

AGATTE



2025

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2025

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ON THE COVER

“Discovery” by Jahzeel Moscoso

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.

2024 - 2025
STUDENT WRITING CONTEST WINNERS

First Place:

“A Work of Heart” by Jeannie Gibbs

Second Place:

“Where I’m From” by Alexander Madison

Third Place:

“Upon Wings of Death” by Gabrielle Blake

2024 - 2025
STUDENT ART CONTEST WINNERS

First Place:

“The Mechanism of the Heart” by Brendan Coffey

Second Place:

“Discovery” by Jahzeel Moscoso

Third Place:

“Orange Mycena” by Alexander Madison

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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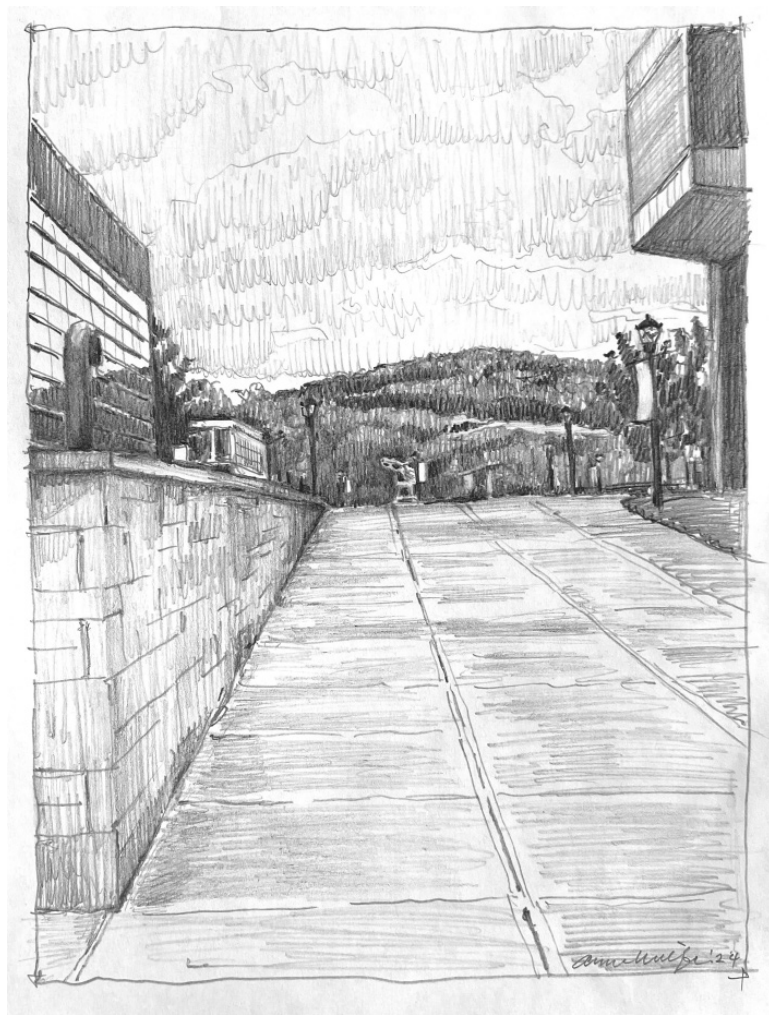
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Time Waits for No One
By Jacqueline Madden



Delhi Campus View

By Anne Wilfer



An Old Friend

Jake M. Dean and Emma F. Bonita

The dusty road crumbled underfoot as a stranger on back of pale horse rode past the rickety, faded sign proudly displaying the name "Sunset." His face is shrouded by an old hat and bandana, a worn sickle prominently displayed on his hip, neighboring a revolver clinking against each other as he rode further into town.

The town saloon, like Sunset itself, barely got visitors. The letters on the sign above weren't as faded as the entrance though. Inside, there were a few rugged men sharing a drink at one of the tables, two younger men engaged in a game consisting of faded cards off to the corner; and finally a tired looking man sitting at the bar sipping a glass of whisky.

The rider walks in with a familiar glint in his eye spotting the lone patron. He approaches with a certain grace that caught the man's eye immediately. The rider placed the cool iron on the counter and signaled the bartender. Without skipping a beat he turned his full attention to the man;

Rider:

Hello Jesse, it's been a long time.

Jesse paused and slowly returned his gaze lingering over the countless notches on the rider's pistol. He locked eyes to the other man's obscured face.

Jesse:

(inquiring gruffly)

Do I know you, Stranger?

. The other man seemed to give a soft smile beneath the tattered bandana.

Rider:

You are very well acquainted with my partner, and you used to know me very well.

Jesse quirked a brow.

Jesse:

Wha-

He was cut off by the shaggy barmen clacking a glass of watery whisky on the dull counter before the rider who didn't seem to notice. Shadowy eyes firmly boring into his.

Jesse:

(puzzled)

Have we met before, lawman?

Rider:

Naw, I've been right there with you on every score.

(Turns and takes a sip of his whisky underneath his bandana)

You've just been too damn blind to see me.

Jesse sneaks another glance at the notched pistol before looking down into the almost empty whisky glass, to his amazement and horror his last job shows in the murky reflection.

Jesse has his gun pointed at the bank teller during his last big score, but this reflection memory feels off somehow. As he was about to pull the trigger, he noticed that the bank teller wasn't looking at him with fear in his eyes. As he looked deeper into the glass, nose brushing against the chipped rim he noticed another figure standing there that the man was looking at and realized that it was the very man sitting next to him.

Jesse:

Sits up sharply and turns to the rider

What are you?

Rider:

I think you already know the answer to that.

Takes another sip of his whisky.

Jesse rolls the glass between his calloused palms suddenly not being able to meet his companion's eyes. The rider clears his throat and begins to

swirl his finger along the rim of the glass. The rider returns the pistol to his belt before turning a palmful of shiny looking coins onto the counter next to his now empty glass. Jesse avoids looking at them for any longer he has a feeling they aren't silver dollars.

Rider:

Dolefully

My partner tells me you used to be such a gentle boy when you first arrived; she always hoped you would stop before it was too late.

Rider shrugs and picks at his tobacco-stained nails.

Rider:

Maybe that's why it took her so long to tell me. She planted this garden and you pissed on her flowers before they even bloomed.

Was it worth it?

Jesse:

softly huffs

I ain't be meaning to offend your partner.

Awkwardly

Please send the lady my regards.

Rider:

Waves hand dismissively, responding absently.

We've seen worse than you; we've been together a while.

Rider:

Winks.

Jesse:

Hairs and goosebumps begin to stand as he takes a hard look as finally begins to understand. Quietly nodding.

So you're-

Rider:

interjecting with a rough chuckle

Don't be an addle pot.

Jesse:

Smirks and stares once more into the rider's eyes
I knew this day would come eventually.

Rider:

resolutely

Can't stay above the snakes forever. Are you ready?

Jesse:

Finishes his drink and puts the glass down on the counter
The drinks here are shit anyway.

*He nods as they both rise from their seats and walk out of the saloon
onto the middle of the dusty road, turning to face the opposite way from
each other and stepping five paces each then turning around. They
stood there for what seemed like hours, like statues in a field.*

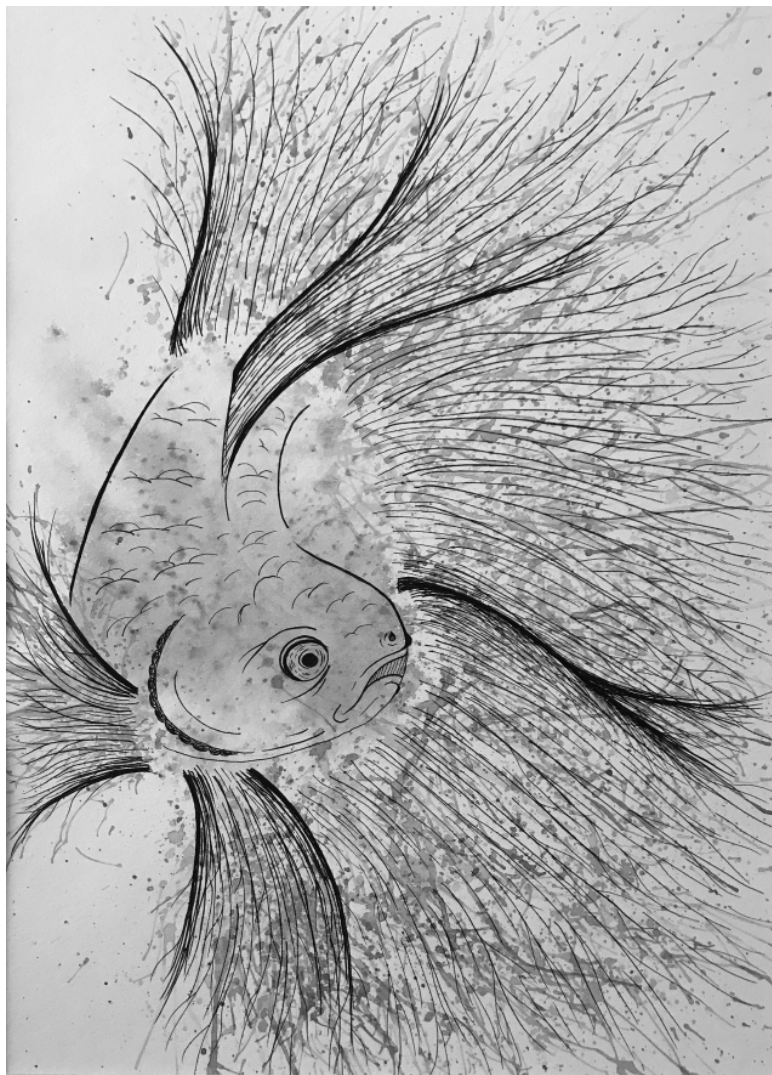
*Then they drew their guns with lightning fast speed, but Jesse was faster
to the draw. As his shaking fingers hovered over the trigger, Jesse took
one last moment to look at the rider.*

Why waste a bullet when it wouldn't work anyway

A gunshot rang out.

*The rider took out his neglected sickle and etched another notch into the
barrel of his gun as he got on his pale horse and commanded it forward,
as always; hoofprints washing away with the next breeze, and rode
away from the town called sunset,*

BlueGreen Fish
Brendan Coffey



I Remember Waking

By Alexander Madison

I remember waking.
Opening my eyes and breathing,
Yet my life is so distant

I grew so cold with myself,
Like another person,
That now I find myself learning more about myself.

Every day I find I have preferences,
I did not wake with them,
Yet I remember waking.

I find myself,
In the creaky floors that drive me mad,
In the gentle breeze that makes my heart swell,
In the foods that I refuse to eat,
And the ones I eat so freely.

My ears used to belong to creaky floors.
That gentle breeze was such a fright.
The refusal of food tasted like a swollen lip,
Gluttony like starvation.

I find myself so interested with myself.
All the things I learn about myself.

It's almost like a dream,
But I remember waking.

Weeping Angel

By Ariel Jeffery



Grieving Midnight

By Jamison Moscoso

I sit beneath the shade of these great oaks
I watch as the sun retreats into the horizon, taking in the warmth
that I once knew
And then, midnight's veil drapes across the sky
Like a leviathan, it reminds me of the isolation I live by

At twilight's zenith, heroes and beasts of a time long since past
dance across that midnight canvas
It's only then do I light the embers
It's only then do I let fire dance on my lips and down my throat
It's only then do I let myself speak

I stare at the newborn flames
I relish in the crackle and splitting of long since dead bark
I await for shadows to form and dance alongside the familiar hearth
Tell me o flame and creatures of darkness, what do you see thus far?

Do you see the tempered steel that is my heart or scars long since
torn and festered?
Do you see wisdom or grief hidden behind tired eyes and a creased
brow?
Do you see a pillar of confidence or rather someone at the edge of
annihilation?

Tell me shadows, what is there left for me?
For a lonely road is all I can see
I imagine myself sailing across an endless sea
And I always question, will anyone travel along with me?

I drift aimlessly within an infinite cosmos
And I always question, what is my ethos?
What purpose do I serve
Which stars will guide me to the destination which many consider
"home"
Where is this enlightenment that has yet to be shown?

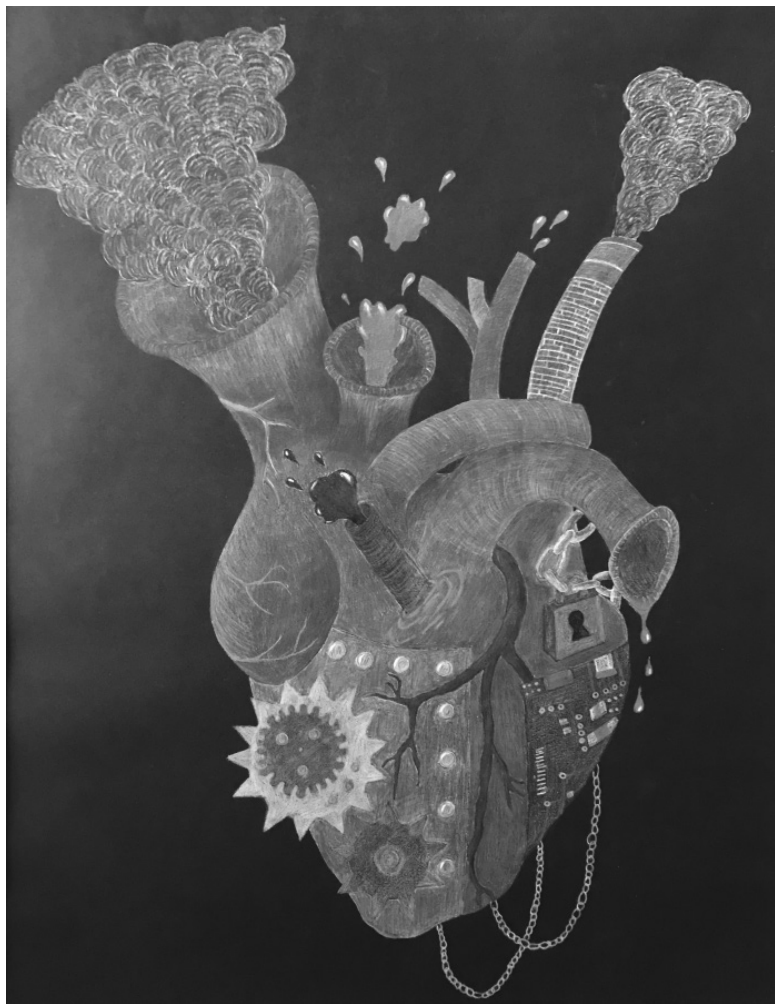
Honed are my skills
Filled is my heart
Apart it is torn, and rebuilt it is

Hazardous may be the path
Last I may be
For them to remember me
Yet grief need not only be melancholy
For it can be love preserved, like a memory
May it bring comfort in what we once shared so dearly
May it remind me of a time where things weren't taken so seriously
May I remember why I wait so patiently

While elusive you may all be
I'm glad my memory hasn't failed me

The Mechanism of the Heart

By Brendan Coffey



Words That Make Me Weep

By Nancy Willow

Amaranth, okra, sweet potato slips: songs of the South I never learned in my New York garden, no, these are plants of place, with sun and heat too hot for the likes of me but that doesn't mean I didn't appreciate their color, texture, taste, the softness of their seeds, their skin, their blooming, right there in the backyard alongside the tangles of bamboo and poison ivy, the very definition of verdant, and I was too, I was too, but I don't know what to do with all that music now that I'm back up North, I can hear it, yes, sometimes, still, but I can't play it, can't explain it, can't sing it in a key that makes sense, even in dreams, even to myself.

Ghost Pipes

By Alexander Madison



Poetugal Literacy

By Joe Piasek

Ponta del lava bells
Towering soft at sea
Foaming a fountain
In Pública view

Romanian journalist X-
Seeding their freedoms
Like wild mushrooms X-
Pfunged, knowing all 2-

Well that their marks N-
Delibly ruined by
Jotting unrestrained,
Adding to take away

Like a memory lost, Jack-
et back et de room with
A view on the narrow
Euro, mine no-mo

With limpets so gummy tummy
Octopus yummy
Delgada Davida, honey (don't you know that)
I'll always bidet.

Redraw #3

By Gabriella Ferri



The Paths Known to Me

By Jamison Moscoso

I find myself within a matrix of glass
It is, for lack of a better term, a labyrinth
Each twisting and incomprehensible corner ending in a mirror
There are some that show possibilities unbound
But also regrets
Some that are filled with what-ifs
Others, tragedies
And each time I find myself at the end of one of these paths, it
always ends with shattered glass

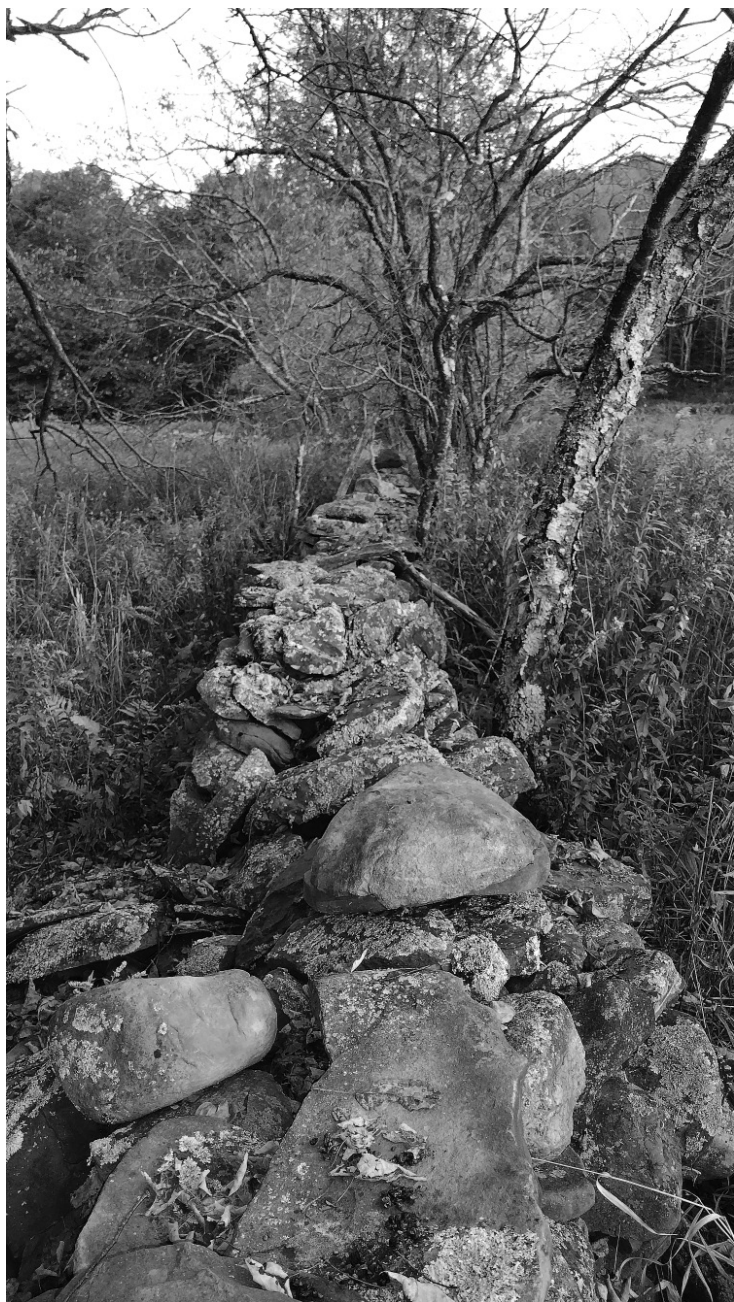
Sure, I bleed, I hurt, and I scorn
My blood trickles downwards as I continue to be torn
As everything reminds me of how I am forlorn
And I only beg please, please, please, no more

Yet, this blood is not my own
This crimson ichor
This history
This map
It is something far greater and more precious to be spilt on
desecrated ground
And as it trickles, flows, torrents to something uncontrollable
The labyrinth becomes filled with heavy red mist, with only one
path clear
An escape
And then I realize, maybe I haven't been sleeping as much as of late

I open my eyes and find myself in a bathroom with my hand
smashed into this poor mirror and with much more blood than a
mirror should normally have. I now realize, I'm back in reality, and
what a throbbing realization that is.

Stone Wall in Autumn

By Jacqueline Madden



Alstroemeria

By Brendan Coffey



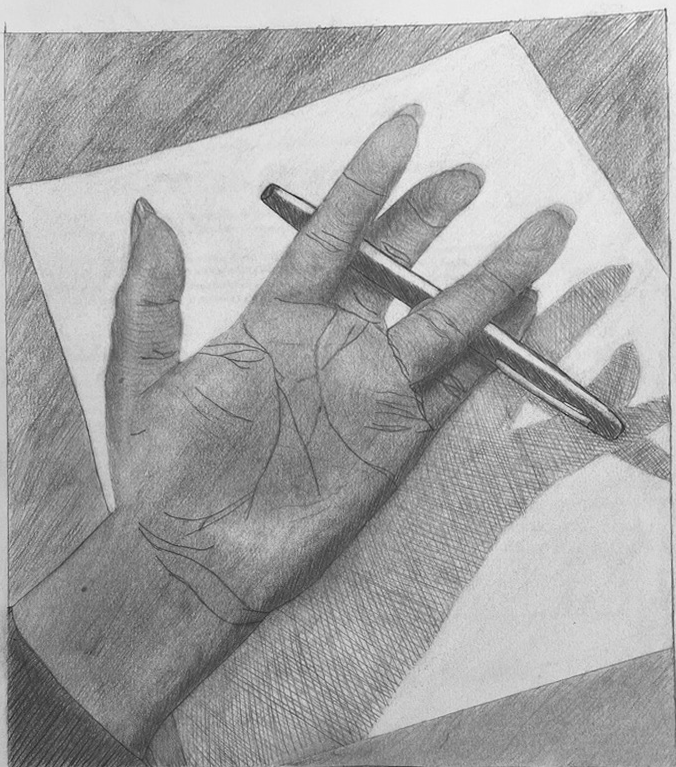
The Eagle

By Hailey Wolcott

king of the sky
a soul soaring free
flying high above the storm
a spiritual mentor
perched over the rushing river water
diving head first into desire
striking at opportunity
with its powerful talons
electrifying the heart with a sense of wonder
guiding with blessings of bravery
symbolizes a journey through life
driven by eternal good luck

Modified Contour #2

By Alison Martinez



Alison Martinez

Modified Contour #2

9/25/24

To Exist is To Perform

By Kam Dunham



Anxiety

By Ariel Jeffery

I tap my fingers on the desktop underneath me.

One.

Two.

Three.

Four. The taps matching the beat of my heart.

Bump.

Bump bump.

Bump Bump Bump.

Bump Bump Bump Bump.

It's beats increasing.

Pulsating.

Drumming.

In my chest.

In my ears.

In my fingers as I,

tap

tap

tap.

I can't focus.

The words on the board blending together.

Time dancing with gravity.

Gravity flirting with reality.

Reality hooking up with mentality.

And mentality proposing to anxiety.

All wrapping,

molding,

becoming the color of my eyes,

The chapped lips that are mine.

The pimples that decorate my skin.

The freckles and acne scars dusted,

littered,

scattered all over me.

It's my hair.

It's in my nails.

It's in my clothes.

Suffocating me.

Pulling me under its taunting,
Haunting,
Horrifying embrace.
Forcing me to dance with it,
Sing with it,
Swim with it.
It has me so compelled I'm drowning in it.
There's no escaping it's lullaby it's that embedded into my skin,
Into my veins,
Into my bones,
Into my soul.
Its to the point I can't breathe,
Can't think,
Can't be without it looming over my shoulder,
Pouring its venom into my veins
Drowning my thoughts in its inky poison,
Whispering thoughts,
Feelings,
Actions into my mind.
I'm it's loyal puppet.
All it has to do is pull the strings and it has me fooled.
Thinking what it thinks.
Singing what it sings.
Acting how it wants me to act.
Doing whatever it tells me because I am not my own person.
Not without it.
Them.
The puppet master pulling my life strings.
I tap my fingers on the desktop underneath me.
One.
Two.
Three.
Four, as I succumb to the anxiety looming over me.

Untitled

By Cabrina Simmons



Redraw #2

By Gabriella Ferri



Where I'm From

By Alexander Madison

I am from somewhere closed,
Like lids to boxes,
A place waiting for a push,
To let everything spill free.

I'm from broken dreams and cursed things,
Lies and family I never wanted,
Things I never needed,
Names I'll never speak.

A place where grass grows too well in patches,
Barrel lids in the yard,
Bags in the freezer.

A place where I leaned against the door too hard,
Holding the handle too tight,
Later smelling the copper on my hands,
Stained to my soul like a streak of white.

A place that tasted of tears,
A place that tasted of screams.

The feeling of adrenaline,
Listening to the floorboards.

Yellow bottles,
Chalky taste.

A deep humming,
A sound you hear in horror movies.

Is that gas?

Stains on the carpet,
What happened here?

Static in my lips,
Where did it go?

A name I don't recognize,
Who is he?
Where I'm from is dead,
Another green spot in the yard,
Another bag in the freezer,
Another stain in the carpet.

It is a name I do not know,
Pictures that are not mine,
Faces I don't remember,
Smells that make me ache.

I come from a place I will never return,
A place I leave to nightmares.

I live with my love

Happy memories staring down at my work,
My life is not where I'm from,
My life is where I will go.

No more running
No more crying

I am not my past.
I am not my family.
Their lies,
Their abuse.

I live in a home

In our home, I hear a name,
Someone I know,
I love her.

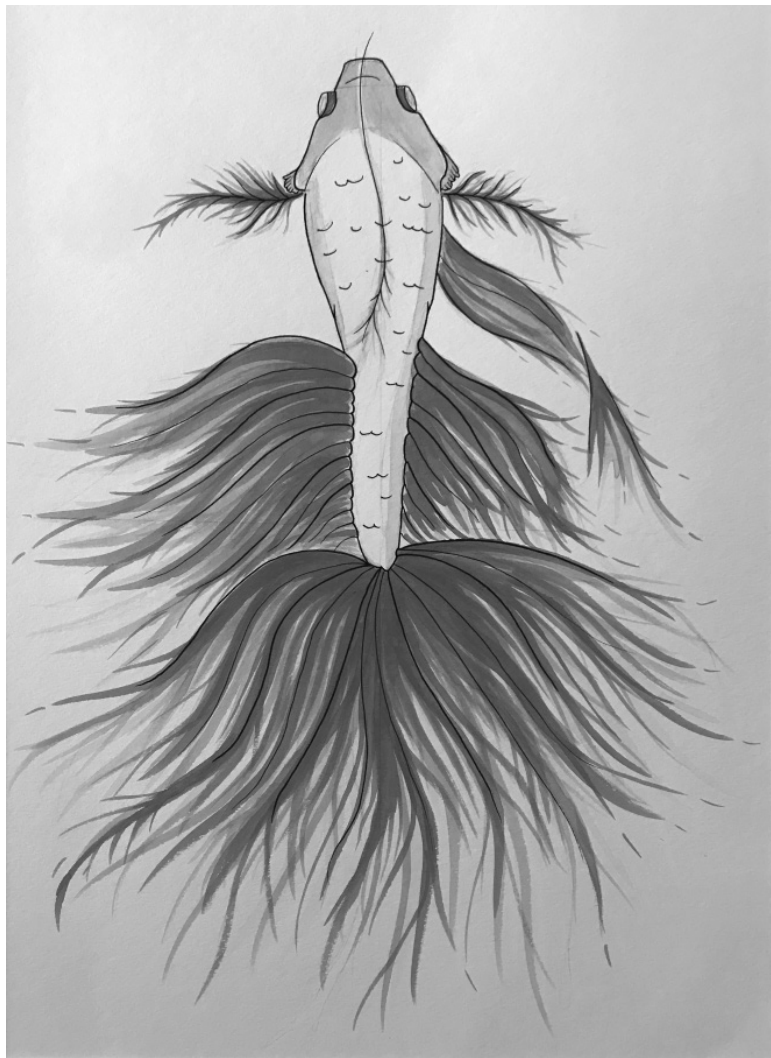
In my home there is my love,

My dog,
My dreams come true,
In our home, there's writing on the walls,
Clips of memories had,
And memories lost,
Things tucked away,
Too fresh to forget.

I am from nowhere
But I'm going everywhere

YellowOrange Fish

By Brendan Coffey



Seasons

By Jamison Moscoso

Time once again has left me changed
Bringing in the end of another age
Pages and Pages of life's chapters fill
Making me wonder, is this the last thrill?

But like seasons, life is a cycle
Don't dwell on what is done and look ahead on what's to come
Life's pages aren't filling any faster
So why rush into disaster

People and habits change
But like the crimson leaves that dance across the sky
I am reminded of the passion I once knew them by
Each gentle sigh bringing memories of those familiar golden smiles
And as I hear the crackle of those orange leaves under my feet
Like a hearth, it reminds me of their warmth that I miss so dearly

Sooner or later those colors fade and the world turns gray
Winter's harsh embrace begins, like a temptress begging you to give
in
And then it all begins anew

A pure white renewal blankets the world, signaling the start of yet
another chapter
Before long, emerald blooms and life booms

And then we come back to where we began
Yet I'm glad these seasons change as I can remember you all again

White Rose

By Jacqueline Madden



Upon Wings of Death

By Gabrielle Blake

A bird lands
This uninvited fellow
Comfortable on its perch
Looking, looking, looking
Through my window!
There looking still
Surveying, how impertinent
This thing sitting and looking
Through my window
The spectacle!
From where has it arrived
Here looking at me
I watch it
Watching me
Crow.
Harbinger of death
What have it to say to me?
Killer of men
symbol of end times
Suspect
Looking still at me!
Only a wretched noise to end all!
It speaks no truths to me
Perhaps, not yet wise enough
Looking, looking, looking
No longer looking
at once gone
I'm still looking
How ridiculous
and
All too much speculation for lunch.

Redraw # 1

By Gabriella Ferri



Through their Eyes

By Ava Dilliplane

She sees the notification: one image attached. She opens it and is greeted with a picture of writing. “Here we go again,” is one of the thoughts that rushes into her mind as she expects another one of the sappy love letter-type messages.

Instead, she is greeted with a reminder in a language she is fluent in. Listening to words and reading a text that has been repeated a thousand times turns into a broken record real fast. Now, as her tired ocean blue eyes read through the second section, she starts to realize the direction this is heading.

“Sometimes you have to escape reality to see what’s right in front of you,” she says. A statement that showcases years of life experience, though too many for an 18-year-old girl. With everything she has experienced, she finds the real world to be difficult to tackle head-on. So she uses her own form of escaping.

She hurts herself. She does it in more ways than one – but almost all of them are physical. The girl who never thought she would do such a thing now finds herself doing it on a somewhat regular basis. Instead of choosing to keep fighting, she gives in to the urges and cuts again. And again. And again. And again – because the ones she made already did not add up to be an even number. She wants to make new ones.

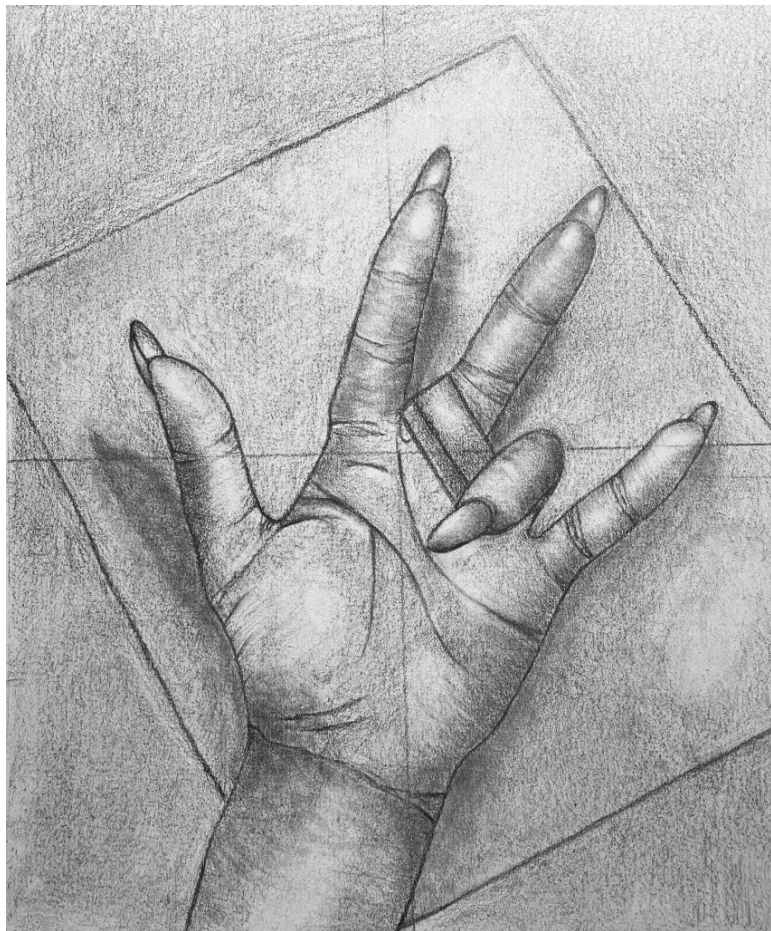
Every cut pierces into her own skin, along with the flesh of everyone in her life that deeply loves and cares for her. Seeing the person who is constantly there for others give in to her own

demons is not only heartbreaking, but a reminder that she has work to do.

She knows that her escapes are harmful to her in every single moment except for the one she does them in – because she doesn't think. She knows she can win the battle against her own mind and reclaim what's hers. And have all the confidence in the world that she will. She owes it to herself. She owes it to that smiling little girl with bangs who saw the world in full color.

Perspective

By Haylee Hernandez



Blue Tarantula

By Brendan Coffey



Like a Brother, My Childhood Best Friend

By William Egle

Two years have gone by, yet in my heart I know you're near,
When quiet times occur, and the teardrops start to appear.
You were my brother, my buddy, my friend,
A love that will always remain and never end.

We grew up together, day after day,
Through good times and bad we found our way.
You always knew how I was feeling inside,
Never needed to hide.

Time flew by, but the memories stay there,
Your wagging tail, your eyes so bold and brave.
Though you are gone, I can still feel your love,
I can feel you watching from above, it's real.

You were more than a dog, more than a pet,
You were family, and I won't forget.
I would never think that a time would come when
You will be never dead to my heart, never die.

Two years have gone by, and I still carry thee,
In every thought, in every chill.
Though you're not here to walk with me,
You'll always be a part of my heart, eternally.

Conversation with Space

By Bersham Brown



Dissonance

By Hector Rodriguez

A young man with long, silky black hair walks down the street on a cool dark night. As his tall, slender body takes step after step his breath escapes in the form of a wispy fog. A ding sounds out in the quiet darkness.

The man pulls out his phone and reads a message from a contact labeled, "Sis" : "Bodhi, Mom's back in the hospital. R u coming?"

The man stops and drops his arm to his side. He stares up at the sky and sighs, "Not again."

Bodhi reaches into his pocket with a shaky hand and pulls out a pack of cigarettes. He lights one and leans against a nearby building as he lifts his shaky hand and takes a puff of his cigarette. His hands stop shaking as he lets out one last puff of smoke and snuffs his cigarette.



Bodhi Smoking

Bodhi texts his sister: “not if dad’s there”

Bodhi watches his phone as his sister begins typing. Minutes pass until she stops typing only to send the short message: “Ok”

Bodhi takes a deep breath and continues his trek only to be jumped by a man lying in wait in an alleyway nearby. Bodhi fights back against his assailant, throwing punches and kicks in a desperate attempt to survive. Bodhi's head smashes against the pavement as his assailant pins him to the ground.

Bodhi kicks the assailant away and slams his head into the wall in a fit of rage. The assailant drops to the ground. Bodhi continues his onslaught throwing groggy slow punches as blood slowly seeps down from the top of his head.

Bodhi's vision flickers in and out of focus until he falls unconscious.



Bodhi Awakening

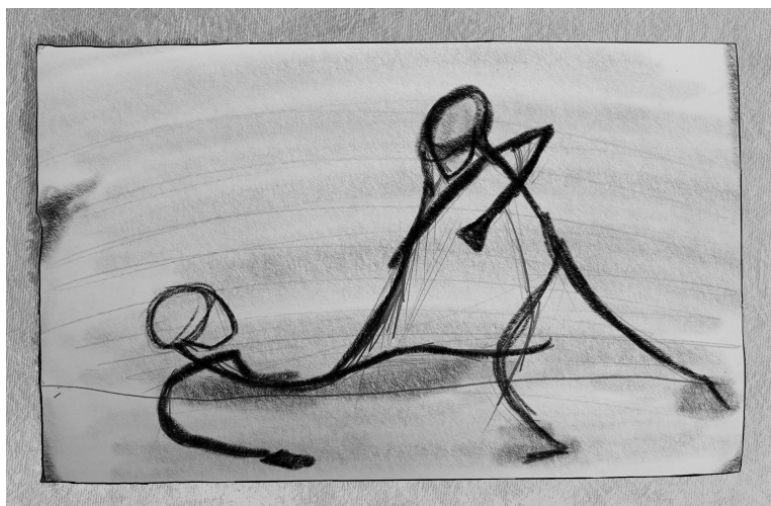
When Bodhi wakes he finds himself in a hospital bed relatively uninjured. He scans the room as a nurse notifies his doctor that he's awakened.

To his great surprise Bodhi soon found himself released from the hospital. After his last few papers were finalized he was able to leave. He gave his thanks to the doctor and nurse that had taken care of him during his stay.

Bodhi takes his first step out of the hospital room when he realizes something's wrong. He isn't in a hospital hallway or even a hospital at all. No. He's in the living room of a small house. The room is rather plain with its only distinctions being the vintage style carpet on its cold wood floor and a large circular tunnel directly across from Bodhi.

Perturbed, Bodhi turns around in hopes of reentering the hospital room. However, the space he had just exited from was no longer there. Instead Bodhi finds himself staring at a blank wall. With no other path forward Bodhi walks through the tunnel. Along the tunnel walls are charcoal drawings beginning with that of an abused child. As Bodhi walked through the tunnel the child in the drawings grew older until he was a depressed grown-up man.

However, Bodhi's fear doesn't let him notice anything but the door ahead of him. On the door lies a drawing whose image portrays an eerily familiar scene. The picture shows two men fighting in a dark alley.



Charcoal Drawing

Bodhi inspects the picture as he lifts his arm and turns the knob to the door before him. He opens the door and finds himself in a new room. The room is surrounded by large dome shaped windows with designs reminiscent of different flowers. Bodhi's eyes flutter around the room as he notices the room is filled with children's drawings plastered on the walls, ceiling and floor. After a few moments he finds himself looking at the right corner of the room where a small boy kneels head hovering above a piece of paper as he scribbles away.

Bodhi taps the boy's shoulder. The boy turns snappishly. "What!?"

Bodhi swallows hard. "Sorry to bother you, but...do you know where I am?"

The boy rolls his eyes and turns back to his drawing before saying three simple yet menacing words: "You're in hell."

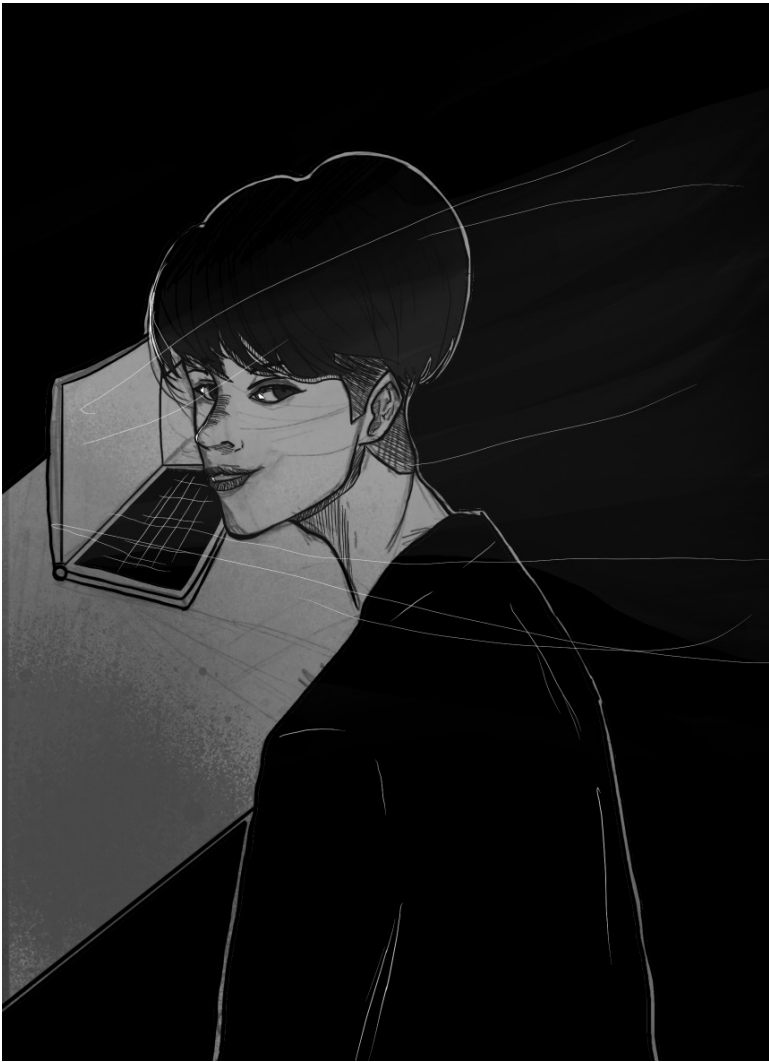
Uncomfortable, Bodhi decides to leave the room and regroup his thoughts. He walks back out of the door he entered from as it was the only door in the room and finds himself pleasantly surprised.

I must've gone through a different door than I thought, Thinks Bodhi as he finds himself at the top of a small staircase. He descends the staircase lit only by a faint blue light all the while hearing a quiet tapping sound. Bodhi's hopes fade after he reaches what could only be the basement. The room with its dirty stone flooring and old, uncovered wooden beams was lit by a small computer resting on a desk in the middle of the room. The light was just enough to illuminate a few things: the uncovered insulation on the ceiling, a small spider skittering along the ground and the face of a teenage boy quietly tapping away at the computer.

As stress grips Bodhi's chest he finds himself desperately asking the teenager a question.

"PLEASE, how do I get out of this house?!"

The teenager stops typing as if to process Bodhi's question. He then turns calmly to Bodhi and smiles.



Smiling Teen

“I’ll tell you, but only if you read my story.”

Somber Mindscape

*WARNING- THIS BOOK CONTAINS DETAILED
DESCRIPTIONS OF TRAUMATIC EVENTS*

My name is Ben Shido Mornet, a victim of domestic abuse. I hope to shed light on the trauma of domestic abuse by giving you a glimpse into the warped and somber environment I call my mind.

My first memory of abuse began at the tender age of four. It was my younger sister's second birthday and we were celebrating. Well, my sister, mother, and I... My father on the other hand wasn't in the celebratory mood.

As we sang my sister "Happy Birthday" my father entered the room in a drunken glaze. I still remember the scene perfectly. With his deep bloodshot eyes my father swept my sisters cake off the table, shouting all the while:

"QUIET!! I NEED SILENCE"

My mother calmly pleaded. "Please, REDACTED, it's REDACTED's birthday. Please just let us celebrate. It's important."

My father smacked my mother across the face.

"IS MMYYY PEACE NOT IMPORTANT TO YOU!"

My father balled up his fist and pulled his arm up. His fist shot down at my mother.

THUD

A crashing sound distracts Bodhi from the teens' story. The teens' eyes widen to the dull creaking of footsteps above. He hurriedly grabs his laptop and quietly sprints to a corner of the basement all the while muttering to himself: "He's coming...He's coming...HIDE"

Noticing the teens' trembling hands, Bodhi slowly backs up until he hits the wall behind him.

Who's coming?: Thinks Bodhi as the footsteps stop.

The room grows more tense as Bodhi does his best to gain an understanding of the occurring events.

SLAM

He mutters to himself: "...in hell"

SLAM

"...mindscape.."

SLAM

"...assailant..."

SLAM

Bodhi's eyes widen: "Am I in the mugger's mind?"

SLAM

Bodhi's attention snaps to the ceiling as debris crumbles to the ground and dust clouds fill the room.

As the dust dissipates a cold melodic voice rings out in the now desperately silent room: "I maaade it."

Bodhi's hands start shaking and he reaches for his pocket in hopes of finding a cigarette. Unfortunately, he finds no cigarette instead finding himself staring into the eyes of a man with a gray iris and midnight black sclera. Grayish-blue veins streak across the pale face that lies hanging upside from the hole in the ceiling.

Bodhi turns and runs to the stairs as the freakish man slithers down the hole with a menacing smile.

PITTER-PATTER-PITTER-PATTER-PITTER-PATTER

SLAM

Bodhi shuts the door behind him, finding himself back in the long tunnel from before. Bodhi takes no time to question his surroundings, deigning to simply continue his race with death. He runs for minutes. Hours. Days.

Bodhi passes the young boy from before: “Told ya.”

He passes the teen: “KEEP RUNNING”

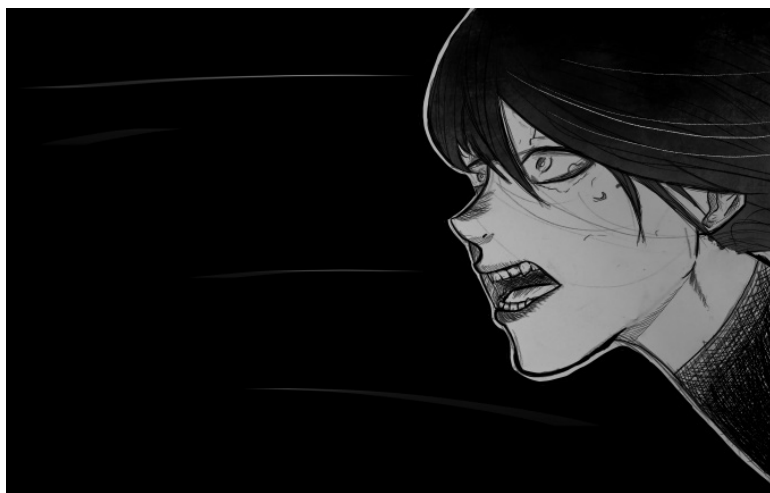
Bodhi runs and runs until...

WHAM

Bodhi trips and slams into the ground. Bodhi quickly gets back up and looks behind him. The terrifying man continues the chase, seeming to run around on the tunnel’s circular walls.

Bodhi turns to look forward. He’s in a room with a vintage rug and a large hole in the floor. He’s in the living room. The room with only one exit: the tunnel he just escaped. Bodhi panics and searches the room for hope. Perhaps his own Deus Ex Machina. He finds it.

The wall to his left, once plain and undecorated, is destroyed leaving only the view of a rain filled forest. Bodhi takes his chances and bolts out of the building.



Bodhi Running

A nurse walks into a coma patients’ room for his regular checkup. The clipboard in her hand is labeled with the following information:

Patient: Bodhi Mortenson

D.O.B: 1995

Sex: Male

Blood Type: O

Cause of Hospitalization: Blunt Force Trauma to the Head

A doctor enters the room soon after. They check the I.V. fluid, the feeding tube, and the other pieces of equipment in the room before the nurse starts a conversation.

“Hey...Have you ever wondered what happens in the mind of a coma patient?”

The doctor sighs, “If I cared I would have majored in neuroscience.”

The nurse stares at the coma patient’s face questioningly when his eyes open suddenly.



In Hospital

The man sits up and looks around the room in a panic. Clattering and squelching sounds resonate as he rips out the tubes scattered along his body while fighting against the help of the doctor and nurse.

Once ready and able Bodhi, the coma victim, lets out a hoarse: “Where’s the mugger?”

The doctor frowns as the nurse takes Bodhi’s pulse.

“Sir please relax for a moment.”

“NO!” Bodhi yells. “Where. Is. THE MUGGER!”

The nurse tries to calm Bodhi by tapping his arm in a slow rhythmic manner.

“Your assailant is long gone.”

Tap...Tap

“He was released from the hospital and imprisoned several weeks ago.”

Tap...Tap

“You have nothing to worry about.”

Tap...Tap

Bodhi’s shoulders droop as he lowers his head and begins to sob to himself: “It was my mind. Those people...were me.

FIN

Modified Contour

By Christy Mendoza



Tenfold

By Elizabeth Hoyt

10 years
That embraced love
That included understanding
That grew companionship
10 years that involved Weddings
Connections
Babies
And Growth

10 years
That witnessed sorrow
That included despair
That dissolved bonds
10 years that bore Grief
Trauma
Tears
And Forgiveness

10 years
That saw busyness
That included idleness
That succumbed to numbness
10 years of Deep Breaths
Self-healing
Togetherness
And Survival

10 years
That radiated laughter
That embraced celebrations
That were captured in family photos
10 years of Texts
Hugs
Birthdays
And Milestones

10 years
We have been
Without Maureen
Without Mom
Without Moma

Forever
Together
In our hearts
In our thoughts
In every dragonfly, sunflower, and hot fudge sundae

Forever
Family
No matter what
As big as the sky
In this life and the next

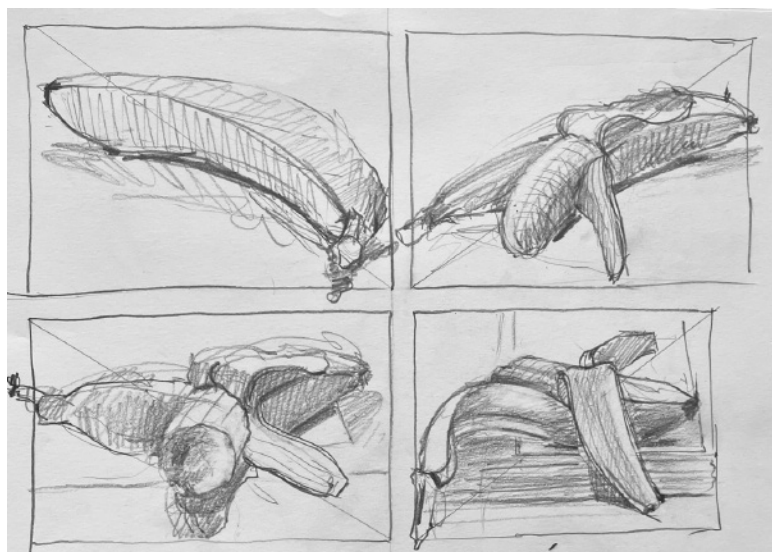
Moonlit Knight

By Jahzeel Moscoso



Still Life in Action

By Rhonda Harrow Egel



The Muse and the Starving

By Gabrielle Blake

I've been thinking about the music and how it doesn't move me like
it used to
I wonder if it's me
or
if it is really just the words
So they all seem emptier to me
I will chase sound
I will find movement in myself
In my heart
In my soul
I desire the bloody stage
To witness them bleeding on it
Sacrificed to the restlessness
Seen and devoured
Screaming beautiful
Jagged sounds
Cutting up the throat
Blood and blood
And
Pain
Feasting on the secret
Hoping for fire
Only a spark
Only ever

Discovery

By Jahzeel Moscoso



A Friend Amongst the Stars

By Jamison Moscoso

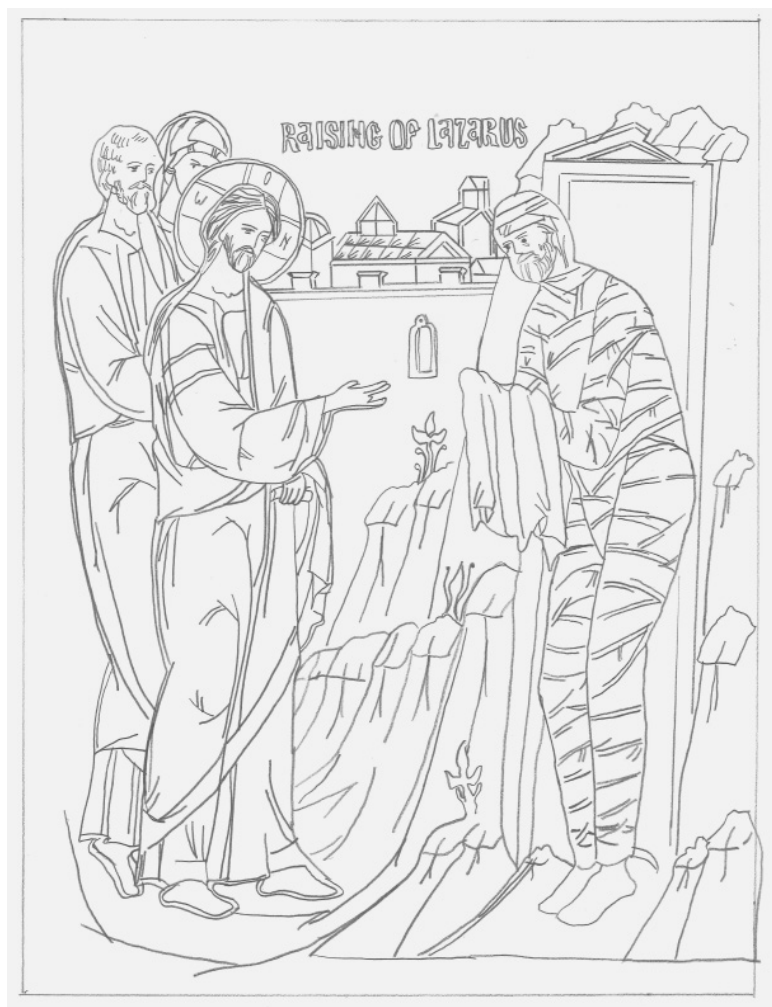
Tell me friend, what pains you so?
Is the path you follow filled with thorns and sorrow?
Do you find yourself within a void of isolation?
Wondering, is this annihilation?
Have you really been forsaken to damnation?
But you might never really know

Distance separates many of us
Miles and miles do your voices travel
But if they reach me, it's already unraveled
And unfortunately, time waits for none
I've already lost some
Yet, what's done is done
So, what do I do?
I serve as a guide

Many lack strength and courage within themselves
So why don't I share mine?
When you're lost in darkness look towards the sky and find my
light
May I dance along the midnight curtain alongside heroes, gods and
monsters
May I serve as a guiding star when hope seems lost
And remember, I'm still a friend you have not yet lost

The Raising of Lazarus

By Lorenzo Chin



A Work of the Heart

By Jeannie Gibbs

“Nursing isn’t just the science of medicine and following doctor’s orders. Nursing is a work of heart, in which our greatest impacts on a patient’s life are not the medications we administer, but in how we treat them most human.”

I vividly remember my favorite professor’s voice as she stood before our graduating class and spoke to us with a tone that seemed both pleading and stern in the same breath. It was the cornerstone of most of her lessons, and at least once a week she would remind us about this, usually when we were going over our reflection paperwork for clinicals. I spoke the mantra; I figured it aligned with the usual reasons people tell you they go into nursing: to help people. Of course, I wanted to help people, which was ingrained into my heart.

As I move around the halls with my vitals machine, complaining loudly to the other night nurse working with me about our hand-me-down equipment, I do the usual routine. At precisely 18:30, I clock in, go to the computer, look up my patient assignment, write down the important things in this perfect little diagram I’ve come up with on the computer, and take a few sips of my iced coffee to get into the mindset of a psychiatric RN. The noises around me are a cacophony of wild laughter, angry screaming, and sobs as a patient blames her mother for having her committed—the usual. I hear Reggie say something along the lines of “Great, another thug who should be in jail.” When I see the name on the roster, I don’t recognize it, but I’m still a new nurse at this hospital and haven’t learned the “frequent flyers” yet.

My first introduction to this patient is Reggie walking me to the back where all new and/or acute patients and known aggressive ones are held until they’ve earned their way to the front section of the unit. This patient is massive compared to me at only five-foot-nothing, has arms thicker than my thighs and an expression that can only be translated in a long string of expletives that even I am a little hesitant to put into legal documentation. Reggie introduces

me, the patient cusses at him and threatens to assault him, and in the same motion he gets up out of his bed with fury in his motions. I'm not sure what to do other than look up at this man who towers over me and remember something my Mama always taught me: kindness is as simple as a sandwich.

"Are you hungry?" I ask where I stand in front of Reggie, who is ready to call security.

I don't think he knows how to take this because he stops walking menacing toward us at the door and just blinks down at me. Brows furrowing, he says, "What did you just ask me?"

I smile at him, as Southern women tend to do in any given situation, and again repeat, "Are you hungry? I know it was meatloaf on the menu tonight; I've seen it, and it gives me the heebie-jeebies, but the café is still open to staff. I could get you a sandwich on the premises that you quit acting like you ain't got manners." I continue into the room with my vitals machine despite the other nurse telling me to just leave. "Now sit so I can get your blood pressure and temperature; I can't give you any medications until I have your vitals and I'm not leaving the unit for a sandwich until I make sure all of my patients are at least breathing."

Reggie is more startled than I am when the patient barks out a laugh and holds up his hands. He smiles at me, saying, "You've got some balls to come in here telling me I have no manners, but all right, let's see what else you got, pint-size."

At this point, I'm able to get my vitals. He sits there watching me in a way that reminds me of some predator assessing a threat, but I pay him no mind.

"You really gonna get me a sandwich?"

"I said I would."

"People say shit all the time, hardly ever back it up."

I look at him then, see the shift in his aura, and hear it in the slight octave change of his tone. He's been hurt by broken promises; I'm willing to bet. "I have to finish getting vitals and then do my medication pass. I'll save your meds for last and then come back here to sit and talk. It won't be until after 9, but I'll get your sandwich now and put it in the fridge."

He doesn't say anything in response; he just watches me, and I know this is where I either put my money where my mouth is or sow distrust and breed animosity. I do get that sandwich, which I hide away because we aren't supposed to be giving the patient's stuff that doesn't come up on the carts, but when have I ever followed the rules over my instincts?

It's almost eleven by the time I get back to the patient, between an admission and then having to deal with the usual sprouting of patient problems, and when I find him in his room, he's laying with the blanket over his head in the dark. I figure he's asleep or doesn't want to talk, so I'm not going to bother him and choose to set the sandwich down on the table beside his bed, intent on leaving.

"You actually brought it?"

"I said I would."

There's silence for a solid thirty seconds before I hear him shuffle in the bed, sitting up at the edge. "Bitches lie, you know."

I pause where I stand and tip my head thoughtfully. "Well, I don't lie, but I'll own that first part."

Again, he laughs, lifts the sandwich and takes a bite. He watches me for another pregnant pause before putting the food down and laying back in the bed, looking up at the ceiling. "Aren't you afraid I'm gonna put you through the wall?"

I shrug. "I'll get to go home early at least."

"I like your tattoos. And your hair color. My sister was into that

stuff.”

“Is she still?”

“She’s dead.”

There’s such a darkness to his voice that I can’t help but wince. “You guys were close?”

“She was all I really had once Mom overdosed. Don’t know who my sperm donor is.”

Choosing a place of soft curiosity, I say, “It doesn’t sound like life’s been kind to you. Is that why you come out of the cage snarling before anyone else can kick you?”

He doesn’t say anything at first but turns to look at me, holding eye contact and searching my features for something. When he finally answers, it’s in a tone much less aggressive and standoffish than in hours prior. “You ever felt like you got knocked down and now every time you try to get up, someone else kicks you before you can even take a breath?”

The patient proceeds to tell me about his life growing up, about his incarcerated father and his drug-addicted mom, who always left him alone to take care of his younger sister with no help. He told me about her, his little sister, and how beautiful she made his world. He’d turned to selling drugs to take care of her, put her through school and give her a better life. His “partner” had raped her, and shortly after finding out about his secret life, she’d taken her own life. He has blamed himself all this time and continues to live a life of crime because he’s not worthy of anything more and thinks about suicide himself. He cries, hiding his face under his arms at one point. By the time he is finished, it’s almost 2 am.

When there is silence for more than a minute, I know he is finished.

“I’m gonna go do my paperwork, but if you need anything, I’m

here until 6 am.” I get up from my seat, heading toward the door knowing he may not want to talk more after all he’s just divulged to me over the last few hours in conversation. Before I make it out the door, I hear him speak softly.

“I wish I had your heart.”

“You don’t. You have yours. That’s good enough.”

Four years later, across the country in my new home and new life. I receive a letter in the mail from the hospital I worked at with a photograph of my patient in a graduation gown as he smiles with a beautiful girlfriend and his nursing diploma. A note is tucked away inside, and as I read it, tears fall.

It reads: “Thanks for the sandwich.”

Orange Mycena
By Alexander Madison



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