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Brayton Seymour

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AGATE

2024

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AGATE

2024

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ON THE COVER

“Grasp Out in Solidarity” by Alexander Madison

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.

2023 - 2024
STUDENT WRITING CONTEST WINNERS

First Place:

“Bittersweet Existence” by Jamison Moscoso

Second Place:

“Toxicity” by Ava Dilliplane

Third Place:

“Juniper Wisteria” by Ariel Jeffery

2023 - 2024
STUDENT ART CONTEST WINNERS

First Place:

“Fake Lake and Real Tree” by Gabriella Ferri

Second Place:

“Unaccepted Apology” by Logan Oliver

Third Place:

“Moss to Know You” by Alexander Madison

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Unaccepted Apology

By Logan Oliver



Juniper Wisteria

By Ariel Jeffery

These rustic iron walls are starting to make my brain bleed. The rust that looks like blood trips my mind up, confusing the two as the same thing, same liquid, same consequences. As for the smell, the pungent iron tasting fumes, similar to blood, doesn't help the mind-boggling trip up.

I have been locked in this iron cell for five days, one hundred and twenty hours, seven thousand, two hundred minutes and forty-three thousand, two hundred seconds and the first trial period hasn't even started yet.

The 'King' is prolonging it. Making sure our skins are crawling with anticipation and fear before he rains hell on us all.

He feeds on fear like a leach feasting on blood. He craves it, yearns for a taste, a look, a droplet of fear from the thousands of innocent souls he had forcefully brought here, and that realization alone is enough to make my empty stomach retort and dry heave the imaginary food out of my thinning organs.

I have feared nothing in my life. I have found it rather easy to live by. My grandmother helped me grow past the grief over the loss of my parents, teaching me how to control my magical abilities so I don't kill again.

That can't happen again.

I won't let it happen again.

Not after the blood I caused.

The blood I saw.

The blood that taints my fair skin, haunting my thoughts,

My dreams.

My reality. Crumbling into one image, one vessel, one hallucination of a young girl, no older than 7.

Her eyes were empty, the life draining out of them like the pool of blood draining out of her.

I had lost my faith in humanity that day.

Faith in the Gods, the world, the universe, all of it. Because how dare they grant me such skills, such abilities, such *powers* into my tiny human, naive little hands? Making me their lethal weapon.

How dare they allow the killing of an innocent girl to happen? How dare they allow her life to get taken by a mistake? A mistake they made in the stars, the galaxies, the goddamn scripts they hand sewn for their supernatural creations on the mortal plains down below?

They are no better than the greedy leaders on the grounds below. How could they be when they made them? Formed them? *Molded them* into their idea of a perfect soldier. Perfect leaders. Perfect Kings, Queens, and *perfect people*.

They make me sick.

The world I live in makes me sick.

I, make me sick

Spores All Along

By Alexander Madison



I Am You And You Are Me

By River Harris

The morning draft through the window felt like icy fingers caressing my face. The sweet symphony of cardinals called me to wake from the warmth of my bed. The autumn breeze grazed my senses as I took a deep breath and arose with a stretch. The mirror that lay at the end of my bed reflects the sun in vibrant hues onto the walls beside me. The smell of antique wood was always a pleasant gift in this quaint cottage, its scent a reminder of the wolf kept at bay, the wolf that wishes to tear my slice of heaven apart. My eyes are ever creeping toward the parts of this room that I cannot see, the parts I never want to see. The parts I catch a glimpse of every morning when I lie in this place.

My eyes catch the horror of the undulating beast, the one that *breathes mold and exhales disease*. My spine shivers, my breath stolen. Quivering, unable to blink, unable to look away. Vile rot drips from its accursed maw, every drop corrodes the floor. Sounds of battered breathing grew from its body, almost whistling from the decaying holes in a place where a chest should be. Its gaunt figure constantly flows with a tar-like substance, a never-ending waterfall. Its eyes a blackened stew, pussing and bubbling. I try to scream but the screams only echo in my head: "You're not real," but no matter how much I try to scream, my lips won't unsealed. I sit frozen. I close my eyes so tightly, I feel I'll cut myself with my lashes. I can feel the wolf's cold presence creeping closer, hearing the cracking of its jaw, the overwhelming stench of rot pouring from its mouth as it begins to speak.

"You can keep the wolf at bay, but you and I are the same. I am you and you are me. You can stay locked up inside but you can't hide from what we are. You will always look, you will always see. Because I am you and you are me..." The ghostly breaths click and stutter with the grinding of teeth. I finally opened my eyes. All I see is my reflection in the mirror. No more rot, no more dark corners. Just me and the sweet symphony of cardinals. I breathe a sigh of relief. My *breath is one of mold and one that exhales disease*. I hear a whisper in my mind. "I am you and you are me."

Bittersweet Existence

By Jamison Moscoso

The sky is littered with a multitude of stars
Each with their beauty of varying sizes and shapes
Yet the only one that catches my gaze is the star on this world of
mine
It's sun

As I go about observing and studying
I question its warmth
It's eminence
It piques my curiosity

As time moves on
I see the sun for longer
I see it, it's brightness
But ah, I must not yearn
I must not reach out to power beyond my own

So I wait

I wait until I can longer hope but to yearn
Where yearning turns into desire

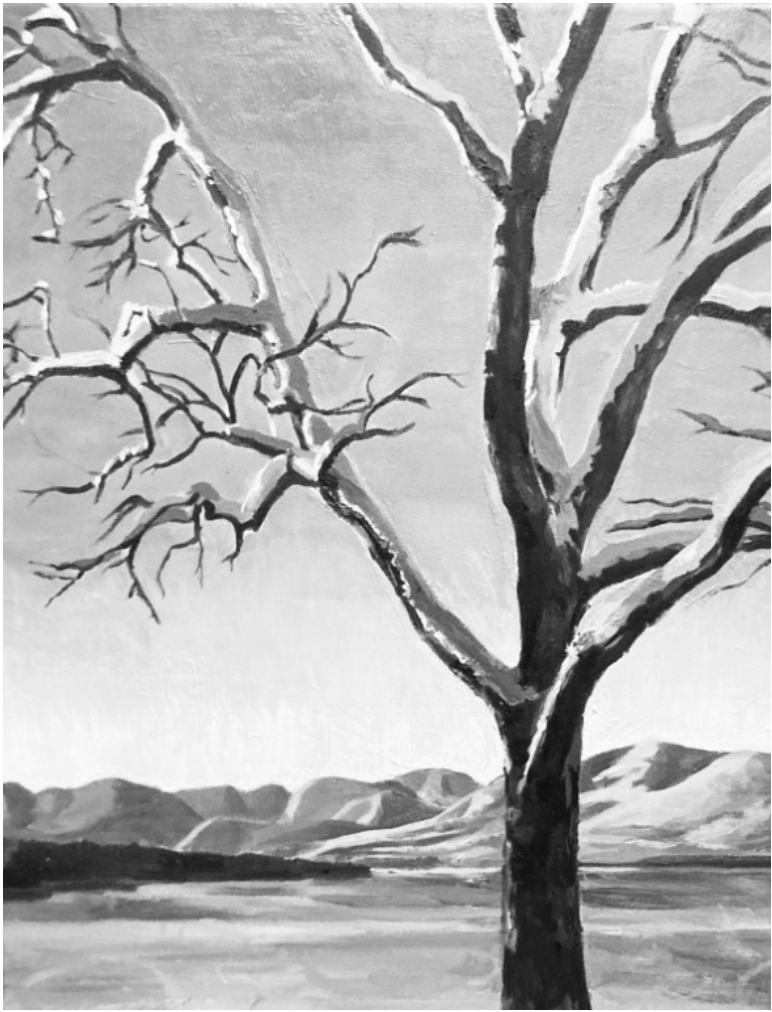
I speak to the sun
Recounting tales of different worlds
Sharing the discoveries I've made
And the sun speaks back, oh how lonely they were
It continues like this for some time until I can bear it no longer

I carga my wings, with an ugliness but profound spirit
I take off to the skies
I soar higher and higher
But only once again to realize that the sun has already begun to set

As I bask in what remains of its crimson afterglow
I ask myself
Why must it be so
Why must I live in this bittersweet existence

I glide until its luminance leaves this world
I leave the hollow crust that remains
Drifting aimlessly in the abyss
Until another star finds my gaze
With hopes that maybe this one will stay

Fake Lake Real Tree
By Gabriella Ferri



Ephemeral

By Jamison Moscoso

Each individual is unique
But you carry a truly unique and irreplaceable soul
That individuality is a treasure that should be valued

But shadows haunt you
Demons lurk at every corner
Scars tear open and fester anew
Yet despite all of that you follow through
How can my eyes not follow too?

Like Icarus, I too look at the sun
Dream of the sun
Yearn for the sun

Yet I am no fool
Only a coward

The sun is strong and fierce
The sun is bright and powerful
But the sun always casts its shadow

Who am I to look at the sky and reach the star in my gaze?
Who's light pierces the midnight curtain

But serves as a reminder of the distance between

Who am I to dream?
To relish in the light
The warmth in the hours of midnight

A crucible melts, pools, and reforges
It does so to create something stronger than what was put in
Yet here I thought it did the same for me
Yet I'm still the same fool I ever was

I'm scared
These thoughts continue
I try to bury them
Burn them
Run away from them
Yet I can't

They're not as ephemeral as I thought

The golden glow
The warmth
The aroma
The comfort

I guess I'm more like Icarus than I thought
Chasing the sun that will always be out of my reach

Icefall

By Jacqueline Madden



I Am From

By Ariel Jeffery

I am from Schenectady NY, a city where you have to lock your doors after the sun sets. The moon's shadows bring alleyway critters, longing substances, awaiting their next hit and craving money to put into their empty wallets.

I am from a family of poverty, the money cards that have been dealt to us from whatever God assigned up above assigns everyone were drawn short, our deck made and molded too blank, too short, too *empty*.

I am from Caucasian descent, our ancestors coming from Ireland, Scotland, Poland, France and Native Americans. My mother and father had a Scottish themed wedding in 2019, the Scottish descent coming from my father's side of the family.

I am from a family who holds little to no traditions, following society's normal traditions like Christmas, Thanksgiving, St. Patrick's Day and Easter.

I am from a mother who has spiritual beliefs. I believe in the universe. I believe in Karma. I believe in whatever the galaxy has to offer. The umbrella I fall under hovers above my head like an angelic halo. Fate, soulmates, and reincarnation sit on top of the halo like microscopic cosmic animals.

I am from playing with my father, my mother and my sister, running, laughing and smiling, not knowing what the word "hurt" or "reality" could bring just yet.

I am from getting waffles for breakfast every Sunday, being brought to stores, fishing trips and hiking trips with my father.

I am from that slowly dying, the Sunday breakfasts, the fishing trips, the daily store trips faded away before my eyes, and I never knew why.

I am from growing up too fast, too early, agonizingly too early. The knife against her neck was too haunting, too terrifying for innocent eyes, forcing the pastel walls and unicorns on top of rainbows to crash and burn. Dragging in panic attacks and anxiety, buckets on buckets full of anxiety by their hair, dropping them off to stay, their luggage coming shortly after their arrivals.

I am from forgetting that memory and growing up with the after effects of it, never knowing why I was this human vessel for anxiety.

I am from loving drawing, music and writing. Lots and lots of writing. My mind can never shut up with these ideas. Many, many ideas flow through my head like a broken record playing on loop, never really knowing where to stop or where to pick up again.

I am from loving parents, wonderful friends and an amazing sister <3.

Untitled

By Cabrina Simmons



Why?

By Ronnie Coe

Why?

I'm as sweet as a honey bee,
Sophisticated like a bag of herbal tea.

As strong as a tree.

But I wasn't the key to your plea.

I thought it was going to be me.

But you just didn't see.

The potential we would be.

How this is continuous,

I do not know.

As I begin to wonder why I bestow,
These constant blows straight to my heart.

I begin to wonder if "the one" exists.

Because I don't know how much longer I can persist,
I can't resist any form of love, may it be fake or not.

While I constantly wonder

If you care for me by saying he loves me...

He loves me not

Picking the petals off of a daisy.

Because it left me with nothing else but to go crazy.

Self Portrait

By Terry Beaupierre



Golden Horizon Love

By William Egle

It was the night they met; the sun began to set.

A night that came, one to never forget.

When they met, he was very quiet at first,

But as their friends left, she asked, "Are you ready to talk yet?"

He nodded yes.

As the sun began to vanish, he realized his love for her was lofty.

Their love for each other grew stronger with each passing day and week.

Hanging out from days to nights,

The evening air was filled with anticipation as he knew it was the perfect moment.

The night he asked her to be his girlfriend.

Yes, it took time, but she thought it was right.

She responded with a yes.

He wasn't expecting that answer yet, but she believed the relationship was one to never forget.

They talked about their future as her roommate said, "It was love at first sight."

Their love for each other went on from day to day and night by night.

Their love for each other was undeniably right.

Moss to Know You
By Alexander Madison



Teetotalism For 3

By Elizabeth Hoyt

3 years of choosing myself over alcohol.

3 years of wanting better for my family.

3 years of dedicated sobriety.

Some days are great.

Some days are questionable.

Some days could have been disastrous.

3 years of walking a different path.

3 years of growth.

3 years of change.

All days are remembered.

All days are valued.

All days are worth it.

The Big Small Apple

By Brayton Seymour



The “New” Me

By Ronnie Coe

I’m beginning to feel comfortable;
with the idea that I will never be who I was.

She was bubbly.

She was energetic.

She was innocent.

I liked her.

And eagerly wished for her.

But through my past experiences it crushed her.

The “fragile” her.

I was given a random seed;

Not aware of what would sprout.

I became something new.

I didn’t even know who I was.

Not even a trace.

I was in the middle of a forest;

Just waiting to start a path.

I could go where I wanted...

End where I desired;

It was a daring feeling;

But in a way it felt like freedom.

Sure, I could be like her.

But why would I with all that I endured?

I became stronger,

More independent,

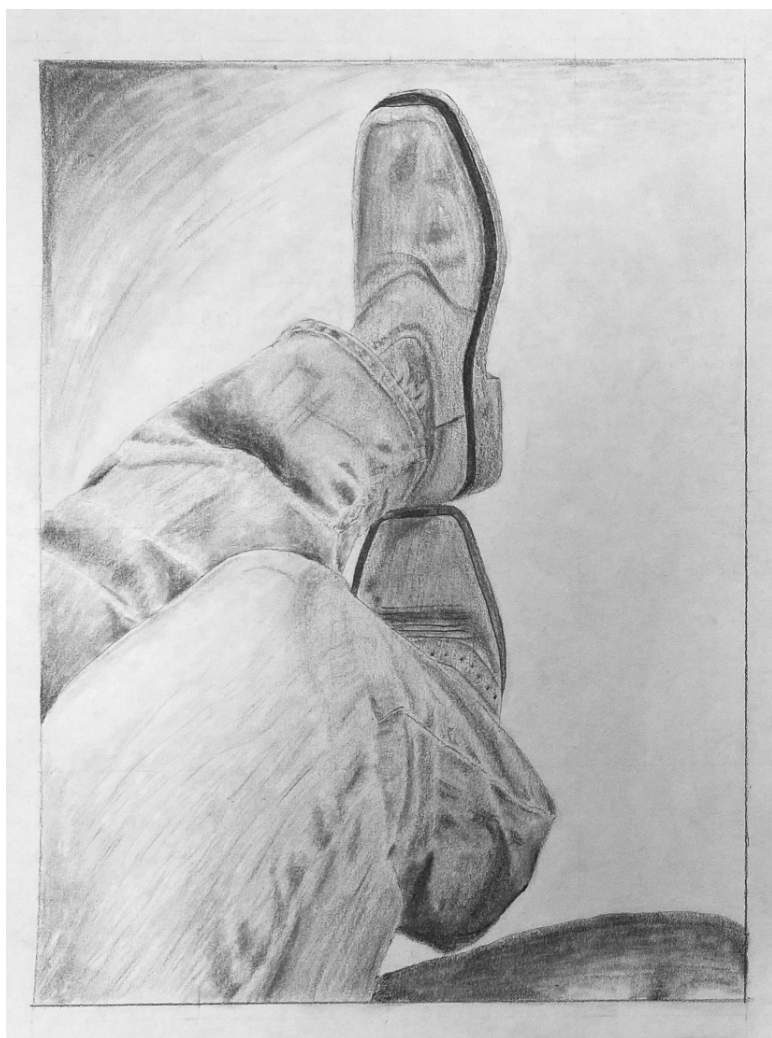
And understood who I wanted to be.

I could just see,

See the “new” me.

Just Like You
By Skyler Nowalk





Toxicity

By Ava Dilliplane

Apologize for your words of Abuse.
Bruised from your brutal Beatings.
Cuts from the Carelessness of your actions.
Desperate for your Death.
Embarrassed by your Excuses.
Fractured by Fear you have punctured my skin with.
Gruesome but Gracious
Heavy from your Heartbreak
In love with the Illusion, you've created when you're sober
Jealous of everyone's Joy
Killed by your Kindness.
Lost in your Lies you have told me.
Mutilated by your Manipulations with money and words.
Nauseated by your Negligence.
Oppressed by your Opinions of my body.
Poisoned by your Past.
Quiet from your Questions.
Raw from your drunken Rage.
Scrutinized by your Shadows.
Tortured by your Truths you tell me.
Used for your Urges.
Victim to your Violations.
Wounded by your Wishes.
Xanax to quiet the thoughts.
Yearning for Your love.
Zero Chances Left.

...

Gracefully NOT
By Alexander Madison



The Monster Beneath The Mask

By Jamison Moscoso

The mask
It crawls
It consumes
It morphs
And it curses

Yet, at the same time it shields
Like a curtain of midnight, it separates the world into two
Protecting the monster beneath from them
And them from it

Whilst midnight can bring its star dazzled gaze
Its shadows that try to consume
Or its inky tendril like chains keeping what should be held down
The monster remains

Through the slits the monster can see the blurred world
Oh how it yearns to be free and true
But no

It scratches at the mask
Drip
It claws
Drip
Its screams
Drip

Who are you to be free?

Yet when it gets lost in a pair of dark almonds, piercing through the
blurry world

Crack

When it basks in the eminence of skin that glows like the goddess
Athena

Crack

When it hears the serenades of genuine joy coming from a voice
pure

Thump

The monster isn't so scared

For once, it doesn't hurt

The mask crumbles

And it gets to experience bittersweet bliss

But bliss nonetheless

For the monster knows it should always be beneath the mask
So another forms

The mask itches

Drip

The mask stretches

Drip

The mask is dark

Drip

And so the monster must go where it must

Freehand Person

By Gabriella Ferri



What If?

By Ronnie Coe

What if it works out?

All the stress and heart-beating beyond my chest,

I end up with something far more amazing.

Than what I had ever dreamed of.

What if my hope follows through?

Everything I thought was false hope ended up being the truth.

Something I daydreamed of in all my youth.

I always thought of the “what if” being bad...

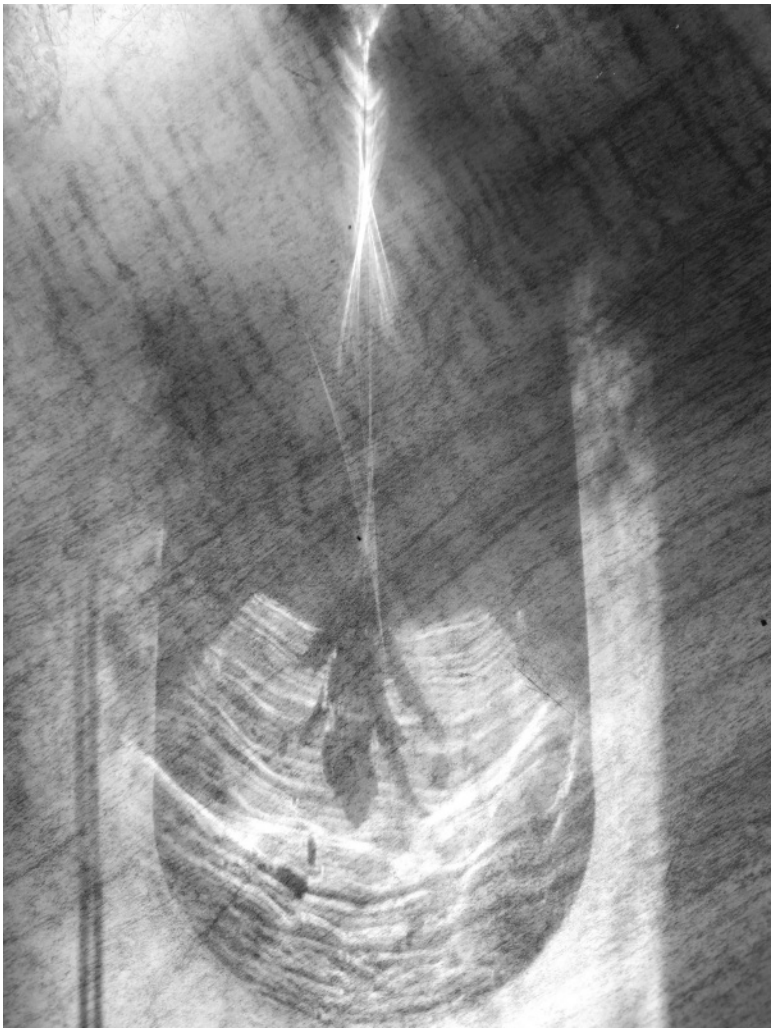
But today I feel different,

Just a tad...

But it's more than I've ever had.

Mirage

By Jacqueline Madden



To The Dog Who Didn't Live Long Enough

By Ava Dilliplane

I miss you every day that you've been gone.

I still remember the day I had to say goodbye. It was one of the worst days I've ever had.

I still remember that pain.

I still remember the hurt and the break I felt in my heart.

I still remember going to see you that night.

I still remember how I looked you in the eyes and said I love you.

I will always love you no matter where you are. No matter how far away you travel.

And after that day I would look out to where you lay.

I would cry all the time because of how much it hurt, until eventually I came to terms with the fact you were never coming back. I never thought I would see you again. But now I know you were watching over me, and you knew the heartache and pain that was coming for me. You knew how much I was going to struggle, and you sent me one of the best things you could think of. This gift helped me through it all, it helped me through the rough times. Through the pain, through the breakdowns, through life. I knew it was you who helped it happen. I knew you were the one who did that. You sent me the best gift I could ever get. I see so much of you in this gift. The soft touch, the comforts. Everything. I still miss you every day and I will always miss you and when my gift must go, I hope you finally get to meet it in person. I hope you get to thank it for taking your place. I hope you get to talk about all the things you missed, all the things you wish you were there for. I miss you so much and sometimes I let it hurt, but I know you're always going to be there even if it is not close enough for me to hold and touch. I love you still, that will never change. I miss you every day even when I don't realize it. But I'd like to thank you for the best gift you could give me. I will never be able to tell you how grateful I am for it. I love you and miss you with all my heart.

Meet ‘Ralph’ The Ruffed Grouse

By Jacqueline Madden



The Lone Sailor

By Jamison Moscoso

She walks along the pier
Taking in the cool sea breeze, like she does everyday
A breeze that refreshes
A breeze that bites
A breeze that blows gently thought her midnight hair
In the hours of twilight, under a star filled sky, does the world seem
at peace

As the waves crash against the worn posts, she prepares herself like
she does every day

As light begins to pierce through the cloud-stricken sky, the
shadows begin to taunt her
Yet, she continues like she does everyday
As her body aches as she loads her boat, the light catches her old
cars and wounds
One that carry memories, nightmares
Yet, she continues, like she does everyday

As she travels along the void that is the sea, a darkness covers the sky
A storm like any other day on her travels
The waves crash against her
They thrash
And then they drag her within

As the chains of despair drag her deeper, she thinks
What's the point?
What's the point of it all?
Each day is the same as the last
Each one dragging you in
Suffocating you
Why fight a battle you can't win?
Yet in the distance, a beacon reaches out
Its light wears down the cabins and she freed
Why? She asks
Why save me?
But it was her who fought back

That's strength, true strength

Despite all that happens, she kept going, moving towards the next day, like she does everyday

Night

By Gabriella Ferri



I Miss My Teddy Bear

By Melanie Wirtz

He stole my special teddy bear.

I was planning on giving that teddy bear a different day.

I was eventually going to give him the teddy bear when I wanted to.

I had a vivid dream for how I wanted to give that teddy bear.

I had it planned for a long time.

I wanted the teddy bear to go to someone I could look at and know
they were

meant for my teddy bear.

I wanted the person to be gentle and loving.

But instead he just ripped it away from me without asking.

I didn't want to believe he just took my beloved teddy bear so I
acted like it was a generous gift.

Deep down I knew the teddy bear was ripped from me.

I will always remember how my teddy bear was ripped from me.

I sometimes miss the time before I lost my teddy bear.

I will never have my dearest teddy bear again.

Now I will have to live with that feeling forever.

Water Leaf
By Gabriella Ferri



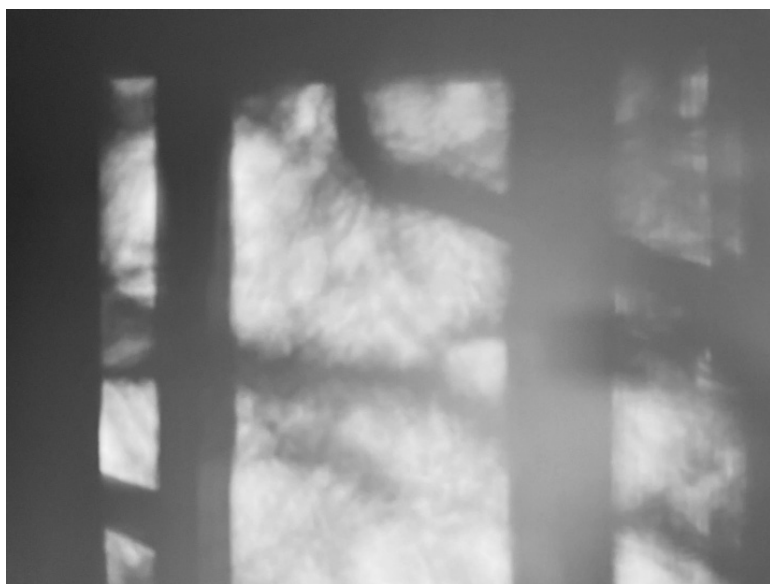
November

By Nancy Willow

There are whole people dying everywhere
Every day the news a broken window
Those we love on all the fractured angles
And yet
You are here
Deep in my autumn
Finding me again at the edge
Whispering tree shadows on the wall
I touch the softness that lingers in the last
Light of this desperate spacetime
My hands still reaching for
Grace

November

By Nancy Willow



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