



Cadenza

Art & Literature
Magazine

2023



2023 Cadenza Editorial Staff

Art Editors:

Cassie McKinney
Johannes Waals

Writing Editors:

Jade MacDonald
Braxton Robinson
Sabrina Kennedy

Special Thank You to our Selection Committee & Judges

Lora Eggleston, Bobbie Pyron and Cary Gray

Staff Advisor:

Felice Lopez Bell

On behalf of the Cadenza Staff, we would like to thank all
of our artists and writers for their diligence and
phenomenal submissions.



"Rings of Balance" Johannes Waals

Winners 2023

Art Awards:

Judge: Cary Gray

Photography

1st Place

"Hang the Bunny" - Tori Franklin

2nd Place

"Lost in the Woods" - Hope Hughes

3rd Place

"Class Amphibia" - Lee Barker

Graphic Design / Digital Illustration

1st Place

"Heart to Heart" - ANT Flores

Ceramics

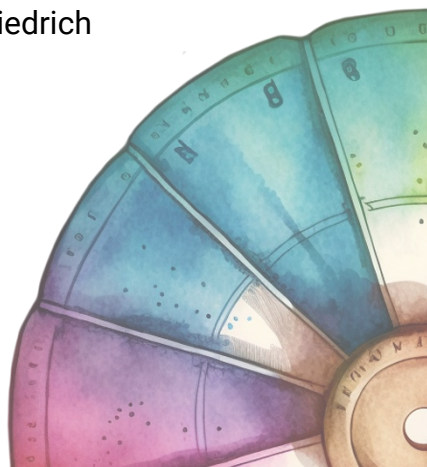
1st Place

"Ceramic Bowl" - Sharnel Friedrich

Painting & Drawing

1st Place

"Blue" - Cc Milton





Creative Writing Awards

Judge: Bobbie Pyron

Poetry

1st Place

"The Shadow of a Mother" - Faith Giles

"With just eighteen words, this poet goes right to the emotional heart of this poem. The last line is brilliant!"

2nd Place

"A Letter to Time" - Leah Goodman

"What I absolutely love about this poem is how the poet takes a less than concrete concept like time and defines it with concrete, unique yet relatable examples."

3rd Place

"Adam" - Adam Sellers

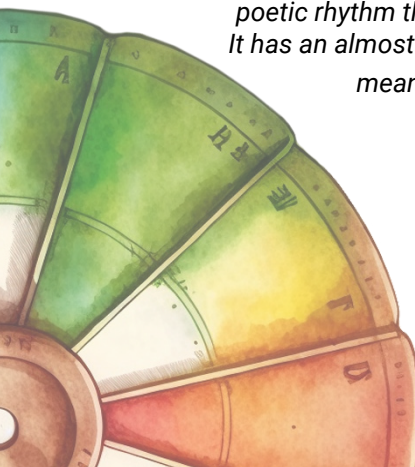
"Beautifully lyrical writing with evocative sensory details. The poet has a gift for metaphor."

Prose

1st Place

"The Thief, Arsonist, and Murderer," - Kas Clouatre

"From the very start of this piece, there is a definite, almost poetic rhythm that quickly becomes part of your heartbeat. It has an almost fairytale feel of deeper and deeper layers of meaning. This is creativity at its best!"





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"Your Wings Were Ready" Cassie McKinney

"Black Beauty" Savion Williams

Black! Beauty!
Is black the only color?
I sit down & wonder,
Why is that the only color?
Man, I ponder.
As beauty is within the eyes,
It's not within the thighs
Or located behind.
But overlooked by
So many eyes
That I can't reply
Mindset on a close caption
Seeded by one's thoughtless childish
Reactions!
Becoming a player is too outdated
for this generation.
A lover & fighter,
Fixated on a lover muse,
The truth may seem obtainable
But blinded by the glass of the birds'
Fatal opponent. Black nor white
Truth to all, that even the mindset can find another.
Beauty!



"Crawl Over Racism"
Leann Cotts

"Running Ghazal" Maxwell Gaither

When the walls of reality start closing in, your first instinct is to run,
as well as when you're first faced with adversity, part of you wants to run.

It's more than common ground to you ; it's the only thing you know, intrusively
The breeze, the adrenaline, and the sound of footsteps ; all want you to shoe run.

You aren't thinking, just going as far as your quota takes you,
It brings you everywhere, not everything, so now true run.

Step over everything in your way, except you can't step over yourself,
You gain a lead on yourself, but your problems also learned to run.

You keep lapping yourself repeatedly, wondering why you haven't won yet.
Putting yourself first doesn't always win because procrastination started a new run.

Once you turn around, start running towards yourself, will you start reaching the end?
The track starts to get smaller, you were never wrong, you just needed to run.

You finally passed yourself, Max, reach the finish line but you're all by yourself,
The past behind but you can still sense affliction, so you do what you do best, you run.



"Walk Which Way" Tori Franklin

"12" Tayler Hodges

One. I think I am done
There is no where
Left for me to ru--

To. After all we have been through
I am giving up.
Because

Three means we are free.
No more tiptoeing,
No more being

Four. Walk out the door.
Normal would be two
But

Five is too much. Knives
Stab my throat as I swallow
Because I watch you grab the

Sixth. This can't be fixed.
"I haven't had any"
That makes

Seven lies. Will you go to heaven?
Maybe not. This goes
Against commandment number

Eight. You have sealed your fate.
Lies slip out of your mouth.
Take me back to age

Nine. When I could say I was fine.
And I meant it. I finally
Caught on at age

Ten. Can I trust other men?
After you, I don't think I can.
Staying u p till

Eleven. Your words are weapons.
But you didn't mean it right?
It is because you are a

Twelve pack in. Look at yourself.
This isn't you. But there is no point
In getting worked up. I always
make it back to



"The New Man" Cailyn Martinez

She chose him over me.

It used to be just mom and I
Sleeping in the homeless shelter,
Tea parties and shopping for toys.
Then he came and she changed.

Seeing dad every weekend
Baseball games and trips to the park,
To nothing at all.

Moving against my will,
Too young to have an opinion.
All childhood friends left behind,
To a place I've never known before.

Constant punishments,
The feeling that I'm not enough.
Only nine years old,
I was so young.

Used books pile to the ceiling,
Reading author upon author to escape from my own reality.
All due to being locked in the room I call my own.

Hurting me and then saying,
"I love you,"
Changing my perception of what love actually is.
The older I got, the more I rebelled against his manipulation
Just to be punished more.
The little girl in me just wanted to be loved.

He made me move out,
She didn't even stop him.
Did he ever truly love me?
I just wanted him to treat me like his own daughter.

She chose him over me.



"Path Way" Zac Rumley

"Beauty" Laela Jimenez

I reminisce about our perfect days.
No cares existed in our minds' cache
While we rolled around where the overgrown fescue sways.
But now my memories ache
With the image of you struggling to find breath.
Not because of the exit wound.
No, that was not the cause of your death.
Although your whines did compound
That was not the worst of it all.
This meant no more running through the backyard.
I could not even try to recall
The pure moments that used to bombard
My mind with the greatest joy
Because your wise age had to destroy.

"Summer of 2014" Barrett Klapprodt

Heat felt as warmth
Sun seen as bright
Brightness fell onto all things
Youth as conceived as eternity
Grass felt as soft
Gravel trodden over as smooth
Soccer viewed as freedom
Soccer expressed as happiness
Soccer felt as natural
Soccer personified as destiny
Gentle breeze felt as calmness
Sleep engulfed in bliss
Problems seen as nothing
Fate seen as linear



"Sudzy" Tyler Rice

"Veins" Marcus Orta

They show through my skin.
You say muscular,
I say thin.

I am malnourished,
But you praise my body so
What about my mind
I'm starving from head to toe.

It's not out of choice,
More of circumstance.
I've been thirsty for years.
I'd drink if I had a chance.

I may be smart,
I may seem strong,
But I am unfit
And not fit
To be here long.

Look through my glass,
See through the panes,
Better do it fast
I'm about to pop
Open my veins.

"My Reality" Alex Oleschuk

Midterm week got water in my lungs,
Gasping for smooth, refreshing air.
Looking at the reading I haven't done,
College night, I should be there.
Midterms stacked with quizzes,
I should be building a business.
But here I lay where I rest,
Writing this for extra credit on a test.

"Her Favorite Color is the Color of Glass" Cassie Berry

1

I once asked her what her favorite color was.
She responded and said, "My Favorite color is the color of glass."
The color of glass? As in clear? I wondered "Why?"
"Glass reflects all colors; the colors of everything it sees, like me. That is why my favorite color is the color of glass."
I thought for a moment and sighed.
Like me she said. Like me. She reflects the colors I wish to see.
And so, I was left wondering...
What was her favorite color?

2

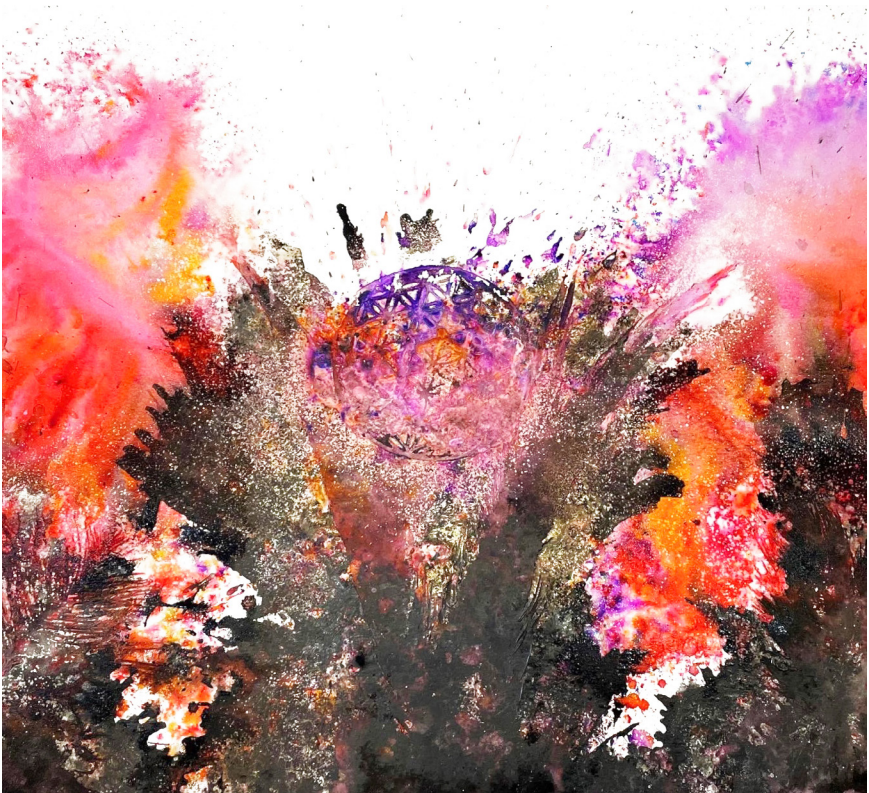
Perhaps it's red? The color of the poppies that grow
outside her bedroom window.
But no, she hates those Cardinals that sing too loud in the morning.
Perhaps it's Orange? Like the wood she walks upon,
But no, she hates the wooden door that keeps her caged.
Perhaps it's Yellow? Like the color of the sun.
But no because she can't feel the sun upon her skin.
Perhaps it's Green? The color of the plant that sits on the windowsill.
But no, it's a reminder that she longs for the grass.
Perhaps it's Blue? Like the sky she can't have? No.
Perhaps it's Purple? Like the rooms of her walls? No.
Perhaps it's Pink? Like the color of her lips, but she hates that mirror. No.
Or maybe it's Black? Like that vulture that patiently watches her from the
tree outside her house? No.
Or Gray? Like the mice that remind her how truly alone she is? No.
Or White? Like the moon and stars that mock her from above? No.

3

Her Favorite color is the color of glass.
Not the glass of her mirror.
Like the glass of the window, she watches every day.
The glass of the window that shines the rainbow upon the floor she
hates, giving it color for a few minutes a day.
Reflecting the colors of the world.
The glass that if it were to shatter she would be free, but she keeps it
there looking through it, just how others look through her. She keeps it
there because...
Her favorite color is the color of glass.

"The Shadow of a Mother" Faith Giles

She wears a smile, though her whispers cut like knives:
The mask falls, not far from the tree.



"Scattered Destiny" Johannes Waals

"Crash" Lauren Bryner

Ebbs and flows like a wave crashing on to the surface,
people come and go.

Seclusion created illusions in the mind,
you are gone and not mine.

Heart shattered life not afloat.

Formerly revealed secrets,
exposed in the air.

I miss your presence and the bond we shared,
hallucinations and voices ensnared with confinement.

Ebbs and flows like a wave crashing on to the surface,
people come and go.

Leaving so easily I am revoked.

Selfish world with cruel humans,

I don't see the sunshine.

Heart shattered life not afloat.

Caring too hard and loving too deep.

I am the fool in this lousy state,

friends around me hear my never-ending whine.

Ebbs and flows like a wave crashing on to the surface,
people come and go.

Better to love than not at all.

The pain in my chest leaves me to weep,

my surrounding tribe is reassigned.

Heart shattered love not afloat.

Connected once, disjoined once again.

The world moves on as I am empty in a deep sleep,

obsolescence is life, in my coffin I recline.

Ebbs and flows like a wave crashing on to the surface,
people come and go.

Heart shattered love not afloat.



"Anatomie Comparee" Jasmine Morales

"Breaking the Fourth Wall" Faith Giles

As my comfort drinks its last supply
I mourn my own newly abandoned age.
I told myself that I refuse to cry
As my light shines upon another stage.

I turn my back on all that I have known
And quickly shove the butterflies aside.
In this new atmosphere I stand alone
And pray I'll eventually find my stride.

I cannot predict how this world will try
To tear me down or throw me off my tracks,
But this is now my time to learn to fly
And hope my armor will block the attacks.

My world's a stage but the actors refuse
To even read the script or follow cues.

"The Little Things" Braxton Robinson

She likes the bad weather in the morning
But she hates to drive in the pouring rain.
She thinks the days of blue skies are boring
But the white clouds have always fogged her brain.

She likes her coffee with extra sugar
But can only drink it with extra ice.
She says I'm the only one to push her
But being pushed is only half the price.

Her favorite day of the week is Sunday
But that's the day I have to come back home.
Her least favorite driving is the highway
But that's the place that she lets her mind roam.

The love we share is complex but still true.
Upon first glance, my heart already knew.



"Professor Stein's Standard" Johannes Waals

Everyone fixated toward empty center.
All eyes scowling into internal abyss,
Concern strewn across every pretender.
They won't look away, lock-stepped focus.

All eyes scowling into internal abyss,
Scared, Angry, lashing dissenting desires.
They won't look away, lock-stepped focus.
Scorching waves consume all deniers.

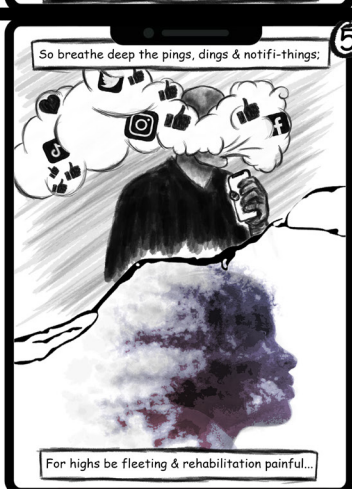
Scared, Angry, lashing dissenting desires.
Questions shunned, perceived to criticize.
Scorching waves consume all deniers.
recoil, antagonize, reject, apologize.

They won't look away, lock-stepped focus.
Pleas suppressed, pendulums swing.
All eyes scowling into internal abyss,
Conformity to which they cling...

Concern strewn across every pretender.
Masked culpability, oppressive comforts.
Everyone fixated towards an empty center.
Until any Other be transgressive...
Everyone... Toward... Center...
Fixated... Empty...

*A Refracted Reflection based on one of my Favorite Poems
by one of my Favorite Thinkers:*

"A question that sometimes drives me hazy,
am I or are the others crazy?" - Albert Einstein





"Blue Man" Cc Milton

“Accidents Happen” Jade MacDonald

Loise was one of those girls who, in all stages of her life, could wind up far more than presentable without trying. Her rusty hair, on the rare occasion that it was down, brushed gently off her shoulders and into her eyes. In the sunlight, it glowed crimson, as if the top of her head had been dipped into a paint can. Her sunscreen-caked skin mixed with the beige tone of her overly freckled face, delightfully complementing her piercing green eyes.

When Loise was younger, she found herself fascinated with repairing injuries. She spent her childhood plopping bandages on her dolls and using toilet paper to wrap her wrists and ankles in makeshift splints. Loise’s parents had wondered if they were feeding a strange future obsession. But at that age, it was all imaginary; pretend still had the power to make real things not feel so real and could serve as a reminder that normalcy was reachable.

Loise’s dad worked as a surgeon at the nearby hospital and had spent a substantial amount of time on call in the early years of her childhood. Some of the time, he would bring her with him, and she would fall asleep on the floor of his office to the sound of his voice as it progressed through dictations. When she awoke, she would often peer over his shoulder as he viewed scans. Even though she had expended most of her Saturdays shadowing him around the hospital and stealing candy from the nurses’ station, it wasn’t until her first experience with a car accident that fastened her attention on injuries.

At the age of six, Loise’s mother died in a car accident. They had been on the way home from dinner when their car hit a patch of ice and spun off the road into a ditch. The driver’s side collided with a telephone post, and the airbag had caused a blunt force trauma to her mother’s head when it deployed. In the few moments after the incident, Loise did exactly what she found to be the most logical thing to do.

“Dr. Jones, it’s your wife,” the nurse said with phone in hand.

"Just send her to voicemail. She knows I'm in surgery," he said in an arrogant tone before calling for the next surgical instrument.

"Sure thing. And if she calls again?" His eyes flicked up towards the door.

"Send her to voicemail again. She is disrupting my work and so are you." His voice held an inkling of frustration as his head tilted back down to the patient.

Loise's feet dangled out of the booster seat as the phone line buzzed in a quiet hush against her ear. The tones faded into a voicemail, and a piece of her knew that he would've answered the ring if it had come from the pager on his hip instead. Loise slowly worked her way out of the restraint of her seatbelt and lavender puffy coat, her limbs hurdling into the front seat.

Her dad didn't answer the second time when she called him from the passenger seat either. She couldn't help but shudder as chill air poured in from the broken windows and bit at her arms, her lips whispering an I'm sorry towards her mother as a tear ran down her cheek. She sucked in a deep breath at the gash the seat belt had left on her mother's limp neck before grabbing the leftover Mexican food from the dashboard and stepping out of the car.

Earlier at dinner while Loise and her mom waited, her dad had gotten called into an emergency surgery. After an hour of waiting, a nurse called to say he couldn't make it.

"Loise, what do you say we take this food to go?" she said with a sigh. Her mom's eyes always appeared red and lonely, her voice a little strained from fighting with her dad. Her eyes watched her mom's head fall between her hands with a new kind of exhaustion. The two of them sat side by side in a swaying embrace while they waited on to-go boxes. The snow falling in a beautiful stillness outside slowly pushed the unique heartache each of them felt towards her father out of their minds.

The fork in her hand occasionally poked at the now cold rice in the container and found its way to her mouth for warmth. The snow had ceased as the ambulance finally pulled onto the scene. Loise was dazed by the red of the scene as the lights flashed and the EMTs pulled her mom's lifeless body onto the stretcher. She told herself she would look away, but worried she would lose her mom if she did.

As she grew into a young adult, scars traced her body. She had endured scraped knees, broken arms and torn ligaments through her time in sports. The toilet paper was substituted with an abundance of casts and athletic tape. But no matter how many cuts and bruises she obtained over the years, the origin of her intrigue never seemed to fade from her memory.

It was the night of her 19th birthday when her car had crossed the median and barreled down low into the wooded area that lined the road. When she regained consciousness, horror flicked across her face as blood flooded her eyes. The crimson of her hair now intertwined itself with the dark red of the drying blood from the gash on her forehead. Her arms hung over her head, brushing the roof of her sedan as the seat belt pulled tight against her. Ringing bounced off the walls of her head, straining her ability to fully comprehend the loss of feeling in her legs. But in that moment, she realized one very important thing. Her days of causing herself pain were over. Her focus was desperately shifted to repairing the irreversible pain she had just inflicted.

Flashing lights swarmed the scene as firefighters worked down towards the ravine.

"Looks like it's a young girl! Search the other side once we pull her out for an ID." The men had to be careful about releasing the seatbelt with the position the car was in. Without knowing the extent of her injuries, they couldn't risk moving her body. They sat there for several minutes discussing their options. Loise's eyes slowly flicked open as she regained consciousness for the second time.

"Call my dad..." she groaned out. "Sir, will you please call my dad?" Panic ran through her as she tried to catch her breath.

"Hey she's awake! We need a medic!" A lady rushed over to her, her hands immediately working to clean up the cuts on her face.

"Do you know his number? We are waiting for some extra hands so we can get you out of this mess." Her head shook slowly as she struggled to remember the order of the digits.

"I-uhh yeah I think I do." Loise recited the number she had pointlessly memorized from childhood. The medic strode away from the vehicle with the phone up against her ear. Several moments had passed before she returned with a defeated look.

"I'm sorry honey, he didn't answer. What about your mama?" Loise let out a snuffle and slowly flicked her eyes to her. The medic noted the unspoken words and stayed kneeling down by the window as she retried the number for her father. She put the phone on speaker as it echoed loud and clear. The phone had cycled through drawn out tones, stinging with each unanswered ring.

"H-Hello this is Dr. Jones."



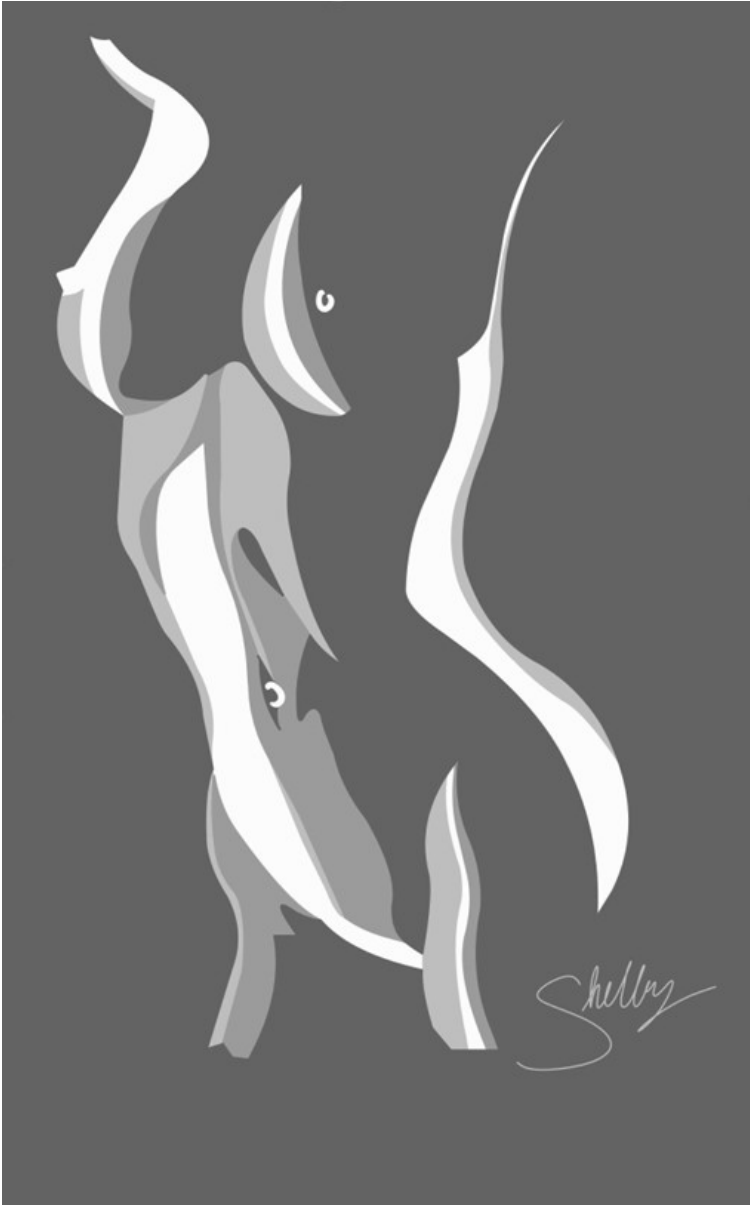
"Hang the Bunny"
Tori Franklin



"Aryeh" Kaitlyn Johnson



"1 13:3" Kaitlyn Johnson



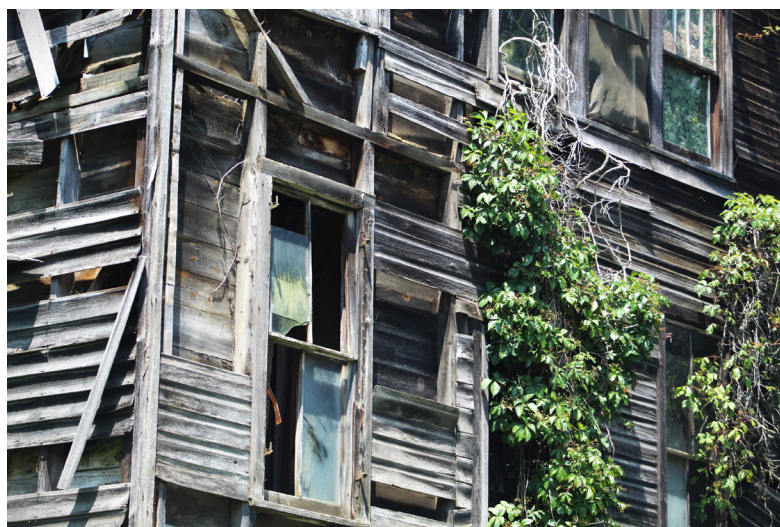
"Desire in the Faith of Woman"
Shelby Newton

“Truly A Nightmare” Sabrina Kennedy

I see his face and I can't breathe.
I see his face and I can't speak.
I see his face and I suddenly freeze dead in my tracks.
My body won't move because my brain is too busy trying to protect itself,
Trying to hide away the awful memories that cause me so much pain,
Trying to forget what he did to me.
I hear his name and I choke on my own gasp.
I hear his name and my body starts to tremble.
I hear his name and tears quickly start to swell in my eyes
Because of how he touched me without my permission.
Remembering my “no's” to his persistent “can we go to another room?” questions.
Remembering how he did not respect my personal space or my decision.
I felt his touch and I said no.
I felt his touch and I moved away from him.
I felt his touch and sirens of “danger” were screaming inside my head, but I could not move.
The aftermath was overwhelming.
It set my head on fire and I could not think.
It kept me up crying for months and I could not sleep...I'm so tired.
I see his face and I want to scream.
I see his face and I feel like my body is going to drop to the ground.
I see his face and wish this was a terror I dreamt up in a nightmare, and would soon awaken from
Because if I am awake right now, if this is reality, if I am truly living this nightmare.
How do I pull myself out of this ditch?
How do I keep myself from crying alone at night?
How do I ensure that this nightmare does not dictate my future?
The one thing I am sure of is that I will not let him win.
No matter how broken I feel, I will not surrender.
I will never stop fighting because I am worth it.



"All Smiles" Tyler Rice



"Barely Holding On" Audrey Davis

"A Letter to Time" Leah Goodman

You have a habit of causing the walls to close in
When I'm lying in bed, already depressed
about something else.

You make people better, stronger, and wiser
But then you hold me down and make me watch
as you catch up to the people I love.

You chase me down when I run from you and
you disappear when I call out for you.

You go by too quickly.

You're one enormous existential irony that
mocks everyone from behind curtains made of clouds.
You remind me of what it's like to sit still
in a car next to a moving train.

The train seems like it will never end but it will.

And when it finally does, I am still sitting there,
a whole new set of cars surrounding me and all new
colors in the sky; wondering when the tears on my cheeks
got there and when my teeth decided to retreat
back to behind my lips.

I can hear you in the depth of my little brother's voice
and see you in the new lines on his face.

I know you're there in my grandmother's growing joint pain
and her shrinking memory.

And when I'm committing the act of forgiveness.

People say you heal us and tell us things.

But by the time you have, we are wrinkled and achy
and forgetful of why we were waiting
or healing in the first place.

We seem to need you

So I want you to know that I mean no offense by this

but I wish you didn't exist.

“Adam” Adam Sellers

They.

Smell like clean slate.

The scent from Bath and Body Works.

They.

Wear facial hair like a mask.

Sometimes taken off.

They.

Hold their cup of coffee gently.

Like it's their lover.

They.

Sound like a lake when they sing.

Deeper it goes, the less you know what's underneath.

They.

Observe like an owl.

Not speaking unless needed.

They.

Shake like an off-belt washing machine.

Sometimes.

They.

Smile barely.

Fearing that gap in their teeth.

They.

Have a body covered in dots.

A galaxy on their skin.

They.

Have hair that adorns their arms.

Like the thorny bushes around your grandmother's house.

They.

Love all.

But love too easily.

They.

Are me.

And I am them.



"Sunday Drive" Lee Barker

"Rain" Leah Goodman

One day, as I sat outside on a bench waiting for my bus
the clouds quickly overtook the sun.

I didn't have an umbrella.

And the girl sitting next to me

probably thought I was insane

But my teeth broke through my lips

As a trapped piece of me broke free,

My dress rapidly changed from pink

to a soaking wet dark red,

stained with the weight of what should've been
an unfortunate circumstance.

Even when people in passing cars started to stare,
All I could do was laugh.



"Class Amphibia" Lee Barker

"Parasite" Riley Gall

You are like a parasite in my mind.
You spread through my veins like a virus
Eating at my heart
Crushing my soul
Infected by your charm
Contaminated by your touch
Poisoned by your kiss
Damaged from your soul.
I am begging for a remedy to cure me from your clutch.
Yet, I am addicted to you:
Addicted to your touch,
Addicted to your mind,
Addicted to your smile,
Addicted to your embrace,
Addicted to your heart,
Addicted to your soul,
Addicted to everything about you.
You are my drug of choice.
I get high off your love.
Every hit I take, the farther I fall.
I fall so hard, so quick, so deep in love with you.
I fell and it hurts.
Why?
Why does it hurt so bad to love you?
I don't think I want this toxic love.
I need an antidote for my infatuation.
Get out of my mind.
Get out of my heart.
You
You are like a parasite in my mind.
You spread through my veins like a virus
Eating at my heart
Crushing my soul
But you
You are no longer the host in my life.

"Healing the Broken Heart" Riley Gall

My mind is full of deep dark thoughts.
Spinning, racing, holding on for dear life.
My feet are moving but I'm standing still.
My lips are moving but I'm not speaking.
I am here but unaware.
I am screaming but no one hears.

Who am I?

Am I even alive?

Is this a fever dream?

No, can't be.

No.

No.

No.

NO.

NO!

NO!!

I cannot breathe

Somebody help me please!

It's okay...

Breathe

Breeeatthee

B

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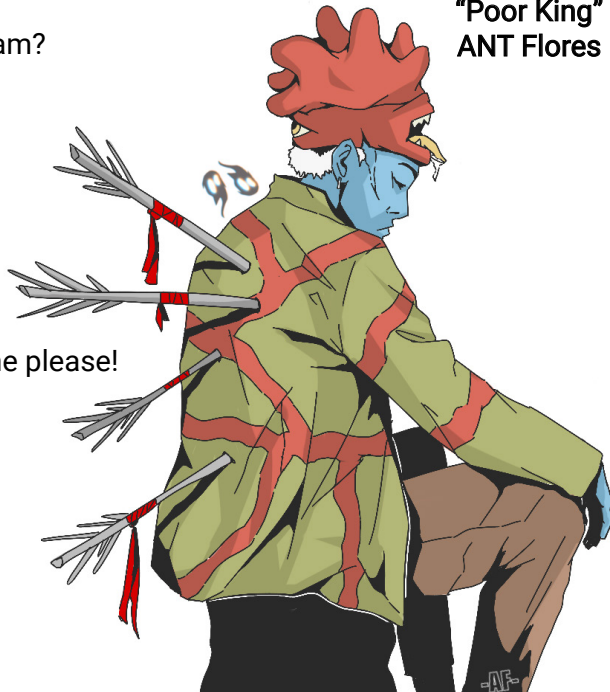
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"Poor King"
ANT Flores

Like a flower growing from the seed,
my heart needs time to heal and breathe.
Remember you can't heal in one day,
let yourself feel the feelings and eventually break free.



"Ceramic Bowl" Sharnel Friedrich



"Mickey Vase" Shelby Newton



"Dogwood Bowl" Carli Knight



"Toni" Onalee Durham

"She is Me and I am Her" Shelby Newton

You saw me naked.
You saw me for more than just being my body.
You saw me for who I was and who I am now.
I saw myself as before you and after you and
all you saw me for was the collective.
I never wanted you to know the me before you.
I couldn't show the girl that cried each night or
the girl who wanted to erase the parts of her body she hated.
I wanted to show who that girl is now.
The girl that sings when it rains, celebrates her cellulite, and
has confidence in every ounce of her body.
But the girl before is part of who I am now for
I can't erase the days when she wanted to wither away.
I could drain the whirlpool of tears she could never
make disappear.
But she made me who I am now, she is a part of me.
She is my past and present.
She is part of why I never skip smiles or laughs.
She is why I get lost in books, compliment a stranger or
smile at others.
She is why I stand up for myself.
But most of all she is the reason I love the skin and bones
that make up who I am
for she is me and I am her.



"Yellow Flower" Sharnel Friedrich



"Christmas at Valley Crucis" : Kaylee Fitzgerald

"A Woman's Love" Aero Seagle

It's an ethereal thing
to be loved by a woman.
It can give you a new look on life and stop your heart all at once.
Their eyes are kinder, more welcoming to get lost in.
I had a friend tell me they'd love to experience that in their lifetime.
I replied that you probably have been, you just don't know.
Women love wholeheartedly and secretly
From day one, there is girl code.
Women love like soft summer rain.
Women love like a cup of earl grey in the morning.
Women love like the switch to sweet at the end of sour candy.
Women love like a mother bandaging your scraped knee.
Women love endlessly, entirely, evermore.
The love of a woman engulfs and fills your heart so much
you think you might drown
but you won't.
If anything you'll drown by trying to find yourself once she leaves.
That's why you should consider being respectful and loving
Loving her in the best way you possibly can.
Because after all
being loved by a woman is an ethereal thing
so make loving her just as beautiful.

"The Count's Emissary" Cam Pierce

"They're coming for us!"

"Run! The village will be destroyed!"

A cry rose throughout the village. I, of course, didn't much care what it was about. "Sir, sir!" a villager I'd known of for years (but had taken great pains to waste as little of my time as possible speaking with) shouted as he sprinted madly by.

"Yes, what is it, Timothy?" I grumbled back.

"They say Lord Tepes has done it, sir! They say he's brought the dead back into this world!"

"Oh, bugger off, man!" I groaned. "There's no way anybody can do that. Have you got that idea from the drunkards down at the pub again?"

"It's the general, sir! The general says he's seen it!"

Those words made me halt in my tracks. General Worthington had always been a dependable man; as far as I knew, he had never told a lie in his life. "T-then he must have gotten some false information!" I sputtered.

"No, friend, I seen the terror in his eyes. He ain't never been scared before, but when I saw 'is eyes, they dint seem like they wanted ta keep goin'!"

"H-now hold on! The general has always been full of life, even at his age! There's nothing that could make him go senile like that!"

"Look, I dunno what 'e's seen, all I know's 'e's halfway dead by the looks of 'im!"

"Well, let's just hope I don't run into him, then," I concluded, turning and walking back into my house.

...

That evening, as I read an old book by the crackling fireplace, I heard a knock at the door. As I opened it, I saw the general himself, carrying his favorite antique musket at his side and draped in a black traveling cloak.

"Ah, good evening, General Worthington, sir!" I exclaimed, pleasantly surprised. "I've got a question I need to ask you - have you been playing a bit of a trick on Timothy, by any chance?"

The general didn't answer my question immediately, if he'd even heard it. "May I come in?" he asked.

"Surely you don't need an invitation! But anyways, did you see Timothy at the pub today?"

"May I come in, Christopher?" the general repeated, sounding (with the exception of my name) exactly the same as he had sounded before.

"Well, yes, if you're going to be insistent about it, then yes, I suppose you may come in, general," I relented, and without a word, he stepped into my house, sitting in the chair next to mine by the fireplace.

"Did you also have a matter which you wished to discuss with me?" I asked the general.

"Yes... as a matter of fact, I do...." the general whispered, much quieter than the jovial tone he'd used before.

He stayed silent for nearly a minute, during which I thought that maybe, for once, Timothy had been right about something that wasn't the quality of an ale. The general certainly seemed like something was wrong with him.

"Er... have you been playing a bit of a trick on Timothy?" I asked again.

He stayed silent for around ten seconds, then, "No....."

At once, a pinprick of panic wormed its way into my heart. "Tepes really has found a way to raise the dead?"

"Yes, he has," the general said, far more lively than the last few minutes. The panic within me settled a fair amount, if only because it felt again like I was talking to a real person.

"So, how do we protect against these... these walking corpses?"

"You can't," he replied, tone grave but still far more alive than before. "There is no way to stop the count, Christopher. We're living on borrowed time, maybe a few weeks, if that. He'll come for us eventually."

"But --" I tried to protest, but something in me, maybe the remnants of panic, held me back, and I resolved to wait until later to continue this conversation. "D-do you want some ale, general?" I didn't wait for him to answer before I got up out of my seat and headed into the kitchen.

After I poured some of my ale into two glass mugs, I began to contemplate my current circumstances while staring at my faint reflection in the thin glass window (although, deep down, I knew I was just stalling for time).

"Are you done with that ale yet, or not?" the general asked from right next to me. I made a brief shout in fright but then remembered to control myself. "Never mind, I can see you're off in a dream." I looked back at the window - even though the general was right next to me, I couldn't see even a trace of him there. I looked back at him, and he sighed.

"Christopher... you would have been far, far better off not having seen that." He stared straight into my face, and for the first time that evening I got a true, good look into his eyes.

They were an unnatural shade of red. Not the kind of red that you see on the wings of a ladybug, nor the kind used on the covers of books.

They were the dull red of blood.

"Have you already been taken by the count?" I asked, desperately hoping I wouldn't hear the answer that I knew was coming.

"I have," he replied. "You cannot stop what has begun, Christopher. Will you allow yourself to join us, too?"

I began to back up. "I'm not going to join the legions of the dead," I managed to squeak out.

"Pity. I had hoped for my first job to be an easier one than this." He immediately made a lunge at me. I turned away in reflex and knocked over a small container which I used for holding salt. As the near-empty container shattered and the tiny crystals spilled over the floor, the general looked petrified. He bent over, slowly, and began to pick up each grain of salt, examining them one by one. I could hear him faintly whispering, "One... two... three...."

Silently counting my blessings as he counted the salt, I opened my pantry to see if there was anything in there I could use as a weapon. (I wasn't nearly foolish enough to try and take his musket from him). I began frantically tossing all of the fresh vegetables I'd purchased from the market over my shoulders in my haste, only to stop when I heard him screech in pain. I turned around to see the general wheezing as though he'd come down with a pox. "One... hundred and... thirty four... You've got a clove of garlic... haven't you... Christopher?"

"I..." I was at a loss for words. Leaving behind the fact that he could be slowed down by garlic, he was still making conversation with me, despite the fact that he was trying to make me into an abomination like he had become.

The word "abomination" flashed through my mind... and I had an idea. I dashed into my bedroom, the abomination following at a considerably slower pace than before, and stopped next to the crucifix carved into the head of my bed. As he approached, I took refuge right next to the carving. "Go no further, abomination! I have the power of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit on my side!"

The abomination looked disgusted but ceased his approach towards me. "No windows in this room," he stated. There was no malice behind his words, he said it in the tone of somebody mentioning offhandedly what the weather looked like.

"What?"

"No windows," he repeated. "No way in, no way out, unless you go by me. You've got to come out of there sometime, so unless you've got the strength to rip that cross off your bed, I suggest you be wise and surrender. No shame in that, you've done all you could."

"You can't keep standing there forever," I spat at him.

"Can't I?" he challenged back. "Can't I, Christopher?"

He got no further before there was a loud snap right from his side. A man in a cloak had grabbed his musket and, with a deft strike with his knee, snapped off the stock. The man threw aside the barrel of the gun as the general turned towards him. Before the general could react, however, the man plunged the stock straight into his chest.

Before he could even say anything, the general seemed to decay ten years in the span of ten seconds, eventually ending up as nothing more than a pile of dust on my floor.

"I'll have to thank ya for keepin' 'im occupied for me, Christopher," the man said in a voice I knew all too well as he removed his hood.

"Timothy!" I exclaimed, happy for the first time in my life to see the village idiot's face.

"It's Timothy van 'Elsing, sir," he said, discarding the dust-covered musket stock. "Looks like we've got a lot we need to talk about."



"LETHAL" ANT Flores



"HEART TO HEART" ANT Flores

"9 Stages of Grief" Leann Crotts

1. Disconnection

Blurred.

Walking in a straight line through the crowds of people
the sky filled with gray
the earth touched with rain
the breath of fog escaping my lips.

2. Direction

Brave.

Walking in zig zags,
confused,
an emptiness.

Almost at the end of my journey but
unaware of where I am going next.

3. Denial

It's okay,

It's not okay.

It's not okay.

Get angry.

Feel something.

4. Destruction

Bold.

I got rid of who I was.

A mess of the sloppiness,
the naiveness.

Tore down the walls,
and burned the ropes of suffocation.

5. Disguise

Breathe.

Pretend you're okay,
put on that mask.
do not let them see,

6. *Pause.*

Don't go back,

Don't revert.

Keep going.

7. *Depression*

Battle.

A wave of sadness,

in an ocean of happiness,

that I can't seem to baptize myself in.

8. *Devotion*

Bloom.

Growth.

Peace and tranquility.

in my goals

in my dreams

in myself.

9. *Development*

Beginnings.

Day by day,

one step at a time

metamorphosis into the person

I strive to be.

it will all be okay.



"Life After Death" Kaylee Fitzgerald

"Encounters Along The Way: Mr. Harris" Johannes Waals

Roof down, & Blaring something to the tune of Joplin or Joel, *"hmm... WE Ain't too pretty... ohhh WE aaAin't too proud..aaa"* we come cruising into the lot at the top of our lungs. Pausing only for a parked moment so Mom can finish enjoying her cigare..tte... *"We might be laughin a BIT TOO Loud oOOooo"* and... yep... She's ready to embark for our appointment!

Lending my arm for support, we confidently stroll into the radiation treatment center together. Screened at the door for pandemic symptoms, we both indicate fevers... Until the convertible behind us is pointed out and we are considered safe enough to enter. A somewhat sterile waiting room greets us. Modern semi-artistic flares decorate the space in attempt to breathe life into the plastic shrubbery littered about. Having certainly experienced worse, we find some decent seating and wait through the misplaced atmosphere.

After a few minutes, commotion begins in the back office, moving toward the waiting area. Some frustrated conversation and what sounds like the unmistakable techno-gargle of one of those throat communication devices some cancer patients need, stereotypically buzzing and clicking between electronic voice attempts.

Turning to whisper to me, "Oh that's Mr. Harris, he's angry and grumpy all the time. The nurses told me he's been through this a few times, given up and doesn't care anymore, says his family is just waiting for him to die," Mom gossips matter-of-factly.

We listen, watch, and wait.
Mom is called back for her appointment.
I continue to wait...

Then, slowly shuffling my direction, I see an old man approaching. He sits next to me. Of course...

Looking over I somewhat nervously say, "Hi, how are you"

Raising a small mechanical device to his throat,
"Click click **H** zzzz **llo** zzzz **Buzzzz** click pop zzzz **You?**"

He desperately tries to say.

Instanely frustrated and smacking the device against his hand.

He tries again but this time it's just more static frustrations mixed with *clicking, popping, and buzzing*.

Some profanities can possibly be made out. His frustration visibly grows with every second of attempted conversation.

"I'm doing well, thank you for asking," I say,
deducing what he was clearly trying to ask.

There we sat painfully continue to converse. Me interpreting and deducing, and him getting a few words and fragments out between the nervewracking interruptions and distortions.

Sitting in this space for half the hour, probably less...

What all did we manage to talk about?

Does it matter?...

Mostly the weather, his loneliness, and his endless frustration with that damn little failing auditory throat device.

I asked why he didn't get a new one or change the batteries.

He collaboratively-explained that money wasn't a problem but he could not get anywhere, had no one to help him, didn't want any help.

A nurse comes forth beckoning "Mr. Harris, we are ready for your next appointment" Nodding and grunting he rises, turns to offer a handshake, and shuffles into the back with as much grace and electro-static grumbles as expected.

We missed our next brain radiation appointment because mom wasn't feeling well enough...

Finally returning two weeks later for one of her last futile brain treatments. Batteries in hand, but no sign or well, sound, of my grumpy new acquaintance.

One of the nurses approach me
while sitting in that sterile waiting space.

"Mr. Harris passed away this weekend...
but he left this note for you last week"
abruptly handing me a little yellowish piece of scrap paper;

"Sil's Son, I liked meeting you, Thank you for talking."
Signed "Mr. Harris"

("The note is still buried in boxes I'm not ready to open")





"Gardiner Falls" Marcus Orta



"Monet" Jasmine Morales

"It Must've Been Heartbreaking" Jade MacDonald

How heartbreaking it must be to love someone who doesn't feel the same. How bad it must hurt to stand with open arms and be walked out on. To have the doors you open shut in your face. How draining it must be to choose someone day after day who you know would pick you last. How heartbreaking it must be to care so much for someone who cares so little for others. Someone so self absorbed that they don't even see the tears in your eyes or the nails in your hands. It must have been so heartbreaking.

It must have hurt so bad to have your arms stretched on a cross and yet still be receptive to anyone who would stay. To sacrifice your life without knowing if anyone would return for you. It must have broken your heart to hear them mock you, blood dripping down your brow from the thorns they wove on top your head. To look up and see the spit leave their mouths. It must break your heart.

And Jesus, I know it hurt when I abandoned you all those times. When I came to you crying and said I wouldn't leave you again. When I begged you to take me back after saying, "I've broken both of our hearts again". It must hurt to pour all that energy into me when I sometimes forget to pour all mine into you. To remember all the times I dismissed you and tried to do things on my own. That must have been heartbreaking.

But Jesus, as I write this my heart is breaking once more. You didn't have to choose me and you didn't have to stay. You didn't have to endure that hurt for as long as I denied you or love me all the way to your grave. But Jesus, I'm done patching up my own heart. So with all the energy and love I have to give you, Jesus let thy will be done. Because it hurts when I do it alone. Let the rivers not overwhelm me or the fire burn me because I know now that you are with me and you were all along.



"Madre Premordial" : Catt Varela

“Gracious Love” Cc Milton

The trees were dipped
in honey gold by God
As you peeked behind
the broken branches of our youth.
A smile that reminded me once
more what His love meant.
Warmth, happiness, truth, and fright.
The kind of fear that presents
you floating, but not drowning.
Held up by his wholesome love.
Given peace as more than an accessory.
Attached to not just the hip,
But the soul.

“Jack of All Trades” Faith Giles

To serve under her court,
But never to wear the crown;
To fight before the fort,
But never hear renown.

The queen chooses a winner,
A knight with sharper swords.
She claps for the beginner,
Innate talent rewards.

Words of honor spoken –
Here she climbs the hill –
Her promises are broken,
Another fits the bill.

How should she know her fate?
A smile upon their face,
They call her good, not great.
Who mourns for second place?

"Reading a Book" Allye Carter

As I sat in my room I looked at my bedside table,
I picked up this book for my nightly read.
It wasn't a romance book or a thriller,
It was kind of boring, but I kept going back to it.
It didn't have a plot and there was no excitement,
But the attraction to the cover kept me going back.
The only good thing about it, is the one good line on every page,
The one good part in every chapter.
Although every time I close it,
I don't remember much about it.
This book was not my favorite,
Nor was it my first choice.
Maybe I should have left this book alone,
Maybe I thought the book had more potential.
Something about the feeling of the paper,
The way the book felt in my hand,
The familiarity of the book was the reason why I kept picking it up.
Now that I am approaching the final chapter,
I can't help but wonder if I want there to be an end,
Or if I'd rather end the book on my own terms.



"Typewriter" Hope Hughes

"A Holy Union" Michael Leon

In flesh and blood, we are made,
Our bodies vessels, where love is laid,
In carnal passion, we find release,
A moment's respite, a fleeting peace.

Yet, religion tells us to abstain,
That flesh is weak, and love profane,
That sex is sin, a stain on grace,
And so we fear to seek embrace.
We pray to gods in heaven's light,
And try to deny our earthly plight,
But in our hearts, we know the truth,
That love and sex are the same root.

For in our flesh, we find divine,
A sacred bond, that does entwine,
And in the throes of passion's fire,
We reach for something higher.
Our bodies temples, our love a prayer,
We worship in each other's care,
And find in sex a holy rite,
A sacrament of love and light.
So let us cast off the chains of shame,
And celebrate our love's sweet flame,
For in our flesh, we find our worth,



"My New Ring" Chase Jordan

Blinding lights...everywhere. Sweat drips down my face as fatigue kicks in for the 22 players on the field. A game growing ever so intense everyone inches forward on the red, sun-beat plastic chairs that'll put your butt to sleep in no more than 5 minutes. A feeling of helplessness floods me as I watch the last few minutes tick away from the bench. Only 15 years old, a first year, in a varsity jersey. A feat not accomplished since several years before my time in the soccer program at Alta High. Here I am standing as tall as I possibly can at the towering height of 5 foot 7 inches and barely weighing in at 120 pounds with a great sense of pride. I watch as 6 foot 2 monsters run around chasing a ball around an enormous green pitch with grass only seen by me in pictures before this moment. Every blade of grass measures the exact same as the one before itself; it's almost psychotic. "I really made it" I think to myself. Who cares if I don't get the luxury of playing in this type of game tonight. I'm wearing the same jersey as the ones on the field, apart from the grass and blood stains mine so clearly lacks. The thought of failure crosses my mind every 5 seconds as I wonder how to react if we lose the game we have been working towards all those months ago. The reason I'm on the bench rather than the field, our senior captain, steps up to throw the ball back into play. Time seems to stand still as the ball approaches the opposition's net and I can feel all the emotions of the enormous 3,000 people behind me. It almost feels as if they are breathing down my neck even though they are paces away. A few bounces here and there and suddenly the net ripples as what feels like the entire state of Utah erupts. Comprehension is not an option as my legs are already moving faster than they ever have before. It might be cliché but all I can think about is how appealing that ring I've only dreamed about will look on my hand.

“The First Event” Alexis McPherson

Here I am standing on the side of the nine-panel mat. My stomach is loaded with cicadas as my group listens to our coach fill our heads with encouraging words. It’s time. We run out onto the floor and get set. Her foot is in my hand, and I am in a low squat. The nerves strike a tremor in my gloved hands. Eternity passes before the counts begin. I turn to the side to look at the team. “1, 2, 3, 4,...” I toss my top up in the air, as she is suspended, I catch her feet and place them onto my shoulder. The team is cheering loud, we dip for the tuck off. As she lands, we give each other a look of relief. It feels like an elephant has been taken off my chest. We move on to the next skill, a pop over. I feel all her weight in my hands as I toss her over to my partner. We encourage each other with a small smirk. We run off the floor. My sweaty palms are holding my teammates’ waiting for the scoring to be announced. The wait feels endless. At last, we beat the competitors. The team is shouting we are all smiling ear to ear. My group won their event.



“Heisenburg” Nash Richardson



“Mac the Aussie” Braden Hoskyn

“Adulting” Leah Goodman

There are dirty dishes in the sink.
Trash bags sit in a pile outside the front door.
While I’m left with no choice but to suit up in dirty clothes
in order to go to work and look professional.

Just when I think I can breathe again
My car wants me to check its engine.
I guess I probably should.

I miss my mom and dad.
Not enough to ever go back
Just enough to where I am constantly sad.

My little brother got his first job.
My best friend and I don’t talk.

Adulting is supposed to be a good thing.
I’m supposed to be a big girl.

But whoever said big girls don’t cry
Has never lived like this before.

“Water and Toothpaste” Adam Sellers

Water and toothpaste
Man's soap for the mouth.
And the only drink doctors really recommend
to anyone who wants to be healthy.
Put the two together and you get a weird funky combo.
Some people like the taste.
I find it dissatisfying.
As the water rushes down my throat.
To the lagoon of my stomach.
My eyes widen.
Like the people in the
York Peppermint Patty commercials.
Aren't I beautiful now?
I stand in front of the mirror.
And see myself grow.
In the blink of an eye, I shrink.
I have skin for miles.
And a medium becomes an extra-large.
Aren't I beautiful now?
I walk for minutes.
My shoulders become weights.
I might stop and rest for a while.
Just give me one second.
Aren't I beautiful now?
I have become a waterfall.
I spill into the bowl.
Onto the tile.
And from my eyes.
Aren't I beautiful now?
I step onto the slab of metal
And hear TOO BIG, TOO BIG.
From others I hear.
TOO SMALL, TOO SMALL.
Aren't I beautiful now?
I'm cold.
I'm tired.
I'm brittle.
I'm hurting.
Aren't I beautiful now?
After talking about the wilderness that is eating, you ask,
“What does this have to do with water and toothpaste?”
Well, What if I told you that the only thing I have had today
was Water and Toothpaste.
Am I beautiful now?

"My Will" Trinity Pendleton

You may have a broken back,
But I have a broken past.
You may feel betrayed,
But I cannot breathe.

You went through the army,
But I have a degree.
You "gave" me everything,
Then why am I in therapy?

I was broken
Left alone again,
All about you guys
And the end prize.

Who is the best mother or father
When neither could be bothered?
Why have more and more kids
When there's no fucks to give?

Maybe it's a second chance
But from a different glance
I made it through alone.
I will be the one known.

The one who keeps pushing on
When everyone is done and gone.
Do not say you were there.
Words and actions show no care.

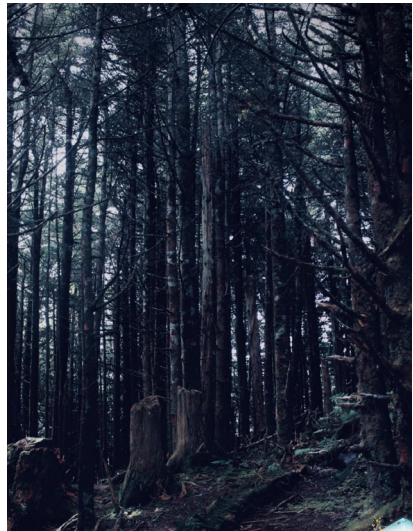
Inside I was scared of the dark,
But then I learned how to bark.
My words became heard
And both of you stirred.

I found who I am.
Words shot me and bam!

I was broken
Left alone again.
All about you guys
And the end prize.

Who is the most?
hurt or chastised?
I was left broken and
traumatized.
Those I loved most I lost,
No matter how hard I fought.

I looked for that love and
still left
Alone in the dark feeling heft.
I push on and on until
I hold the only quill,
So I can write my will!



"Lost in the Woods"
Hope Hughes

"The Lighthouse" Tayler Hodges

I lied to you when you asked.
I didn't have the courage to say
That I am sad most days.

The hopelessness creeps up like a fog.
There is no point in running
Because I know it is coming.

I can't be honest with you
Because sadness equates suicide.
I know that is what he chose to do,
But it doesn't mean that I will, too.

Seeping into sadness happens often,
But I know how to crawl back out.
Like sitting a well-loved sofa
Sometimes it takes a helping hand to stand.

The hand is extended down to me,
But it isn't time for help yet.
I say I am fine, and it takes time,
But I can stand up by myself.

I have a way of seeing through.
I drag myself up the stairs
To the top of the lighthouse
I use the light to part the fog.



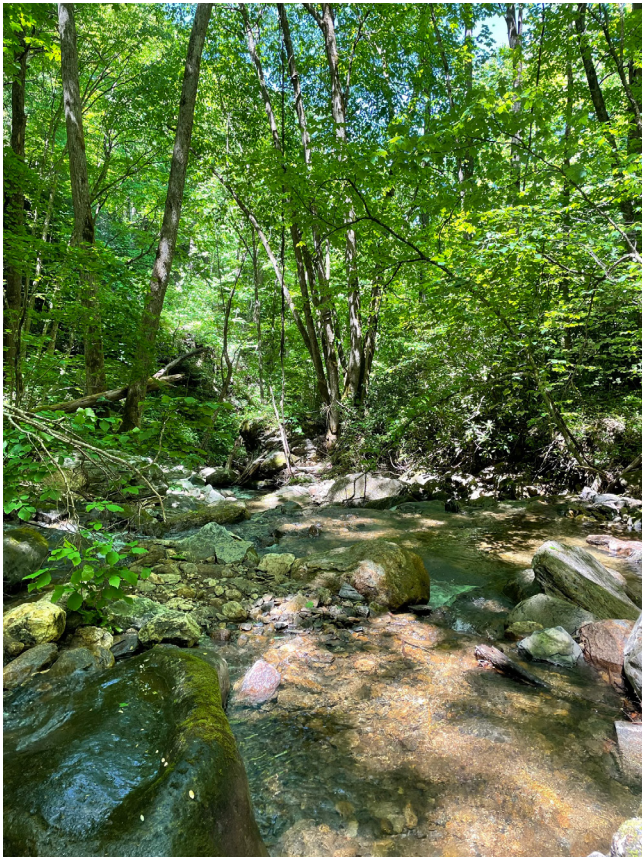
"Brushes" Sharnel Friedrich

Like Moses parted the Red Sea but
You have no way of knowing
That you are the one who told me
How to get to the lighthouse.

Your smile is what powers the light
That shows me the way out.

I trudge through the mist
To get back to you.

You are what is keeping me here.



"Hike" Tayler Hodges

"Tired" Chandler Adams

They always say,
"You don't need support from others,"
"You don't need approval from others,"
"All you need is yourself."

I disagree

You need love and support,
From family,
From friends,

But what if you don't have this?
I'll tell you

You'll feel alone,
You'll feel tired,

Tired of showing up for yourself,
Tired of looking into the stands,
And seeing no one

Tired of waiting for a call,

You'll learn to live alone,
It becomes the new norm.

You'll start to look for love in all the wrong places,
Your mind will trick you into thinking you are unlovable.

You deserve genuine interactions,
Genuine love,
Genuine relationships,

During your journey,
Don't forget to love yourself,
Because for now,
You're all you've got.
The Girl Who Always Smiles

The girl who always smiles,
Doesn't really smile,

But you wouldn't know,

Her tears spill privately,
Not because she's embarrassed,
But because she feels like a burden,

A burden to her mother,
Conflicting with her busy schedule,

A burden to her father,
Who is present but never there,

A burden to her friends,
Scared to ruin the fun,
so she stays home,

Words from these people she loves,
Hurt so bad,

From a mother who invalidates her feelings,
From a father who doesn't call and say "happy birthday"
From a friend who doesn't notice when she isn't herself,

She feels alone in a world full of relationships,
But she doesn't know she has me,
And I will always care for the girl who always smiles.

Dear Little Me
Dear little me,
The people you once loved are gone,

Some passed,
Some moved,
Some changed,

Cherish your relationships,
Because one day they'll be gone,
And you'll feel alone,

But that's ok,
You haven't met all the people you'll love,
And you haven't met all the people who'll love you.

The Thief, the Arsonist, and the Murder” Kas Clouatre

The house of mind, body, and spirit. Never full or finished, but ruined all the same. The house of the body, murdered and disfigured. The house of the mind, burned and sent with the wind. The house of the spirit, stolen and broken.

Nothing had been seen or done about it for many years, the event erased with the completion of the new houses. Perfect and neat, clean and tidy, perfect little homes much like the surrounding ones. The children played and the adults watched as the houses stood, different yet the same.

Three suspects were found long after the ashes of the house of the mind had grown roots. A shy, stalky, and paranoid bearded man. A short, intimidating, and quiet young man. And a lanky, anxious, and timid young woman.

The three were all silent when questioned and accused. None made a sound or grew violent for many days. Until a jar of debris that was collected from the original houses was presented to the accused, as if they had forgotten the crime. They all had grown restless and became defensive, even to the point of violence.

The first of the suspects to break was the young woman. She became unusually quiet after having been chatty before. After days, she confessed. She had stolen the house of the spirit and broken it to create something for herself as a gift, a boost to her esteem.

The second to break was the bearded man. He became extremely violent, throwing chairs, tables, and even beating an officer nearly to death. The man, after being restrained and heavily sedated, confessed that he had burned the house of the mind to the ground. He said that "they made me do it," that "I had no other choice," "THEY were watching," and "THEY would have harmed me if I had not burned the house to the ground."

The young man was the last to break. He remained quiet, even after hearing the commotion of the other two suspects. The investigator questioned him for weeks, but he never said a word. That was until the investigator told him what the others had confessed to.

The young man replied, "Is that so? That's nothing. I murdered the house of the body and ripped it to pieces." The investigator was shocked to say the least. This seemingly normal, kind, and intelligent young man had just confessed to murder without even blinking an eye. The investigator then asked why he had done it. The young man responded, "My mind told me to, and my heart said nothing against it. So, I killed myself, set myself on fire, and wept a beautiful song as I watched my heart stop beating."

The young man then faded away, like a whisper in the wind. The young woman then followed by shattering like a mirror. The bearded figure screamed, "the houses of ash, blood, and glass were never gone, simply hidden and disfigured!" In a burst of brilliant,



"War Torn" Johannes Waals



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