon light.

a brown spider crawls carefully across the topography of my corduroy pant leg - too close for comfort.

the truck rattles on, idling away.

how much is it to ask for a little silence?

naked trees, pared down to the brittle and dry frame.

where are your colors and adornments now?

thin icy crust, expanding in a semi circle, contrasted by the reflection of the bank beyond the surface.

immature chuckling and giggling.

I guess some people just can't handle the solitude.

solitudinous.

that's what the world needs.

VILLANELLE

there in the valley stands our peak,
resolute and unyielding
tis not a good time to be weak.

hear ice soulfully groan and creak
silent only under the wind
there in the valley stands our peak.

jutting ridgeline like a bird's beak
long deep caverns not seen by man
tis not a good time to be weak.

respect the legend's summit streak
but know the mountain doesn't care
there in the valley stands our peak.

see the skis so polished and sleek
creeping and carving through the snow
tis not a good time to be weak.

play with the best and hear them shriek
find a tempo and mind the ledge
there in the valley stands our peak
tis not a good time to be weak.

UNLIKELY ASCENT

Sling, kick, kick, sling. Focus, breathe, rest, up, always up. As the sun winked maliciously at the wall, Renand swung his axe into the unyielding ice, spitting forcefully to his right, disregarding the chance that his spittle would hit his partner, Quirby, who was belaying him below. Swing, kick, up—always up, it was the only way. They had made slow time up the wall, dulled first by punishing cold, then by fatiguing heat. It was midmorning, putting them exactly 37 minutes behind Renand's calculated timetable. It didn't matter now, their food would be gone by the time they touched summit, if they even could touch summit, and Renand had no qualms taking more than his share. After all, it had been he who'd attended the Elite Alpine and Mountaineering Academy for the Gifted, it had been he who'd raised the funds for the expedition, why shouldn't he take more than his share; surely he had earned the extra calories?

Climb, climb, climb, swing, kick. Rest, breathe. No time! No time! The time was now, the time always was now. Up, up, up. Leave Quirby to his frostbite and lethargy. Up, up, up. His muscles tensed, and his eyes squinted from behind expensive lenses. Renand no longer feared falling, and no longer feared death, long since resolving to free climb the wall's final icy pitch, no longer requiring Quirby's pitiful assistance. Kick, swing. Lactic burn seared across his shoulders, causing the axe's arc to be stunted, crashing timidly into the ice and soft snow. Kick, swing. An icy gale blasted Renand's exposed cheeks, reminding him of the life he had abandoned, now many thousands of miles away on a different continent. Reminding him of the people he had similarly abandoned to pursue his dream. The dream. Certainly there was no nobler pursuit, no finer ambition than that which drove a man to capture, to earn his dream. No matter, the wind was coming. Kick, kick powerfully, swing; swing as though they're watching you, power, power, power. Nightfall would be coming soon, summit within reach. It had not occurred to Renand that it would be wise to bivouac somewhere along the lip-like outcropping above him, to swiftly pitch the tent made for two men, now left to one, and rest. No rest, no time. Christ, time had become worthless, as worthless as Quirby's incessant whining and requests to slow down and pace themselves.

Cracked lips, dehydrated mouth, fading daylight. The sun was making its vindictive descent, off to bathe some other part of the globe in its punishing radiance. Climb on! Carry on! Do it for the sponsors. Do it for the years of effort and single-minded sacrifice. Prove them wrong. Let them watch. Renand succumbed: breathing heavily in the thin alpine air, clinging to the rock face he had become intimately familiar with without the security of a rope, cursing the weakness of the body. In the fading twilight, Renand could make out his reflection in the dented and worn aluminum axe; jaw flexed, eyes focused behind the expensive lenses, beautifully poised for greatness. Greatness. The word haunted and invigorated him, giving him warmth in a bitterly cold universe. Great men had come before him, more would come after. He wanted his name in the history books. That'd show them.

Kick, swing, kick. Sluggish now. Renand labored under the weak light of the headlamp. Live like a rooster, infinite expectation of the dawn. Thoreau's principal teachings echoed through his exhausted mind as he continued his tormented summit assault. Courage man, courage. Swing, kick, swing, kick. Midnight now, murderously cold. Renand paused once more to admire his handiwork in the dark, pulling himself over and onto the gendarme ridge that stretched into the abyss. Trudging now. No more mechanical swing and kick. Always methodical, always controlled. If only Quirby could see him now, if only they could see him now. Trudging along the gendarme, Renand moved with slowed purpose, stopping frequently despite his mind's constant demands to forge on.

Daylight broke. A tormented, famished, and savagely cold night had passed. The summit was visible once more, and with it brought a fresh surge of indignant rage and power through Renand's core, warming him. Less than 500 feet of scree field separated Renand from obscurity and the exaltation of the summit. Less than 500 feet to complete an expedition that had been tried and failed three times before; the price of fulfillment was discipline, and the cost was a lifetime of missed opportunities. Renand's musings were violently interrupted by the wind's icy howl, threatening to plunge him back into the depths from which he had doggedly arisen. Less than 500 feet of windswept, snow covered talus. Spitting rudely into the wind battering him, Renand made the traverse, still moving with vengeful purpose and efficiency.

Transcendence. Attained at a terrible, euphoric cost. Renand collapsed to his knees, overcome with exhausted emotion. Pride and contented rage swept through him; if only they could see him. How foolish they'd feel for doubting him, taunting his training plan. He rose to his knees, the summit was deserted, no trace of human life save his own footprints and the wind battered logbook case. As he peered over the vastness below him, the cloud capped mountain ranges and plummetus valleys, Renand felt no remorse. To hell with Quirby. He couldn't have appreciated the view, anyway. Renand fumbled with his mobile phone, his nearly frozen fingers resting for a moment on its buttons as his mind feebly tried to remember how to use them. Let them watch, let them be jealous. He snapped a shot of the valley below and a poorly crafted summit selfie, using what little service the phone could muster to send the photos in to his friend Heinrich, the only one who had believed in him. As he turned to descend, Renand paid little attention to the rapidly dropping temperature, warmed by the triumphant euphoria of first ascent; nor did he pay attention to the series of storm clouds gathering ominously that would soon claim his life. His goal had been met. Renand would be remembered.

GEMS AND JEWELS

beginning with the cracks and pops that frighten some,
yet feel so good.
layers upon layers of mismatched sweaters and tights veiling the body, trying to mobilize the frozen muscles and joints.
slowly the layers are shed from a thin frame. giving the essence of perfection in this thrilling world.
the beads of sweat rolling down foreheads, gleaming in the bright lights, pooling in the hollows of some collarbones and smoothly gliding down the always apparent ribs. stopping in a pool that soaks the stomach endlessly.
a progression of intensity for two hours, then a calm reverence to finish.
all a preparation for the gems and jewels to ensue.

they are lined up like a row of swans, preparing to be just that. a nervous shake in their voices
as they coat on the translucent powder to keep from being lost in the lights.
perfecting the wing off the eye's edge, even though it is invisible to all but those behind the curtain.

breathing decreases once the hooks are done up; the boning constricts the movement needed to glide across the stage like a covering of fog in the low valley.
a sweet melody resonates from the instruments opposite the long, heavy curtain
that contains all that awaits in the evening.
heart beats uncontrollably,
a momentary lapse in memory.

in the next moment, everything is finished. no more gems and jewels to be seen, merely the clearing away of fallen petals.
one more night finished, only to return the next and do it all again.
this never ending sequence of layer shedding, constricted breathing,
and a story completely forgotten in the blink of an eye.
a vicious cycle of gems and jewels to be worn and forgotten.

OUR THOUGHTS

we spend our time doing things that will not matter when we are six feet under.
the thoughts we have are all our own and when we die, they die with us.
an important person shared this with me, and it has impacted how I choose to spend my time.
the pages in books will always be there; reprinted for ages, they are concrete figures.
but how you feel and your ideas only last as long as you do.
everything you say or think will drift away over time, so stop wasting your time with doubt.
why waste time holding back and not doing what you want?
tell that person that you love them, or have a heated argument about something you have a passion towards.
do whatever your heart desires, find that passion worth arguing about.
talk and be with the people that make you happy and support your decisions.
let go of caring, tell people how you feel and let your thoughts be free.
take a chance on life and do the one thing that terrifies you the most in this world.
most most of all:
don't let everything die with you.

LIFE

they say that in near death experiences,
your life flashes before your eyes.

well boy oh boy,
do I hope I like what I see.
I hope I see all the things I enjoyed,
not the mistakes and poor decisions.

I hope I have children to see
along with their achievements.

and if I see people,
I want to see all the good in them.
the humbling moments they've shared
in only the best memories of what they used to be.
I don't want to see all the people by whom I've been hurt, or that I've hurt.
I want to see influential people and people I've influenced.
those whom I love
and love me in return.

I only hope to see the good in every situation,
but I know that's not how it goes.
without the harsh truth, and rough patches,
the life that would flash in our eyes would be boring and fruitless.

if my life flashes in front of my eyes,
I just hope for the best;
and that I'm not disappointed in my own life.
that I'm happy with the people I've brought into my life,
by the choices I've made to influence myself and those around me.

I only now hope that I achieve some of my goals
and that I'm pleased with anything I may see.

m.w.

DISGUSTING BEAUTY

"Haven't you always wanted to feel beautiful?" I feel disgusting. "I'll show you, you're beautiful." You made me this way. "Take off your clothes, I'll show you places that will make you feel beautiful." I'm not beautiful. "Don't be shy- no, don't fight. Let me do this for you." I want to hide in beautiful clothes, pretend I'm good to look at. "Don't you love me?" Naked, I am not beautiful. "Your scars and cuts, they don't take away from how you look." They're there because of you. "Here, do you like that?" Every place you touch burns like acid eating away at my skin. "Don't cry, you're attractive. It's okay, you're mine." You taste like regret mixed with citric acid. "Here, you can do it, too." My tears are bitter and salty. "Touch." I feel like throwing up. "Rub." I taste you, tears, bile, blood, regret, anger, discomfort, hurt, shame. "There." Please, I don't like this. "Feel." Stop. "Good." Disgusting. I feel myself crashing. Bitter tastes and feelings collide; I trusted you. I want to scream, I trusted you. I want to fight, I trusted you. I thought you loved me, I trusted you. I want it all to stop, I trusted you. The noises, the thoughts, the emotions, the shaking, the crying: they all stop. "That was wonderful." I'm numb, I'm a monster, and I trusted you. "Good job." I will never like this type of thing again. "You're beautiful." I trusted you. I trusted you. I trusted you.

I AM ...

I am nothing my parents wanted me to be-
I am nothing I thought I would be.
that little girl in pink, hair down to her shoulders,
well she begins to fade and she molders.
hair cut short, a rebellious look for a girl,
but I thought "let's give it a whirl."
I'm still who I am, I'm gentle and kind.
though different on the outside, same in the mind.

I am everything I never thought I could be,
I am happy with who I am, being me.
I am that boy, with the loose shirts and sweet smile,
that boy with the perpendicular style.
the boy that doesn't get to go in the locker room.
that boy who is still in bloom.

despite what my mother yells and my father denies,
I am a boy, I am Atlas, who smiles wry.
so remove me from your Christmas card list,
like I give a fuck. your choice, your miss.
deny me for my labels, you shallow pig.
because of them I smile big.

ONE TO TEN

one more day is another year.
one more breath is another fear.
one more loss is another tear.
I can't stand being here.

two more days brings more tomorrow.
two more breaths grow hard to swallow.
two more losses shrouded with sorrow.
my life is not yours to borrow.

three more days and you will see.
three more breaths are killing me.
three more losses not meant to be.
one, two, three...

four more nights lacking sleep.
four more voices begin to weep.
four more lives valued so cheap.
I can't count another sheep.

five more nights spent wide awake.
five more voices sound so fake.
five more lives too scared to take.
my life I'm ready to forsake.

six more nights blend to a mix.
six more voices create conflicts.
six more lives without a fix.
four, five, six...

seven more minutes until it's dawn.
seven more words are already gone.
seven more children rest beneath the lawn.
I can't help but be withdrawn.

eight more minutes to compromise.
eight more words filled with lies.
eight more children dry their eyes.
my life has spiraled into its demise.

nine more minutes of pain entwine.
nine more words lacking rhyme.
nine more children are beginning to resign.
seven, eight, nine...

one more day grows old.
two more breaths become so cold.
three more losses at a young age.
four more nights filled with silent rage.
five more voices are slowly lost.
six more lives will pay the cost.
seven more minutes are lost to thought
eight more words that can't be bought.
nine more children are laid to rest
ten secrets have been confessed.

our mistakes have brought us here again.
all the way from one to ten.

THE CLOYING SUPERNOVA

I walked down the institution's lifeless hallway, the smell of the derailed making a thick fog in the air. The building had been poorly furnished when it was first built. You could tell by the sour smell of water damage as well as the ventilation system that lined the roof, installed sometime in the early 2000's. A hideous time to be alive. The imbecile next to me, an obvious ninny and my new director, Dr. Ravioli, waddled with his twisty mustache and awfully tacky yellow hair, evidently enjoying the grey walls around him. He stood about 5'3", embarrassing me whenever someone strolled past us, especially a person of obvious social stature. I ducked my head in shame and pretended they weren't there as we would walk by.

I, on the other hand, stood supreme at 6'5", my features chiseled by the great beyond. Running my hand through my thick steel blue hair like a cosmic Elvis Presley, I cemented my superiority and beauty to this ugly man. But he already knew. I could see it in his pathetic gait. I was pristine; I was utter beauty. "Dr. Cognitive, I would like to welcome you to our most renowned patient, who is now yours." I smiled, cringing at his shrill voice, though I calmed myself by running my well-manicured pale hands together to remain cool, their texture velvety smooth. I lifted myself out of my emotional dump though I wanted to turn to the ugly little man, jam my finger into his chest and say, 'Hello you freaky man! How does it make you feel that my suit is more expensive than your flat! You pathetic noodle!' Regretfully, withheld my wordy ambition.

"Oh, Dr. Ravioli, don't you give my patient a wacky rep. I am sure it will be extra-ordinary," I said, chuckling as he chimed in to defend his ego.

"Dear friend! I did not mean a thing by it, Dr. Leopard Cognitive, sincerely! I did not!" A cherry red color pooled in his cheeks as he began to pick up his pace, practically sprinting down the never-ending hallway of checkerboard flooring that seemed to lead into the utopia of average dressed people with bland personalities. His shoes made a squeaky noise that was as loud as his shame.

"I'm sure you did not, silly Dr. Ravioli." I said with a heart-stopping smile.

We got to the end of the hallway and took to standing in front of my subject's 1950's blue door. The silence would have consumed everything if it wasn't for the slight humming any medical institution seemed to have. I stared at him intently wondering what in the wonderful world we were doing standing staring into nothing until I began to crack; the stench of the disinfectant was seeping into my brain. It's disgusting for a person to stand for so long and not be productive. "Well, there's no use in standing around when there is work to be done!" I said, my voice almost quivering with excitement.

I reached out to the metal scanner that would open the door, finally giving me my first subject on which to vomit all of the teaching I had learned in a cloudburst of psychological genius, but before my finely painted feelers could even scratch the scanner, the sassy little man jumped in front of me! "You mustn't!!" he yelled superfluously. I pulled myself back, avoiding any contact with him and falling to the ground, in the process tarnishing my iridescent suit. "Dear god, Dr. Ravioli, what is the dilemma?!" I asked, rage oscillating in my eyes.

He was gripping onto the scanner like a squirrel gripping onto its walnut, his eyes beating and manic. "You cannot open this door; she moves at high voltages and speaks at absurd frequencies. A horrible child, horrible child..." He trailed off. "You know, Dr. Leopard Cognitive, your name is quite fitting for your profession. Were your parental guardians roaming gypsies?"

He trailed off again, his fingers slightly twitching. I stared at him in absolute wonder. How in the world did this man earn a degree, let alone in the field of psychology?

I started to laugh.

"Stop this talk at once, Dr. Ravioli. You are being absurd! Now please open the door so I may earn my paycheck!"

He rose up to the posture of a decent-mannered person, staring cheerfully into the wall in front of him. Having a sort of revelation, he then looked into my eyes, trying to retrieve the conscience he had lost long ago. "My goodness, Dr. Leopard Cognitive, you are quite right. These patients have made me quite nonsensical in the noggin."

His eyes finally connected with mine, and I was struck with a strange pang of sympathy for the foolish man. I rested my hand on his shoulder. The contrast of my pale hand to his electric pink lab coat electrocuted my eyes. My voice purring softly, I spoke calmly to him. "Now how about you open the entrance so we can move on with our short lives."

He nodded, and, slowly moving to the door, shoved it open with heavy arms. The door swung open. Disappointingly though, another outdated door came into view, and we were encased in a smaller-than-life middle ground. I sighed and sucked in the lead paint smell, waiting for his next grand move.

He did not turn his face but began to whisper. "Now I introduce you to loopy Lucille, the pastel child who crunches on pearls and..." Dr. Ravioli leaned back, sniffing at my collar with two quick whiffs, then returned back to his original position. "Seashell perfume!"

My eyes widened in frustration. What did he even mean? This cuckoo old man. What nerve he had! I sniffed my collar, nervous still, despite his lunacy.

Smiling wickedly, Dr. Ravioli ripped open the door screaming at the top of his lungs: "CHILD!!"

The fragile girl creature who sat on the ground whipped her star struck eyes around, looking out and beyond to dimensions we would never know. A feeling a senility drowned my senses, and as I walked closer to her, my 5 senses went completely to waste. She was sick and weak. I looked her over. Her skeletal arms were raised slightly above her shoulders; her pointer and thumb fingers connected making a circle. The epidermis surrounding her was that of white petals. Her lips, pink, hair a ghostly white, and her most captivating eyes radiated fluorescent grey.

"Lucille!" Dr. Ravioli screamed as if she were near deaf. I was overcome by an exhausting sense of sadness. Her room was painted white but upon the walls lonely pink hearts had been painted by some sad enigma's tender hand. "How's about you say how-do-you-do to your new mentor, Dr. Leopard Cognitive!"

She flopped uncomfortably onto her back and propped herself with the occipital part of her brain, staring at me with innocent distaste.

"Leo Decapero, knight of broken hearts! Dr. Ravioli, another mentor. How dare you?"
She spoke with a sickly feminine voice that crackled romantically and crossed her arms, silently shaming the little man.

"No, no, my dear, do not think of it like that!"

Dr. Ravioli rushed to the lunatic's side, sitting crisscross applesauce besides her and cupping her cheeks with his hands.
"My dear, listen to me, he is more than a mentor, equipped in all areas! Won't you look at him?"

Lucille did not heed his request because in a matter of seconds he grabbed ahold of her head and forcing it up to focus her attention onto my unworthy soul.

"Quickly, Dr. Leopard Cognitive, sell yourself now!"

They both stared unimpressed. Slightly I waved, making an odd squeaking noise. My cheeks flushed crimson red with embarrassment.

Lucille made a loud discontent sound. "Doctor, why must you always hurt my feelings?"
She covered her eyes, shaking her head, collapsing down into her own lap. She began to breathe heavily, sniffling rather pathetically. Lucille then rose up pointing furiously at me.

"I know why. Because you bring in these new ratty neuroscientists to do your bidding! Just leave me alone Doctor!"

Appalled, I began to sulk away, letting a foreign lugubrious feeling be plopped onto my heart: eight years in the life school and this is what becomes of my career. Lucille evidently caught the smell of my sadness because she propped herself up once again holding her right hand in the air.

"Hold your horses, Dr. Leopard Cognitive,"

I heard her clueless voice peep. Without a moment's hesitation I came up from my mood and walked gently into the room, crouching down next to her. Her sticky scent of cotton candy milkshake flooded my nose and rotted my teeth.

"Yes, gentle Lucille?"

I spoke calmly, as I was advised to do while talking to the mentally rocked. I cast a quick look to Dr. Ravioli to see if he noticed my professionalism, but the dumb little fool failed to do so.

"Did you know your name was once a dangerous forest cat? Dr. Leopard Cognitive?"

I let my act down, acknowledging her grey eyes swallowing me whole.

"As a matter of fact, I... did"

Curiously I trailed off, completely engulfed by her sparkling wonder. She swallowed my spirit whole, and the hedonistic personality my cranium harbored before was dissolved in a vat of candy pink acid Lucille cooks up whenever she sees fit to melt away imperfections that come into her life, making them incorruptible and soft. My every molecule became a red blood cell floating through her infinite veins where I would forever dwell on the edge of absent oblivion.

LIME

by anna young

puncture his thick skin
and there is a sour interior
memories divided into segments
and protected beneath a puckered
unwelcoming
bitter exterior.

his brother
he is much the same
with the same thick skin
but he's sweeter
past his tough defenses
colored in a softer yellow
glow of optimism.

but it's the other one
green with envy
and pockmarked with hate.
he's the one to watch
and maybe
with the right combination of sweetness
maybe his faults can be healed.

POET'S PRICE

by aryn cummings

it's all so bland, isn't it?
the poetry you wrote before the pain.

lifeless, meaningless words strung up and glued together with
nothing but dry rhymes.

then you blink and you're filled to the brim with hot, burning
pain like a fresh cup of tea on a December morning.

now, suddenly, you're the poet you've always wanted to be.

a.j.c

SORROWED EYES

his long, dark hair,

red war paint streaked on his face,

beautiful colored beads

decorating the chief with honor and respect.

the beat of the drum in his soul

becoming more faint.

his headdress sinking lower.

the bright blues, oranges, yellows and reds:the ones his ancestors proudly wore before him.

the colors begin to fade

along with all they once knew.

his eyes,

white and black contrast,

nothing in between.

reflect memories of devastation, horror, sadness.

what was once freely his people's

is nothing but a fond memory.

his freedom no longer flies like the eagle.

he sees his reflection,

his fire inside has diminished.

no longer a warrior

it no longer flames the red and orange

but a prisoner.

of the sunsets he once watched.

it has all been stripped away.

nothing left but beads, feathers,
and sorrowed eyes.

YOG-UGH

From the hustle and bustle of our daily lives to the problems we face at work, jobs and school, many people deal with stress. One common form of stress relief is the body bending, deep stretching art known as yoga. Many people take yoga classes to unwind from a hectic day or to start off their day in a meditative way. Some people even turn to yoga's more intense version: hot yoga. Hot yoga is just like regular yoga, but turned up a notch. Well, the thermometer is turned up a notch. Although hot yoga can be relaxing, it comes with its own set of problems and frustrations. Luckily, many steps may be taken to ensure that a hot yoga class is survived with little to no damage to the participant's body or psyche.

The first step to surviving a hot yoga class is to learn to deal with sweat. One may or may not be surprised to learn that hot yoga is hot, and heat causes sweat. Mix the ninety-five to one hundred and five degree temperature with the hard and strenuous body positions, then throw in a dash of stress and increased heart rate, and the recipe yields sweat. A lot of it. Even the most seasoned yogi's (people who practice yoga) will sweat. Sweat will bead up from tensioned-wrinkled foreheads and will drip down onto sweat-smeared yoga mats. It will dribble down butt cracks and be soaked up by the customary, extra tight yoga pants. It will glisten on the back like a salty, freshly buttered piece of corn on the cob. Sweat will shimmer on the skin and make the yogi look like the cooked chicken she feels like. Overall, the constant blasting heat will give off the familiar feeling of being at a barbeque. The slight difference is that the yogi is the food, and not the patron. The good news is that all that extra sweat will result in a nice, salty flavor. A new yogi must be prepared for everything to sweat. Feet will sweat. Trying to hold a pose on slippery sweaty feet will feel like an inadequate Jesus impersonator trying to walk across water. The yogi should just try to dig in her toes and reminisce about the good old days sliding down a slip-n-slide on a sunny summer day. Armpits will sweat. Like a shower turned on high, armpit sweat will rain down across the land. Armpit sweat will glide against the arms and torso and will rub across prickly armpits that were mostly likely forgotten about during the shaving process. A yogi will wear deodorant and hope for an inadequate Jesus impersonator to deliver some kind of armpit-sweat-free miracle. Hands will sweat. Sweat will drizzle out of the palms like a leaky faucet. The survivor yogi will embrace the feeling of being a kitchen appliance and move on. Sweat will sweat. Deep, deep down in the beads of sweat that the yogi sweats, the microscopic particles of sweat will complain about being hot and will sweat. The yogi will bring a towel to wipe away the sweat, but she will know that just like a persistent rash, it is unlikely to go away. The sweat will destroy all chances of having the cute hairdo planned for that day. Wearing hair down is a dream that needs to be let go of.

For the neophyte yogi to prevail, she must wear a ponytail. She should always remember that becoming a sweaty beast is an extra special privilege, especially when the odds of taking a shower before school starts in ten minutes are highly unlikely. If that's the case, she should just see the aforementioned comments on towels and hope for the best.

Not only will things get sweaty, but they will also get awkward; overcoming the awkward moments that will always happen is an important step to surviving a hot yoga class. First, let's talk about the awkward, uncomfortable things others will do and how to deal with them. Avoiding the weirdest people is an important skill, and knowing where to place one's mat before class begins is key. The man who sits in the corner, takes lots of "breaks," and uses those "breaks" to look around and watch what everyone else is doing is a code-red threat and should be avoided as much as possible. The bohemian woman who takes at least ten minutes every morning to put on all of her necklaces and rings will smell like incense and dirt. She is fine to be around. A yoga survivor would simply compliment her patterned baggy yoga pants and try not to inhale her earthy scent too deeply. The ripped lady who checks herself out in the mirror is fine to place the mat by, but the new yogi should know that feeling adequate may ensue. She should also know that there is a slight chance of being hit in the face, as the lady is unlikely to notice another human is doing yoga right next to her. Another safe person for the inexperienced yogi to position her mat by is the older lady. The older lady will try her best to do the yoga poses, but things just aren't the way they used to be, and flexibility is diminished. She will most likely be clad in leg warmers and perhaps even a leotard. She is harmless to be next to, but the neophyte yogi must be aware that even with decreased flexibility she will still somehow be better at yoga than most. Once the greenhorn yogi has maneuvered her mat into a safe place, the awkward moments of class can begin. Now is the time when she gets to have the pleasure of seeing her fat rolls in the mirror when she is bent into strange and perplexing positions. There is more good news though, those lovely strangers talked about earlier will also get to look at them. And the yogi will get to gaze upon theirs. But hey, at least the creepy guy is in the corner. A yoga survivor will always be prepared for any of the following: gong ringing, people grunting, awkward eye contact, people breathing extremely loudly or humming while they breathe, or any other type of awkward situation. If any of these occur, a new yogi should simply suppress the urge to laugh, avert her eyes, and continue on.

Yoga is all about stretching the body into unique positions, and with that comes the uncomfortable burning pain of muscles stretched past their limits. Surviving the discomfort of yoga will involve swallowing feelings, fighting back tears and wishing for better times. A greenhorn yogi should know that yoga instructors are not actually humans at all. They are alien creatures from a faraway planet full of much more flexible beings. Their bones are made of rubber and their muscles are strong as steel. They were sent to this planet with one mission: to teach a yoga class and make all others feel inferior. They will perform impossible yoga maneuvers and leave their yoga class struggling far behind. They will be in a one-handed handstand, whist everyone else struggles to touch their toes. Despite the lack of ability though, a hot yoga survivor must still persevere through the painful poses. If she can't do a backbend? That sucks, she has to do it anyway. If she can't put her legs behind her head? Too bad, she has to keep trying. When attending a hot yoga class, a new yogi should just try not to care about what she looks like, and just embrace the pose. When in tree a pose, she should embrace the tree. She should see the tee, feel the tree, BE the tree. When in corpse pose (the best pose when the new yogi finally gets to just lay down), she should see the corpse, feel the corpse, BE the corpse. The neophyte yogi will always encounter situations where she cannot hold a pose and will just fall flat on her face. She will also most likely encounter a situation in which she thinks she is doing a pose perfectly, only to look around and discover that everyone else is doing something completely different. In that moment, I recommend pretending the mistake was intentional, like some sort of an alternative style. If the pose is too extreme to complete, a survivor yogi would pretend that failure was because of an injured limb, and not lack of capableness. A yoga survivor must always be prepared to face pain and she must channel her inner, limber rubber band.

Although it may come with its own sweaty, awkward, and uncomfortable challenges, hot yoga can be a rewarding practice worth struggling through. Making it past the challenges of the weird guy in the corner, the painful poses named after odd exotic animals, and the scorching heat can allow the yogi to survive a hot yoga class and to perhaps survive the rest of her life a little more stress-free.

ODE TO THE MAN SITTING NEXT TO ME

his soul
is a sea otter.
dipping below the water
slipping away,
slick in the gushing blue mess,
and the forest of swaying kelp.
he is searching for clams in my eyes
and when he finds one,
he hits it.
until it opens.
he rubs his paws over the fur on his head
and blinks his big eyes slowly.
and he holds hands
with the other otters,
while they sleep.
and his eyes are like empty shoes.
if I slipped them on my feet
I could walk
until the soles
wore out.
and his heart is like a bathtub full of water
with a drain.
and a plug.
and functioning pipes,
ready to pour in more water.
and his mind is staticky radio
chattering on
in a buzz
of waves overlapping.
and if I reached out and touched one,
it would shock me
and give me goosebumps.
and if I reached out and drank one,
I'd be thirsty,
and drunk.

THE OPPOSITE OF LIGHT ISN'T DARK, IT'S HEAVY

a shining yellow room,
ablaze under the swinging lights above.
their fluorescent touch warms my skin,
but they will never tan it.
radiant beams flood through glass in the late afternoon
and illuminate the people as they talk about nothing.
a small ray like an angel welcomes me when I open the refrigerator door,
half full of food that I will never eat.
all the waves in the spectrum cascade across the back of my retina
and the light in me flickers.

glowing windows dotted across the town
are sewn together like a patchwork quilt.
they glisten,
and gleam
and light the way home.
radiating like an exploding bomb.
the shine of lamps to read under.
the white gleam of sun on glinting solar panels that make more suns.
the blue haze of the screen glowing over your face that night.
you sit next to me,
but you are miles away.

and so I flee,
to the dark woods bordering the golden town.
no moon, no stars, no flashlight,
no old-fashioned whale fat lantern to light the way.
just tawny trails turned black by dusk.
I set each foot on unseen, uncertain ground.
perhaps a snarling beast behind that darkened bush,
inky teeth gnashing, waiting.
shadows like the valley of death,
perhaps the end.

looming cliffs of raged peril cloaked in the reserved shades of night
lure me to wander off them,
and fall
and fall
and die.
black trees ready to crush me.
veiled rocks ready to tumble upon my unsuspecting head.
murky rivers ready to drown me,
and carry me away into caliginous night.
there is no light here.
finally.

IN HER EYES

by molly mclees

in her eyes,
the universe in not held, nor did they shine
because all wondrous poems before were lies
perhaps in a world where all was just, they would be fine
but I walk in a world riddled with corruption
where eyes do not shimmer, but rather spark
emotion is never chained, it causes an eruption
and afterwards, the aftermath is dark
but when the stars do not shine,
and the isolation is smothering
there is always a shrine
where everything is not withering
maybe there, eyes gleam and the pretty poems fit,
but I have yet to encounter it.

THE ONLY CURE

by margo haft

alone I sit atop my bed with whispers of **suspense**.
my mind focused on the squeaking of the cork against glass, **controlling**

your actions, body, and now brain. your breath smells like stale wine. **my**
senses wonder why addiction takes over like a re-wiring of your mind.

the footsteps I hear from upstairs are out of place, loud, intoxicated. **I**
wonder why you do it. how can your body function after a third bottle. I **cannot**

come to reasoning with you about my feelings tonight. you are gone. I must **find**
you somehow. you say the same excuses every time. "I couldn't sleep tonight". **the**

sweet but bitter grapes and yeast have left your body now. until you find your **way**
and can rationalize with me like nothing happened the night before. you need **out**

but cannot find a way. the pains you feel are only freed through bottles **of**
alcohol and I cannot help you anymore. you make me want to leave **here.**

*poets note: the last word in each line of this poem is from Milky Chance's song "Stolen Dance."

ROOFIE DAYDREAM

circles spin, you're lost in time,
as it hangs all around you,
drooping down like a sad lullaby
that you cannot fall asleep to.

warm humid air surrounding you feels like daytime
but the shadows and glowing sunset say it's night.
the lifeless tree hangs dead in sorrow,
waiting for your touch of life.

in this strange place you cannot wake up
and you cannot fall asleep. you are not
physically here. but you feel hard as rock
ground beneath your barefoot-uncovered feet.

so what could it be? a nightmare or daydream?
you will never know and time will never tell.
are you in heaven?
no you think this is pure hell.

who on earth put you here to suffer in confusion.
your head spins like something's been slipped in your drink
and the confusion of time sweeps away your conscious.
you are trapped forever in deep, deep sleep.

*poets note: this poem was inspired by "The Persistence of Memory" by Salvador Dali

SECOND FAMILY

How do you react when you know that you no longer have your biological family? Do you cry, scream, and feel loss? Or do you hold your head high and realize how happy you are with your family now? Maybe even a little of both?

"Ching chong! Who's your real mom, Abby? Do you know her? Why'd she give you away?"

The voices of ignorant children still ring in my ears, seven years later. I cannot shake their voices, repeating that question, every day in my head. I turn it over and over but will never know why my birth mom gave me up for adoption in Anqing, China, over fifteen years ago. That word, it still haunts me: real.

I believe I do not have a real mom, or a fake mom. I have a birth mom and a mom. No matter what I call her though, my birth mother left me. She left a helpless, tiny baby girl with big, brown eyes and a little squiggly vein across the bridge of her nose, somewhere on the bustling streets of Anqing.

I look at my files with tears in my eyes. I am only twelve years old, but my lifetime battle has already begun.

I beg my mom, "Why, why didn't she leave me with a note? Was I not important enough? Did she not love me? Why, mom? Why did she leave me? Would it have been so hard for her to leave me a note and tell me my birthday and name and WHY?"

She only looks at me and says, "Abs, I have to believe that your birth mom did love you. She only wanted what's best for you and it might have been too dangerous for her to leave a note."

The tears keep coming and I do not try to hold them back. My mom holds me tight and gently strokes my hair, reassuring me that I am loved. My vein has gone from the color of rust on a penny to a faint green.

I spend time talking to the other girls I was adopted with, and most of them are sharing the grief that I did before we turned thirteen. We call each other sisters and have the same yearn to find our beloved family who left us years ago.

"Am I part of my birth family?" I quietly ask my sisters.

They do not know the answers any more than I do, but somehow, they understand exactly how I feel. Their silence emanates around us as our thoughts orbit in our own heads, but simultaneously collide. The tranquility is a comforting one, one that holds so many questions, but lets me know that I am not alone. They feel what I do and deep down, in the darkest parts of our twelve year old hearts, we know that we would always have each other.

"How are you going to translate this? And don't put that in there, it's too personal. Oh, and I asked, and

they can help us with it, too." My mom gives me tips on my poster that I am making. It is to be left at my finding spot, the place where I was found in China.

I still do not know why my mom left me, one year later, at thirteen, but I am trying to find out. I know that in a month, I will be going to China. The summer of 2013 will change everything for me. I think to myself, my birth mom will see this poster and she will call me. We can get together and she will tell me everything.

I glue photos of me as a baby with my deep vein, and photos of my metal encaged teeth and purple sparkly glasses. I fear that she will not recognize me.

"You need to be prepared, sweetie. She may not even see the poster, and she may be too scared to contact us. I love that you want to leave the poster, but the chances are very slim. Just keep that in mind, okay?" My mom warns me yet again, but I only want to believe that this poster will change my life and relieve my years of hurt and loss.

The tears start to come, just as they always do. I sniffle them back and try to keep my shaking voice in check. "Mom. I need her to see it. I just want to meet my Tummy Mummy. Maybe someone will see it and tell her! Just like in that movie I saw!"

"Abs," she tries to calm me down, "your finding spot might not even be there anymore. It's been thirteen years since they found you. I don't want to be negative, but I don't want to let you get your hopes up too high. Okay?"

I turn the hated question around in my head again. I still cannot shake it away and she is the only one who can answer it. I need to meet her and once I do, everything will be alright.

"Okay," I whisper, not wanting to believe a single word that slips out of mom's mouth, further deepening my fear that she will not answer my questions.

In the rental van I am shaking. I am on my way to see the place where my mother last left me. Will it be the same, I wonder? I am scared, nervous, and excited. My heart is pumping the shiny red liquid through my veins faster than usual. We drive through streets I have never seen before, knowing that I was probably born in one of the many houses that line them. When we finally slow down to a stop, I cannot breathe.

It is so beautiful. A tall, pink preschool decorated with colorful hearts, clouds, and shapes. It is happy and inviting, and most importantly, it is still here. I set my poster down in front of it, and with tears welling in my eyes, I walk to the metal gates. I take photo after photo of the Lingbei preschool, as if I take a certain amount

of photos, my birth mom will come. I look around, and on the street there are pieces of my favorite food. The bright red melon is intense against the gray pavement. There are Chinese words on the front door, and in this moment, I wish nothing more than to be able to read them. But I cannot, so the tears come and come and seem like they will never stop. It is as if my eyes are the clouds and it is April.

I close my eyes and wish for her to come. My years of pain and questions need to end here. But they do not. I never receive a call and never get the answers I beg for each night.

Looking back, I can realize that she loves me. I have to believe that she still does. My birth mother left me at a place she was sure that I would be found and taken into good care. She could not keep me and so she did the only thing she could. I did not lose her, and she will never lose me. I have a new family now. One I love and that has always been here through the ups and downs.

It is still hard to cope with my loss, but I try not to think of it as losing a family. The haunting word has been pushed to the back of my mind and rarely comes to visit me. I am still trying to figure out which family I belong in, but maybe I do not need to. Maybe, just maybe, I am lucky enough to have two families who love me. And that is real.

BOX AND KEY

half of one world,
and half of another.
a small girl brought up by
two different mothers.

her heart is one place,
her soul somewhere else.
stuck between cultures,
she is not herself!

with eyes of a foreigner,
but tongue like the rest,
she will have to settle for being
second best.

"white girl, white girl!" they say,
but she is not so.
she is entirely different from head to toe.

'but is different a bad thing?'
she wonders aloud.
perhaps it is special to stand out
from the crowd.

that girl is me.
my name is Shuqi.
my culture lies in a box and only
I hold the key.

AWAY

she fights the storm that is drenching her
little floral dress. the flowers soak up the rain, and
her tears blend in with every lukewarm drop.

all seems lost and she is alone.
the storm turns to a full downpour, and with it, her
heart pours out her love.

she gives everything to the pummeled earth.
her eyes are the colour of the muddy path, and her skin like
the oak tree she begins to climb.

take me away, take me away! she begs.
the clouds throw her looks of pity,
but don't give her their glorious fire.

the wind carries her dress and wraps her coffee hair around
her twisted lips,
muffling her pitiful cries.

drums crash overhead and sparks dance in the sky.
but nothing takes her
Away.

she flits her eyelids closed, angry at the sky.
she is one with this strong tree, and parts of her are mixed with the clouds' sorrows.
she is ready.

when she rises to her tiny feet, the oak tree cries in pain.
it realizes love is not real.
the tree's heart breaks, followed by the snapping of its precious branch, and she is taken
away.

the lighting still plays at the corner of the storm's thin mouth.

BEAST

It started with her abdomen. Its claws slid softly along her organs, slicing here, holding there, yet still hiding its true malevolence. It sniggered as the steel scalpels tried to pierce its hide, each time followed by cheers of victory from outside. But it wasn't slain, it was only beginning.

As the men in white masks finally realized their mistake, it began its game. Great talons ripped forth to replace innocent claws and its gluttonous mouth sucked hungrily at the thin straws of sanguineous cocktail. Then it laughed great, bellowing cackles as it delightedly launched itself into her vulnerable flesh. It slid and swirled through her veins, here and there, slipping out to gorge itself on fat and luscious marrow. Heavy chunks of flesh sluiced through its hooks as it rampaged, leaving only gnarled hunks of tissue in its wake.

The chemical didn't do anything. It would hide for a bit when they chased it, just long enough for it to seem like it was gone for good. Then we'd hear it again. Its chorus of giggles exploding out of her in strangled screams, its dripping saliva falling from her tear ducts. Every night it played.

Then it stopped.

Her mouth is open. Not a scream this time, thank God, just a snore. Her final snore. Frozen.

They're telling me it's time to go.

I haven't talked since we got here.

She fought. That's what I will always remember. Like a Warrior Princess, she battled until the last second. Maybe it wasn't enough, but she fought and she fought and I will never, ever forget that. It never beat her. It never broke her. It killed her. But it could never win.

I stand up, letting the tears no one can see fall on her pillow.

I love you, Mom.

DARK

The clock ticks another minute. It's finally gotten to the point where it takes longer and longer for every turn. Outside, the darkness presses against the glass like the ribcage of a massive beast, small sprinkles of starlight leaking through its punctured carcass.

I always think it should get easier. Of course it never really does. Not that it's really all that hard just being awake. You just exist.

But things are different at night. TV and music are too loud, lights and phones too bright, thoughts and pasts too free.

I used to think it was better not to sleep, to avoid the nightmares: to avoid waking up mid-panic with tears on my face and a scream lodged halfway through my throat. I thought my memories couldn't find me while I was awake.

I was wrong.

Maybe I don't have nightmares anymore, but she still finds me. I used to cry when she visited, not wanting to remember, not being strong enough to see everything again. At first it seemed like my nightmares had dragged themselves out of my subconscious into the waking world.

But the dark has loosened a little.

The house creaks under her lost footsteps, the wind whistles with her soft whispers, the rain patters with her soothing laughter.

I close my eyes, feeling her lay her hand on my shoulder and kiss my forehead. Feel her warmth linger for a second as she brushes the hair from my eyes and whispers something I can't make out into my ear.

Then she's gone.

She's always gone when I open my eyes.

ODE TO THE STARS

those twinkling lights of wonder
that spot the sky like diamonds
watching over our lives
as guardians of the night
they shine
we wish on them
like distant gods of fate
we claim them as our own
giving names to the billions
we shape them into constellations
and predict our futures
you make us lay out picnic blankets
like stargazing stations
and stare up into your
glistening eyes
you amaze
giving us galaxies
encompassed in our eyes
and felt in our very
souls.

ODE TO LOVE

ode to love,
to the tricky and whimsical devices of the heart,
the mending and breaking of fragile souls,
from the sweltering summer nights,
to the frozen winter mornings,
all encompassed in love,

you can captivate us, inspire us, and change us,
pulling closer the warm clinging embraces,
the fire pulsing in our drive for you,
we desire your closeness,
for you to stay,
you make us climb mountains, run for miles, or jump off cliffs, in your name,
you promise cures for all ailments of the mind and body,
you rip us from the inside out exposing us,
we rapidly cry bittersweet tears,
we live and dive for you,

and when we are asked if you were worth it, we agree,
we curse you and fight you trying to avoid you,
not because we hate you, you disappear,
but you are forgiven every time,
you bring in the light,

you are the only one that fills our undying emptiness,
you push us to apologize and forgive,
helping to make us human,
giving us new life,
making us whole.

IRISES OF HOPE

I set the purple and blue irises down on the kitchen table,
they bring color to the small room,
the violet petals hide the cracks in the eggshell walls.
and helps the lament green table look fuller,
I sit in our dull apartment that is stitched together at the seams,
and wait for my beloved to come home,
The rooms are clean and kept in order,
while I wait for him return so i will know,
if we will have more to eat than stale bread,
it's not easy finding work these days,
but my sweet goes still to find a job,
to push past the other men begging for a job,
I admire his unyielding diligence,
these little violet miracles might give us the luck we need,
when the door knob twists and the door creaks open,
I see my love trying to keep his smile from cracking,
I run into his arm and smile because i already know,
“honey, I got the job”

COLD COFFEE

after Ed Sheeran

I sit across from the blue-eyed girl, She’s
ripping up pieces of tattered napkins, like
they were snowflakes huddled in the cold,
while I stir up my cup of black coffee,
cars park in yellow lines as people walk in,
This cafe serves only breakfast, the
booth is worn and windows frost in the morning,
The light casts wild colors to her and, I’m
feeling tipsy from the sight without being drunk,
loving her was like being in a bright room with lights off,
a burst of sunlight pouring into last nights,
kitchen slow dances mixed with wine and whiskey;
knowing your in love is looking up at her and
smiling because it’s 10 am and she’s already on her 3rd coke.

ODE TO MY STICK SHIFT

at first, I could not fathom the
idea of driving such a
reckless, complex math
equation. the clutch plus
the gear shift were like two
Rubik's Cubes with different
rules. but when the time came,
I mastered you like a four year
old mastering Mozart. I no
longer dropped your clutch,
and you no longer violently
shook like an earthquake on
a calm, beautiful, sunny Sunday.

now, you are my knight in
somewhat shining silver armor.
you are a mouse that can snake
between giants in the nightmare
of sliver parking spaces. you
can't jackrabbit entering the
highway of snails on rocket
skates, but you can jackrabbit
faster than any Speedy Gonzales
at the flash of the green lights of
heaven.

your engine roars like a ten-foot
kitten's purr on hyper drive. when
it revs, it can be heard through
the thunder of dogs yapping.
it is a sound of angels when
driving a rollercoaster like you.
you, no longer a reckless,
confusing math equation, instead
you have become a bumpy cloud
that I would never trade for
anything in the world. not even
for a lifetime of free gas, or a
million cute pictures of baby
animals playing.

COME HOME

as the war called for you to fight,
I would hear you say,
"our love will only grow stronger
with each and every day."

we wrote each other back and forth,
both wishing you were home.
with every bomb, I cringe with fear,
wondering where you roam.

I pace the floor of this old house.
gazing at your picture,
I remember the way we laughed.
will you come home quicker?

weeks pass without a word from you.
each day fills me with fears.
finally, a letter arrives.
your death brings me to tears.

THE OPEN ROAD

I've come so far, I'm not looking **back**.
it took me eighteen years till the **road**
became mine. now it's mine, there's **no**
way that I'm going back. all the **lines**
that have held me back were not as **high**
as my wild dreams. my soul will **beam**
brighter than the passing cars' **headlights**.
just wait and see. I am no longer a **baby**.
I am no longer the scared little girl **you**
thought always needed your help. I **just**
might surprise the world with the **might**
that glows in me. all of the bumps **make**
me stronger, and all of the turns make **me**
smarter. if I make a wrong turn and **lose**
my way, I will make it right again. **my**
road may lead anywhere, but I don't **mind**.

poet's note: the last word in each line of this poem is from Lauren Alaina's song, "Barefoot and Buckwild":

LONE WOLF

its spirit: wild and free.
running with no pack.
feet gliding along the forest floor,
thick, green, and dark.
wind rushing through its luscious coat.
a coat of white and gray and silver.

the moon, a bright ball of white,
illuminating the path.
on a hill. stopping.
howling at the sky's white sphere.
its majestic beauty shining,
under the sphere's light.

commencing on the journey,
back into the forest, dark and welcoming.
stopping with a slight pause.
a pack ahead. inviting.
no, choosing a different path.
its spirit: wild, free, and independent.

Rain Is My Parade

Like most kids, every time it rained I would sing, "Rain, rain, go away." However, as I got older, I stopped singing that song. I grew to appreciate the rain, and realized that it is much more than what it looks like and how it sounds. It is much more than just blurring objects between the fast moving drops, and it is much more than the relief when the rain clears from the sky. Every time it rains, whether it is a sprinkle or a storm, something extraordinary happens.

Sitting in front of my family's silver desktop computer, a slow steady tapping starts on the roof. At first, the pitter-patter of the rain comes every few seconds, and then it increases to a loud roar. Fast as lightning, my dad rushes out the maple door to the garage. After a minute, he opens the door with a gleam in his blue eyes. He says, "Ali! You have to take a look outside!" With wonderment bubbling up inside me, I leap from the black, cushy chair, pass my dad, and run into the garage. I stare with amazement at the rain, showering down. In the light-bulb shaped cul de sac, its huge drops jump up and down like ballerinas. Adding to their performance, they are beautifully accompanied by the orchestra of the rain, which played on the roofs of many houses. Expecting to feel a cold chill from the spring rain, the air instead hugs me in welcoming warmth.

Across the cul de sac, a tiny yellow light twinkles through the heavy rain. The heavy storm blurs the house attached to the porch light, ready to guide any lost stranger through the rain shower. Just to my right, right outside my house, stands a tree. It stands just over twice my height, five foot three. Normally it likes to show itself, even at night, but for now the rain will only allow its silhouette, giving it a mysterious look. The pitch-black rain clouds stretch across the sky, giving the calming, peaceful sense of night. Drawn back to the cul de sac, I watch the dancing rain.

The dance begins to slow, and the orchestra begins to quiet down. The once roaring rain slows back down to a slow and steady pitter-patter. The rain steadily finishes its performance as the pitch black clouds lighten to a medium gray. I can see that the yellow twinkling light, now glowing, has a blue house with white trim attached to it. The tree right in front of my house has a hazelnut trunk with hundreds of branches sticking out from halfway up the tree. The branches are covered in emerald green leaves and little light green buds, soon to become big cherry blossoms. Damp evergreen grass surrounds the tree and the spaces between the five houses in the cul de sac. Sweet melodies of chirping birds fill the silence the rain has left behind. The sharp, pleasing smell of the rain, when it finishes, consumes the air as sweet aromas from hidden flowers poke their way through to my nose.

Even though the rain slows to a light drizzle, and is about ready to end, I recall the lovely show and what the rain has left behind. The twinkling light looked like a moving painting behind the wonderful dance of the rain. The orchestra section of the rain provided beautiful music and left behind amazing aromas. I can tell by the luscious green colors of the trees and the grasses that the rain has replenished them with nutrients, and because of the rain, their life, as well as other plants and animals, will go on because of the extraordinary rain.

NIGHTHAWKS

by katie kubicka

the nighthawks collect in my cafe. they gather here around midnight
like moths congregating at streetlights.
their wallets packed with hundreds,
but they spend their loose change in here.
only three sit tonight, sipping their subpar coffee.
I smell the vodka on the couple's breath.
they came here after a night of dancing and drinking.
maybe they hope the coffee with help with the hangover.
the other man stares deep into his creamless coffee,
hoping to find meaning in his life.
he looks into the cup for answers every night
like a detective examining a crime scene for clues.
every morning he leaves empty handed.
his head hangs as he moseys back to his CEO duties.
I often wonder why they come.
they are the ones that don't rely on tips to feed their stomachs.
they eat from silver spoons.
I on the otherhand
have coffee stained hands with irregular scars
from scalding water.
I dream of being a nighthawk.

SEE THROUGH

I fell down the stairs.

No, I was pushed down the stairs.

I'm bleeding from a gash on my forehead.

I'm being chased.

The sun shines so bright that I'm forced to open my eyes. Squinting into the brilliant rays, I realize I'm lying in someone's lawn. How did I end up here? My memory is like a chalkboard with part of the writing erased. I remember who I am. I remember where I live. I remember what I ate for breakfast yesterday. But I can't remember what happened to me last night. I must have been at a party here. I must have drunk too much. That's the only explanation.

As I slowly sit up, I look around. I must have been passed out for a while because my neck and back are sore. I ease my way onto my feet and notice my shoes are missing. Great. With no other way to get home, I begin walking down the street. I try not to look as lost and confused as I feel. A few blocks down the street I notice a bus stop. I sit down and wait for the next bus that can take me to 6th Avenue. A couple people get on the bus when I do, but they act like I'm not really there.

I step off the bus and walk a couple blocks to get to my modest apartment that I share with my mom in downtown Hillsboro. I quietly thank my mom for hiding a spare key under the welcome mat. Unlocking the door, I'm greeted by a loud screech. Meredith, my calico cat, jumps down from her perch on the windowsill. I stroke her head and she purrs with content. There is a week's worth of unopened mail on the floor. That's odd, we check our mail every day. As I close the front door, I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror and gasp. My hair is a disaster and my clothes are caked with mud. It seems my first order of business is to take a nice hot shower.

Half an hour later, I'm in the kitchen looking for something to eat. I gaze at the scarce selections in the fridge and decide on a bowl of cereal. I'm about to pour milk over my cereal when a panel on the milk carton catches my attention. Turning it around, I almost drop the milk carton. There's a missing person's ad shown.

And the missing person is me.

I try not to panic. The best by date is 03/1990, so I know the milk isn't old. I must have been at one crazy party to be still having hallucinations. There's no way that I'm missing; I'm standing in my own kitchen.

The next thing I know, I'm running to the closest telephone booth—we can't afford a landline. First, I

dial the emergency number on the milk carton. A dispatcher answers the phone. I'm speechless. What do I say? The dispatcher must decide she's being pranked because I hear a click and the line is disconnected.

This has to be a sick joke. A million questions race through my head. How can I be missing without knowing that I am?

I make it back to the apartment before the tears start cascading down my cheeks. Meredith plops herself down on my lap in an attempt to comfort me. But it just makes me feel even worse.

When the last tear slips down my cheek, I feel a calm wash over my mind. That's when I hear the front door open. Mom?

I jump up and run to greet her. I turn the corner and freeze. It is indeed my mother, but I barely recognize her. She looks horrible. Her skin has lost it's normal vibrant color and there are gray streaks in her hair. She looks like she has lost her will to live. She hasn't seen me yet. I walk towards her, but she continues to shed her coat as if I'm not even there. "Mom? Why are you ignoring me?" Nothing.

Now I'm really freaking out. She can't see me. She can't hear me. But I can see her walking around the apartment like a zombie. I can hear her mumbling to herself.

Whatever happened to me last night wasn't just a party and I didn't just get drunk. It has to be something more. What would cause my mother to react this way?

My mother doesn't stay for long. It appears she hasn't been at home much at all in the past week.

I know what I have to do.

My mom steps out the door and I slip out behind her. I figure that following her may be the only way for me to figure out what is happening to me. She catches the bus that takes her to Main St. South. She gets off at the first stop and I trail behind. Where is she going?

After walking several blocks, the police station comes into view. But instead of walking past it, my mother walks up the steps and inside the station. My stomach drops. This can't be good. Again, I follow her inside. Again, no one acknowledges my existence. I see my mother standing next to an officer. My mom is grilling him with questions.

"Have you heard anything?"

"Since an hour ago when you left? No."

"How many officers do you have on the case?"

"Enough."

"Enough isn't enough! My baby girl is still out there somewhere."

I'm an only child...

"We're doing the best we can, ma'am."

My mom collapses into a chair and sighs.

I'm really missing.

Suddenly I need some fresh air. I run out of the police station but I can't take a breath. That's when I black out.

I'm being stuffed into the trunk of a car.

Nobody can save me.

I'm being kidnapped.

When I come back to reality, I'm still standing on the sidewalk in front of the police station. I know what I have to do. The answer lies within the house where I woke up this morning.

Am I really going back to that house?

An hour later, I'm standing in the lawn once again. But this time, I have a clear head. With a sinking feeling in my stomach, I realize the house is abandoned. There's no way there was a party in this creepy, abandoned building.

I notice that the front door is slightly ajar. I wonder if it's safe to enter. This is the part of the movie when the main character decides to walk right into a trap and gets himself killed.

In the end, my stubborn resolve motivates me to walk through the front door. Just inside the door is a huge foyer. There's furniture covered in white cloth, but dust covers everything. How long has this place been abandoned?

As I walk down the hallway, the floorboards creak under my feet. I notice spaces on the wall where there must have been paintings. This must have been a nice house back in the day.

The next thing I see brings me to a complete halt. There is blood splattered on the wall in front of me. It trails down the hallway and around the corner. My skin is crawling with fear, but I have to know where the trail leads. I turn around the corner and I see a staircase. The bloody trail follows the stairs. I slowly make the ascent. My heartbeat is racing.

When I make it to the top, I feel like I've entered a maze. I see three different hallways that each lead in a different direction. But I know to keep following the trail of blood. The realistic part of my mind is internally screaming. Should I run and call the cops? But then I remember that that didn't work very well last time.

Creeping down the hallway, the trail is leading me farther into the house. There is even more furniture

up here, but some of it looks like it's been used recently. What kind of a crazy whack job lives in an abandoned house?

The path leads me to what must be the master bedroom. I'm alarmed to see that the bed is unmade. I'm even more alarmed when I realize the trail of blood ends in this room. I slowly approach the area where it appears to end. That's when I see the closet. It looks like the trail just ended abruptly but it's clear there is something hidden. I can barely contain my fear.

I slowly open the closet doors...

...and lying there at the bottom is my own dead body.

AUTUMN SHIRE

It is no wonder to anyone who has seen a New England autumn, a brilliant and harmless woodland conflagration, why it is considered one of nature's greatest displays. A hike up the slopes of Mt. Washington, a stony behemoth that juts out of the fiery landscape, leaves even the most experienced naturalists with a resounding sense of awe and wonder. Even solo, as one walks, they get the omnipresent feeling that they are not alone, but rather enveloped in a hive swarming with the most innocent of lives. The symphony of the forest is blaring a song most beautiful: a chorus of birds singing a melody on high combining with the rustling of the leaves in the wind to create a subtly grandiose cacophony. Continuing up the path, one can't help but gaze around at the wilderness that consumes them: a fiery canopy in the sky held up purely by towering brown stilts, twisted and warped. The air is still moist and cool despite the ensuing blaze, with each breath being soothing to the lungs like a gulp of water is to the throat.

Climbing further yet, the once green carpet of the woodland floor transcends into a dirt and stone causeway, with the surrounding vegetation becoming less and less dense. As clouds begin to obscure one's vision, the air becomes more and more frigid. Hulking roots jut across the trail, necessitating the occasional hurdle at risk of an aching ankle. If one is lucky, they may stumble upon a green bush speckled with navy blue delicacies, sweet, juicy, and refreshing. At this point, many come to realize their face is aching, not from anything bad, but from having unconsciously grinned from ear to ear for hours. The canopy above begins to break apart, revealing a crystal blue sky above. The peaks of surrounding mountains peak their faintly white heads up out of the clouds and into the great ocean above.

Alas, the summit is in sight. The crowd of trees so thin they are but an afterthought; the wind begins to howl. The decrepit wooden signs on the way up had warned that Mt. Washington remains the windiest location in the United States, having winds up to 253 miles per hour. While perhaps not quite that forceful, it is no breeze, but rather a roaring gale that numbs any exposed skin. However, it is all but unnoticeable as the summit is approached. Looking down is known to bring full grown men to tears, as they gaze upon the shimmering golden sea beneath them. Miles and miles of untainted nature sits below, interrupted only by the white mountains that abruptly erupt out of the sea, contrasting the vibrant leaves with massive triangles of granite. In the distant valley below lies a quaint farming village, split in two by a meandering river. A lone tree rests atop the mountain peak with same roaring fire as its brethren, a symbol of overcoming the odds, of growth, of serenity, of triumph.

MEMO TO THE 21ST CENTURY

It was like this once: little children danced
in the neighbor's backyard singing songs about posies,
spinning in circles of joy and giggles
until they tumbled like stacked bricks on unstable gravel,
and the endless songs continued as tunes changed. The children slowed
as they grew tired. After lunch they cheered with a new spark
of energy and life.
That is how it was
in 1959.

Children played ball with their dads once,
after a home cooked family dinner that filled each with happiness knowing that they are loved and cared for. Interested in each other's day. None of it was faked
the warmth of love was real. Boys and girls ran into the arms of their parents
and felt the calming touch,
and the secure grasp.
That is how it was in 1959.

Parents grow weary between work and home,
they drive on roads of their paved dreams, arriving
home to lifeless children staring at bright,
lonely screens full of animated friendships. Silence
fills the room in response to forced questions of forged kindness
and next year it might be better, maybe in the blue screens
something will spark you to look away. In the intertwined connections

I think of you, the billions of you, wrapped
in your twenty-first- century technology

And I want you to hear,
to listen in the silence, pull yourselves out of the grasp
of the welcoming light of others' reality
tug your eyes away and look to light in each other's eyes
and there you'll find a new connection. This old way of communicating. Listen:
In this world, people
were real.

Modeled after Philip Appleman's Memo to the Twenty First Century

CRAVING MORE SILENCE THAN THAT SIMON AND GARFUNKEL SONG

most teenagers like to sneak out to party at night,
and I too sneak out sometimes.
but only when my family is tucked in the heap of the Elk-horns,
and I wander away from the cabin for the silence.

the constant hum of machines,
abrasive music, cacophonous cars,
is stalking me, suffocating me, cutting me
and I am unable to think.

but wrapped in the darkness, in the dead of the forest,
I am finally able to rest.
laying on my back, eyes gazing past the stars,
the thoughts stop cracking my skull.

sometimes, it is better to be ignorant of the information
that is constantly pummeling into us.
sometimes it is nice to lay in the throes of ancient trees like I'm dead
just to stop being human for a while.

but that is a lie, it's not really to stop being human,
What I really like is how the darkness and silence
allows me to stop being me.

ODE TO MY SAXOPHONE REED

my reed lies flat against my tongue,
like a prisoner on a cool stone table
awaiting its torture.

a prisoner that has been kept in captivity
for months and months,
judging from its sour reek.

with a drum-like beat, I ram my tongue
against it.
forcing it to squeal and screech
in pain as it vibrates between my
tongue and the unforgiving
surface of the jet black mouthpiece.

I'm only finished torturing it
when it is limp like a dead carcass
by the side of the road,
and resembles a piece of wood
that has skyrocketed into your
naked eye from a wood chipper.
the poor prisoner is then tossed
into the oblivion of the waste
basket, never again to be remembered
for the torture it has suffered through.

THE SECRETS OF THE WHEATFIELD

the beauty of the ocean blue sky
and the emotions of the graceful wind.
the elegance and calming power all hide
the secrets of the wheatfield.

it's peaceful and quiet all except
the swoosh of the golden grains,
swaying and tapping in the wind to cover
the secrets of the wheatfield.

the brown trails through the waves
of mysterious grass show only
What you need to know about
The secrets of the wheatfield.

many have tried to expose the
truth about the constantly moving field
but those who went, never returned to tell
the secrets of the wheatfield.

stay on the straight and narrow path
and just enjoy the outward beauty,
but never try to explore
the secrets of the wheatfield.

the field trusts one species only.
the crows that soar overhead can
closely venture through
the secrets of the wheatfield.

the death-black crows won't tell of the burden
that the lovely grasses hide.
they admire and enjoy and are thankful for
the secrets of the wheatfield.

LIFE LESSONS

freshman year was clean and clear;
my future seemed to bloom.
my faith and friends and family close
and changes coming soon.

then sophomore year came rolling in,
when I did nothing right.
"be this, be that," they said to me,
and changed my view on life.

crashing in, came junior year,
destruction at its core.
with blades on wrists, depression grew;
my dreams of life were torn.

now senior year has finally come
and life is at its best.
with graduation drawing in,
I find my heart can rest.

but these four years have been much more
than suffering each day.
I'm thankful for the precious things
I've learned along the way.

I'll hold them close and cherish them
'til I turn ninety five.
It took some time, but wisdom came
with lessons of my life.

1935 HELENA EARTHQUAKE IN RIO THEATER

What do I remember? I remember...dust...smoke...and screaming. There was so much noise. Oh, you want the whole story, okay...Well, John picked me up around seven o'clock, and took me to get ice cream. After the ice cream we walked down to the theater, The Rio, and went to the new movie, "The Case of the Lucky Legs," because it has my favorite actor, Warren William. We chose seats towards the top of the theater so we could see the whole screen, and talked until the movie began. We watched the movie, sneaking kisses in between scenes, until I felt our seats start to tremble. John and I looked at each other, and then looked at the other people around us. They also were glancing about the theater. Then the tremble turned into a violent shake... some of the people in theater began screaming. John grabbed my hand and pulled me out of my seat. I could hear the building begin to creak and groan with every shudder the earth gave. John pulled me to the aisle where others were already pushing and shoving to get out of the building. Suddenly, a huge crack echoed through the theater, louder than the movie still playing on the big screen, and dust and debris rolled over our heads. John yelled and pulled me along faster. My wrist began to ache because of how tightly he was holding onto it. And this is where my memory begins to haze...I know we were halfway down the aisle when suddenly I felt a sharp crack on the back of my head. I remember stumbling...and then being carried. John was the one carrying me. I could feel his heartbeat pounding against my skull as he carted me across the lobby of the theater, to the outside street...and him screaming for a doctor....That's all I can remember...so now please tell me this, because when I woke up here he wasn't with me. Where's my John?

VACATION

teacups spin clockwise with a lemony twist;
dirt cakes the bottom like tea leaves.
children glance around, wide-eyed, sucking in their breaths,
as the parents snap photos in a buzz like bees.

young girls and boys dressed for the occasion,
scream and laugh in the tea colored cups
And stomp their light feet, making metal bang sounds
that echo back, forth, down and up.

bright, loud colors lazily droop from building to building
and chicken scratches decorate the side.
smells of popcorn, pretzels and cotton candy lay heavy in
the air
and fat, little children toddle by.

this is the place where dreams come true,
where animals talk and boats fly, fairies glow bright and
pirates sing.
where we can all ride in teacups and never have
to worry about a single thing.

JUST A WALK...JUST A DRINK

the sun was shining bright that day;
the birds were all singing.
a father pushed his infant son
who clutched a blue herring.

a black truck came roaring by.
the dad and son were hit.
the blood poured from the father's skull
while the infant son's screams quit.

the young driver climbed out of the crash
and looked at the crimson hues.
she fell to her knees and began to shake
while the reds seeped into blues.

the traffic nearby screamed to a halt.
the dad's face was white.
a woman raced out from her car
and held the child tight.

so now you know what happens when
you're driving drunk or buzzed.
just remember this poor dad and son
who were so very loved.

IT SHINES

by lindsey burkett

it speaks to no one, but is seen by everyone
it boldly shines in the night sky in hopes of catching my attention
it is surrounded by an organized chaos that no man could ever create
like a spilt bottle of glitter,
each dot sparkles so spectacularly as it looks down on me for approval

it humbly sits and waits during the lingering day, dull, and unnoticed
but then radiantly shines in the night, confidently, declaring its existence

every night I see it,
every night I watch it,
I stand with it, looking down at countless lives
people here, and there, scurrying through their day
I watch to find the sparkle in each of them.

MECHANIC

by brylee flath

I saw him standing there near a broken car;

The rusted thing bound to be fixed;

Rough, charred edges along the metal.

His hands tinged black with the smell of grease.

The button up shirt I always did for him;

Slapping his hands away if I struggled with a button or two.

His hair sticking up in the oddest places.

He would grab my hand and smile;

Rubbing his greasy hands against my clean ones.

He would talk to me in a voice that was low.

Low like a smooth rhythm.

His smile would light the room.

That same smile would light up my world
if everything went dark.

PERFECT CIRCLE

there is none to blame, but I.
life has no continuum as a river ends in a wash.
I am exorcised by day and haunted by dusk with burdens like these.
I dilute my anxiety by choking on miniscule blue pills.
the spiral of desolation motivates my demons to choke and drag me down.

I have been abandoned and myself is whom I conspire with.
a child that blossomed in a home where the family drowned in a cup of liquor.
I hear the echo of their memories reverb in my vacant skull and,
atop the building, with wind howling, and drifting clouds; you must revel in the fall.

*the last words are from Mac Miller's song "Perfect Circle / God Speed":
" I wash these pills down with liquor and fall".

MORE POETRY IS NEEDED

more poetry is needed
for those with depression,
a void of emptiness that
eats away any spark of hope
leaving a blackout of emotions,
and a heavy cloud of gloom.

more poetry is needed
for those who are alone,
hoping that the ones
they looked up too
are somewhere superior
where pain is a myth.

more poetry is needed
for those who are angry
believing it's them against
the world because the
last time their trust was given
it was shattered into unfixable pieces.

more poetry is needed
to diminish the dark clouds.
to present a spectrum of emotions.
to give hope to those who are broken.
more poetry is needed.

IN MEMORY OF DEON E. GILLEN

February 14, 2016
We all knew he was in his early teens,
A good boy in a blurry world.
A time within his life that came to a hault
He spent his life in the land, wrestling as a young-man.
Talkin' bout his college goals runnin' bout the future
Told us all he was fine, that he was really lookin' forward.
Why'd you burn it, and let go of us?
Man why'd you go
We won't know,
But we live on,
We keep thinkin', hopin', prayin',
You are up above in the blue sky heavens.
We are down below,
We have tears falling,
Why'd you get caught-up-in their rude comments?
You had some gifted soul to show your talent.
It's too hard to think truly,
We wish you knew truthfully your meaning
They didn't know you like us
You were precious to the ones that were close to you man
You left us standin' tearin' apart.
Thinkin' you aren't important
You were a boy with a lot in front of you
So you finally let go, why?
Why don't you leave all the good times right here now
And let us share them once more
And cry
But keep you near
Cause you're livin' within' heaven
And we won't forget how you came here smiling.
How you kept tryin'
How you were touching
How you were evolving our school nation
And how some never will have got to know you
How a few of us knew you
The amazingness of your smile and your personality
Oh how perfect the crease of your mouth
How could you leave the world missin' you
How we wish we could change this man
Bring you back to life, help you through this tough life
We'll cry
We'll be breakin' , hatin', fakin
With the tears fallin' from our face, your everything.
As days pass away

We will cry harder
Though the memory will stay deep inside
Our hearts will forever be in haze with change
And the days will move slowly
For we lost a young athlete
You have left us with heartache
But thoughts of you will remain
For your life has been touching

23 SOCKS

His mom never did his laundry. It was crucial that his laundry was washed in a specific order with a specific brand of laundry detergent. The shirts were not to touch the pants, and the underwear were not to touch the socks. That is how he had always liked it. And only blue-dyed detergent ever cleaned his clothes perfectly, or at least that is what he believed.

He snatches his laundry basket off of the ground, the carpet giving way on the permanent imprint of a perfect square where the basket always sat. He looks at it for a second, and shakes his head. He hates imprints. He walks in an orderly straight line past the love seat, turning the corner down through a hallway and opens the door to the laundry room. Shivers sprint through his spine to see how dirty it is. He closes his eyes and inhales sharply and, without hesitation, bolts into the room and opens the washer. First, the shirts then the socks, the pants and the underwear. Quick seemed to cripple its meaning for how fast he was in and out of the room.

He slowly paces up and down the hallway waiting for the washer to finally make a loud buzzing noise, exclaiming that it is finally finished. Once again, he is in and out of the laundry room. First, the underwear then the pants, the socks and the shirts are all thrown into the dryer and he shuts the door and runs out. He dreaded waiting for the wash because it always took the longest. His mom tried to keep him occupied by getting him a tablet, but he only used it for schooling purposes.

Finally, the buzz sounds. He sighs a huff of relief and jolts back into the laundry room, grabs his clothes, and throws them back into the basket. Slowly, he heads back around the corner, down the hall, past the love seats and into his room. He begins to count his clothing to make sure nothing had gone missing this time. First is the underwear. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten and eleven. Eleven pairs of underwear exactly. Next were the pants. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven and eight. Eight pairs of pants and eleven pairs of underwear were logged into his notebook that always laid at a 90 degree angle on his nightstand. He continued to count like this until the very end. Socks were the last thing to go into the drawer, so socks were the last things counted. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven and twelve pair were counted. He began to take his tallies and notes into his notebook when he noticed a discrepancy in the log book. He should have twelve pairs of socks, a total count of 24. But from his calculations, there were only 23. He began to look confused and wonders if he has lost his mind. He never counted wrong before, and he is always correct.

His bedroom door swung open and his mom could barely see him flying past the love seat, down the hallways, around the corner and into the laundry room.

She looks up from her book with a puzzling glare toward his room. He stumbles back out and heads

back for his clothes. She continues to read.

How is it possible though that he would have miscounted? He had never done so before and he wasn't planning on doing it now. So, to make things easy for him, he ran back around the corner, down the hallways and past the love seat, into his room, and threw away the extra socks. He was happy with twelve pairs of socks.

Every Saturday at exactly 2:32 was when he did his laundry, and every weekend another sock would go missing in the dryer.

"Maybe the dryer is just eating them, honey, or it's falling behind the dryer. I'm sure everything is just fine," said his mother. She always tried comforting her son in times when his OCD was getting the best of him, which was constant. But no matter what she said, he always shook his head and swore that he noted the count and he was always missing one sock each time the laundry was done. Weeks went by and the log book was still calculating one sock was missing from the laundry basket once he got past the corner, down the hallway, past the love seat and into his room.

Each week he had to go out and buy one single pair of socks just to keep everything equal, but he had enough. He was to find out what was happening to his socks once and for all. At first he tried to convince his mom to buy another dryer.

"It dries your clothes just fine sweetie, there is no need to throw away a perfectly good machine."

But nothing convinced him.

A few more weeks went by and every time he would return to his room from walking around the corner, through the hallway, and past the love seat, another sock had gone missing. Three nights later, he decided to take matters into his own hands. He grabs his laundry basket, glances at the imprint on the floor, and takes a slow breath in. When the house was in a dead silence and the dog had stopped barking, he left his room and tip-toed through his door, past the love seat, down the hallway, around the corner and into the doorway of the laundry room. It had since been cleaned up after he demanded his mother to do so.

He starts the washing machine, opens the lid, throws his clothes in the barrel and closes the lid. He peeks over the dryer like a shadow over a mountain and stealthily moves his hand onto the lid. Without taking a breath, he slaps the top of the machine hard. He imagines that the smack would do something besides making a large clanging sound throughout the house. Nothing amazing happens, so he tries a new tactic. He grabs behind the dryer and slowly pulls at it, moving it quarter of an inch by quarter of an inch. Finally, the dryer has moved farther away from its resting position and he steps behind the dark shadow only to fall into an opening in the floor.

He begins to yell out for help, screaming whatever word spills out of his mouth. But no amount of yelling and screaming could mute the distant echo tunneling up and reverberating back down the hole. He continues to fall until the bottom of the hole takes a sharp turn against the ground and he is flung into a small garage-like door. The sudden stop rattles his cranium and he sways upward until he is on his two feet. He isn't sure how to react, but his only human instinct is to open this strange metal door to see why it is here and where it came from.

The door slowly slides open and he is greeted by a bright red light that flashes, but makes no sound. Silence, then drips from a leaking water pipe. He slowly begins to walk around a bend, through a small underground corridor and ends up in an open room that is blinking a red-blood color. The drips continue. In it is a table with four chairs with stuffed animals sitting in the chairs. He slowly walks toward the animals as the flashing light fades back and forth into darkness and into light, revealing the animals made from freshly sewn socks. Darkness and back to light, the drips clanging against the ground louder and louder, and the red light was all he was seeing, and yet he did not notice the figure slowly creaking behind his very own footsteps. His hand gently strokes the sock doll's cheek, yelps, and drops it out of fear. The dark figure behind him was the last thing he saw before the red flashing light made a horrific buzzing sound. The washer was finished.

NATURE'S WONDERS

Standing on the top of the mountain, the vast open space shines through the snow. Bitter cold rushes my face, while snow continues to fall. In the winter season, skiing is something I never turn away from. There is a place up high in the mountains where people are free to roam. The snow provides a cover, and surrounding areas provide a massive display of what nature can do. Being free in the wild is something that nothing can compare to. The fresh fallen snow, the tall and skinny trees, and the rock cliffs give a great area to mess around in. Putting goggles on, the red lens gives a brand new look on the valley. The sweet and sudden click of the bindings gives a sign that the skies are ready to go.

The chairlift to the top is a slow crawl. Once at the top, the view is amazing. The entire valley and landscape is visible. The forest of trees beneath makes me wonder how to navigate through it. White blankets of snow falls and covers the mountainside. Standing on the tip of the cliff, a feeling of triumph over takes me. The snow and layout of the run ahead brings fear into my head. Taking my sight from the vast land, I look down at the corridor of trees. Carefully planning my run, I release a cloud of breath and push my legs forward. Falling over the cliff, the time to face that fear has come. The snow parts upon my ski. Flying into my face, snow blocks my view of what's ahead. My tucked in bandana protects my ever so vulnerable face. The sun shines off the crusted snow bank directly beside me. Exiting the trees, the snow begins to fall upon me as before. My goggles instantly become a blur and force me to stop in the middle of this dense forest.

After cleaning off the fog that forms on my goggles, nature's true beauty is shown. Snow falls gently on the trees, while the wind is silenced by the surrounding snow banks. Animals scatter towards their homes as the night begins to form. This view from in the forest rivals only the view from the top. Massive trenches in the snow lead to my only way out. Green leafy moss attaches itself to the side of the tree facing the sun, for none seem to be growing on the other. Once my strength comes back to me, I find myself shaking off the powder snow that anchors me to the ground. After I am free, I begin to start my descent to the safe bottom only to return for another run.

Skiing is one of nature's beauties. Snow falls all around, thus creating a white landscape down where all the houses lie. The views and wonders found while skiing showcase what nature can do. Bitter cold adds to the adrenaline that pumps through your body. Trees only add obstacles in the outback snow areas. Once you reach the bottom, you feel obligated to take a ride back up. Nature has something that nothing can rival. Every view I see on the mountain is worth a second glance.

RANCID LIFE

by garret carlson

the grass is wet
flaxen of supple blonde
matted about the mud, an earthly scalp
cool mist stings away the drought

Demure forest scenes of stunted trees
clumps and knots of wet slick wood
are pleasing, doing the eye some pleasure
bent like knees, these wretched beings

westward below, tapestry of rotten brown-
grounded necessities all around
neither exists a greatness so demure
to create an upward force of censure

far above it begins to snow
the creation of a future that so few see
beyond the ridge is eternal duty
drips and drops of ephemerality

yet here today on the earthly scalp
stands all of eternity for no reason now
moroseness of being, winds of doubt
meaning of what, I do not know how

UNTITLED

by jeanee coyle

you are the lightning
I am the tree
your gaze sends me up in flames
the forest is destroyed by its ashen explosion
but I live for the fire

the spark can range for miles
as I count to three
I feel your thunder shake my soul from across continents
it tugs at my being
calling me to exist in two places
I am drawn to my other half

a force stronger than that which holds my own atoms
together
drags my soul down roads unknown
as I tie my walking shoes the path expands in front of
me
endlessly
the horizon alludes an infinite expanse
of construed certainty and presumed promise

but your fire lights my way
my road is not lonely
your spirit, my companion
as I make my way to the forest of flames

MUSEUM WORTHY

by allie bickel

They used to eat paint. Soaking internal organs into a fluid mosaic. Maybe the yellow of their stomach, the pastels of intestines, or museum worthy insides would bring a happiness to the places the paint could not reach. Possibly, they thought if the paint embodied their blood, colorful bubbles would surface from their mouths. Each word could linger, left to dry out as a trail back to its creator. It may have been a sport of sorts, guzzling until they could no longer breathe. They were the Vincent van Gogh over themselves. No one insisted on what colors to consume, or in what order, because they were diligently concerned with their own masterpiece. Walls stood white and bellies hung full.

The paint secreted from pores, staining hands, changing fingertips. I can imagine them, sweetly sucking paint from lovers palms like grapefruit juice. Unashamed of their muse. Paint was bitter and heavy on their tongues, clogging throats. Maybe they had been obsessed to find untamed satisfaction, even as it drown them.

Paint is toxic. But if it made them happy why should it matter?

They used to eat paint.

And then we got more creative with what to destroy ourselves with.

RED

by nina murphy

I'm not one to complain most of the time, but why do some people get more attention than others? Not in a "poor me, I want to be the center of every person's world," but the attention that could save a life. People are always worried about those who self harm. But the reality is they are only concerned with the physical abuse. The emotional torment that people put themselves through is put on the back burner because they have not "hurt" themselves and are not at the point of concern. Let me tell you that if you could see what I see, you would turn right around and put me at the top of your list. When people see entire arms covered in two-inch bright red scar marks they say,

"you are so brave" and "you're going to get through this."

But what about me! I have had the life drained out of me but you can't even see it. I have never once afflicted pain on my physical body. But I have more scars than you can imagine. For every scar that other kid has, I have one just like it that can't be seen. I don't bleed red though when I slice through my emotions, I bleed sunshine yellow and bubblegum pink, emerald green and tangerine orange. What's left is the deepest of blues and darkest of purples all smashed together in a blanket of black. I've tried to tell people but they brush me aside because they don't understand that those colors are what make me who I am, and if they aren't there then what's the point.

In this minute and a half that it took for you to read this, I took it upon myself to banish the dark, and stop myself from bleeding my colors, by slicing through my body one last time and making myself bleed red.

WHAT IS LIFE?

by tori nelson

I try anything I can to fill the empty void
that resides where this heart should be-
empowering emptiness and ineffective eternity
laugh and mock as they're drained right from me-

oh how I long, learn, and lust
to just be out in the ground-
winter- I'll be dead
but long comes spring I'll be around-

life will sit upon me as it once did-
singing in my ear, housing in the clear-
oh how I fear, yet know-
the end is near-

oh what a beautiful year

A WALK

by courtney radke

I walk in the forest
on a trail whose name I don't know
I hear a rustle
I hustle,
to leave as the icy wind blows

the water, it glows
under the newly fallen snow
clear and clean,
oh, how it gleams!

as I walk by the babbling stream
it sings, it talks, it screams-
the winter is coming-
or at least that's how it seems

A NEW DAY AT CINDERELLA'S CASTLE

by kaitlynn lindbo

in a klingdom of wonder holds a lonely prince
with a handsome face.
a rainbow stretches, catlike, across the sky.
the sun brightens the atmosphere in a
heavenly glow.
his thoughts roam on and the stream trickles
by.
deer graze under the canopy of the sleeping
mossy green willow.
a pink tree gazes with childlike innocence over
the trail.
cotton clouds obscure the ocean of baby blue
blueberry sky.
oil lamps light the way and each shadow ac-
companies him,
saturating the air with a feeling of safety.
water dances and bubbles in its bed of silky
dirt full of life and air.
a singing breeze tickles my face and runs
down my neck.
even a wind current contains the magic of this
land.
the glamour of the swans remind me of a bal-
let as they fly through the water.
only here is there no pain or sorrow,
but solitude resides, hiding behind the beauty.
this perfect fairytale contains the loveliness of
all happy pictures,
but even loveliness has its lonely secrets.

HICK

Buy yourself a pair of cowboy boots, a big truck, and a can o' chew, and you can call yourself a real cowgirl. You've always lived on a farm. You've always woken up to the smell of cow shit outside and the roosters crowing from the chicken house, but none of that mattered. It's all materialistic. You ain't worth a lick unless you got the boots and truck to prove it. That's just high school.

If you're a momma's girl, you'll live at your old grandparent's place that sits on twenty-two acres of land in the middle of nowhere. You'll go exploring every once in a while, but it won't be anything you haven't seen before. You'll only just get your license even though you've been able to take the test for over a year prior. You'll use the main farm truck as your transportation because the other one is stick and you don't know how to drive with a clutch just yet.

Your first day of junior year is tomorrow, but you have to clean out the bed of the truck because it was used to get logs for the fire stove, and all of the wood chunks are still in the back. You grab a broom and spend well over an hour sweeping it out as you listen to country music through your headphones, singing along every once in a while.

The next morning, you head outside to start the dodge twenty minutes early because it's as old as your favorite movie from the eighties and the engine isn't as good as it could be. Just as you're about to leave your driveway, the truck dies, and you have to walk all the way back to the house to tell your mother.

After the first few weeks of school are over, you decide that you don't like your English teacher and the boy that's in one of your classes isn't half bad on the eyes. He's from California, and his voice is as sweet as sugar, because you don't like honey. You invite him to a bonfire that's that night and act as if it isn't your first one, like you're an expert and you're not completely off your rocker. You hope he'll message you, like he said he would, to see if he can go with you.

Spending the rest of the time after school until the start of the bonfire, you get ready and try not to be too anxious. You check your phone about a hundred times up until the point of when it's time to leave, still no texts. You go in your sister's car, and you guys head to Target to pick up her friend, another boy named Donovan. He holds up a case of twisted tea and hollers as he puts it in the trunk under a bunch of clothes. You give up the passenger seat and sit in the back as he gets in the front, commenting on how the seat is still warm. On your way to the bonfire, your sister almost runs the car off the road and tips it over train tracks. You freak out for a moment but then continue on your way.

You take your first shot of Fireball and chase it down with some Sprite, relieving your throat from only some of the sting. People clap and whistle as you almost throw up from the alcohol, but then you clap with them as you finally stop heaving. You have a tropical drink in a can and make friends with a young man named Eric. He has black hair and black framed glasses. He wears a flannel. He makes you forget about California Boy. He's twenty three, seven years older than you are, but he won't know that. You decide to stick with being best friends. You tell him that too, but that's the first and last time you ever talk to him.

It's October before you know it, and you're good friends with California Boy, but you've come to terms with the fact that he's gay and that you are never going to go on a date with him, and what's more is that you're happy about it. You skip work to go see a Back to the Future marathon in theatres on the day that Marty McFly goes to the future. You start to like a boy in your English class whose name you can't help but say with a Transylvanian accent. You catch him staring at you every once in a while. His cheeks will get red, and he smiles at you then looks away. You look down at your boots and blush too. You fall in love with his brown eyes.

After a while, you get tired of neither one of you making a move, and you get over him. The next time he smiles, you look at your shoes, but more out of boredom than anything.

In November, you buy your first record player. It's robin egg blue (your favorite color for vintage items) and folds up in a briefcase. Your favorite color for vintage items. The first album you buy is George Strait. You get it at Goodwill for 99 cents. The next day, you almost ruin the player by carting it through the first day of snow.

You put it in the passenger seat of your truck and start up the engine. You wait even longer than usual for it to heat up and when it finally does, you take the way towards the Zip Trip to get home. At the stop light, the engine dies and you barely have enough time to turn the truck off and turn it back on again before the light turns green. The engine tries to do that two more times. A few days later, you almost get in a car crash because some dumbass in the other lane doesn't understand what a yellow light means.

Later that month, you fall on the ice trying to get inside the foyer of your high school. You are surprised when a low growl comes out of your throat without permission, and then you turn scarlet as a boy with blonde hair rushes over to help you up. You try to laugh awkwardly as he grabs your hand and pulls you off the ground.

You look at him with wide eyes and call him "Jackson," the name of an old friend that you still keep in touch with. You wonder what he's doing back in town. The boy's face turns into one of confusion, and then he realizes that you think he's his older brother. He tells you that Jackson is still in San Francisco, and you get all embarrassed. You apologize profusely and hope that you're not annoying him. He isn't bothered by your rambling; he thinks it's cute. He tells you his real name- Levi.

On Christmas day you head over to Levi's house for the first time. His mother gives you a big hug when she meets you and tells you that you have to try her homemade banana bread. You say it's amazing, but you don't tell her that it will never be as good as your momma's. You all sit around the tree.

Levi's arm is around your waist as you sit on his lap; your feet are tangled in his. Jackson is in town for the holidays, and he is sitting by his mother. You have already caught up with him, talked about what San Francisco is like and how his girlfriend-of-almost-two-years is doing. You then feel awkward because he says that they broke up only two weeks before and that's why she isn't there with him. You say you're sorry and comfort him with a long hug.

During present time, you give Jackson his, which is a life proof phone case because you know that this is his third phone in the past seven months. He is very clumsy. You turn to their mother and give her present. It's a cashmere scarf to go with her sweaters. You get up and sit beside Levi as you give him his present. When he opens it, he finds a white Polaroid camera, because he's into vintage stuff like you. There's some photos already taken and put underneath it. They're all photos of you two together: The first time you held hands, the first time you hugged, the first time you kissed under mistletoe at a Christmas party a few days before. He looks at you, stupefied, wondering when you had the time to take all of them. When he asks you, you just smile.

When it comes time for dinner, you guys sit around the table and hold hands as you bow your heads. You feel peculiar because you haven't said grace in years and you don't quite remember how it's supposed to sound. You look around at everyone's faces and notice how their eyes are closed so you quickly do the same. Levi squeezes your hand because he is able to feel how tense you are and he tries to comfort you. You smile with your eyes still closed and relax. You quickly give a merci to whoever controls destiny before the grace finishes.

In February, there is an incredible lack of snow. You decide to take your friends, they're twins, to a little diner for milkshakes and fries. You tell them that you plan to go home for the night, but you guys both know that that never happens. When you guys get home, you play Monopoly. As you play, Beth (who is the younger of the twins) texts one of her friends, and you all decide to hang out. No one really wins at Monopoly without Boardwalk and Park Place anyway. Brooke and Beth gather enough change to pay for a gallon of gas in your truck. You guys head to the gas station down the road.

At the gas station, Beth chooses to go in and pay for the gas, but since your truck is only one seated and the passenger door recently broke, she climbs out the window. Almost falling and doing the splits, she stands up and goes inside. You wait for her to come back out and tell her that you'll pump the gas. Just as she's about to go through your door, you tell her that the only way she is able to get back in the truck is back through the window. She laughs and goes back around and tries climbing through, but she's too short and there is no foot rest. You give her a boost in. It's dark out, but you can see that one of the gas station clerks is staring at you while he smokes a cigarette. This is one of those things that you just have to do in high school.

When you get to the park that her friend was supposed to meet you at, you park your truck, grab your blanket, the one that your grandmother made for you on your sixteenth birthday, and you head out. Your boots click clack as you rustle through the dark trying to find the friend. When you reach her, you lay the blanket down

and all of you sit on it. You shake hands with the now-acquaintance stranger whose name is Kayla. Noticing that she has a bag with her, you ask what it's for. She laughs as she pulls out a pipe. You look over to Beth.

"We actually set this up. I thought tonight could be the night that you lose your smoking virginity. Don't you want to do it with all of us? We are your friends." She looks at you and giggles nervously. Your eyes bulge, and you refuse. You watch as they light up and take hits. You grow confidence as you take the pipe, putting your finger over the hole just as they have said, and you breathe in. Your eyes begin to water as you cough ferociously.

All of a sudden, there's a flashlight showing through the trees.

"Hey, you there!"

Your friends yell "run" in sequence as they flee in panic, leaving you. You don't understand what's happening or what's going on. Your vision is blinded as the light is shined into your eyes. You can't see anything as you feel someone pull you to your feet by your arms. You start to cry, unsure of what else to do. Your hands are placed behind your back as a cold metal clamps around your wrists, causing gooseflesh to travel its way up to your neck. You're pushed into a car with red and blue flashing lights.

You're sitting in an office on a chair. Your rump is starting to feel tingly, along with your feet. You've been sitting there for at least an hour now, unsure of what to do. Since this was your first offense, the police couldn't put you in a cell overnight, thank goodness.

"Your mother is here. You can collect your things at the office."

You head out to the waiting area and find that your mother is sitting in a chair. She stands immediately when she sees you. A stern look is on her face. She crosses her arms.

"Mom, I'm sorry,-" you begin to say but she puts her hand up to stop you.

"I don't want to hear it." She turns around and leads you outside. As you're about to close the car door, Levi stops you. You roll down the window.

"Beth told me what happened. Are you okay? "

"I-I'm fine, but I have to go." You roll up the window and leave him standing there with a sad look on his face.

In May, the snow from the last snowstorm is melted off the ground, and the yellow flowers that grow on the sides of dirt roads are budding. You're sitting on a rooftop eating a bowl of cereal with Levi as you watch the town's lights twinkle. The moon is in a crescent shape.

Your relationship with your mother hasn't been the same since the smoking debacle and you've decided to completely forget about Beth and Brooke. They tried to apologize a few days after it happened, but they left you when you needed them, and that's just unpardonable.

Levi grabs your bowl and puts them aside. Here is the first boy you've ever had an actual relationship with. It's real and it's alive. He has been the only one that still trusts you. He understands that you made a mistake and it's okay. He gave you a lecture after it happened but has since moved on, knowing that you aren't going to get yourself in trouble. He is going to keep you out of it. "Oh!" he says. "I've got something for you."
He pulls out a piece of cloth, and as you look at it, you realize it's the blanket that you left in the park. You smile widely.

"I love you."

"I know," he replies, and he pulls you close to him, covering you both with the blanket.

It's June, and the last day of junior year is in two days. You're sitting around a dinner table with Levi and your mother. You look at Levi, and you realize that ever since you started dating him, you have been wearing your boots less and less often. He lives on a farm too, but his favorite shoes are his chucks. Levi doesn't care about materialistic possessions. You slowly learn that none of that matters.

After dinner, you go into your room and pull out your boots and hat. You put your boots and hat in a box, and you tuck them in the attic. They don't fit your personal style anymore.

THE NIGHT IN NOVEMBER

by hailey warren

the calm sea,
cold as an Arctic night
met with the frozen land.
waves crashing into the shore, one after another.

the rattle of rusty chains
and wooden crafted boats,
rocking on the rough water
filled the frigid breeze of the midnight air.

welcoming cottages with painted doors and
precious sleepers
filled the ever-so quiet town
in the vast land pass the soaring mountains.

the glistening colors of daylight
were engulfed by the charcoal skies of night.
a dust of golden, blissful stars
gave hope to the people below.

with roaring waves meeting the golden brown sand,
boats floating on the reflective water
and a sea of stars glowing like fireflies in a black-filled night,
the air was filled with complete serenity
as the town said goodnight to that night in November.

this poem is based on the artwork
"Starry Night Over the Rhone" by Vincent van Gogh

2063

by jessica wigen

the modern world taken over by Mother Nature
she smiles as trees grow in between the town cars
so many people fled only to avoid death for a minute
before the whole city erupts into violence

the earth is happy now that the people have gone
field mice reside in pantries eating like kings
bodies litter the streets, slowly decomposing
some took their own lives as their children watched
others had the decision made for them

only animals walk the path of life
all anger has left the city and peace in its place
the violence was only supposed to last twenty-hour hours
but it continued until there was not a single soul left

the canal reflects the blue sky glowing with content
sky scrapers sit abandoned as vines grow up the sides
rivers of blood stain the side walk
if there are any souls left, they are hidden in the shadows

vibrant green trees repair the atmosphere
years of pollution erased by photosynthesis
mating calls ring out through the city
all is calm
all is peaceful

FAKE IT 'TILL YOU MAKE IT

Being tired is no longer just an emotion to me. It's the only constant my mind has ever known and the only stability my heart has ever witnessed. With endless days and swiftly passing nights, sleep is no longer a safe haven. Its darkness slips over me like smooth silk, lovingly embracing me for a moment's time before pushing me back into this unforgiving reality I'm forced to call 'home'. These brief, nightly encounters can be compared to that of a high. Like a meth addict, I'm addicted to short time I can feel this release but, every morning I wake up, I am ripped from this calming ocean of pure obsidian and shoved into a world I never asked to be in. Everyday I'm left begging, pleading, praying on my hands and knees to be left in this world of ebony ecstasy for just a moment longer. Waiting for the very hour, minute, second I can be enveloped in the nothingness once again, but like the soft kiss of sun on a warm autumn's dawn, it leaves me just as soon as it had come.

Though no one would ever know. No one could ever tell. My masks lie so deep upon my face that I cannot even tell where I begin and my pretense ends. My facade has become like a deep-rooted tree in the center of my very being. I do not know who I am and thus, neither does anyone else. I am lost in a maze, wandering amongst the walls I built around my heart to protect myself, but in creating this barrier between those around me and who I truly am, I made someone new. I brought forth a new person just to keep myself company in the midst of the scars and concrete. I am so used to utilizing this person separate from who I am that I no longer am aware of who I was, nor who I will continue to be. But no one would be the wiser.

For years I have played this game and every time, I lose. I've lost many things to these bets, and yet, I never fold. Lord knows why I continue when I know I can never win but, every day the hand plays on. Like the adrenaline rush that flows to the mind during free-fall and the hard crash that comes after, I crave the pain these poker games with Satan bring for they remind me that, I am real.

These thoughts, accompanied by many others, frolic and fight amongst one another in my mind every passing moment of the day. Constantly conflicted and being torn in half while I adorn the kindest of smiles. It's written in the pores of my skin, etched into the breaths of my speech and painted in the glaze of my eyes. The pain, the fire, the never-ending battle is doused all over my face yet, continues to go undetected. Over the years I have mastered the ability to go completely unnoticed. I am an expert in presenting everything while reveling nothing and in these presentations, I still learn nothing. I continue to know nothing for I have 'faked it, made it' and in doing so, I lost it along the way.

BURNT MARSHMALLOWS

the fire was slowly dying down
and turning to a glow
the perfect time to find a stick
and make a s'more, you know

once the stick had been acquired
I went and found the rest
cracker, chocolate and a mallow
would start me on my quest

I put that mallow on the stick
to roast it golden brown
It soon exploded into flames
my smile turned to a frown

the mallow dropped into the fire
and I began to cry
no more s'mores could be assembled
the mallow bag was dry

GOOEY BURNT CAKE

I strap on an apron and prepare the counter.
rummaging through the drawers
I find the measuring cups and spoons.
reaching up to the top shelf I grab the largest bowl.

the fridge is filled with eggs and milk,
while the cupboard supplies the flour.
I preheat the oven and follow the recipe to a T;
however, I misread the time.

burnt to a crisp, the cake baked an extra 20 minutes.
I restart hoping to fashion a perfectly cooked cake.
the fridge still has eggs and the cupboard still has flour,
but I forget the oven was off and mess up the next.

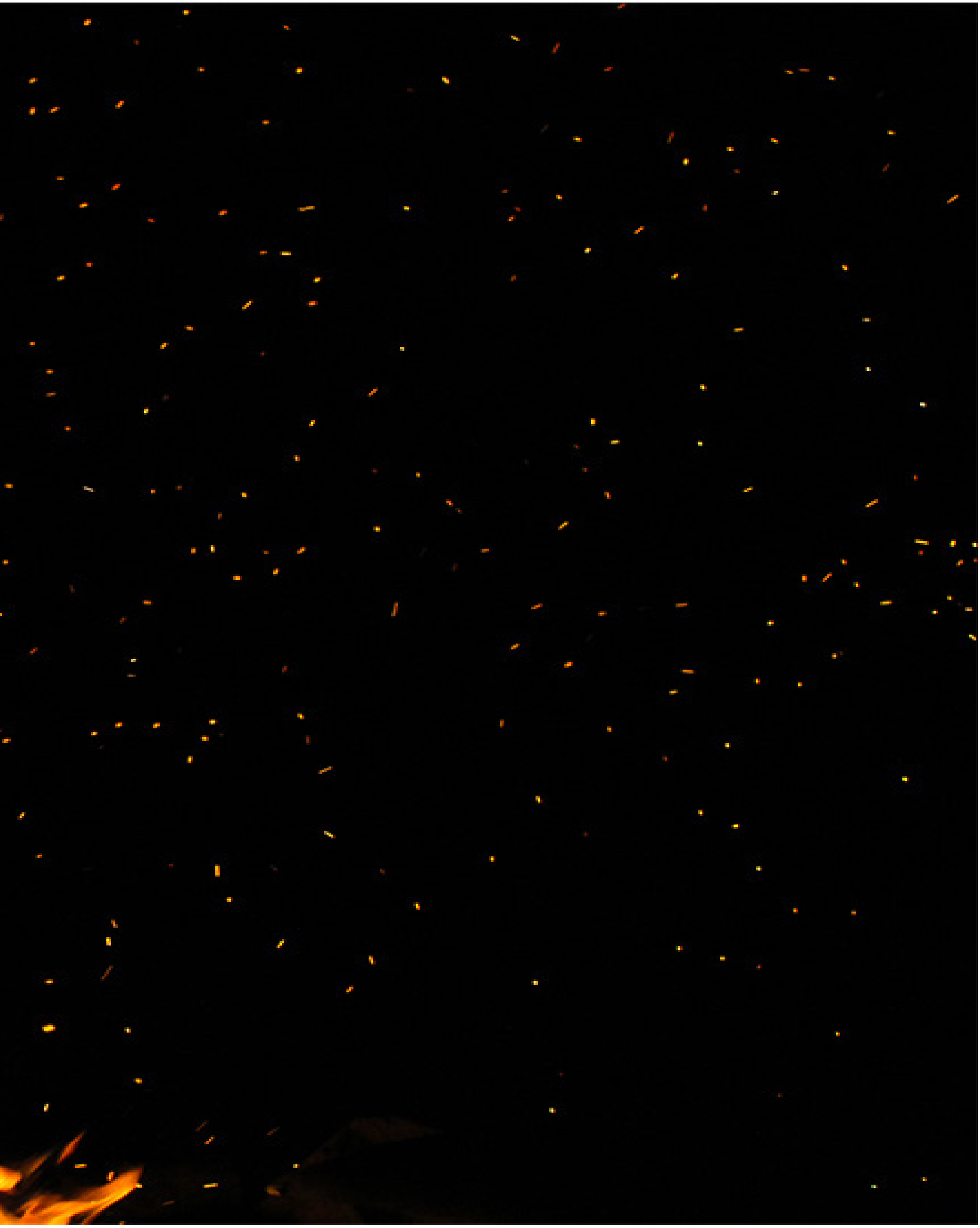
for a third time I embark to construct a cake.
my supplies are all here and my oven is primed
I carefully read the recipe and double check everything
the toothpick comes out clean when inserted in the cake.

It is funny how light means happiness in most situations,
yet a light and gooey cake will inflict you with salmonella
but darkness is also unpleasant, you must find a balance.











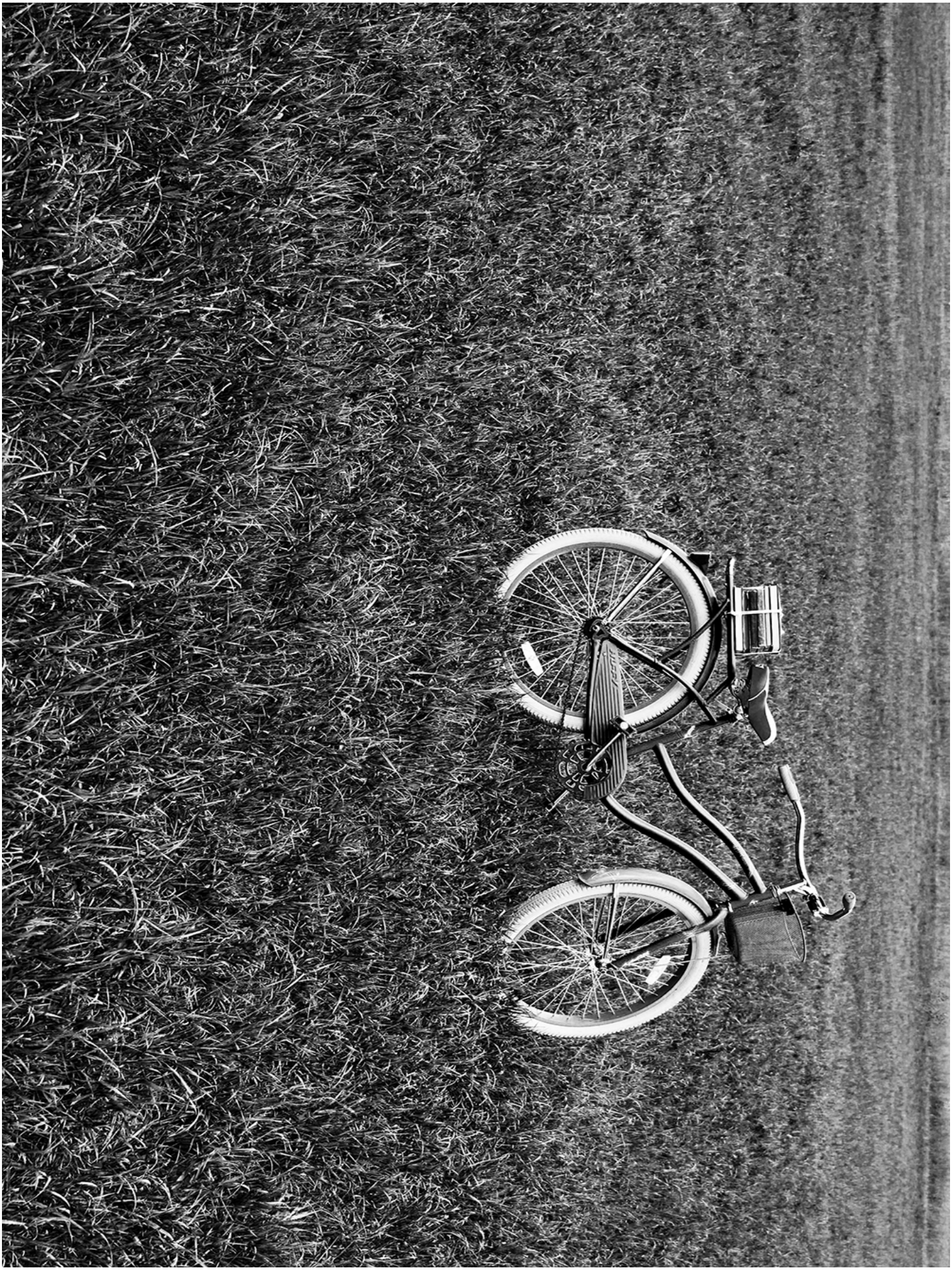












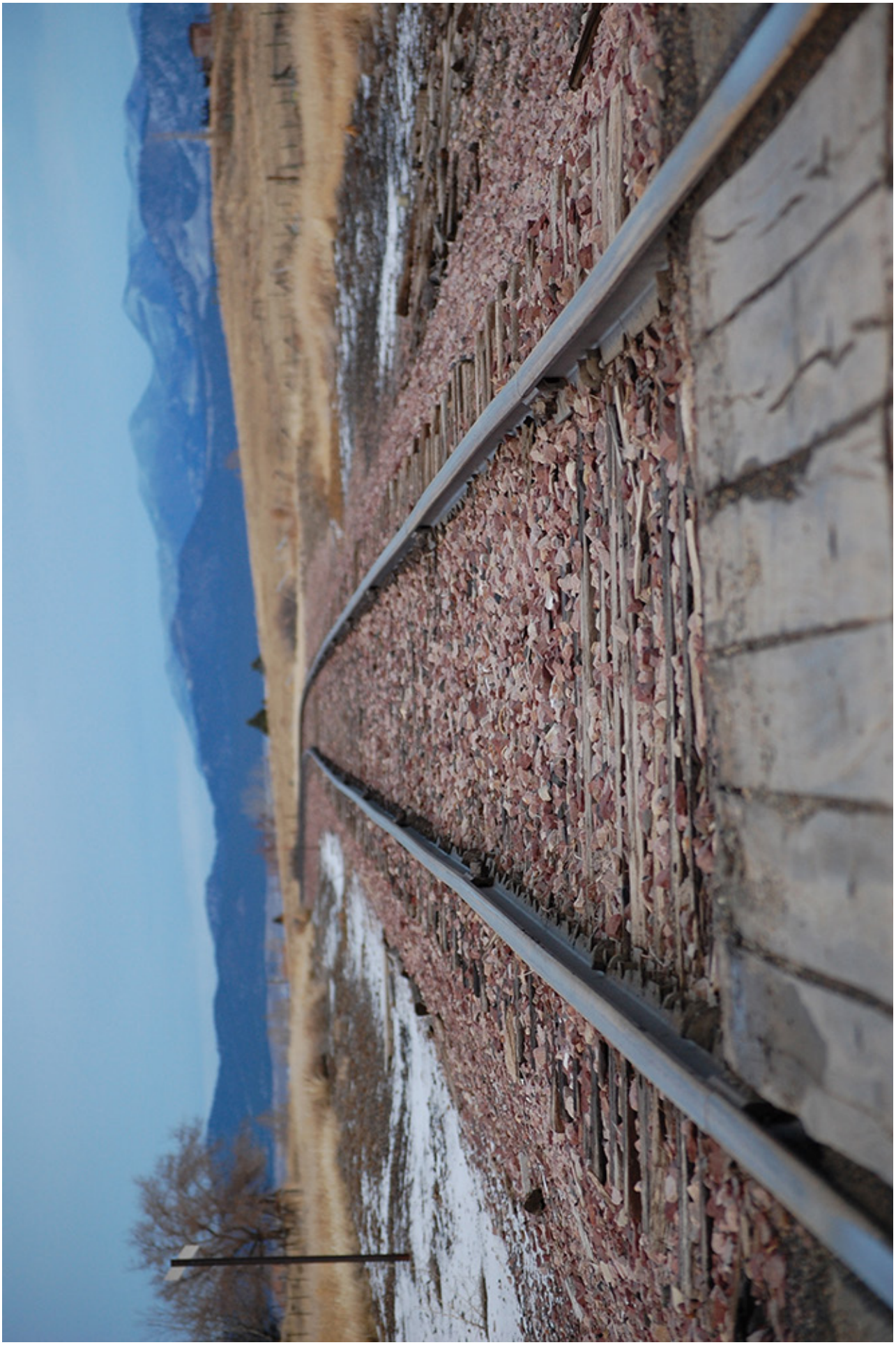






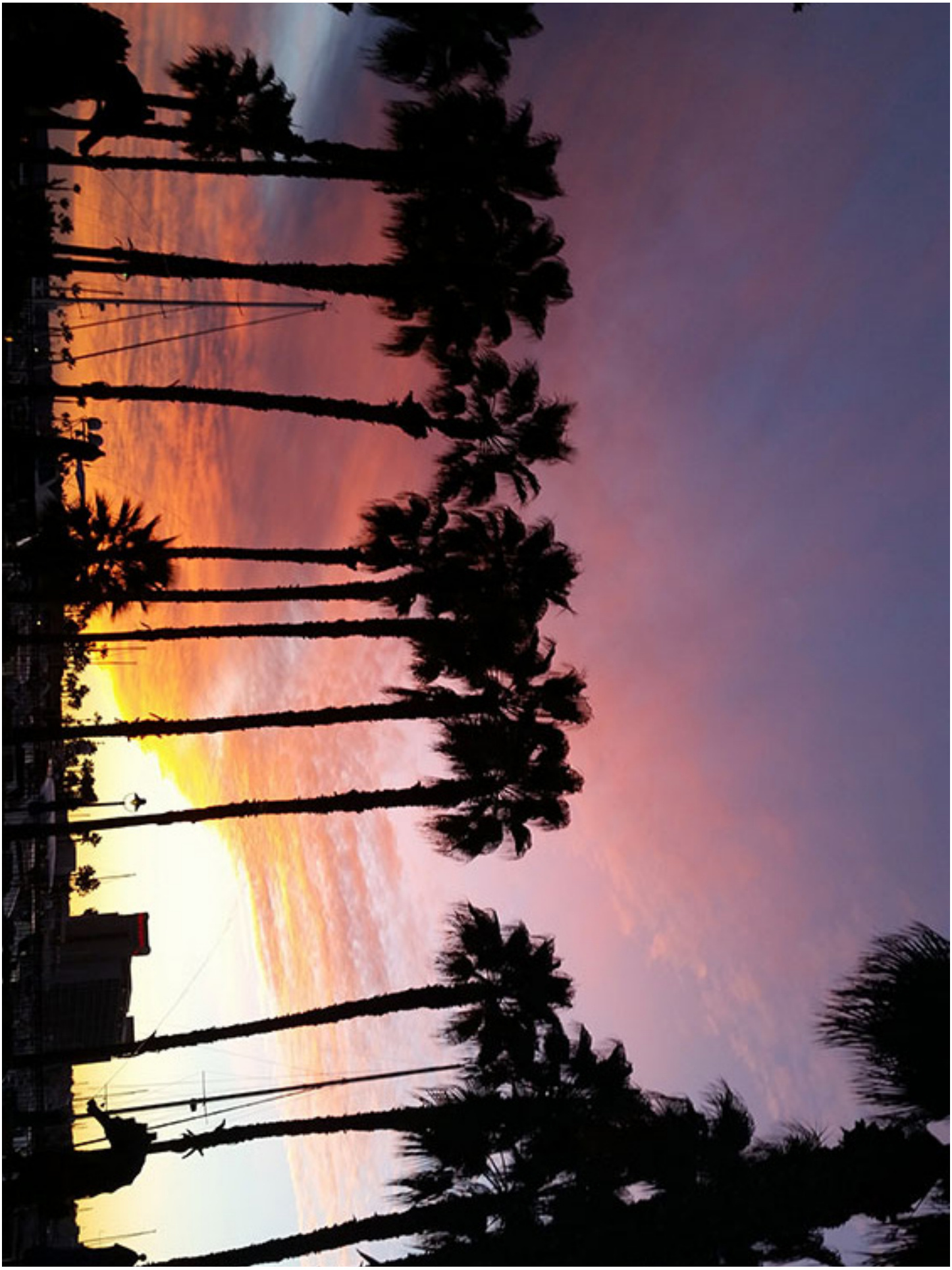






































washed up.

split second.



gold standard.





melt.

emma.





jawn.

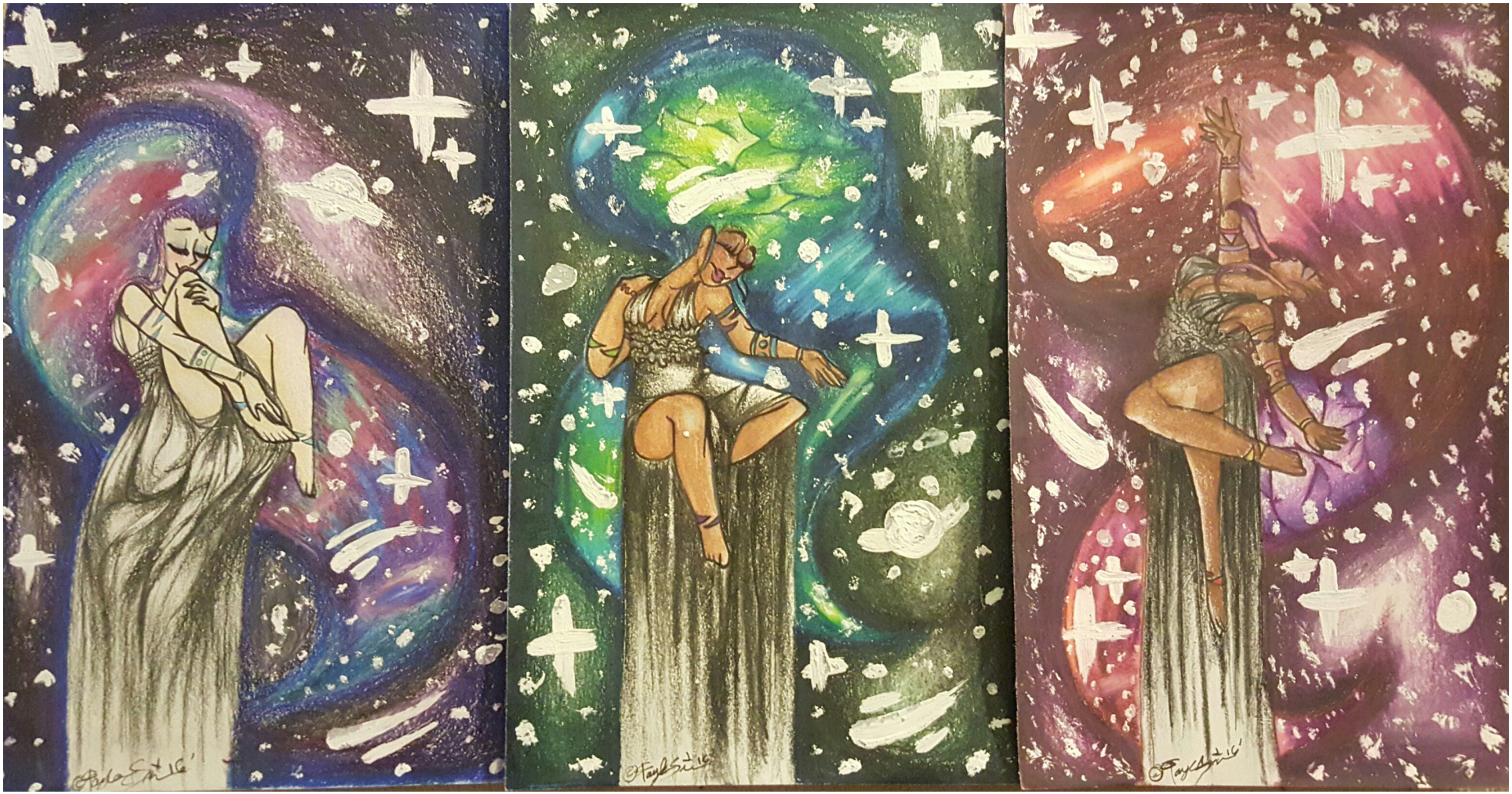






emmalea
&
david.

incandescence.





trapped.


Ronan
Tricia F (12-20-15)



red hair & rosy cheeks.

THE NIGHT WE DANCED

I had just finished sprinkling the final spices on dinner when Jamie walked in, and always loving my cooking, quickly tried to sneak a taste. I slapped away the reaching hand, then turned around, smiling. "Oh come on, Jake," Jamie said, playing with the gold ring on my finger as had become a habit since the wedding.

"No!" I said forcefully and turned back to the stove. Slowly, I felt soft hands creep around my waist and pull me close. "Do you remember our prom?"

"Of course I do..." I said, thinking back.

"You were radiant and ecstatic, I don't think we even made it through the doors before you started dancing. I always hated pop songs but... I don't know. They let me dance with you and that made me love them."

"You were always an amazing dancer," Jamie added. I chuckled before continuing.

"Anyway, I remember that we danced as much as we could that night, and I felt like I was dying, but you never even broke a sweat. You were so graceful, and I don't think any girl has been a better jitterbugger than you. But that's not what I remember the most vividly from that night."

"What is?"

"I remember what happened after we stopped dancing. Everyone else quickly made for their cars and drove home as fast as they could, but we decided to walk around for a while. You were cold so I gave you my jacket. You had forgotten yours in the car, and eventually we just ended up sitting on this small, snowy outcrop that looked out over the city. I put my arm around you and you pulled close to me. I remember asking you the most trivial and idiotic thing then. I asked-"

"Wait, hold on. Why did you ask if I remembered the prom?"

"Well, while you've been talking... I may have been eating your food," Jamie said sheepishly, while trying to hold back giggles. I sighed but decided to finish the story anyway.

"Okay," I said. "I remember looking into your amazing eyes and asking 'What is Jamie short for?', and you laughed and said, 'James you dork'... Do you remember what happened then?" I asked as I turned around.

"Of course I do, Jake," Jamie said, "you kissed me." I nodded. Then kissed him again.

THE AUCTION

"Lot 1401, sold to the gentleman in the fifth row!"

The crowd reeled under the smack of the gavel and parted as the man, both relieved and horrified, was led out the door behind the podium. The Auctioneer disappeared for a few moments, and returned just as the screams began. They were cut off sharply as he slipped the door closed. With a cough and a brush at his collar, he settled himself and began on the next item.

"Too expensive, not gruesome enough," the man beside me said. "How much you got left?"

I looked down into my battered pouch, carefully counting the piddly amount of change and bills.

"Not much, only seven years and a few loose hours here and there."

"Oof, good luck pal. Hope it's worth it."

The Auctioneer had finished his soliloquy and subsequent absence, returning with the final lot of the night. Clearing his throat, he began. "Now this piece is truly marvelous, Disemboweling by Feral Hyenas. Let's begin the bidding at one year."

It was perfect. The painful ones always were. No one ever spent that much on the true pain, opting instead for the ever popular bullet to the back of the brainpan. With my heart in my throat, I put everything I had into my bid and was rewarded with a blanket of silence followed by the crash of the gavel and the triumphant yell of its holder.

Tears burned in my eyes as they led me back, ripping all of my time from my hands. We went through a dark corridor that emerged into a brilliant white room. In a blur, they had me sign away my Life, initial here for benefactor, there for acceptance of execution, then stuffing the forms into the envelope with the cash. They pulled forward a monitor so I could see him as they deposited my years. With all of the bills placed into his account, I saw him rise from his hospital bed, a look of awe painting his face. He ran his hands along his body, marveling at its new found strength.

I cried and collapsed as they wheeled the screen away, leaving only a small, five-minute coin on my chest.

The hyenas cackle behind me.

TOD

Let me introduce you to my depression. His name is Tod. Tod is sitting in the corner, wearing a black suit with a loose tie and flipping through a worn book while smoking a Lucky Strike. This is how he is most of the time: calm, quiet and just... there.

Often he just sits in the room with me, but every once in a while, something makes him change. It's something different every time, but for whatever reason he'll move from his perch, give me a sad glance and then start taking slow, soft steps towards me.

He keeps walking until I can feel the heat from his cigarette and see the tinges of blood just inside his sleeves. Then he'll sigh and lay his hand on my shoulder.

You would think that his hand would be cold, but it isn't; it's warm, soothing, and that warmth flows throughout my entire body. It's never any use to fight, it just takes over and you can't even move. You just lie there, sometimes curled up into a little ball, and sometimes just collapsed haphazardly on the floor.

The most difficult part is that there's so little I can do. No matter what, I can't make him let go, but I can stop him from going too far. I can stop him from putting the blade to my wrist or the rope around my neck and I can stop him from pulling the trigger against my temple. I can stop him from finishing the job, but I can't make him let me go.

Tod doesn't scare me like he used to though. I know now that I'm just as strong as he is. And I know what he fears. So whenever I feel his worn hand on my shoulder, and his breath in my ear, I don't try and fight, I simply pick up the phone and call them. They're my secret weapon; their voices come out of the speaker strong and Tod quickly draws his hand back. Then he gives a quick smile that seems to say, "until next time," and then strides out of the room. He walks farther and farther with each word said into the phone until he's gone.

Until next time, old friend.

JUST AS PRETTY

Lindsey laid on her back staring up at the Colorado sky and wondering what it would be like to see the world from a cloud's perspective. She checked her phone and realized it was time for her afternoon psych class. Psych was her favorite because she loved learning about the human brain and what makes people act the way they do. As she walked along the crooked brick path to Perlin Hall she wondered what they would be learning about today. This week's reading had been about serial killers born from sociopaths-- people who were just a little off, and ended up being some of the most vicious killers anyone could have imagined.

Her mind then wandered to her roommate. Amber would be in their room, putting on her makeup and getting ready for her 4:30 class. As if she even needs makeup. Everyone loves her already, Lindsey thought to herself. She let her mind wander over all the things that made her hate Amber until she found herself walking up the steps of Perlin.

She found her usual seat, three rows back, five from the right. Lindsey set her backpack down and pulled out her notebook, sending a handful of pens flying with it. Appearing as if out of thin air and picking the pens up off the ground came Daniel Williamson.

"Drop something?" he said as he handed Lindsey the pens and flashed those perfect, almost too white teeth at her. It took her a moment to think of how to respond.

"Oh, yeah. Thanks," she said, smiling politely.

"No problem. How are you liking school?"

"It's alright. I love the people and the campus. It's gorgeous here," she responded. He likes me, she thought.

"Yeah, the people are great. Hey, speaking of, are you doing anything later?" Her heartbeat quickened.

"Oh, um, I don't think so," she said.

"Okay well I think there's a party at Kyle's tonight if you want to come." Her heart was beating a hundred miles a minute now as she tried to smile coolly.

"Yeah, sounds awesome."

"Maybe I should get your number so I can tell you when we're headed over there," he said, giving her another glimpse of that gorgeous smile.

"Sure." He handed her his phone and she added her contact information to his endless list of names.

"Sweet. I'll see you there. Oh, and maybe your roommate would want to come?" Her stomach dropped. Amber. Of course he was after Amber. He didn't care about her. He was simply using her as an in with Amber.

"Oh, uh yeah I think she's free," she said, her cheeks burning, first from disappointment and the embarrassment of thinking he actually liked her, then from anger.

"Awesome! I'll see you both there then," he said.

"Yeah, we'll be there," she said.

As he walked over to his friends she focused on breathing. She couldn't cry in class. The rest of the class was a blur. She hardly heard what Professor Gilbert was saying. Her pen tapped rhythmically on her notebook, the pen he had touched. She hated that pen. When class ended she was the first one out the door. She dropped that pen on the concrete and stepped on it, making it bleed ink and watching it move through the cracks in the sidewalk.

That image played through Lindsey's mind all the way back to the dorm. She took the stairs up to the seventh floor and found the door to her room unlocked. Typical. Did it ever occur to her that I might have something important in here? Of course not. Bitch. She slumped down heavily on her bed and laid there, slowly calming down. When she was teetering on the brink of sleep she heard Amber run into the locked door. Ha. Serves her right.

"Hey Linds, could you come let me in? I left my key in there." Lindsey pushed herself up off her bed and moved slugglishly toward the door. When she opened it, there was Amber. He long golden hair fell over her shoulders and back in effortless curls and her pink lipgloss contrasted against her white teeth as she smiled at Lindsey.

"Ready for tonight," she asked as she brushed past her into their room.

"Oh yeah, Daniel Williamson invited us to a party at Kyle's," Lindsey replied instinctively. Shit,

why'd I tell her that?

"Ooooh! Daniel invited us? Isn't he a babe?" Hearing Amber squeal about Daniel like that made her even angrier.

"Yeah he's alright I guess."

"You don't think he's hot? I wish he would ask me out. I bet he's a great kisser." Lindsey's fists got tighter with every word. Amber kept talking as she opened the door to her closet.

"What should I wear? I want to wear something that gets Daniel's attention but isn't too suggestive, you know? Hey Linds, what do you think of my little blue dr-" She was cut off by Lindsey slamming her head into the side of the closet. The blow hadn't quite knocked her out and she looked at Lindsey confused, trying to regain her balance while Lindsey still held the base of her neck.

"Linds, what...?" She peered at Lindsey, the light fading from those perfectly lined, bright blue eyes. Lindsey smashed her head against the wall a second time, then a third.

She watched Amber's body fall to the floor just as her phone vibrated on her bed. An unknown number. "Hey it's Dan. We're headin to that party now. See you guys there?" She set her phone down. She would reply in a few minutes. Don't want to seem too desperate. Lindsey looked down and watched Amber lose blood like her pen losing ink. Stepping over her roommate, Lindsey went to Amber's closet and grabbed her blue dress. Not like she'll be needing it any time soon. She dressed and touched up her makeup, pausing to look at herself in the mirror. I'm just as pretty as she was. Grabbing her phone and her purse she replied to Daniel's text. "Yeah! Something came up for Amber so she can't make it. I'm just leaving. See you in a bit :)" Throwing one last glance over her shoulder, Lindsey said goodbye to her no longer beautiful roommate and walked out the door, making sure to lock it after her. There could be something important in there, after all.

26 SUNDAYS

Allison remembers spending Sundays with her mother, sitting on the front porch and painting each other's nails cherry red, the air sweet, like the ripe Georgia peaches ready for harvest. The porch is in shambles now, with chipped blue paint and gouges and cracks in the wood. But it must have been pristine before, if Allison can remember. It must have been, because she would dance around the porch barefoot while her mom sang, and the neighbors, sitting on their own porches while ice clinked in the glasses of their sweet tea, watched and cooed. If anybody tried to do that now, their foot would surely end up looking like a porcupine. She remembers going for walks around the neighborhood, waving hello to everyone they saw. In the summers, they would find the biggest watermelons they could, and slice them up to bring plates to the older neighbors. Allison remembers all these small things in great detail, as if they were the only moments in her life, as if they were the only things worth remembering.

But the truth is, Allison's life was not comprised of lazy Sunday afternoons. Her father, a reporter in their small town, and a well known one at that, had left their great state of Georgia for a young blonde news anchor in New York, when Allison was just barely old enough to walk. He never came back – he wouldn't have been able to if he wanted. The town was very small, consisting of several generations of just a handful of families, including his own, and so word of his sin travelled throughout the small church town like wildfire, successfully assuring that this man would never again be able to show his face, even to his own family. Allison's mother then took on the burden of raising her child alone, although small southern towns are the best places to raise children, as every woman became like another mother to every other woman's child. Her mother also had a comfortable amount of money, both from her parents on the West Coast, and from her business as a tailor, where her children's dresses were practically famous in the lower half of the state, and some parts of Florida. She was very well off, and in that respect, she was lucky. She'd had their house built for the two of them shortly after her husband had left. It was never intended to be a large house – just what they needed. Two bedrooms, side by side, a cozy kitchen perfect for baking treats, a backyard with a garden, and a front porch facing out onto the small dirt road. It was serene and fairy-tale like, Allison recalls, the way they lived for years. Waking up early on Saturdays to make homemade bread, cleaning during the afternoons while the old record player spun The Chiffons; their lives were perfect.

When her mother was murdered, the news of the killing rocked the small town. Allison was always spared the gory details – her mother's remains were found in a ditch not far from the church. She'd been strangled to death with a rope or cord of some sort. For all the interrogations and searching the local police, and even

teams from Atlanta did, they never found the killer. The town had a brief 15 minutes of fame in the national media, but no more than 15. However, the event changed the small town for years. At church, the pastors addressed it, at the grocery store old women whispered about it in the bread aisle. All the young children checked the locks on their doors twice and their windows thrice, because the older kids would tell stories of the killer roaming through the streets (although, of course, those older kids were reprimanded by their mothers, who also checked the locks). Allison was only 8 years old at the time of the murder, and was often pitied by the women in the town.

She went to live with her Uncle Walt, her father's brother, who lived just up the hill from her mother's house. He was a deacon at the Church, and a fine one at that. Everybody in the town loved him as if he were their own father. He was a round man, with a round face, and round eyes, and a rounded personality. His hands were calloused from his work on the farm as a young boy, and he was never one to waste his words, but he was an adored man and rightfully so. There wasn't one person in that town who didn't have him to thank for at least something. Allison had always admired him. She'd grown up with him around long before the murder. He was one of the only members of her father's family who tried to remain in her life. He always treated her well, and living with him didn't change that in the least. She was his treasure, practically his own daughter, and for years they lived well in his house on top of the hill. He bought her expensive gifts and sent her to the private school in the next county. She never needed, or even wanted, for anything at all. While Uncle Walt wasn't the wealthiest person in town, he was the wealthiest deacon, and many respected and envied him. In his younger years, he said, he'd been dirt poor, but 'by the grace of God' he'd found his way. Allison never dwelled on the fact that his work as a deacon couldn't possibly have raised him out of poverty, but then again, God works in mysterious ways.

Nine years later, the town was again rocked by the death of Miss Anna Mae. One of the oldest residents of the town, Miss Anna Mae was a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and frequently told stories of her parents' childhood during the Civil War. Every young girl in town would go to her house in the springs, wearing their nicest dresses, to have tea with her. She, too, was widely adored in the community, and was especially fond of the church, as was everyone. At the time of her death, she had willed all of her money to the church, and distributed all of her fine jewelry and art to the women and girls of the town. Allison herself had acquired a pearl necklace and a topaz ring. Some of the money went to help others in the community, but most of the large sum was said to have been saved in the bank for the church to use it as they saw fit. Before her death, Miss Anna Mae had been struggling with her memory, and many thought her death was a result of her forgetting to refill her heart medication. It was later discovered that the jar had been refilled just days before, according to the date printed on the label. But after weeks of interrogation and suspicion, just as with the murder

of Allison's mother, it became a cold case, and the matter was reduced to whispers in the bread aisle and a few words every week from the pastor for the next year.

Allison was only 17 at the time of Miss Anna Mae's death, and although she was distraught and fearful, she also had more pressing issues. Soon after she turned 18 she began nursing school, as did most of the young girls of the town. Due to its population of young children and elders, medical assistance was almost always in demand, and every young girl aspired to grow up and become a caretaker or nurse. She spent two years in Atlanta, learning the basics of nursing with her friends from town, coming back for Christmas and Thanksgiving. She continued to live in a fairytale, but quickly returned when she heard news of Uncle Walt's illness. He was having severe breathing problems. She moved back to the house on the hill, back to her hometown that still smelled so much like her mother, and wearing the topaz ring of Miss Anna Mae.

She cared for her uncle every day, rising early on Saturdays to make him homemade bread, and cleaning in the afternoons while the old record player spun The Chiffons - and despite her uncle's illness, things returned to normal. Sometimes Allison would return to her old house at the bottom of the hill without her uncle's knowledge, to tend to the flower beds, or sometimes to tidy up the inside. The house was still cozy and serene; such a house could only make Allison's heart swell with fond memories, even if they were only memories.

One day in the spring, when Allison was digging up the flower beds, she noticed a frayed piece of rope in the soil. Her curiosity got the best of her, and she stuck her fingers into the dirt to pull it out. As she pulled, and pulled, a long piece of rope emerged from deep under the ground, so deep it was almost difficult to dislodge it from the earth. She stared at it for a moment, and thought it peculiar that this was similar to the rope that had previously hung from the church bell, with the blue tape wrapped around the end of one edge. No, it was definitely the church rope. She remembered the day they put the tape on the rope. She'd complained to her mom that when she had to ring the bell for Sunday service – as it was always the children who got the privilege to do so – it hurt her hands, so they put a small amount of tape on the edge to prevent rope burn. It had disappeared around the same time her mother died, and was replaced with a nice, heavy, velvet rope. Now, the bell was automatic. An uneasy feeling settled in her stomach as she lowered the rope back into the ground and quickly remade the flower beds. She walked into the house, which now seemed a little less cozy and a little less light, and scrubbed her hands vigorously to clear the dirt from under her fingernails. When she thought them clean enough, she quickly exited the house and all but ran back up the hill to her uncle's. She tried to forget the rope, but for the next week it was all she could think of.

The following Friday was laundry day, as all Fridays were, and once again, the topaz ring slipped off of

Allison's bony finger while she hung up some of her uncle's shirts in his closet. Miss Anna Mae hadn't really been thin, but then again, maybe it was because Allison had been too uneasy in the past week she could hardly bring herself to eat a crumb unless Uncle Walt was watching. She did not want to concern him, especially with something that was probably just in her head.

The ring had fallen off her finger and slid to the very back of the closet. Allison got on her hands and knees, and crawled to the back corner to retrieve it. Doing her best to see in the dark of the closet, she reached and grabbed at the ring and quickly brought it out into the light. But this wasn't her topaz ring. Oh, no, it was not topaz. The same cut and style, but it was amethyst; another ring belonging to Miss Anna Mae. She knew, she recognized it. It was Miss Anna Mae's second favorite ring (she was buried with her first favorite, a lovely opal ring with small diamonds on the outside). Allison grabbed a flashlight from her uncle's work desk and returned to the closet, shining the light in the back corner, and to her surprise, she saw a number of rings and necklaces littering the floor, most of which she recognized as belonging to the old woman. She shined the flashlight up and down, and the light caught a necklace dangling from the pocket of one of her uncle's cardigans. She pulled it out of the closet and brought it over to the bed. The right pocket was empty, save the dangling necklace and one earring that were both snagged on the fabric of the clothing. The pocket itself had a hole in the bottom, explaining why the jewelry littered the floor of the closet. She stuck her hand in the left pocket, expecting more rings, but she felt something smooth. Several smooth objects, a whole pocketful. They were like rocks, yes, like small, identically shaped rocks, with similar feeling indentations on one side of them. Allison grabbed a hold of a few in her fingers and pulled her hand out of the pocket and up to where she could see them. They were pills. Heart medication, the same kind of which Miss Anna Mae was deprived of at the time of her death, the same kind of which her Uncle Walt had never needed -- and of course, Allison, as his caretaker, would know. She put the pills, the evidence, back in his pocket and hung the cardigan up in the back where she'd found it. For all the credit Uncle Walt got for being a very great man, he was not a very smart man. No, not at all.

DEATH BY COFFEE

In the morning rays when I start my days, I fill a ceramic chalice
up to the brim with some coffee and then, I find myself far less callous.
It makes me less mean, and it tastes like a dream. Oh yes, my coffee gives me rapture
I drink it all day, snuffing sorrows away. The joy of my soul it captures.

But feeling ill, and unfit to sit still, with my pulse soaring past one hundred
I went to get aid from a doctor who made me feel overly plundered.
How dare they say, they would take away my coffee. My love. My respite.
"You're but a quack!" I went on the attack. "No coffee? I'd rather die!"

"But your poor poor heart, may need a restart, for it's beating far too fast.
The caffeine you drink, brings you to the brink of something that cannot last.My dear I fear that for your health, this habit must soon end.
So put down your mug, please set down your drug so that your heart can mend."

"Though you may think I don't need that drink, I promise I won't go softly.
I'll kick and I'll scream. I'll protest a ream, until I get my coffee.
Prevent my caffeine embrace, and I'll spit in your face, then at you I'll just snicker.
So you had better back up, because I need a cup of the morning person's liquor."

Ignoring the warning the doctor gave, I kept with my sunrise habit.
For life is short, when you find what resorts, you must reach out and grab it.
Black coffee was poured, the heeding deplored, and down my throat it went.
For I am the captain who controls the action of how my time is spent.

Now I drink and I drink and I try not to think, of what to me will happen.
But it's far too late, I have sealed my fate, my coffee a virulent weapon.
It was a gun to my head, and yet for it I bled. 'Twas a habit I dared not quit.
I poured my cups and I drank them up, and said cheers to the life I lived.

Now my right atrium pounds like a drum while my ventricles just flutter.
"I couldn't survive with my coffee denied" was the last thing I could mutter.
Broken ceramic in hand where my body did land, it was a sight most savage.
It was a warning unheard, and a crash deserved- my death by a breakfast beverage.

Format based off of "The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert W. Service

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