



# AGATE

2020

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## ON THE COVER

Front: "Winter Blues" by Tiana Franqui

**Agate (ág-it):** a fine-grained crystalline mineral that forms in cavities in volcanic rock. Agate is prized for its beautiful patterned colors, and its hardness makes it ideal for delicate carving.

**2020 SUNY DELHI  
STUDENT WRITING CONTEST WINNERS**

**First Place:**

“Performance Paper” by Jocelyn Mahar

**Second Place:**

“I Don’t Think That I Would Exactly Call It Love” by Ikram Brown

**Third Place:**

“I Am” by Hashim Gambari

**STUDENT ART CONTEST WINNERS**

**First Place:**

“Untitled” by Bertha Miller

**Second Place:**

“Untitled” by Rafia Umar

**Third Place:**

“The Humming Hibiscus” by Alexa Scaglione

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Special thanks to Heather Hilson for her expertise in laying out the magazine, and to Linnea Goodwin Burwood, Dean of the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Provost Kelli Ligeikis, Interim Provost Susan Deane, and President Michael Laliberte for their continued support of *Agate*.

**DELHI  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

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## **Resilience**

By Nesha Pullum-Leitch

I am

I am an existing being in a world full of meaningful souls.

I am in water trying to swim.

I am drowning.

I am drowning in my emotions and sorrow.

I am a lost soul looking for hope.

I am not who I was years ago, hope introduced me to growth.

I am a work in progress; I cannot do it on my own.

I am my guide and I provide myself with the tools of life.

I am life, I will NEVER be afraid to challenge life... my life.

I am thankful for my struggle, I met a brutal teacher and stumbled across my strength.

I am a queen; my beauty is dangerous please believe me when I tell you my intelligence is lethal.

I am my Horus eye, my power, protector, and healer.

I am the ambition, courage, pride, and respect that courses through my veins daily.

I am an eye opener, the perfect rose on your journey of enlightenment.

I am

I am Alicia Odessa Pullum-Leitch

**Untitled**

By Aubrianne Cummins





## Uncomfortable Truth

By Na'Imah Johnson

This is annoying  
Saying this over and over again  
It's boring me that you don't understand

Don't say that word  
Don't steal my style  
Don't follow me around the store  
My pockets are empty

Don't tell me I have to act like this  
To be accepted by you  
But wait, if I do it's never good enough

People that look like me  
Can never catch a break  
We always have to suck it up  
Move on

Forget about it  
Stop complaining  
"All lives matter"

I never said they didn't  
But my life doesn't seem to matter at all  
Your main goal is wanting all of us to fall

But we can't and we won't  
No matter how hard you try  
My skin is built like steal

Trying to make me feel useless  
As if I'm beneath you  
Well I'm way over your head

You better come at me with respect  
I can prove you wrong  
And that's on straight facts

You can never walk a day in my shoes  
Feel my emotions  
Or understand what I go through

All you have to do is listen  
Have some respect  
But I guess that's too much to ask

# Untitled

By Kelsey Innes



## To My Body

By Adam Spangenberg

I am sorry  
For all the muck I put inside.  
The cherries I smoke  
When I beg for a toke  
That make my lungs scream  
And my mind dream

I am sorry  
When I strike a blade.  
Blood cries on my sheets  
Listen to the sick beats  
Of my worried little heart  
It tears my sanity apart

I am sorry  
For draining glass bottles.  
That clear liquid, the bliss  
Of when my lips start to kiss  
The tip of my drink  
I love to hear that clink

I am sorry  
That I pop open that child lock.  
To take a cyan little pill  
Sometimes just for a thrill  
That leaves me numb  
that fills my body with scum

I am extra sorry  
Because though I may fight  
I could lose this plight  
I am so sorry for that.

# Untitled

By Rafia Umar



## **This Thing Called Love**

By Rafia Umar

Hello again!

This is love,

I knocked on your door,

I called out your name,

You were unreachable,

But I patiently waited,

I basically have all time,

You were in trouble, I lent my stiff arm

When you were lonely, I stayed close by

Even without physical contact, I shared my comfort

Behind closed doors, I heard your cries

I stood by and sympathized.

I still kept knocking,

No response,

I bought you,

Your favorite pillow,

If I had to stay out in the rain,

I did.

I kept calling out,

No response,

You should know,

I never get tired,

You would eventually let me in,

One way or the other,

Take all the time you need,

I come with thorns of my own,

It's a choice to forgo them,

Or to carve them into flowers.



**Taking Flight**  
By Linda Blocker



## **Love Yours**

By Nesha Pullum-Leitch

Today  
I have decided to love myself.  
The time is 3:05pm  
I made up my mind.

I am going to love myself.  
Let the pots clang  
The stars hang.  
Let the drums bang  
The gang speak so highly with their slang  
Today I have decided to love myself.

Today I have decided to love myself  
I am no longer unsatisfied with my soul  
I won't be blind!  
I will show change and growth.

Finally, I will let it show  
From this day forward  
I take this oath  
To love myself farther than anyone has

To receive that love  
My soul and I  
You and I  
Us both.

There won't be any more leaving...  
Leaving my spirit still  
Waiting for its refill.  
Today I have decided to love myself

Because nobody else will.

**Untitled**

By Bertha Miller



## **Who Am I?**

By Brandon Miller

I am a NIGGA!!!

Wait let me fix that.....

I am that nigga we all learn to fear,

I am that nigga who has zero cares,

I am that nigga cops stop and frisk because of my appearance or  
because I talk like this

I am that nigga with hidden knowledge,

I am that nigga that who will go off to finish college,

I am that nigga white officials don't acknowledge

I am that nigga with durags tied tight, cops try to indict or ran-  
doms asking me for a light

I am that cute ugly nigga females love to call,

I am that good for nothing nigga your father probably saw

I am that nigga, who other niggas, wish dreams would fall

I am that stupid nigga ready to risk it all

I am that nigga whose race everybody wants to die

I am THAT NIGGA so why ask who am I?

**Untitled**

By Landa Palmer





## **My Little Pam**

By Mackenzie Bennett

I once had a cat  
Her name was Pam  
She was black and white, just like a cow  
Sometimes,  
I'd call her Moo Moo

When I first met her,  
I fell in love instantly  
She was just so tiny and soft  
And super adorable

I took her home with me  
And I took care of her  
I gave her everything she needed  
And I'd watch her play, and play,  
And play some more

As she grew tired  
I took her and laid her on my chest  
And I simply watched her  
Her tiny body sprawled out  
She slept so peacefully

My heart melted at the sight  
Little did I know,  
This little bundle of white and black fur,  
Would steal my heart before I could even blink  
But she didn't just take it  
For she had filled the holes within it,  
Mending the broken pieces  
With love and joy  
She made me feel at peace,  
And she was the only thing,  
That could bring me out of the dark place I was in

I owe her so much  
And she doesn't even know  
How grateful I am

As time went on,  
I loved watching her grow,  
She became so brave and sassy  
At least with the other cats she was  
But never with me  
She was so gentle and loving

But I noticed a change within her  
When I had come home from college  
She went back to being shy,  
Hiding away, behind the couch  
It was odd that she wasn't as playful anymore

I tried to coax her out,  
But she simply looked at me  
She refused to come out  
I took her to the vet,  
I wanted to know if there was anything wrong  
But the news brought to me,  
Weighed heavy upon my heart  
And dragged me down

I lost my little girl,  
And I didn't get to say goodbye  
Her heart,  
Was far too big for her tiny body  
It's no wonder why,  
She had so much love to give

I know that she loves me,  
And she waiting for me on the Rainbow Bridge,  
I have hope I will see her there, some day  
But until then,  
Rest easy,  
I love you, my sweet little Pam

# Two Sheep I Used to Have

By Nathan Mizrahi



## Who Am I

By Henry Xia

I am olden Chinese respect values.

I am an ever changing, adapting animal surrounded by Americans.

I am a disappointment.

I am Queens on a Tuesday morning grabbing a Bacon egg and  
cheese because breakfast didn't  
exist at home.

I am competitive games where I'm uncompetitive and can't stand to  
lose but can't stand to try.

I am Jeff Chang, the alter ego of a boy who so desperately needed  
to be accepted.

I am the son of two very loving parents that want to understand  
but just can't.

I am a typical Asian student, playing League of Legends, who can't  
wait to get home and get into a game that I hate but can't let go of.

I am self-pity and self-hatred and so many selves that maybe I don't  
know which one is the real  
me.

I am Chinese but washed with so many layers of white, that I don't  
know where the white ends  
and the yellow begins.

I am recovering, trying so hard to recover.

I am the fragments of my heart that were left behind the girls I  
loved never wanted to take.

I am strength in a sea of weakness, trying to cling desperately to the  
light in the far distance.

I am opinions that hurt the society I live in, but with not enough  
self-restraint to avoid voicing  
them.

# Tarantula

By Allene Slating





## **At It Again**

By Rafia Umar

Hello, hello  
Can you hear me?  
I hope not, if so  
Stay away.

Your presence is contagious,  
Your cologne attracts me like a bee in search for nectar,  
You sniff my hair like you were trying to devour my brain cells,  
Your words dissolve me, sending chills through my nerves

If I'm the blood flowing through a heart then you are the veins,  
Your whisper makes me forget what rain showers sound like,  
Then overwhelms me, making me reckless  
Seeing your smile across the hallway brings out my hidden  
weakness,  
Which is probably you.

Then when your friends come over, you send me away  
Like you were shipping off a box of packages to Paris,  
Then a day or two, you want me back  
When you're cold and need to cuddle,  
You hit me up,  
Looking into those dark blue eyes,  
I want to believe you,

I really want to,  
Your eyes capture mine, not wanting to let go  
I don't want to either.

## Imagining Mine

By Sierra Sillaro

As I look up at the sky, I visualize your eyes  
When the sky is gray, I think of how we got to this place  
But when the sky is blue, I see wonders above  
I see every word you ever spoke  
When I lay in the grass and look at the stars, I think of you  
I think of you holding me instead of the patches of green grass  
It encloses me like an envelope encloses a letter and after it's sealed,  
I suffocate knowing you aren't there  
But if I close my eyes and think hard enough it begins to feel like  
you are holding me  
And with each touch blossoms bloom  
When I walk the highway late at night, I think of our journey  
Every step forward and every step back  
I count the stars and every star I count is a reason I should hold on  
to the idea of you  
I just hope for some reason you're lying in the grass and visualizing  
how perfectly we fit together  
Like a puzzle's pieces with no space in between  
How perfectly we clicked  
I hope you're counting the stars and holding on  
As I look up at the sky and imagine your eyes, I hope you're looking  
at it at the same time and imagining mine

## **Intertwined**

By Jacqueline Madden



## Performance Paper

By Jocelyn Mahar

For some people, tackling someone in a football game can relieve tons of stress. However, for me, covering a canvas is the best way to express my feelings, whether I'm extremely happy or even if I'm dying inside. Now, painting does not necessarily meet the requirements of a "performance". When painting, you're obviously not competing, unless you are in an art competition, which are fairly rare. However, I am choosing to go with this theme because of the story I am about to share with you. In my senior year of High School, I was in several clubs and activities: drawing club, painting club, photography club. I also volunteered as a mentor for my elementary school. I was assigned to Miss. Rustine's fifth grade class. I will be honest, at first I only went to this because it was a way to get my 10 required hours of community service. I went every other weekday for 2 hours. Therefore, it was easy for me to gain the required hours. It took less than 2 weeks. But in those 2 weeks, I got to know each and every student and I fell in love with this. I would look forward to going all day. So, instead of just getting the 10 hours, I continued going throughout my entire senior year, each day growing a closer bond with these students.

Although I was very close with the entire class, there were two students who I was drawn to and who seemed to show the most interest in having me helping them. These two students' names were Keith and Jerome. They were best friends and sat next to each other. They would always ask me to sit with them. Although they were both so tiny, their personalities were much bigger than the two of them. They were both full of life, so happy. They were always making jokes and always enjoying themselves. Although I was close with both of them, I definitely was there for Jerome more, simply because he needed more of that one on one attention. It appeared that they both came from families that did not have much. Jerome was very skinny and stood taller than me. He had dark skin, he wore big, goofy glasses, and he had a smile that could light up the room. He often wore his favorite red Nike shirt. Maybe because he was so fond of it, or maybe because it was one of the only things he had to wear. I remember Jerome would come to school wearing worn down shirts, some with holes in them. He often had on clothes that didn't quite fit him. I felt so bad

and wanted to buy him brand new clothes but I figured that might not be fair to other students in the class. So I didn't. It was clear to me that Jerome might have been neglected or abused at home, but it wasn't fair to assume that. And it wouldn't be fair to ask a young 11-year-old child that question. How would he know?

One day Jerome got very angry and punched his desk. Afterwards, the teacher had asked me to take Jerome on a walk so I did. We walked around the whole school and talked. I asked him why he reacted the way he did. He told me that when his stepdad gets angry, he reacts that way. Jerome just did what he was taught. I told him that talking about his feelings is healthier. We talked about his future. I asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. He told me that he aspired to be a basketball player on the Lakers team. He then said that if that didn't work out then he wanted to become a teacher. I told him that is a great goal, but in order to reach that goal, you need to have smaller goals. I told him he needed to do his work, pay attention, and stay out of trouble.

He looked into my eyes and sighed, "Okay, Miss Jocelyn, I promise I will try."

I will never forget that conversation with him. I wanted to see him do well and succeed. He was a very smart boy, he just had a hard time focusing sometimes and got easily distracted with any type of drama.

I remember one Friday I came in and Jerome was not in class. This was very unlike him. The teacher seemed very distraught. Miss. Rustine asked me to go out into the hall with her for a minute. So I did.

She explained, "Hey, honey, I know you are probably wondering where Jerome is."

Of course I was. She told me that Jerome came to school that morning with two black eyes and a bloody lip. When asked about it, he refused to answer. She said he was so terrified he was shaking, and his gorgeous smile was nowhere to be found. She sent him to the office and the school called Child Protective Services. Jerome finally told the CPS worker that his stepdad had hurt him because he missed his bus and his stepdad was angry that he had to drive him to school. I felt so sad about this. I just wanted to run into the room and give little Jerome a huge hug. No 11 year old should have to go through something like that. As sad as it was, when the



day was over, everyone went home and started their weekend. I was obviously sad, but by the time Sunday hit, I was at my best friend's house and the thought of it hadn't crossed my mind. That is until Hayley's mom came into the kitchen, where Hayley, her brother, who happened to be in fifth grade, and I sat. She was talking to Hayley's brother, Avery. She told Avery that the school had just called her phone and said that they were calling all of the fifth grade students' families to let them know that there was a fifth grade student that passed away that Saturday. They wanted to let families know before social media could. They wanted the families to know that the next few days might be hard for the students. Hayley's mother didn't mention a name. But I could feel it in my gut. I knew she was referring to Jerome.

Sure enough, I went on my phone and saw several people in the area already posting "RIP Jerome Smith." I couldn't believe it, but at the same time I could. I mean, just days before he was beaten by his stepfather. Then CPS gets involved and he is found dead? Many stories were already surfacing the internet. Some said he was beaten to death; others said his stepfather drowned him in the bathtub. However, nobody could be sure because there were no official reports of what had happened at this point.

When I heard this news, I was so upset and angry. I needed to let my emotions out. I told Hayley that I had to go home. The whole ride home I couldn't stop crying. At this point, I had only known Jerome for a few months. However, he was very important to me. He felt like a little brother to me. I don't remember much about that night; I just remember that I didn't get very much sleep. When I got home, I ran up to my room, slammed the door shut, blasted my music, and sat on the floor while tears were dripping down like a leaky faucet. My mind felt all over the place. I stood up and walked over to my closet and I grabbed a canvas, my box of paints, and my paint brushes. I sat on the floor and without thinking about what I was gonna do, I just began painting. I painted for four hours. I started painting a brown face. Then I added little brown eyes, a nose, plump lips, a huge smile, short, black, curly hair and big, goofy glasses. I finally realized I was painting Jerome. And without a picture, just using my knowledge of what he looked like. Finally, I added his favorite red Nike shirt. To me, the painting was a performance. No, I was not competing

against anyone. But I felt as if I was competing against my own anger. My eyes were a fountain of flowing tears. This voice inside of me started screaming, “Go find this son of a bitch and beat his ass.”

It was a fight against myself not to get in the car and find this man. But I couldn't do that. I couldn't do that to Jerome. I made Jerome promise me to use healthy ways to cope with his emotions, his anger. So I couldn't betray him and negatively portray my anger, no matter how badly I wanted to put this man through the same pain he put an 11 year old, innocent boy through. So I coped the only way I knew how. I painted this beautiful boy that I knew as Jerome Smith. The next day, I took the painting to the elementary school with me and I gave it to Miss. Rustine's class. I wanted these young souls to remember Jerome's smile, because I know I will never forget it.

Was this a performance? Did I fulfill what you were asking for? Technically no. But I needed to share this story. Because pushing myself to stay strong, to stay true to my word to Jerome, not allowing myself to cry in front of twenty fifth graders, that was a performance within itself. Technically, I was not in a game. I was not at a dance competition. No one tried to paint Jerome better than I could. No one won. But there was a loser. Jerome. Jerome lost his life. That little 11-year-old boy became one of my closest friends. And I had to fight to stay strong after this. My performance was staying strong like I always told Jerome to do. I had to stay true to my word. Also, I was able to paint a picture that looked just like Jerome while I was upset, angry, and shaking. I was not sure that painting could count as a performance. I did some research, and read that “Art therapy is a way for people to deal with the feelings and pain they have due to mental illness, trauma, loss, and physical illness in a healthy and expressive way” (Madison). Sometimes, a performance can be as simple as competing with yourself to make it through the day when you're going through a difficult time. Art can help people have a better outcome in those performances.

#### Sources Cited:

- Madison, Elisha. “Art Therapy & Coping Skills.” Study.com, Study.com, <https://study.com/academy/lesson/art-therapy-coping-skills.html>.

Rest  
In Peace  
Jerome



## Summer Lovin

By Jessica Backus-Foster



## **The Crash**

By Rafia Umar

My heart is crashed,  
Memories are crashed,  
My dreams are crashed,  
My goals are crashed,

I'm crashed,  
I might be unable to love again,  
The car came to a complete stop,  
Instead of saving ourselves,  
You saved yourself,  
And before you approached,  
It exploded,

Leaving pieces of metal protruding my bleeding heart,  
The trees seemed greener before,  
Then it turned brown,  
The sky seemed blue today,  
But it turned dark by night,  
The sun was out today,

However, the moon took over by night  
I asked if the car was ready to start,  
I asked if the engine was good enough,  
I asked how far it could take us,  
I asked if it would be safe,  
Don't yell at me just because I'm like this,  
I asked you if you were ready to meet Cupid.  
I saw the eagerness in your eyes,  
And it burnt away by the flames.

**Untitled**  
By Kelsey Innes



## Lost at Sea

By Sierra Sillaro

Loving someone is like a sailor loving the sea  
Toxic but inescapable  
You can't help but become infatuated with its sheer beauty  
But when the sailing becomes bumpy and the waves become  
territorial  
The sailor loses sight of himself  
The waves enclose the boat and leave breaks in its frame  
The thing he loves the most is becoming the thing that's slowly  
killing him  
The wind lifts the waves and it builds up  
Then it all comes crashing down  
Every drop is a reminder of every argument and every heartbreak  
leading to this one moment  
But he still can't help but love the way it hurts as his love crashes  
down all around him  
He would rather feel the water as it fills his lungs than not feel its  
presence at all  
For the sea is all he knows and he's afraid to let go  
The sailor thinks this was supposed to be the way things go  
That he lived every moment for this to happen and he deserved  
what would happen next  
And with one last accepting breathe he mumbled out the words "I  
love you" before losing himself completely in the waves



## Provincetown Picture

By Nelson Mondaca



## West City

By Ikram Brown

The humans in the west worship the forest that lays past the Marauder Barrens.

Following Snake River, through the sparse trees of the Marauder Barrens and over the Open Sky Plains, lies the Forest of Rebirth.

West City is the only settlement that refers to it as this.

Across the province, past the forest are the Eastern Territories.

“It’s a *shapeshifter*!” They yell, fury in their eyes. “A monster! More fearsome than any beast – and able to change form; be anywhere at once!”

“It’s a child snatcher – a cradle robber!” They cry when the revolutions kill children and murder the weak. “It’ll spirit away your babies and *curse* them!”

\*\*\*

In the Western Settlements they believe in their Goddess.

“She is the Goddess Aleta, queen of our Parthenon, the life-bringer, the protector, and the one who begins and the one who ends.” The head clergy says as he walks down the trodden paths. “We do not waste our time with glass and scripture to remind ourselves of her, she is everywhere and nowhere.”

In the settlements West of the Forest of Rebirth, they do not kill foxes or deer. They do not touch or chop down the aspen trees, touched by the Eight Days of Black Ash. They celebrate children born with bark brown hair; eyes greener than the grass.

“The territories in the East – they have one thing right. Our goddess is a shapeshifter. She could be any doe, any bird or wolf, *any* animal that runs as wild and free as the river by our city.” The clergy calls out, and people follow. “The sacred trees, marked by a time where our world was almost burned to the ground, were saved by her. And in doing so, the Goddess Aleta saved us.”

“We here next to the Snake River are the only ones who honor her memory,” says another. “We take on names of the world around us, so she – or her sacrifice – may never be forgotten.” And the clergy looks out to the crowd that follows. She can see her fellow friends and family. Acquaintances and students.

“Hazel, Sky, Alder, Jay, Cypress, Wind, Magnolia, and even myself, Elk,” she says and gestures to the clergy next to her. “And

even Cedar at my side. All of us are named in the image of what our Goddess stands for, lest we never forget.”

\*\*\*

The Western Settlements have holidays. On the first day of spring they have the Feast of Forsythia, celebrating the rebirth of the world. On the first day of winter they have the Festival of Fire, celebrating the Death-Bringer. The fox that bleeds death, unable to feel the cold through his fiery pelt and the ice that freezes his heart.

“It’s important to know both,” a mother tells her child. She weaves a crown of gentle yellow petals. “The fox is her friend, bringing about death, so she can in turn give life. It is the cycle we all live through. And the Fire Festival is to remind ourselves that *we’re* what changes – what stays the same.”

\*\*\*

There was once a girl who went into the forest. She was scared and didn’t know anything about the animals who lived there.

Not their lives, their intelligence, or their hardships.

From the Eastern Territories the warring factions threatened extinction with fire and chopping down the very trees they called their homes. The North had poached on the animals ceaselessly and they all feared that one day, they too, would become pelts wore by their enemies.

The only protector the animals had was the leopard Alba, and when he died, leaving the girl to protect in his place, the animals of the forest had no choice but to accept her.

The animals resented the girl at first. A *human* invading their home and sanctuary, and replacing the irreplaceable, but in time she had gained their respect. She had gained their *trust* and soon learned to hate the humans just as the animals had.

Over centuries she would be known by many names - little to none of them flattering. Imaginary, Monster, Goddess, Cyprus, Kit, Human.

King.

But she, over the centuries, would remember the name her parents gave her.

She remembers being Robin.

## **Make a Wish**

By Jessica Backus-Foster



## **Tell Them**

By Adam Spangenberg

Tell it to the children  
Whose eyes are gaunt  
And hollow  
The ones with bloated tummies  
The young parents with no money

Tell it to the revolutionaries  
Who have no basic rights  
The ones full of pride,  
Might  
And those willing to fight

Tell it to the refugees  
Who lost their nations, families, and  
Lost their way of life  
The ones with nowhere to hide

Tell it to the young  
The old  
Tell it to those with nowhere to go  
Say it  
Shout it  
Scream to the sky  
Please do tell it  
But don't you lie.

## Alone

By Alyson Jones

They pulled into the long dark, frozen dirt driveway. He turned the car off and waited for her.

“Come on,” he said.

She sat there silent, holding her hands in her lap looking out the car window. He sat there looking at her, then outside, then at his phone. His leg started to bounce.

“Let’s go,” he urged.

“You don’t have to wait for me,” she mumbled.

“Yes, I do,” he insisted.

“Why?”

“Because I want to spend time with you,” he replied trying to get her inside the house.

She was quiet. “Just give me a bit.”

“No, Sweetie, please, come inside,” he urged with annoyance.

“Why are you like this?”

“I just want to be alone for a bit,” she sighed looking at him annoyed.

“Ok, but be alone inside,” he wrapped his fingers around her arm.

“Why does this bother you so much?”

She turned and whipped her arm away.

“I don’t want you to get cold.” He was visibly calm, annoyed, and worried.

“Leave me alone for a bit. Please.”

“No!” He blurted out angrily. “This is fucking weird!”

Silence.

He faced her quickly then just as quickly shifted sideways in the seat. “You do this every night!” he gestured grabbing the air wide palmed. “Every goddamn night. What’s wrong? Why are you doing this?” he exhaled with one irate breath.

She sat there unsure.

“You know, this isn’t normal.”

She knew this.

He got out of the car, slammed his door, and opened hers.

“Come on,” he grabbed her arm. She wasn’t going to fight it this time.

“Come on,” he said calmly annoyed while lightly pulling her arm.

“Come on!” he yelled in a whisper.

She moved limply with every light gesture.

He let go of her arm, looked off biting his lower lip, and stormed off to the cold house.

The day was long, and the ground was frozen, but she had felt warm. Her classes were warm, work was warm, the lounge was warm even when no one was there, and the AC was on while the frost crept in. The car used to be warm, but now it’s cold. The house, even with the tank full and thick blankets waiting to adorn her, was cold. And now she was left to be cold in the car or the house. But the memory of warmth in the car held her, until it didn’t. She chose to get out of the now cold car and start to the cold house. With every footprint made in the snow she hoped that, maybe, when she got inside someone would finally make her warm like they used to.



**Untitled**  
By Kelsey Innes



## **Overtime**

By Alexa Scaglione

I hated everything about you at first  
Summer days sitting down sweating and dying of thirst  
Everyone did the same routine every day  
My parents forced me to go so I had to stay  
I sat there every day thinking why am I here  
Wasted my time for an hour learning about William Shakespeare

My final three months and my mindset has changed  
I am so deranged  
I have realized and learned a lot  
No it's not the definitions of climax, setting, character, or plot  
I have made my best friends by going to you  
Thank god you got better, I almost withdrew

You made me who I am today  
Oh how I wish I could stay  
I'm walking across the stage thinking I'll never get this day back  
I can feel my broken heart crack  
Instead of hating you from the start  
You weren't bad at all in fact you were the good part

I realized you were the best years of my life, no doubt  
I'm so shocked how fast you flew by, I think I might pass out  
I throw my cap in the air  
Wishing I could sit back in that chair  
Should've enjoyed every moment but I can't go back  
Now all you'll be is a throwback  
Made so many good memories after giving you time  
Now I have to move on because it's summertime.

## **Where I'm From**

By Joannah Patterson

I am from where your hair turns blonde in the summer and black in the winter.

I am from where manners aren't an option.

I am from where biracial isn't accepted, it's rejected.

I am from where community defines family.

I am from where my mom gets up every day to go to work, without hesitation.

I am from where wealth defines a person, not the qualities of their personality.

I am from where rules are broken, and consequences are reinforced.

I am from where drugs are a way to make a living, instead of a nine to five.

I am from where having a one-person household is considered normal.

I am from where people gather around a fire, listen to Danza Kanduro and roast marshmallows.

I am from where family is all you got.

I am from where three meals a day wasn't always guaranteed.

I am from where my mother raised me to be independent and motivated to do and be better.

# Untitled

By Lillian Bray



## **Inclement Weather**

By Sierra Sillaro

The sky has been imitating my eyes  
Each tear like a raindrop smacking against the tin roof  
You are my thunder  
You heighten my sense of distrust  
But you are also my lightning  
You brighten my surroundings in a way I never thought possible  
Because of this I thought you'd offer me your raincoat  
But instead you decided you weren't ready to give me your armor  
The issue is without you my skies are boring  
Maintaining only a sprinkle of rain  
Drip drop drip drop  
I want nothing more for you to share your armor because you left  
me with none of my own  
I see the skin underneath the coat you don't want anyone to see  
The only thing close to you now is your own storm your own rain  
I just wish I could be the lightning in yours  
It's unfair to think I love what hurts me the most  
I love the lightning in my life but even more I love the thunder  
I just want to feel something  
I want you to cover me with your raincoat and decide I'm what you  
want  
But most people prefer the sun and its many rainbows  
And in the end two storms never love each other they just form a  
tornado and destroy everything in their path.

## The Works

By Jacqueline Madden



## **I Don't Think That I Would Exactly Call It Love**

By Ikram Brown

Around her, I could be still.  
Tame those feral wild racing thoughts,  
And rip the hands off the clock and stop  
the incessant tick-tock in my veins.  
I could make it evaporate. Dissipate.  
I could make it drain.  
I could be still - more still than usual,  
more reserved than necessary,  
I could go the distance,  
find the will,  
have them tucked away.  
Stored.  
I could be more.  
She can be my sun, my moon and my stars,  
I could crane my neck, and shield my eyes.  
For me she doesn't have to be a future, a road, a solid something.  
She can be the air beneath my feet, the space *in between* the  
complete.  
For me she doesn't have to be.  
For her I could.



## The Humming Hibiscus

By Alexa Scaglione



## **Permanent Jet Lag**

By Ikram Brown

Loss is the absence  
Of leashes, dog bowls  
The pitter patter,  
Click clack of nails on hardwood floors,  
And a dog who died too soon.

The confusion  
And a question of will he get better?  
Lumpy mounds of ice and snow settling  
In blood veins when he doesn't.

(Loss is cancer and Beneful dog food.)

A sharp whistle dying on lips  
When one realizes, toast will go uneaten  
Because the dog isn't there.

A distinct weight of a plastic box.  
Concrete paw prints in it,  
And after just one short year,  
When no one mentions his name.

**Untitled**

By Landa Palmer



## **I Am...**

By Hashim Gambari

I am...

I am complicated simply put

I am only seen on the concrete while the officer is on the phone  
with my mom

I am 13 unwarranted police stops, doubled if you count the ones  
not in a car

I am constantly overreacting because there has to be a reason that I  
just cannot see

I am endless tolerance for intolerance

I am the "He's not going to make it" kid

I am more than a statistic though

I am the laugh in tight situations

I am the let's watch a movie at 2 am

I am the let's wake up at 12 pm because we watched a movie at 2 am

I am the hard work and the talent

I am misunderstood

I am the long game that is seen later in life

I am more than meets the eye but constantly overlooked

I am the living proof that control of my future isn't in the hands of  
people who tried to stop it

before it was written

## Two Sheep I Used To Have

Nathan Mizrahi



## **You've Got My Heart, I've Got Your Hand**

By Ikram Brown

There is a flash of light at night that is blinding  
With how bright it seems. I close  
My eyes, and turn away, fearing  
What I might glimpse and see. I know  
The things I can no longer hide and be.  
Because here is the secret no one  
Knows but me: That between  
The roots and the buds and the branches  
Of the trees, there is the heart so  
Fragile it can break in two.

The bright light that  
Flashes in the dead of night  
Isn't as bright as it seems. I have  
Seen in my periphery the glow  
That shines within - the glow that  
Has never once dimmed.  
And the secret no one knows but me -  
The heart that breaks apart in two  
Once grew from the branches and the buds  
And in between the roots of the tree  
That reached so high into a sky  
That the canopy and crown could  
No longer be observed and seen.

Do you see it too? The light at  
Night that flashes a blinding bright?  
It is bursting at the seams. I need  
To close my eyes but for once  
I will not shy away - not from  
The glow that won't ever fade.  
I have let myself be true,  
I hope the same is for you.

And this - *this* -  
Is the secret I whispered in your  
Waiting ear: the heart from the trees  
Was *me* and the blinding light *you*.  
I have abandoned my despair,  
The planets have aligned to see it too.

The awe that keeps us apart is  
Flawed. Simply open your hands for my  
Beating, bleeding heart, and I, in turn, will  
Open my eyes, copper and bronzed hued,  
For you.



## **My Father is a Doctor**

By Samantha Layton

It all started out when I went to the doctors for an ear infection. I've been having pain in my left ear for about two weeks now, with occasional fluid leakage. The doctor said it was normal, and sent me home with some antibiotics. Here's the thing, I've never had antibiotics before; not that I've never been sick or anything, it's just my mom never really took us to the doctor as kids. That woman has always been a little strange, though. I used to think she wouldn't take us because of our financial situation, but whenever we brought up going, she seemed to fear it. Not just a normal shiver when thinking about needles, but almost as if she was reflecting on a trauma. My father was away on work trips most of my life, only returning home on the weekends, biweekly. This meant that he wasn't really more to me and my siblings than just a paycheck and someone who gave us toys each time they came home. Anyway, I'm not really sure if this is normal. The first night I took the pill, I had a horrible dream. By horrible I mean I thought I was actually awake until I woke up sweating in my bed. I was on a metal table with six surgeons surrounding me, poking and prodding me with needles. It wasn't long, but enough to freak me out. After experiencing that, I decided to read the antibiotic bottle for side effects. Diarrhea, vomiting, headaches, but nothing about nightmares. I decided it was just me having nerves about my first-time doctor visit, and I even made fun of myself for it. Although, in the back of my mind I couldn't forget how real it seemed.

The next night was the same dream, except extended. There I was laying on a metal table being examined by six surgeons. It was almost as if I was a medical experiment. They were talking amongst each other vigorously, but I couldn't identify what language they were speaking. German? Possibly. I took German once in high school but all I paid attention to was how Mr. Riley needed to trim his grey nose hairs. One of the surgeons looked oddly familiar. I remember staring at him, trying to figure out where I knew this guy from, but before I knew it I woke up again, drenched in sweat. I called my mom to ask her for some advice.

“Mom I went to the doctors for my ear infection-”

“You did what?!” My mom gasped and her lungs shook like she was looking death in the eye.

“Uhh...are you okay?” I’ve never heard her do such a thing in my whole life. Why was she so afraid?

“Did they give you anything? Dear god help me...” I could almost hear her blessing herself over the phone with her right hand.

“Mom what is going on?” I started to worry for real now. Usually I ignore my mom’s weird rituals and superstitions but she really has me scared this time.

“Come over now. We need to talk.” The phone line buzzed as she hung up abruptly. I grabbed my car keys and hurried over to her house. The whole way there I couldn’t help but think about what she was about to tell me.

I rang the doorbell and she opened it right away. Pushing me inside, she scanned left and right before closing the door.

“Would you like any tea?” Her smile was weak but I could tell she was trying to be reassuring.

“Yes, please.” Watching her tremble as she poured me a cup made me realize I should’ve said no. She sat on the sofa across from me and we listened to the clock tick before she said anything.

“There’s something you should know. Your father isn’t who you think he is.”

“What do you mean? Like is he secretly a drug lord or something?” My joke was intended to be lighthearted, but my laughter stopped abruptly after watching her facial expression remain the same.

“Your father...your birth father, is someone I met in college when I went on a trip to Germany. He is a monster to me now.” Her eyes seemed to be glass in her head, and she looked as white as the teacup I held.

“He told me he was a doctor but decided to retire after he moved back to the states with me. I didn’t have much money at the time; I was a broke college kid with rent to pay and groceries to buy, so I always just had him give me medication when I wasn’t feeling too well. He was able to access medicine that only doctors could buy because he still had his PhD license.” The way I looked

at her must've been a look mixed with judgement and confusion as she followed up with, "You have to understand I was young and naive...I was in love. It started off as small tests. He would adhere sticky-circles all over my body. I didn't feel a thing." I felt sweat form at the small of my back.

"But he wanted more." She continued. "He started drawing blood from me and injecting me with various fluids that he wouldn't ever tell me what was in them. I felt fine, so I guess it didn't matter much to me about what was coursing through my veins. It wasn't until one day that I realized he had gone too far."

She told me about how he convinced her she needed a kidney transplant because both of hers were failing. The fluids he was injecting into her were to induce symptoms of organ failure, and so she went under his knife. When she came to, she felt instantly better. He told her that he had used cadaver kidneys, and that he had done that transplant many times before without any complications. A day after the surgery, she was cleared to take a shower. As she was lathering her arm, she felt something underneath her porcelain skin. When she asked my father what it was, he insisted that it was normal for patients to experience a buildup of fluids in areas closer to lymph nodes, and that it was just her body taking to the new kidneys. Something about his optimism made her question everything he has subjected her to in the past. It wasn't until she heard a faint beeping in her arm, and had a friend confirm she wasn't just hearing things. My mom knew she couldn't confront him about it, and she knew that she could no longer trust him. He always left his in-home-office locked at all times, and never told her where the key was. Now at this point I'm really questioning why it took so long for my mother to feel uneasy around him, and the fact that it took a weird beeping device in her arm to lead her to investigate. I thought about it more and I realized that my mother was always a little on the insecure side, she told me how she has been burned by many guys (cheating, lying, hiding things) in the past, so when she met my dad, she took the bad with the good. She never questioned him because she felt like since he was so much smarter than her, she had no right to ask questions and was afraid he would leave her if she did.

One night, she decided to tell my dad that she was going to the grocery store and would be gone for about an hour. She knew that this would be a perfect set-up to the beginning of her concoction of a plan she thought about the night before in bed when she couldn't sleep. She would tell my father she was going to the store, drive her car to a neighboring block, and walk back to the house and sneak in the backdoor. She did just as she planned. When she entered the backdoor, she could smell the rubbing alcohol from his office (which was more of a small laboratory), that danced under her nose and pulled her closer. Her goal wasn't to see what he was doing there because she had witnessed him working before. He would take cadavers from the local morgue (with permission), and run tests on different tissues from the subject. What she really wanted to discover was the placement of his key ring that detained the key to the filing cabinet. With that she knew that she could find his files of his experiments, including the one that held her surgery information. She was hiding behind a wall, peeking around like a curious child would, just watching and waiting. He removed his gloves, washed his hands, and grabbed the keys that jingled like a bell from heaven when the sound fell upon her ears. As he walked down the hallway toward their bedroom, she waited for the click of the bathroom door shutting and locking which meant he was going to be getting in the shower. The knobs of the shower squeaked and as the water began to flow, she crept over to the laundry hamper. His freshly worn clothes draped on top of the basket held the key, quite literally, to finding out what really happened to her. She reached into the pocket of his jeans and grabbed them. Just as she clutched her fingers around the keyring, he suddenly turned the shower off. He was about to return to the room in a matter of seconds, and she was about to be discovered by whoever the man was that walked out of that bathroom. The only close hiding place was against the wall that was covered by the door when it opened up. She swiftly moved to the wall and clamped the keys firmly in her palm so they wouldn't clink to alert her presence. As he walked out of the bathroom and into the bedroom, he smelled of after-shave. He whistled a familiar tune as he picked clothes out of his dresser and returned to the bathroom, shutting the door behind

him. My mom did not waste another minute, and made her way to his office. In those few seconds she wondered how her husband, that smelled and whistled like usual, now seemed to be a predator and she was the prey. When she made it to the filing cabinet, she looked in the files that were placed under the date her surgery took place. Quickly, she opened her file and scanned through it trying to find anything that caught her eye.

“Subject A: Claudia Borne”

In fine print read: “Subject A, Claudia Borne, 27, cadaver transplant procedure.

For this surgery I took one kidney each from two different cadavers. One cadaver died from kidney failure and the other died from natural causes which signifies that their kidneys were normal-functioning preceding death. I will be studying Subject A to see if their left kidney, the one from the alcoholic, will fail before the kidney from the healthy cadaver.”

She quickly placed her folder back into the cabinet (an action she regrets now), and left the house. When she got to her car, she started it and just drove until she felt safe. She ended up driving five states away once she finished her journey, and it wasn't until she was living in her car for a month that she found out she was pregnant with me. She was working at the time but was living in her car until she met my father (well I guess my stepfather), and she moved in with him after he heard about her living situation. She married, had my siblings, and never talked about any of this information until now. I know she was just trying to protect us, but I felt betrayed. How could she not tell me about my real father? So many emotions went through my mind and all I could do was get up and leave. She called after me but I was blinded by tears filled with anger and sadness. I don't remember getting home, or even the drive home for that matter. All I remember was waking up from a nightmare on my couch, drenched in sweat. The nightmare was the same as always, except this time I clearly saw one of the surgeon's faces. He spoke German. Wait-

He spoke German.

I stood up quickly and the world seemed to shatter and crash around me. My head felt heavy and my vision became blurred. I

struggled to make my way to the counter where my antibiotics were sitting. Each step felt like I was being sucked into the floor like it was quicksand; my feet weighed 50 pounds and the atmosphere seemed to breathe heavily on my bones. Just as I grabbed the pill bottle, I collapsed to the floor like a pile of pudding. Through squinted eyes and ringing ears, I saw something strange. The bottle seemed to have a label hiding under the one on top of it. I peeled back the top label, making sure I was careful enough so I didn't rip what devastating truth was hiding underneath. I couldn't believe my eyes. It was all German. Every. Damn. Word. I felt my chest heaving and I was gasping for air; what is happening to me? My cell phone that slid across the floor when I fell started ringing which almost seemed to me like an alarm that was warning me of something I did not know of. I crawled to my phone. It was my mom.

"Oh thank God you answered, you need to get out of your house-" The phone started to fade out.

"Don't take your antibi-"

"He's here...you need-" The phone went silent. It cut back in with a god-awful scream from my mother and a groan from the bottom of her throat that said, "RUN." I wanted to. I wanted to get up and run until my lungs bled, but I was sinking into the floor; further and further. Black.

I woke up on a metal table surrounded by six surgeons, one being a familiar looking man that spoke German.

"Hello my precious daughter." He said through a thick accent. I could see his grin crack across his face from beneath the mask.

"Your mother can no longer care for you...she has had...an accident. Don't worry, you can live with me now." The sound of a drill started and a mask covered my face. A beeping sensation filled my left ear as I lost consciousness.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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