

Agate 2021

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ON THE COVER

Front: “Spatial Collage” by Max Dehne

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:

“Only If Words Were Enough” by Rafia Umar

Second Place:

“Shreds” by Jennifer Perry

Third Place:

“Tick” by Laela Groat

STUDENT ART CONTEST WINNERS

First Place:

“Re-contextualizing Tsunami Stones of Japan” by Ray Terry

Second Place:

“Esquecido” by Dennis Almeida

Third Place:

“Overlap” by Rafia Umar

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Only If Words Were Enough

By Rafia Umar

You are still dashing
Just how I left you
But you are not moving
Why aren't you moving?
Oh, that's tingling feeling
Put some ice on it, they said
It will pass, it takes time, they said
No, just let it bleed, they said
Oh, those precious moments
It will wear down soon, they said
And it finally did, this morning
Standing four feet away from the coffee shop
My feet has gone numb, I can't move

The feeling of trying to let go and hold onto all at once.
The moment of grieving, no one can understand except you
The sting of a buzzing bee, the sting of a paper cut, the pain of losing your limbs, the
disappointment of failing your recurring tests
The clock stopping for a second
Your entire world shifting across the eclipse
There's no going back, your heartbeat relaxes and intensifies.

I fell unto the ground, trying to make it stop
I don't want to feel, I refuse it
But it won't, the pain cracked into every nerve, finding a suitable soil in my sadness and growing
tough roots of pain into my tortured heart.
Like a metallic ball bouncing up and down rapidly
Imitating the rhythm of my heart
Words can't take away this pain
There's no sunshine.

The Bronx
By Jared Rodriguez



Don't Worry About It

By Zaheer Yisrael

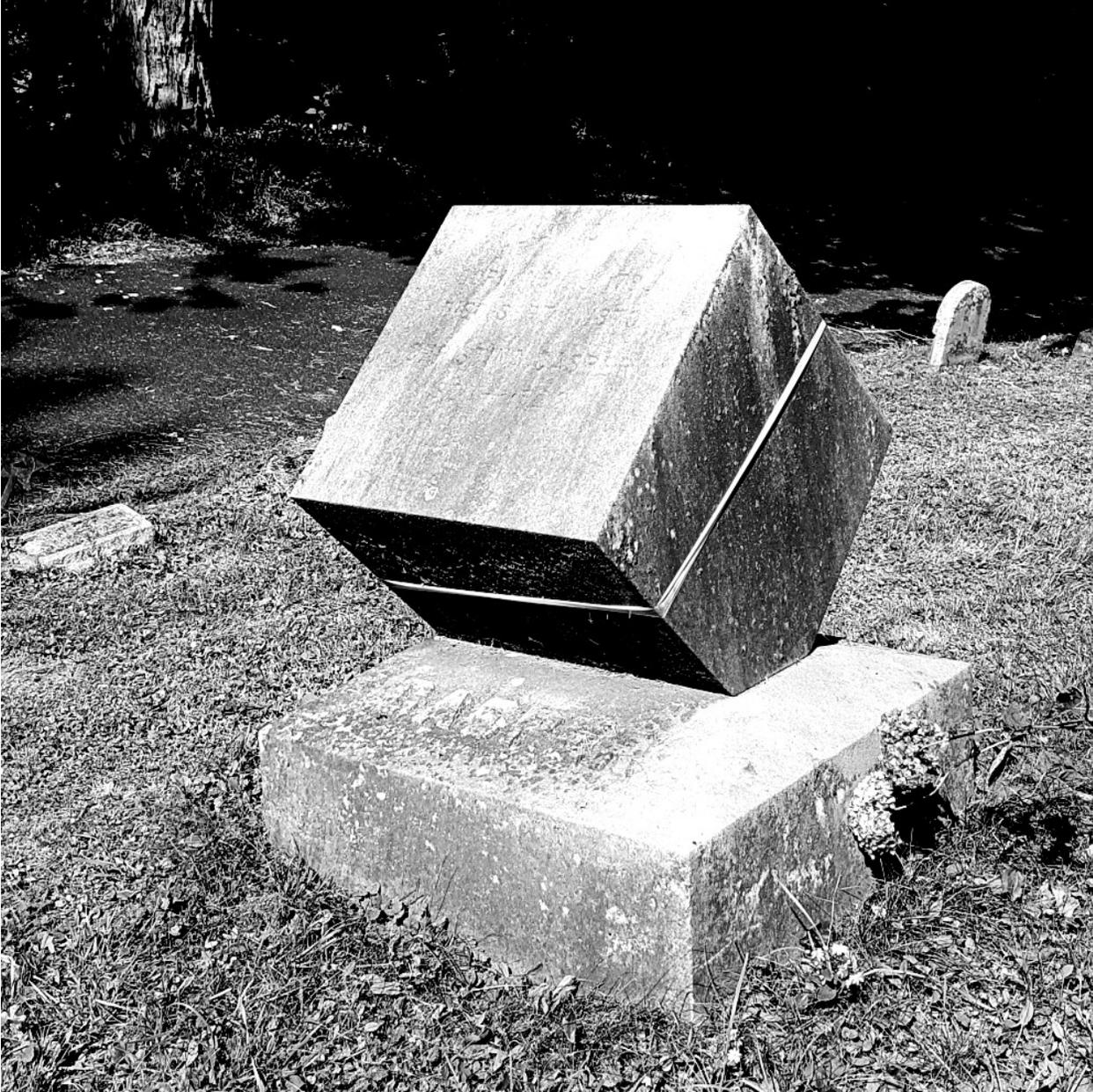
Once upon a time, there was a young child who lived with his parents. He never got to spend much time with them since they would argue as much as possible for a whole day. The only day he remembered when they were not arguing was when they got him his stuffed animal for his 10th birthday. It was a grey bear with a white tummy, stubby arms and legs and orange on the inside of its little ears. He loved it. More importantly the little boy didn't have to hear his parents arguing (even if his father wasn't there when his mother had taken him to the mall). He had hoped for days this nonstop fighting would cease, but deep down he knew it was definitely impossible. Every time he would ask one of his parents why they were fighting, they would always give him the same answer: "don't worry about it", and then they'd hug him for a brief three seconds. They felt half-assed, but to him they were better than nothing.

The lad was 17 now, the bear his mother had gotten him was dirty looking and there was a large tearing through the tummy. He awoke how he did every day- to yelling. He managed to get used to it by venting and joking to his teddy bear ever since the day he got it. Part of him still desperately wanted things to go back to a time where there was no constant yelling. "Y'know", he said to his bear in an attempt to feign happiness. "Despite how damaged you might be now; you will still be in better shape than their relationship". The bear just fell over. He went downstairs after they exchanged their final blows and heard his dad leave for work and made himself some cereal. "Good morning son" the mother said. The boy said nothing and continued to eat. Understanding that he didn't want to make conversation, she said nothing else. After he finished eating, he left the house with his backpack which was full of spray paint and headed out.

The boy started spray-painting when he was 15 as a means of venting and to get away from his parents. He went took his bike to his usual spot which was in the tunnel of an abandoned railroad. He would often be gone for hours, but his mother never seemed to care about where he since he had always come back safely. The tunnel was full of the paintings he had painted in the past 2 years. One was of his torn and tattered bear with text that read "head up" under it. Another was of his parents fighting with text that read "so-called home". He had already thought of what he wanted to draw this time and he got a spray paint can out of his bag. "Damn", he said, shaking the can, slightly upset. "I thought I still had-". "Hey! You in the black hoodie!". Two police officers had approached him while unveiling their guns from their holsters. The boy had dropped his can and bag and put his hands up and got on his knees. Shortly afterwards, they opened fire until he died. Later that night, the boy's father had returned from work, and resumed arguing with his wife shortly after.

Cube Monument

By Jacqueline Madden



Shreds

By Jennifer Perry

Tightly wound like my
viola strings, ready to
snap in half, flicking
those in my way, I only
can think, "Just get through this shift."

In my torn mind, wedged
between volumes of knowledge:
just bubbles of air.
Where are the photos of my
life, the proof that it happened?

Going an easy
fifteen over the limit,
scarves of red, yellow,
brown, and white shed from my skin,
their cries go out the windows.

They are the heartache,
the death, the return of the
nearly dead, the scared
and confused, and the colleagues
who wore coats of rage and fear.

They are from patients,
the ones who broke me into
micrograms, the ones
I lost, and from powerful
people who threatened our lives.

Renascence
By Cabrina Simmons



Love

By Kevin Miller

Love the small things.

Love the sun on those perfect summer days.

Love the laugh of your closest friend.

Love the moon at night.

Love the last drop of coffee at the bottom of your cup.

Love the lack of back pain when you're young.

Love the dance breaks in the middle of the day.

Love the radio station that always plays your song.

Love the people who always lift you up.

Love the things that others take for granted.

Dreamland Barbershop

By Ray Terry



Hero Atlan of Antar

By Carter Webster

The story all began with the ruler of the kingdom of Antar, King Argen. For some time King Argen has been ruling the kingdom alone with no one by his side, even though he started ruling when he was a young adult, but besides that, he was getting lonely. King Argen was then determined to find someone to share the throne with, so he then set out into the kingdom until he went past one of the most beautiful individuals he has ever laid his eyes on. Her name was Kiri and she was a baker in the castle, she took the position over for her mother after she was getting too old to keep up with all the work. Argen couldn't believe he hasn't seen her before, it was like love at first sight. Argen then went to go talk to her but was suddenly stopped by someone he thought worked in the castle but the truth is that this person was a psychic that could see into the future and she was there to tell the king that an individual close to him will cause him to perish. The king was shocked but he brushed it off because he was distracted by Kiri, he thanked the psychic for the information and sent her on her way. Argen then went up to Kiri and greeted her and at that moment there was a sort of a spark between them and that spark was love.

After a short period, the king asked for Kiri's hand in marriage and of course, she accepted. They had one of the most extravagant weddings to have ever happened in the kingdom and that day the king of Antar finally had a queen by his side. Following their wedding, they now wanted to have a family together and so, they made that happen. Kiri was pregnant and expecting to give birth in a few months. After those months they were greeted with a baby boy and named him Atlan.

After a couple of years while Atlan was growing up there was something wrong. Argen and Kiri noticed that he was growing up very fast, with it only being two years Atlan looked as if he was triple his actual age. This worried Argen, then he remembered the psychic he met some time ago that can see into the future, he then set out to find her once again to see if there was anything he could do for Atlan. It didn't take long for Argen to find her because she already knew he needed to find her, she knew what the king was going to ask of her and she was prepared with the information. With the amount of time that had passed, her vision of the future became clearer, and she told the king that Atlan will be the one to be the cause of his death when Atlan reached adulthood. With this information, he told Kiri and they both agreed that they had to send Atlan away so the future might be changed. So they sent Atlan to be raised in a village called Ongo by a couple named Waiien and Isa.

Throughout the years Atlan began to develop abilities of some sort, he was able to lift hundreds of pounds, outrun the fastest of horses, and outthink the smartest villagers in Ongo. This took Waiien and Isa by surprise but they were ready to handle it because Atlan was a son to them and they would do anything for him. Atlan was one of the kindest people in the village and

one of the hardest workers in Ongo. He knew he wasn't normal compared to his friends, but that didn't matter to Atlan because he had everything he needed around him.

On Atlan's 18th birthday, Waiien and Isa felt it was necessary to tell him where he was actually from and who his real parents were. Atlan was shocked by the news and didn't know what to do with himself so he ran away. But what Atlan also didn't know is that his real father hired a skilled guardsman, Hudso, at the same time Atlan turned 18, and Hudso was tasked with keeping Atlan away from the kingdom.

Within a few hours of leaving Ongo, Hudso ambushes Atlan without any earlier knowledge of what Atlan is capable of. They get into a fight and due to Atlan's great abilities, he overpowers Hudso and hurts him badly. But Atlan wasn't about to let Hudso die in the middle of nowhere because in his heart he's better than that. Atlan sets up a camp while Hudso is unconscious from his injuries. After Atlan is finished setting up the camp and finds food, Hudso wakes up and tries to run away but he's way too hurt to even move, Atlan notices and tries to calm him down and let him know that he isn't there to hurt him but to help instead. Hudso is taken back by what Atlan is saying because he did try to ambush and kill him. So he apologizes to Atlan for everything and explains who he is and why he's there. Atlan listens to what Hudso has to say and understands why Hudso did what he did. They both start to talk more, about Antar and even about Ongo, they both got along so well, it was like there was a spark between them.

After a few days, Hudso was healed up and both him and Atlan decided to travel back to Antar together. During their journey to the kingdom, they went through many villages that required help. With Atlan's abilities and Hudso's skills from being a guardsman, they were able to aid the villages in whatever way they needed to. From putting bandits that were stealing from a village into jail to taking down a corrupt ruler that was being controlled by an evil witch, they worked incredibly together, like it was meant to be. After their long journey of helping those in need and developing feelings for one another, they finally got to the kingdom. There they went directly to the king and queen to talk. When they got there both Argen and Kiri were frozen with fright, it's not that they were scared of Atlan but they didn't know what they were going to do or say to him. Atlan asked why they sent him away to Ongo and why they didn't want him to return so badly that they needed someone there to kill him if he tried. The king and queen finally formulated words to say to Atlan, they told him the whole truth but they knew they were in the wrong and just broke down. Atlan did the same, Hudso tried to comfort him and calm him down. After a few minutes, everyone calmed down and were ready to talk it out. Atlan told his parents everything and introduced Hudso as his significant other. Argen and Kiri were delighted by the news and decided to throw them dinner and a party for not only Atlan and Hudso but also for the fact that Atlan returned to the kingdom. During Atlan's time there he helped the guard with the problems in the kingdom, he helped defend it from attackers and just made sure everyone in the kingdom was safe. He quickly became someone everyone knew because of his compassion and willingness to help, traits of a true leader, and both King Argen and Queen Kiri noticed.

Everything, in the end, worked out: the king and queen's plan to change the outcome of the future worked. When it was time for the king and queen to step down, they chose Atlan to take over, and Hudso was by his side every step of the way and became a king along with Atlan. During Atlan's time there he brought his adoptive parents to the kingdom to stay with him and Hudso in the castle. Atlan and Hudso also got married and had a wedding just as amazing as the king and queen before them. And with that everyone lived happily ever after...

Old Blue Willow

By Cabrina Simmons



Essential Workers

By Nancy Willow

In April

I watched the residents of New York City
stop at 7:00 every evening
to cheer on the healthcare workers
who each day put their lives on the line to care for those
affected by COVID-19
which is to say
all of us.

In June

I watched the healthcare workers
stop after another grueling shift
to cheer on the protesters
who each day put their lives on the line to care for those
affected by systemic racism
which is to say
all of us.

And now

I watch my once lonely neighbors
wake early and with vital purpose.
We cheer each other on
as we heal
putting our lives on the line
until every
body can breathe
again
and also
for the first time.

Sawmill

By Jacqueline Madden



The Love Story of Emelia and Daniel

By Arianna Nieves

Once upon a time there was a girl named Emelia who was sweeter than honey and more beautiful than a rose. She was an only child and came from an extremely wealthy family where she was loved unconditionally by her parents and would get whatever she wanted at the snap of fingers. Even with her family's riches Emelia was a humble girl who did not care what your social status was or the household you came from. She always helped the maids with the chores and would even sneak into the kitchen to help the cooks with dinner. Emelia was a caring, genuine, and kind soul but she was also very lonely. Unlike Emelia her parents were not so humble, and they always boasted about their wealth. They were the snobbiest of snobs and if you were not equal to them, they would make that clear. This led to Emelia not having any friends considering most people believed the apple does not fall far from the tree and no matter how beautiful she was no one wanted to put up with that kind of attitude. So instead of going out places she would stay in their mansion in order to avoid all the rude and obnoxious commentary from others. One day her parents had declared they would be going out for the day and would not be home until later that night, so Emelia had the day for herself. With that knowledge Emelia had grabbed an assortment of books and rushed out to the garden which was her favorite place to be.

But the day proved to be an unordinary one considering there was a well-dressed boy she had never seen before who had stolen her typical resting place. She walked up to the boy and promptly sat beside him and with a confused look from the boy she began reading. Soon enough curiosity got the better of boy and he began reading with Emelia. They eventually finished all the books which resulted in a conversation that lasted for hours upon hours. Soon enough they had to part ways, but they agreed to meet again the next day. This eventually became a daily event where Emelia would sneak off to the garden and meet up with the strange boy, she had met on accident whose name was Daniel. A friendship was formed between the two of them and after many months that friendship soon turned into love. Emelia wanted Daniel to meet her parents so that way they could become official, but Daniel was hesitant considering he was actually a stable boy who worked for her family. Daniel eventually gathered up the courage to tell her this information and was relieved when Emelia had confirmed she still loved him regardless of his social status. Daniel met her parents soon after that and although they were displeased at first due to his social status and lack of money, they soon grew to love him and set their emotions aside. The two were as happy as can be and after many years they ended up getting married and lived happily together for the rest of their days. The End.

Re-contextualizing Tsunami Stones of Japan

By Ray Terry



Grumpy Granma

By Miriam Sharick

First came the shutdown.

Schools shut down abruptly in mid-March, giving us less than three weeks to contrive transitions to remote learning. I have vacillated between pride and dismay at my personal responses. I worked hard to produce lessons that I'm not convinced have produced learning. Whatever works for learning outcomes I owe to Kelly Keck and Ericka Ericson.

One by one, all the other scheduled large events in my life also shut down, like lights winking out in a rolling blackout. The symphony cabaret concert, the crossword puzzle tournament, the natural history conference, the Catskill Choral Society concert, my cousin Ted's daughter Emma's wedding in Israel in May, my trip to Pittsburgh and a visit with my daughter Sara in June, my week in Maine in July, Outlaws baseball -- all canceled. Illness rates rocketed, death tolls mounted, the sky really was falling. It seemed surreal, protected as we are from urban mass casualties, even as local businesses closed, events and appointments were canceled, trips were curtailed, and personal protection became the polite and necessary order of the day.

Without access to the Cardio Club for regular exercise, I began taking regular two-mile walks, to the covered bridge and back, past DeWitt Farm and back. And I became dismayed at the amount of roadside trash I saw, so I began picking it up. I filled at least one large bag on every walk. Almost all the trash is fast food and junk food packaging, beverage containers, and broken vehicle parts. This had to come from local disaffected young men in pickup trucks who are too stupid or too lazy to clean up. Go ahead and accuse me of stereotyping, but prove me wrong. Who else would throw a half-empty half gallon of ice tea out a window? This is what disaffected young men do everywhere. Undereducated, underemployed, unmarried, they create messes and chaos, join gangs, become pirates and terrorists and vandals. But Route 10 became noticeably cleaner for the six weeks or so that I kept this up.

I was apparently also losing weight, because my clothing began to slip off me. Yay! Then I realized, glumly, that it mostly wasn't me; all the elastic in all the waistbands of all my underwear was simultaneously, spontaneously unraveling. I was annoyed that all my new underwear would fall apart at once, until I remembered, more glumly, that it wasn't new anymore; I had bought all new underwear about the time Michael Jordan began urging us to go tagless.

Then my plumbing betrayed me.

Suddenly, at the end of April, I couldn't do anything vigorous for more than half an hour without feeling urgency. I had to give up long-distance walking, had to watch my fluid intake, had to worry about the cleanliness of restrooms in stores. I fretted about fishing, gardening, and berry-picking in summer. I didn't dare ride my bike. Gradually I regained control, so that I could plan around my needs.

Then I acquired a cat.

Dan Klossner, knowing how keenly I felt the loss of my old cat Loki the previous year, the same week I learned my mother was dying, offered me a calico kitten in May from his family farm. She was irresistible, and I named her Gobi, like the desert, after an old friend's cat from Pittsburgh. Gobi is both a comfort and a handful. She didn't like Loki's litter, so I had to keep cleaning up after her until I bought a brand, on Dana Santos's advice, that she took to

immediately. I had to feed Gobi kitten replacement milk at first, because she was so young and so small. She now eats a varied diet and is healthy and growing. She's a problem solver. She figured out how to jump onto every surface in my apartment, so I've had to move all my hanging plants and remove all my linen runners on bookcases. She figured out how to open doors, so I've had to keep chasing her out of my kitchen cabinets. She loves to play, of course, but if she wants me to join her, she'll bite my ankles. I don't want to share my oatmeal or my yogurt with her. I had set up a screen to keep her out of the kitchen, but she quickly figured out how to push it open at the latches, so I took it down. If I absolutely have to keep her out of the way, I confine her to the bedroom. She's always poised to get out of my apartment and into the basement of the house every time I step out, so I have to account for the time it takes to shoo or coax her back in. But she's soft and purring when we cuddle up in front of the television together, as long as she's not trying to climb over the set or knock books off the shelves.

My son Michael, daughter-in-law Laura, and grandkids Benôit and Pascale escaped Brooklyn in mid-March to shelter with Bill in Stamford. Bill had been living alone with only Pete the hunting dog for company since I moved out, and, he confided to me, he had a tremendous adjustment to make. The kids took over the upstairs, installed systems for remote teaching and working, shared the cooking and housework, and kept Benôit and Pascale on strict schedules. (Pete wasn't really a house pet and never became much of a hunter, so he left in July.) But Benôit and Pascale visited Granma almost every weekend all spring and summer. They loved Gobi, loved my fine garden, loved the farm animals, loved the freedom to run and shout as all children must have. I got through school, planted that promising garden, tuned up my fishing gear, and planned for a stay-home summer with my grands and my favorite hobbies.

Then I got hurt.

On the opening Saturday of bass season in June, I drove to my favorite pond between Stamford and Hobart and lugged my gear from the road to the water's edge. I caught a keeper fish on my first cast, elatedly put it on my stringer, moved a yard to my right, and stepped into a woodchuck hole. After a few frightening minutes, when I made sure I hadn't broken my ankle, I cautiously moved to another spot along the pond. My ankle hurt, but I could deal with the pain and the limp if I stepped carefully. I caught three more keepers for an excellent day, but I didn't realize what I had done to myself until I got home to clean my catch. I had badly bruised my left Achilles tendon. My ankle was swollen and purple and tender, and I couldn't put my full weight on it. Everything I would do all summer I did with a limp, in pain: up a hill, down a staircase, pushing a wheelbarrow, carrying a laundry basket. But I gritted my teeth and kept up all my normal activities. I caught the most bass ever, picked the most berries ever, made the most jam ever, grew the best garden ever, took my grandchildren endlessly to see the pigs, the chickens, the calves, to walk by the river, pick flowers, catch bugs. Little by little the pain eased, especially when I wrapped my ankle in an ice pack while Gobi and I watched endless reruns of Blue Planet and Blue Bloods, though I didn't lose the limp for months.

I've been watching a lot of TV. My kids put me on their HULU, so I can select all kinds of fun stuff, new and old. I watched hours of Monty Python, which was my favorite show back in the 70s. Much of it now makes my evolved sensibilities wince. I discovered the mysteries on Hallmark, which are interestingly plotted even when they're somewhat cheesy; is breathless denial how 20-somethings always talk to each other? Old Perry Masons from the 50s and 60s and newer ones from the 80s and 90s are a joy when I can find them. I missed the whole Murder

She Wrote series from the 80s and 90s and love catching up. Luckily I can mute the commercials, most of which oscillate between awful and dumb. Yoga with your kid on your feet: I should live so long. Memory supplements: oh, yeah, don't actually work. Endless, endless junk food and fast food: no wonder that packaging forms so much roadside trash. I haven't been immune to these ads; I bought pizza and pretzels twice, potato chips once, Chinese food 4-5 times.

Then I got sick.

I woke up one morning in mid-July not feeling well, and after breakfast a crushing internal pain and racking nausea made me realize I had to call an ambulance and go to the emergency room. I had kidney stones. Reducing my fluid intake had backfired on me. Never mind the rest of the details. After several hours, when I was deemed well enough to go home, I called Bill to come get me. Michael came instead. He took me to the drug store and stayed with me to make sure I could manage on my own. I must have washed out one of the stones; I never caught it, but my symptoms never returned, even though the other stone was still floating around. I got over my scare and resumed all my summer activities where I had left off.

I decided to get rid of that stone.

In December I had lithotripsy to blast the stone to powder so that I could just wash it out. Lithotripsy uses ultrasound to do non-invasive surgery, so it seemed like a good idea. My surgeon neglected to tell me that the sound waves themselves can cause kidney damage. I had the procedure done at Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown and was discharged later that day. I had some misgivings about the aftereffects I was experiencing, but the nursing staff assured me my symptoms were normal. They were catastrophically wrong. That night I developed intense pain and severe bleeding and had to go to the emergency room. I spent all night there, miserable, until someone had time late the next morning between screaming trauma patients to determine that I had to be transported back to Bassett. Lithotripsy had indeed pulverized the stone, but it also caused a severe hematoma inside my kidney; the symptoms I experienced at my original discharge, shrugged off by the post-op nursing staff, were not unknown, but by no means normal. I spent the night in the hospital and then endured several days off my feet, on painkillers, barely able to take care of Gobi. Thank goodness Noel Tarrants brought me some food and took me shopping. I blasted the Bassett staff in a follow-up questionnaire about my care. I lost a month's preparation for spring teaching. But my Achilles tendon healed completely.

Then Gobi got sick.

When we had that big snowfall, on a Friday, I had just recovered from my surgery and its complications to shovel out my car without a problem. I had to take Gobi for a routine checkup, so she could complete her vaccines. Two days later she woke up in acute discomfort, straining and crying, unable to eat or go to the litterbox. Emergency veterinary care over a weekend is really hard to get. I had to take her all the way to Sidney; I had to leave her overnight so that she could have a surgical cleansing of her impacted colon; I had to pick her up the next day; and it cost almost \$460. Ouch. The doctor, Jen Hamblin, was wonderful. My regular vet hadn't missed anything, she assured me; this really had arisen suddenly and unpredictably. Gobi seemed better, and I made some modifications to her diet, but the problem came back a few weeks later. I was able to bring her to my local vet, who tried to clean her out without surgery, but ended keeping her for three nights when surgical cleansing was required again. Gobi now has a completely new diet and a water fountain to drink from and is back to her

lively self. If she wants to climb to the top of the refrigerator and push her way into an empty cabinet, fine. If she wants to play at an inconvenient time, I'll make it convenient.

Like everyone else, I've become resigned to disappointment, and I seize upon nuggets of hope. My chamber music society, Friends of Music, had to cancel our first four concerts last summer, but we held our last five in restricted circumstances, though we had to change our performers. At least we had a season; there have been almost no other live performances anywhere else around here. We're going to have a season, with restrictions, next year. School is remote again this fall and next spring, and probably next fall as well. The Catskill Choral Society canceled fall concert preparations and will cancel next spring as well; same for the Catskill Symphony. My kids moved back to Brooklyn by the end of August, though they've visited frequently since. Emma's wedding is rescheduled for next May, but it's clear that I shouldn't go. Ditto for my other plans; a 70th birthday party will have to wait. I'm drinking more water and putting up with the consequences. I'm going to the gym again, but I have to nag myself to do it. I bruised a thumb tendon while carving a jack-o-lantern and scrambled to make medical appointments for all my other nagging issues, adding up to one big nag. And what I've learned from all the disappointment, all the political stupidity in Washington, all the national illness, all the racial justice stands, is that I have been singularly blessed with overall good health and adequate resources and a good attitude and with time to spend with Benôit and Pascale. Nothing else matters. We must stay well for each other. My children and grandchildren must continue to right societal wrongs, must get a grip on climate change, and must push past ignorance and complacency. I fantasize about spray-painting a swastika on every Confederate flag I see fluttering around here; our kids and grandkids must reduce this to irrelevance. They must restore health, logic, and creativity, and they will turn my grumpiness into the long sunset of satisfaction.

Log Bridge

Jacqueline Madden



Making a Difference During Times of Unrest

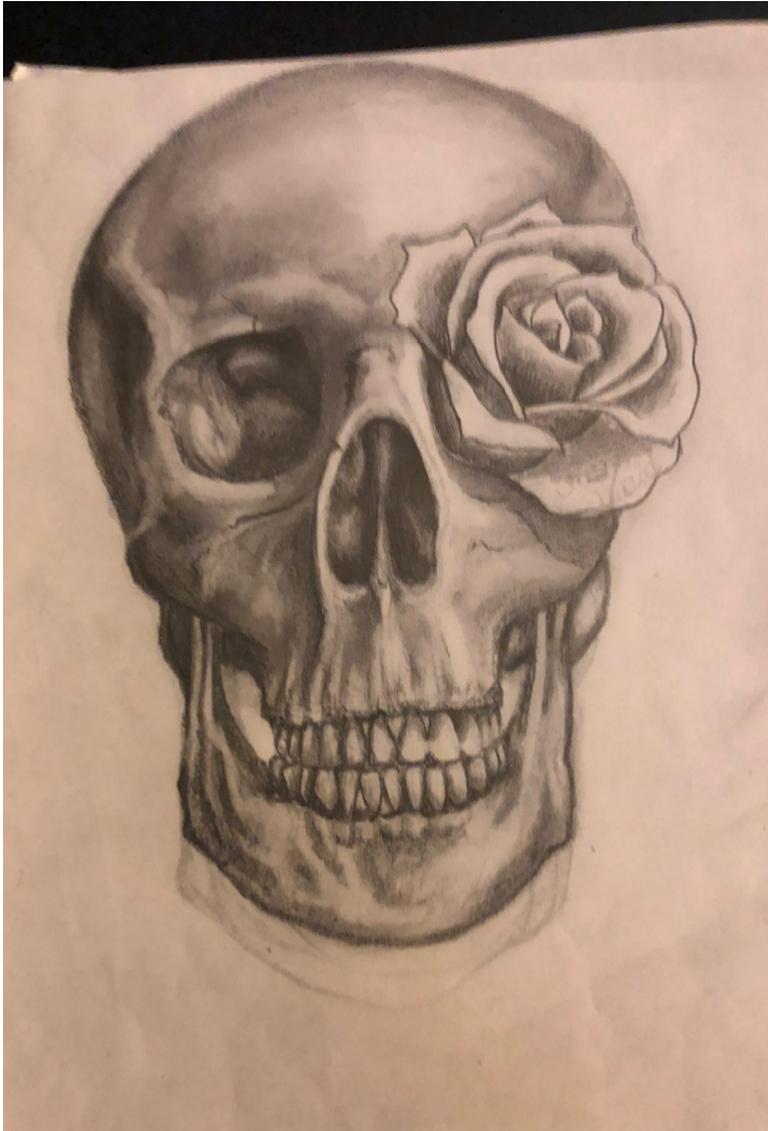
By Michele DeFreece

Connecting hands and hearts
Serving at a distance; making a difference
Students becoming first responders
Students organizing basic need drives
Students fundraising for causes that have a personal meaning for them
Students tutoring their siblings who need to be homeschooled
Students cleaning and cooking in family spaces
Students working at grocery stores
Students helping elderly neighbors with chores
In the midst of all of this
Our community mourns
Nina Pop.
Tony McDade
George Floyd.
Sean Reed.
Ahmaud Arbery
Breonna Taylor.

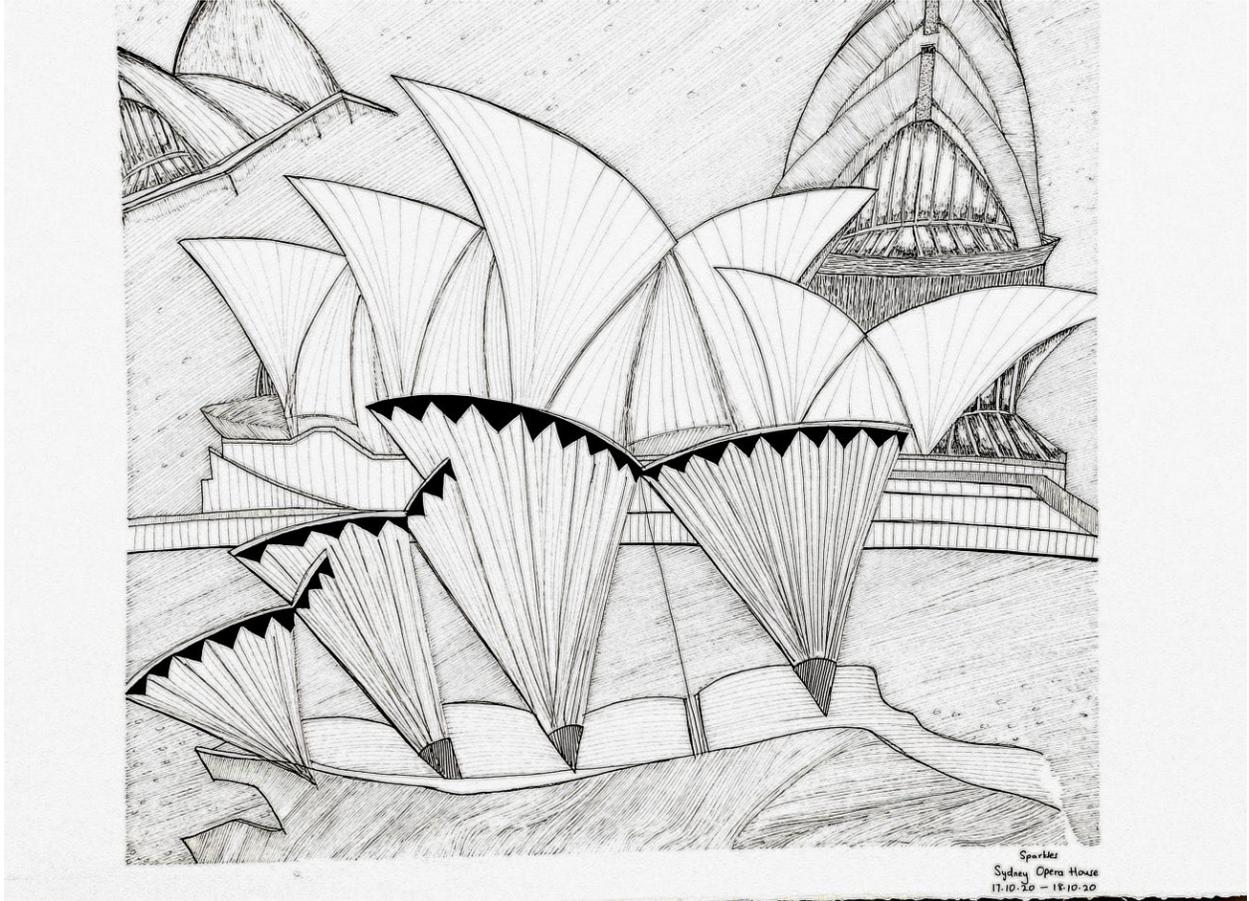
Pause
These could be our students
How can I give my students hope in a world so divided
should I hope for better? NO! I must Do Better. We must Do Better.
Not back to Normal
A new chance to create a caring, courageous, connected community
A new beginning! Zoom, Zoom Zoom.

Life and Death

By Richard Turoski III



Overlap
By Rafia Umar



Tick

By Laela Groat

I live alone in a room where you float in dust as if gravity disappeared. No cleaning products are in sight and there is no motive to clean. Showering is a limited time only option so, the trickling of earth's prime element rolling down the stream of hair upon my arms becomes a spiritual moment for me. Perched high on the smut filled windowsill sat a clock, so faded and decrepit it looked as if its hand were older than father time himself. I am not sure how it got there; all I know is that it was there for me. The ticks became a metronome, and my whispers became its symphony. The bed was there for me too, a quaint pile of comforters and pillows that laid on creaky floorboards. When I was home, the bed I rested my curly, untouched hair on was comparable. Soaked of the tears my mother brought to me by endless nights, I lay in the bed she made, wondering what I have done wrong. At least this bed was just soaked in the dead cells and remains of spiders and flies that did no wrongs to their mother.

The clock and I have conversations about what the weather would feel like that day or if I smelt bad or not. The clock and I floated through the dust sprinkled galaxy, leaving all that was done in the past. Staring at the clock in the window, the speed of the tick's seemed to accelerate.

"Nine" the clock whispered.

"Nine?" I whisper. "What about nine."

Me and the clock have been close for about four weeks now. He seems to be the company I have always needed, and the guidance as well. I remembered the rat poisoned eclairs my mother once gave me. My teeth sank into the delicate crust as cream sprawled through my mouth. Running down my throat, I felt the sting of death. Knowing my mother, I immediately shoved the back end of a metal spoon down my tender throat and threw up all over the kitchen floor. Since I did not appreciate the food that god gave me and I made a mess on the floor, mother made me fast for a week. I appreciate food now, or the food appreciates me because the cans of peas, beans, and soup that I sneak into my room from downstairs were most likely, there for me. Tick.

"Four" the clock whispered.

As I grab the heavy, entangled pile of blankets, I take one to bundle up the goods that I was about to collect. The hallway to the bed was not a real hallway, instead, it was mangled with exposed wires, puffy insulation, and splintering wood. Newspaper lay beneath my feet, serving as the red carpet to the little stairway just two feet ahead of me. During these moments are where I must be careful and silent. Lifting up the latch to the open hole with a drop-down ladder, I signal at clock that I am in the clear. Wrapped in the cotton stuffed graveyard of spiders, I float through the darkened clarity that the space below me reveals. Instead of a galaxy of dust, I was in a galaxy of stuff.

The children that live here sleep as hard as a rock and their parents take about three sleeping pills each before passing out just around 3 AM. The journey comes weekly as my blanket holds enough things to live for another week in the room with a window. While inspecting the cabinets for food I hear a tick, but not of a clock. It is the tick of something familiar but mysterious. Walking around the corner, I peek into the dining room. It is not the dining room in the house that I am standing in, it is the dining room of my mother's house. Beige tinted wallpaper accented with bluebirds carrying field-picked strawberries in their beaks. A round table with two chairs sits in the middle of a virtually empty dining room. The soft echo of "Crimson and Clover" by Tommy James and The Shondells is heard in the background. For dinner is a full fish, garnished with lemon and rosemary. Those flavors always disgusted me. As I step into the room, I see my mother leaning over the table as she urges me to sit. My steps felt short and suspenseful as I approach the round table then falling into the cushioned seat. I look down at the table then glance to my feet. Supported by my white, dingy socks hid a sharpened dagger my father gave me before he died, in which I promised I would use for good reason only.

Once I figured out my mother's plan to kill me and my father in order for her rebirth, I knew what has to be done and I was old enough now. Over and over, stabbing the crimson-colored stain from my mother's fatigued, dying flesh. Flashbacks filling my head which combined with the adrenaline, creating a dangerous martini of emotions, pushing me to the brink. Drenched in blood, I fled the scene, my mother lying there in pieces, dead just like the fish. I look down and I am standing back in the dining room. My blanket still around me and instead of the sound crimson and clover or the clicking of my clock, I hear the screams of children.

"You're supposed to be sleeping, its only four AM," I whispered angrily to the terrified faces of two little girls wearing unicorn pajama's. They do not respond nor were they screaming anymore, but their faces were growing pale and long. Confused, I grabbed tight to my blanket, fleeing the scene, dust scattering behind my path. As I enter the living room, I realize I am in the streets of L.A, two blocks away from my mother's residence. Still drenched in blood, running through one of the neighborhoods in Los Angeles. Frantically searching for a hiding place, I spot a three-story house with no car in the lot and a gate, reinforced with a padlock. "These people should be asleep or not home" I thought to myself, advancing past the gate as I walk up to the back of the house. The door is unlocked, surprisingly, and there is no animals to bug me once I got inside. Pondering through the maze of the house, my attention is drawn to a pink, clean room with a bunkbed. On the headboards reads Princess 1 and Princess 2. "Must be kids", this did not bug me, dogs would be more of an issue. As I reach the top of the second staircase, I see a little hatch. The hatch equipped with a handle is the perfect size for me to reach. A ladder reels out, along with a pound of dust. "Untouched, perfect" I whispered. As the steps to the ladder creak under my feet, leaving imprints of my shoe due to the dust residue, blood drips down my leg.

A shower is in need I thought.

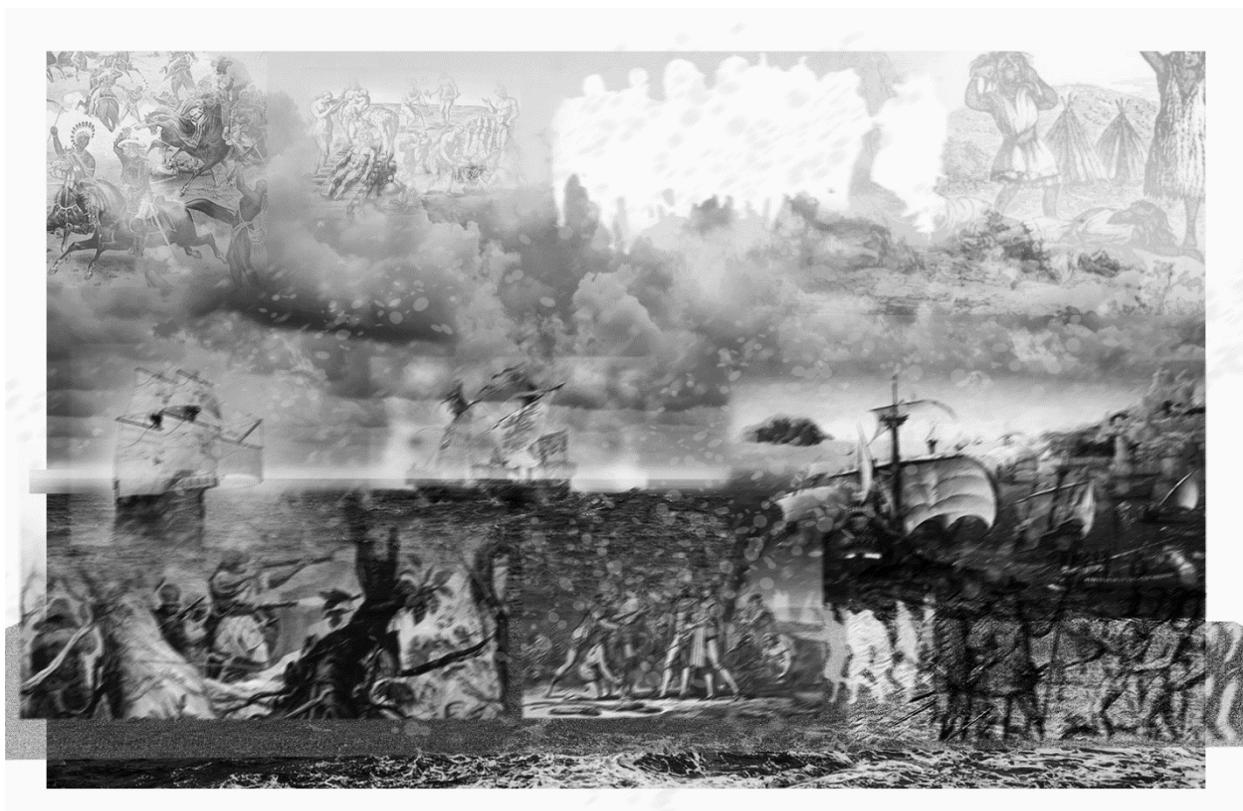
Blood trickled with the water through the creaks and rivers of cuts and rivets on my skin. The soap smelt of musk body wash so a man must be present in the household. Knowing this, I needed new clothes, so I pondered more and saw the master bedroom. Bra's, panties, and socks, blouses, and skirts, and finally grey, men's sweatpants with a plain white t-shirt caught my eye.

My luck became recouped.

After my shower I headed back up the dusty ladder shoot where more imprints of feet are left on the dusty, creaky steps. Approaching the hallway, exposed insulation and wires watched as I began walking to a doorway at the end of the hall. Splintered wood pricked and poked my feet as I walked closer and closer to the door. Behind the door lay a room with a bundle of comforters, a window, and a clock. I shut the door, lay down on the comforters and close my eyes.

When I awake, I am standing in the house's living room and am confronted with the man that owns the musk that I smell of and the clothes that have faded from the dust galaxy. A mother, guarding the two girls in pajama's appears agonized as she is standing with crooked legs. A smile formed on my face as I thank the people for their hospitality and services, pulling a knife from the block and slitting the fathers throat with the same knife that stabbed his wife and kids. As blood trickled from the bent dagger, I hum the melody to "Crimson and Clover" thinking how proud clock would be if he heard the harmony of the angel's voices that I have just created.

Esquecido
By Dennis Almeida



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Dennis Almeida is a Senior BT of Architectural Design and Building major.

Michele DeFreece has been at SUNY Delhi for 36 years. She is currently the Senior Staff Associate for the O'Connor Center for Community Engagement. She lives in Delhi and has three grown children.

Max Dehne is a designer and educator who is fascinated by the gap between architecture and the creation or construction of personal space. Visual collage or confection are one method that he likes to explore in the creation of potential space.

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Jennifer Perry is an RN to BSN student who will graduate this May 2021. She has a B.A. in English as well as two associates degrees in Health Studies and Nursing. She lives with her husband and two children, who motivate her every day.

Jared Rodriguez was born and raised in New York City. There's nowhere else he'd rather be from.

Miriam Sharick has taught and/or tutored various science courses, most prominently Zoology and Botany, at SUNY Delhi since 1992. She lives on a farm near the village and has two grown children, two grandchildren, and a cat. She loves fishing, gardening, making jam, crossword puzzles, birding, and classical music.

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