

FOUNTAIN SPRAY

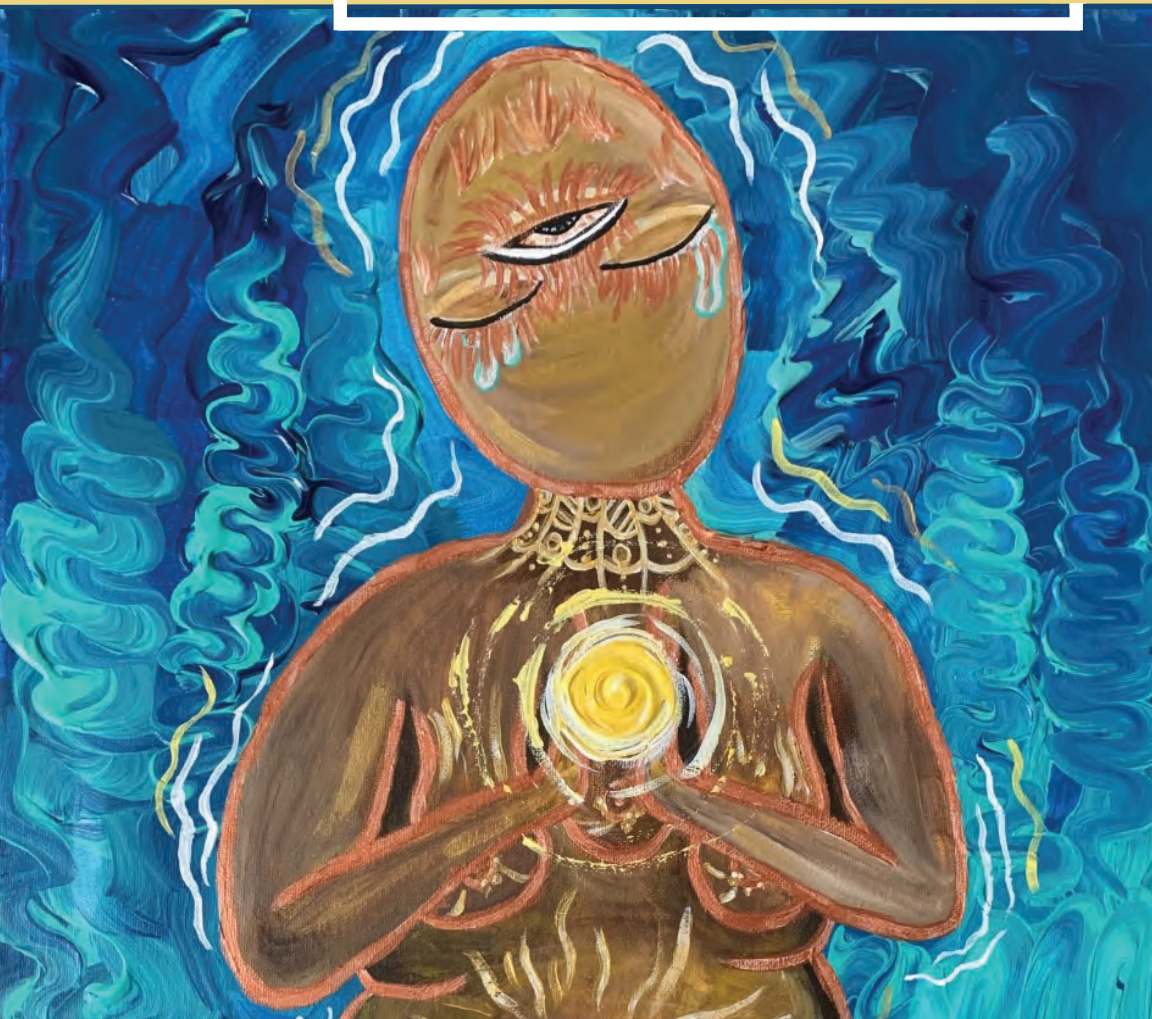


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Environmental Crumble from Recipes for Disaster

Anne Tabor-Morris

Ingredients:

1 star, size medium
1 planet earth, gravity compliant
Liquid water
Powdered snow
Salt to taste as swimming the ocean
Grains of sand
Grains that grow
Leafy greens
Slivers of fish, jellyfish, squid
Mixed mammals, mushrooms, microscopic bacteria
Atmospheric clouds of multi-use gasses

Instructions:

After drenching in aurulent sunlight the waters, sprinkle liberally seeds of various DNAs. Stir earth's atmosphere gyre, mix highs and lows via a Coriolis effect. Encourage photosynthesis, ladle digestive enzymes. This is not a witch's brew. This is enchantment of a planet. Breathe deeply.

Add intelligence, cunning of both predator and prey, and pray. Visualize distinctions, extinctions. Recall every fishbowl evolves disparately. Check often for fever, fire, local or global warming. Ice the glaciers.

Top the mountains with frosting and billygoats,
tilt at aphelion, sprinkle cherry blossom petals.

Add miracles of babies, mother's instinct for cubs,
fold in a confusion of masses, jumble populations
over the course of millennia. Let rise and fall empires.
Swirl in politics, religions and dreams. Layers will
form: mantle and crust, limnology levels, social strata,
circadian cycles. Knead it and need it. Hope and hope

or crash and burn. Flambeau with the douse of reason,
ozone lost over the poles, polar bears swimming round
North Pole's skewer. Smoke ascent and plummet with
deep convection. Garnish with anthropogenic beasts
who "know best". To serve, cut with the double-edged
sword of science. Find a way to better serve the future.

Recharge

Brandon Downey

Scrolling through ads
as if it were a delight.
Hand beginning to cramp
and getting tight.
The finger swipes
with no end in sight.

Phone stop, recharge.

Eyes are shut but
it reaches out.
Cries to be held
turn into shouts.
Soothed by the touch,
alleviated of all doubts.

Phone rest, recharge.

The headaches have
set in.
All thanks to some
small piece of tin.
Slowly eating away
from within.

Phone consume, recharge.

Blue screens over
blue skies.
An ongoing stream
of lies.
Beckoned to the light,
a mindless flock of flies.

Phone decay, recharge.

Draining life from
all that possess.
Can't live without,
one must confess.
A worsening problem
that no one will address.

Phone strengthen, recharge.

A double-edged sword
taken straight to the heart.
Our minds the bullseye,
and it is the dart.
Too far gone to
reboot or restart.

Phone control, recharge.

Little remains
to be taken.
You, the victim,
now forsaken.
Left waiting for its
call so you may awaken.

Phone fully charged.

Introspective

Quincy Southerland, ft. Tyler Rivera



Introspective

Quincy Southerland, ft. Tyler Rivera

When you look into a mirror, are you looking at your physical being or are you looking deeper? What happens when you take away the technology, human interaction, and you are left with just yourself? Introspective takes you on a journey of self-discovery, facing what one would perceive as the worst parts of themselves and arriving at the resolve of accepting the whole self.

Inspired by almost a year of social distancing and quarantining Introspective follows a character who is lonely and longing for any kind of human connection. Through the power of a touch, our character is transported outside of his bubble into unknown worlds where he is free... almost. The only condition for him to stay in this world is through staying in constant physical contact with another. What happens when they let go? That is where the real journey begins.



Mirror Mirror

Naima Towns

Once upon a time there was a girl in love with her reflection.

She longed to see it. To plant herself in front of a mirror and just coexist with the being on the other side.

The reflection she saw was her best friend, someone she could talk and laugh with.

Until one day in the school bathroom, she noticed her reflection didn't match all the other girls. This caused her to feel a way she had never felt before.

She needed to get home immediately to discuss this with the reflection.

Then, it happened. There the reflection was.

The girl began hurling hurtful words and insults to the reflection.

She knew the being on the other side would move and say whatever she wanted them to, but she couldn't help but notice the pained expression in the reflection's eyes.

From that day on laughs and giggles, turned to sobs and sniffles.

And the longing to see her reflection turned into a cracked, abandoned mirror.

Left to collect dust.

Untitled Photograph 1
Matthew Schroeder



Not Welcome Here

Alycia Bardon

Lying high in the hillside
Light of a fire dancing on the skyline
Find a friend whose fair
Take a car if you may
Go slow over the road
Easy turn to the east
There you find people here, there, everywhere
Signing songs around the luminous light
Loud and proud and joyous
For it is the full moon
So the town must sound off
To send fear to the werewolves
On this clear well-lit night
A bonfire burns bright
Sending a sea of flames skyward
Dancing friends find space in the circle
Around the glow the people roar
Shouting songs and noise
So the werewolves will go
Lying high in the hillside
Find a friend whose fair
Take a car if you may
Go slow over the road
Easy turn to the east
For it's another full moon
And the werewolves are not welcome here

Poisoned Memories

Angela Pollock

Wake up, look where I am, displaying the temple that is me.
Memories torn away like a concussion turned amnesia,
Yet, no concussion took place, only my unbearables.
Memories come and go, horrific attacks, passion escapes,
Reminders of what was, forgetting what my life means.
One down, two down, three down, blank spaces now,
Time evades me, sensitivity ensues, bright lights,
Sounds shake and vibrate, my brain pounding like
Dehydration after a day playing in salt, sun beating.
What am I doing? Why can I not kick this pain?
Not just physically, but emotionally and mentally.
Ejecting it all with bottles full of liquid filth, poison
From the God's of neglect, but only to myself, a thought.
Never, is it a lonely affect, it always comes with burdens,
Failure, disappointment, and beds waisted in hospitals.
Spaces gone for people with real struggles, real
Sickness, real scars to be sewn for saving a life.
A worried family, friends, all for a temporary fix
To a twenty-four/seven attack on my conscience.
My life is being destroyed by my fear alone,
My fear to face my demons, while they hijack the
Control of my personal affects inside my dome.
The devil's minions are winning by a landslide,
I'm not even putting up a fight, only submitting.
Strength is courage with weight to back it up,
This is a concept that had evaded me for some time.
Fatigued. Beaten down. Broken. Pieces of me array,
In need of a good cleaning, a reason to fight.

Dismal family and friends of mine should not inherit
My pain, they need me to resist my own demons,
I must drive them to fear me, make their own escape.
A cleanse is never immediate, always bumpy first,
Strengthening of a set mindset, negotiations ensue.
A memory of time down the road, three years sober,
Then, second wave hits me like a swinging slap of
Concrete released from hundreds of feet in the air.
Jitters in my head, lungs heavy from pressure
Unseen, heart pounding outside my chest,
No this is not love, it is fear of being at all.
A nervousness stronger than the Hulk on steroids,
I think is the best description for my insides.
Alas, a new pill to counteract a new problem,
Ones that are somehow, occurring more often,
Strengthening my new “savior” to fight for me.
Catastrophic future ahead, an unforeseen one
At that. One pill down the hatch, turns to four,
Turns to an eventual fourteen down at once.
The reaper must not have wanted me yet, who
Knows why, maybe he was afraid of the person
I had become, an inept zombie, invisible to most.
Memories gone, recollection, not even the
Slightest, like my mind had an eraser working
night and day, ensuring they were gone indefinitely.
I almost destroyed a 28-year friendship, all
So I could destroy the emotions scrambling
Around inside my head, fighting each self.
Emotionally numb is the only feeling
Available on the “happy pills”, none other.
I learned first-hand what tough love can
Do to a person’s state of mind, their idiocy.
That love tears a hole in your heart the size

Of the sun, without the light, only anguish.
This fear was different, it was a real concern,
One with only a single avenue to correct it.
An urgency was feeding me what was needed
To rid the toxic tonic responsible for
Changing who I was as a person, my character.
No more lies, no more secrets, no more mess.
Luck would be an understatement to describe
Detox. Reaper must have been vacationing
Those days, keeping me alive, no weaning.
Doses so high that a straight cut should have
Put me six feet under, face to face with the
Devil himself and the demons that haunt me.
A poison that stripped two years from me,
Burning every memory possible, the moment
They were made

Beautiful & Ugly

Gabrielle Serkus

I'm a flower in a garden and you're an old sandwich in a trash can. I blossom and grow, and beautiful to the eye.

You're an eyesore.

I create a great aroma everyone loves to stop and smell me, People plug their noses and run past when they come near you.

I'm brought to people's gardens, and you're transferred to a landfill. I'm always remembered and well maintained,

You're forgotten about and left,

I'm what flourishes the earth while you slowly destroy it.

People I Used to Be

Gianna DeMarco

I have already lost touch with a couple of people I
used to be.

The four year old who rides on her father's shoulders
unapologetically at the summer shore-house,
staring up at the fireworks that crackle in the sky and
grant her world with a sense of wonder she'll never
meet again.

The sixteen year old who sits in her best friend's base-
ment and cries about the day's woes,
her fears, her discontentment with those around her.
Not knowing that friend will be gone as soon as they
came,
shutting her out, replicating the behavior of those her
tears were dedicated to.

The eighteen year old who has yet to feel loss;
who stands in a kitchen peeling potatoes for the
Christmas that will never come,
although she is wholly unaware of that.

The nineteen year old of yesterday,
a girl who wants to restart and try it all again.
Someone who wants another chance to perfect it,
to make it right.

But that is, as they say, another story

Self Portrait in Brown

Emma Eisner



See You Soon

Sarah Coe

She dipped her pen into the ink, careful not to spill a drop. She wanted this letter to be perfect. That, and she was running out of ink. This was the 4th rewrite.

Dear Sophia,

~~—There is something important we must discuss.~~ No, that was too formal, too serious. This was a serious matter, but Bess wasn't trying to scare Sophia.

Please meet me at Briar Bridge, by the Thames next Wednesday night. There's something important I wish to tell you. Wear something that won't draw attention. I know it's not your style, but trust me. Please.

There, that was enough. Hopefully. Bess folded the paper and put it inside an envelope, then sealed it with wax and a little flower. It was their sign to each other, a sign that the letter was important, ever since Sophia saw the idea in Harper's Bazaar. She went downstairs and handed it off to their singular maid, Hannah.

"I'll have it posted by tomorrow, Miss."

"Thank you," Bess replied with a smile. She headed back up to her room and began to read, but she couldn't quite focus. Not when so much was on the line. Hopefully, Sophia would respond quickly.

A letter came back two days later.

Dear Bess,

Of course. I will see you, and your suit, there.

Sophia was the only one who knew that Bess had a suit, which she often used to sneak out of the house. It was liberating, looking like a man. No one questioned you, and you could do whatever your heart desired. Of course, Bess still had to be careful, but it was still far less careful than if she was wearing one of her dresses.

After opening and subsequently burning the letter (her mother was particularly nosy and she didn't want to be caught), Bess cleaned her suit and began to read yet again. If only she could time travel.

--

Time passed like molasses, and Bess felt as if Wednesday would never come. Every minute was excruciating, every hour unbearable, and every day felt like an eternity. But eventually, Wednesday came.

It was an hour or two after sunset when Bess finally managed to get out of the house. She was almost caught by her mother, who Bess had been certain was asleep, but after standing still in the shadows for 10 minutes, her mother finally went to bed and Bess went out of the house.

It took her 10 minutes to get to the bridge, Sophia, on the other hand, probably wasn't as lucky. Sophia was the type of person who would draw attention even in a suit. She would've been impossible to ignore even if she wasn't the most beautiful person Bess had ever seen. She carried herself with such poise, such confidence that everyone around her always took note. Even if everyone was staring, however, Sophia could probably get past on pure confidence alone.

Bess shook herself out of her reverie as she got close to the bridge. No one was there besides a woman in a dress, who had Sophia's platinum hair and pushed back shoulders. Even in a tattered dress with dirt on her face, Sophia managed to look like royalty. She turned her head as Bess approached, a small smile on her face.

"I'm never going to forgive you for making me tear up one of my dresses. And put garden dirt on my face! "

"This isn't exactly the kind of conversation we can have at the Tea Tray. I'm sorry I made you dress down for one night." Sophia let out a small laugh.

“I’ll survive.”

Bess tried to hide the love in her eyes at Sophia’s smile. She didn’t want to look like a smitten teenager. Of course, she was a smitten teenager, but Sophia didn’t know that. Yet.

“Anyways, how have you been?”

“Well, you?”

“I’ve been well too.” There was an awkward silence as Bess tried to think of how to break it without immediately jumping into a confession. She wasn’t ready to confess, not yet. Just a few more minutes.

“Bess, I know you didn’t ask me here to make small talk or talk about my dresses.”

Bess nodded, still not sure how to reply. She couldn’t make words come out, even if she wanted to. She was beginning to tear up, but she held the tears back with all her might.

“Something’s been bothering you. What is it?”

Suddenly, Bess had lost all of her courage. She couldn’t tell Sophia, not now, not ever. Why the hell had she sent that letter. Why was she so foolish?

“Just tell me, Bess. I could never hate you, you know that.”

“I think you could,” she said through tears, which had finally begun to fall.

“Tell me, Bess.” Sophia picked up her hands and looked into Bess’s eyes. A tense moment passed. “If you have nothing to say, I’ll be on my way.” Sophia turned to walk away, and suddenly Bess’s courage came running back. She grabbed Sophia’s wrist and said the fateful words.

“I’m in love with you.”

Sophia whipped her head around, stopping in her tracks.

“This isn’t a time for jokes, Bess.”

“I’m not joking!” she said loudly, before lowering her voice to avoid curious eyes. “I don’t want to feel these things, I don’t want to feel this way. I’ve been trying to hide this for months. I tried everything to suppress these feelings, but nothing has worked. Not prayers, or journals. Not the confession or the holy water or the blade.” Bess pulled her sleeve down at this, and Sophia’s eyes followed. “I don’t expect you to return my affections. I know you’re not interested in me. I know I’m disgusting. It’s okay if you never want to speak to me again. But I couldn’t keep hiding these feelings. I’m sorry.” Bess lowered her head, looking at the ground and trying not to cry any more than she already has.

Tense silence surrounded the girls for a few minutes before Sophia finally broke it. “We can’t ever be together.”

“I know.”

“No one can know Bess. I won’t tell a soul.”

Bess looked up, surprised. She had been expecting more disgust, more anger in Sophia’s voice. It was almost...kind. “Really?”

“Really. You’re still my friend Bess.”

Bess’s heart panged. It felt like someone was stabbing her, but of course, no one was touching her. Sophia’s answer was worse than utter disgust. Seeing her face every week, knowing that she didn’t love Bess but still tolerated...it would be hell. Maybe it would get better over time, but maybe not. Probably not. Sophia turned and walked away, her heels clicking on the cobblestone. Bess looked up, wiping her tears from her face.

Bess stood there for a moment, collecting herself. After a few minutes, and a few more tears, she straightened and began to walk home.

It took her about 10 minutes to walk home, and

almost the entire time she stared at the ground. She bumped into someone who pushed her off with a rude comment and a curse, but she didn't care anymore. There was a deep, almost physically painful, pit in her stomach. She didn't think it would ever go away.

When she opened her house door (as slow as possible) she just wanted to go upstairs and cry herself to sleep. She walked forwards towards the stairs before a voice called out from the living room.

"Bess!"

She froze. It was her mother's voice. Her mother, who was supposed to be asleep. Supposed to be asleep and not holding Bess's diary.

"Bess, come here. We need to talk."

--

Sophia climbed out of her family's carriage, careful not to get any dirt on the bottom of her dress. She walked up to the red door she had known throughout her childhood. The red door that led to Bess's house. Bess, who she hadn't seen or heard from in two weeks. She knocked and within a minute Bess's mother opened the door.

"Hello, Sophia." Mrs. Brown said neutrally, her face nor her voice betraying anything.

"Good morning, Mrs. Brown, I was wondering about Bess? Is she okay?"

"Come in Sophia." Mrs. Brown opened up the door fully and Sophia followed her in, closing the door behind her. Her heart was fluttering like a hummingbird, even though there was no reason to be worried. She thought she and Bess had parted decently well.

"How much did you know about Bess?"

"What do you mean? I've known her since childhood, I know a lot about her."

"About her...proclivities." Mrs. Brown said it like a curse and made a disgusted face.

In a way, it was Sophia thought. She decided to play dumb. She didn't want to get in trouble, to ruin her own reputation. "Nothing. Is she..." Sophia leaned in close and whispered. "Is she a homosexual?"

Mrs. Brown nodded, looking scared. Sophia played along, acting surprised.

"Where is she? Is she okay?"

Mrs. Brown shook her head. "We sent her to a camp. They're supposed to cure her, but we have no idea how it's going. We aren't allowed to write her anything."

Sophia nodded, faking sympathy. In reality, she was disgusted by Mrs. Brown now. Any mother who would send her own daughter away was a terrible mother, even if they thought they were helping.

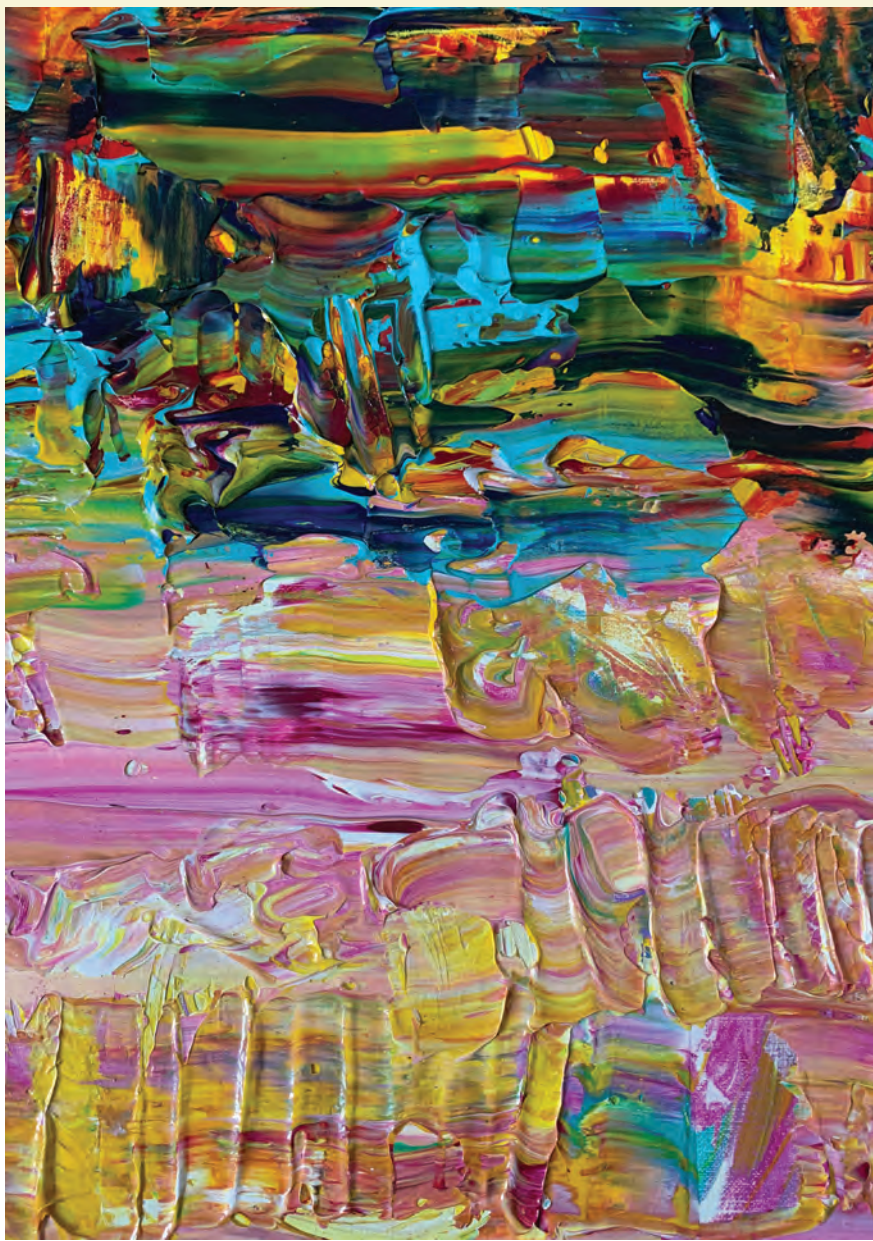
The two chatted for a bit more, making small talk. After about half an hour Sophia left, waving to Mrs. Brown and promising to visit again.

She did, a few times, but without Bess, there was really no reason to go. Each time she went there, Mrs. Brown tried to update her, saying the curing process should only last for a few more months. Eventually, Sophia stopped going, but she never stopped wondering. She never stopped hoping that she would see Bess soon. Maybe next week, or the week after, or the week after that. Soon, she would open the door and Bess would be there. They'd laugh about the whole experience, then Bess would come in and the two would hug or kiss or maybe do something else. Soon. Sophia would see Bess again.

Sophia never saw Bess again.

Energies Colliding

Emma Eisner



Foundations

Caroline Zonis

Love is not reasonable
It is not sensible or rational
It is nothing like him, yet here he is
Wandering through the lilac gardens that grew just
outside his sturdy home of bare brick logic
Traipsing behind auburn flames that keep him
warm when the moon is high and the stars are re-
minding him of all the sleep he's missing
And of course he does retreat, eventually
But he's learning to keep close to her warm light
And she's quite taken with the idea of solid arms
and men who seek to build foundations

Untitled Photograph 2
Matthew Schroeder



First Gift

Anne Tabor-Morris

Very first gift
your true love will give you
won't be what you wanted
or asked for
secretly or openly.

That will come stale years later
when you will find guilt in
buying your own gifts
to give them
to give you.

The first gift won't even be a guess
at what you like.
Nor a style the jeweler
recommends for
someone in your class.

The first gift will be something shared,
something that your love loves!
Deep from gilt heart
love wants to
share bright
pleasure - you too.

Does It?

Gianna DeMarco

My mind always travels back to you,
sitting across from me, flirting with our waitress.
I ordered fries because you said you wanted me to eat something,
But now I know you just wanted to be able to have the pride in saying
you paid for me.
But that doesn't make it a date, does it?

You always had this gleam in your eye when you looked at me,
like I was a trophy that sat inside of a glass case.
It felt like you coveted me.
Maybe I just wished you did.
But that doesn't make it real, does it?

A lot of our friendship was fleeting.
We lived in these strange memories together,
like we could only conceptualize one another for moments at a time.
Most of our time together was wasted.
But that doesn't make it worthless, does it?

You cried so often when we spoke, I felt as though I was your diary.
It was this girl, or that girl, or whoever it was that was hurting you.
Of course, I calmed you down. Every. Single. Time.
I wanted to protect you from the pain people inflicted upon you,
but that doesn't make it end, does it?

What I've realized in the past year, is that I felt something different
about you.
What I felt for you was this fiery, burning, heat of desire,
although you didn't feel the same.
You know, I still think about you every day. That's what you left me
with.
But that doesn't make it love, does it?

Hope

Alycia Bardon

Sydney looks to her phone.
She has done this a million times since reaching the corner of Main
Street and Kinney Street.
She shifts foot to foot, glancing up and down the quiet street, search-
ing.
Sydney hits the home button on her phone again, she has been waiting
for twenty minutes.
Heavy boots fast approaching alerts her, and she quickly picks her
head up, heart pounding.
Disappointment washes over her when she sees he wasn't who she
was looking for.
Sidney lets out a weighted sigh, "come on, where are you?"
She runs her fingers through her ash brown hair.
She begins to pace the sidewalk, scanning the growing crowd.
Maybe he will show.
Maybe.
He will be here.
Sydney checks the time on her phone again.
"If you are waiting for him to answer you, you are going to be waiting
a very long time."
Her best friend's warning echoed in her mind on an annoying repeat.
Rain starts to fall, soaking Sydney to the bone and she starts to shiver.
She watches everyone scramble into nearby buildings to avoid the
sudden downpour.
Sydney is left standing all alone in the pouring rain like a sad Taylor
Swift song.
Wrapping her arms tight around her wet and cold body she leaves her
spot.
She is guessing he played her, toying with her emotions and her heart.
Sydney's last string of hope is cut.

Who Do You Think You Are?

Naima Towns

Who do you think you are?

With your sharp mind and clever charm.

Making the weak feel confident and the strong tremble.

Girl, you are everything.

You, the granddaughter of generations of suffering, and perseverance.

Whose brown skin can be as dark as night, and as light as the sun.

And from that skin can create variations of colors and hues.

Eyes that mesmerize and tell stories that all would line up to hear. Either black as coal or blue as the sky.

You are magic, girl.

Whose hair is soft as cotton, yet holds strength, pain, and love.

Full lips that hold secrets, speak the truth, stand against injustice, conjure up smiles, and when needed can become a weapon.

Whispers as quiet as a mouse, a roar as loud as a lion.

You are special, girl.

Legs long and sturdy, that carry you.

Feet, that walk, and tip toe, as you dance on light.

Hips and a backside, that are generous in size and nothing short of magical casting a spell on any who dare gaze at them.

Never apologize for the space you take up.

Angelic, Bewitching, Captivating, Delicate, Devine, Ethereal,

Graceful, Outspoken, Quiet, Radiant, Statuesque.

You are picture perfect.

A muse.

A Blueprint that many attempt to replicate, but fail, as you are the original.

A womb, wherein all life originated.

You my dear, are the mother, you are the sun, the moon, and the Earth.

You know who you are.

Woman, you are Life.

A Girl Named Blu

Michelle Martinez

When she awakes she is invisible like a ghost
She puts her favorite blue suit on and goes
She travels by day but also by night
Between the sun rays and the moon beams
But always reaching her destination
She does what she wants
She's like a flood, few can stop her but many can try

She walks through sunny days and rainy afternoons
She glides through the days like she glides through the years
She plays hide and seek
Who can see her?
Who can spot her before she darts?
Can you see her?
Can you stop her?

Her presence can be felt anywhere and everywhere
And yet she comes and goes as she pleases
Staying as long as she wants
A day
A week
A year
Four Years
Forever?
Who knows...
When she will come or go again

But
She always demands something
The longer she stays the more she wants
She demands attention
She demands to be heard
Then she demands pain
She demands loss
And isolation

But
Many overlook what she really wants
She desperately wants help
Sometimes she wants a quick fix
Sometimes a cure
She wants to be seen

Loss

Caroline Zonis

In all the lives we've lived, I've lost him
In every way he's left, he's taken fragments of me
And now, in this form, reflections offer me no comfort, no
recognition
I've not heard my voice nor seen my face in years
So when he, very luckily, stands before me, holding all I've
ever known beneath the surface, behind his eyes, I know
elation like this is temporary
I know from the core of me, only loneliness will show me
constancy
It will be there when I grow old, and it will beat my final
breaths from shattered lungs
There will be no deeper sorrow than this

He was

Naima Towns

Like a flame being blown on softly, His life began to flicker. Every breath becoming labored, fading. Blood seeping from his wounds, draining him. While he tried his best to stay awake, the need to rest was overbearing. He was...tired. In his head, all he saw was you. He hoped you were okay, that you weren't hurt in any way, and that you were happy. The thought of you bringing him a sense of tranquility. He loves you.

From the late nights to the early mornings you shared. The inside jokes and the hushed giggles. He wanted those moments to last forever. He closed his eyes as he thought about your smile, and he imagined what your face would look like after he asked you the most meaningful question ever, an event he planned on initiating soon. Breathing in and out slowly his thoughts turned into light. Yeah...he loves.... loved you.

I Know a Man Named Death

Michelle Smith

I'm friends with someone right
now
I don't want to be with.
You might even know him too,
He goes by the name of Death.

I've known him since I was
young,
I was almost turning seven
When my little sister Gitty
Went up to God in heaven

I met Death later on
When my friend's mom passed
away.
She'd had cancer for a while,
Until Death took her away

Death bumped into me again,
It was a family friend this time.
I didn't know this man so well,
But I knew he was very kind.

I don't know why he likes me
so,
This Death, my unwanted
friend
I'd like to stop this relationship
And put it to an end.

But he didn't agree, I know,
Because he greeted me again
When another girl had cancer,
And Death stopped all her
pain.

Death then met me down the
line
When my friend's grandma left
this world.
I was knowing Death all too well
And I knew it wasn't good.

He showed me his fatal touch
Even while he wasn't there.
So many people died
Over so many years.

I thought I was done with Death
Because I hadn't seen him in a
while
I thought we were done forever
But he saw me and he smiled

He met me by my grandad's
At the funeral, not the home.
I told Death I don't want him
here,
That he should make himself be
gone.

Recently he had the gall
to show his despised face.
my mother's father passed on
too,
(Not from smoking, in this
case.)

And so I told my "friend",
"we're done,
you need to leave me for good."
He just gave me a slow, small
smile,
said "if I could, my dear, I
would..."

Light

Emma Eisner



Yearning to be Whole Again

Erica Caleca

1. yearning to be whole again

There is no sound of silence

When I think of hospitals, I think of white walls, linoleum floors, clocks ticking

Always busy, people moving in and out of rooms, hallways

The IV the nurse inserts as you lay in the bed, feeling that little sharp pinch in the crook of your arm or on your hand

Seeing wires connect you to these machines, feeling small in the bed even though you know your own size

Seeing people getting wheeled into rooms in chairs, on beds

hearing the fast walk of people who move with this urgency, hearing the slow gait of people who know they have time, hearing constant beeping from the machines, from the monitors

Hearing voices over the phone, from the intercoms, whispers from one nurse to the next, from doctor to doctor, the hushed tones of those speaking to those who are grieving

There's one thing that I haven't heard in the hospital: the eerie flatlining wail from the monitors

I haven't heard that, I haven't had a reason to.

Visiting my grandfather, all I heard was the television, the monitors, his breathing, my breathing. And when he died, it happened in his home, and I was outside of his room. I didn't hear anything besides the sadness of my aunt, of my grandma. I see in his fragility, something

familiar, what I heard, besides my own breathing, was nothing that mattered. I can't imagine hearing the wail, the moment that people nearby know someone isn't okay, that something bad is happening

Can you imagine sitting in the waiting room, having to hear that sound and being completely helpless? Knowing that you couldn't have done anything about it to save that person? Do you know them? Did you know what they've been through?

Do you ever wonder what their life was like before drugs? The baby pictures, the pictures of them as a young kid, grinning with a tooth missing, tiny teeth lined up with one small hole. The pictures of them as they grow older, taller, limbs awkward and gangly. Pictures of them at a middle school dance, braces on, hair cut differently, the same grin still there. High school portraits are next, clothes different, minute changes to their appearance different, but the grin still remains the same.

Graduation, the cap on their head, smiling with their diploma, looking at each flash of the cameras that their family members point at them. They did it, finally, no more sitting in school for six hours, listening to teachers go on and on about topics that sound like they'll help them fall asleep rather than pique their interest.

All it takes to change them is someone passing it to them in the hallway, or at a party. Slipping pills and smoking weed at first, stealing some sips of someone's cheap beer, feeling giddy at the thought of being drunk at 17, 18, and that they graduated only a few hours ago. Smelling pot and sweat in someone's basement and thinking that *you feel alive for the first time*.

Then, it elevates, stronger pills than the ones they're used to taking, moving onto stronger painkillers, ones that

make them feel more than just slightly drowsy. A tolerance builds up, they don't feel the same relief that they first did, they just want to relax, college is going to be hard, some of their friends aren't even going, so they still have time, all they think about is that they still have time, time, time. This is just something they're trying, this isn't going to be something they do forever, it's just to try why are you mad? Why don't you get it? You were 18 once, I just don't—

It remains the same, always chasing that initial high, a feeling that they are never going to *feel* again. Something that fills this black hole inside of them, something that makes them finally feel *good*.

Do you know what that person looks like, the one who flatlined on that bed, alone? So thin, their limbs resemble a baby bird's--delicate, papery. They look like someone I meet on one Halloween, a fleeting moment where we talked and I learned her name and she, mine. They look like my neighbor's two daughters, my friend across the street. They look like my cousins, me, my friends from childhood, my classmates, my older sister except—

They are everyone and anyone, they have no true face or name, they are the result of misinformation.

They look like my grandpa, though he didn't die from drugs, but the way that leukemia and dementia sucked the life out of him, I don't think you'd know better unless you knew him.

2. 11 Feb 2019

I didn't think it would hurt like it did when we lost you, and I know that I was foolish to think that.

I thought it wouldn't hurt because we were unsure a few times if you would make it or not-I figured that since I'd been so used to the idea of you not making it, that I'd be kind of alright when it does happen.

I was wrong. It hurt, I'm not sure if it still does. The grief, the pain comes and goes in waves, it has its own current. There's a longing in me, missing in me. I wish I could speak to you again. I wish for so many things. I wish I wasn't bothered when I'd have to drive grandma to the hospital or to the rehab place to see you. The constant backandforth. I feel bad that I even felt that way--I've never wished that I could do back and change my feelings more than I do now.

There were two distinct times that you made me heart drop before you passed away. The first was not long after you moved from Brooklyn and I was at your house with you, doing homework. You kept forgetting the grade I was in, how old I was--I wasn't mad at the time, just confused. The second time, I'll never forget. It was Columbus Day, my freshman year of college. I came from school to see you with my dad. (I had off from school, it was raining, and I was at school painting for class) we went to the rehab center to see you and you called me by my aunt's name. I cried immediately because you didn't remember me--you didn't remember my name. I knew then, better than I did a few months prior that things really were different, even though I knew for the most that time my senior year of high school, but it just hit me differently when I stood there and you called me Linda.

3. sea glass eyes (hold my gaze)

being with you is like having my own piece of the sky

your eyes, two clear pale pools of light blue that I welcome
sinking into when you look

at

me I never thought that I'd care so much about anyone's
blue eyes until I had yours lock in mine before we kiss

When you look at me, it's like you see all of mine—every
part—the ugly, bitter, raw, happy, excited, sad, bored. And
after seeing all that, you still choose to stay.

Sometimes I swear you look at me like you can read my
mind.

(I am a book open only to you)

4. death is a rollercoaster in my eyes

I feel like when you passed away, it wasn't one death in
that moment—there were two. There was your mind, which
went earlier in a way, from dementia, and then there was
your body, which went around two years later.

I feel like I had gotten used to the idea of you passing be-
cause it was dicey and touch-and-go for so long. It felt as
though we were on a rollercoaster in the dark, not know-
ing when there would be a sudden drop, incline, or sharp
turn.

(where are we now?) still in the dark

5. unlock my jaw

I'm afraid

underneath my exterior is someone who is cruel and heart-
less

someone who says words with an intent to kill, to hurt
the ones I love,

someone who is hot-headed, someone who looks for
the exposed soft spots--the weakest points on my fam-
ily and friends, waiting for the right moment to come
for me to sink my teeth in and bite down hard--wanting
them to bleed and grow weak underneath me

you raised a dormant monster, did you know that?

Finding Inner Peace

Emma Eisner



Path of Life

Kirsten Nardini

Oh, Life is so dull and lacking in purpose, as I wince to
see the faces of people

The stress is here and encompasses everything we do
What to do as I sit at the traffic light, must keep busy
thinking about work

Must keep busy when away from work schedule to fami-
ly schedule to children's sports schedule to their school
schedule to my school schedule and then the household
chore schedule

Did I forget a schedule?

There is no time for health as I will schedule it

There is no time for healing as I will schedule that too

Humor? I can't fit that into my schedule

What is that? You want me to laugh? About what?

I look at the children who hold electronic gadgets

Angry as they lost the game, rage as they begin another
game, no happiness to be found

We are all looking for answers

Medications are not the answer

There are other holistic choices, I can take herbal teas,
vitamins, and Tai Chi

There are chakras, yoga and meditation

I am no longer limited to treating one part of my body

But instead I am treating my body, my brain and together
as a whole

I can laugh and I heal my body amazingly

Many of us really are ill, but not me

I took the blinders off and I can see

There are people who are still angry, but not me

They cut people off on the roads but I see and laugh

I can now add humor and laughter into the actions of
those I see

I will not be that grumpy person
I can see as I sit with nature, the actions of those around
me
The stress is there but no longer encompasses me I
don't want to be a part of the trance I see
I am no longer a zombie who doesn't believe
There are options and answers in the energy all around
me, as I drink my chai tea
I can make my heart better through Laughter and Hu-
mor, that is the path for me
I have a schedule and it's all about me
That schedule works for me as I no longer live for it
I have scheduled myself into the schedule as now I find
time to monitor my health, learn about healing, as I
laugh and add humor into all I can be
My life is no longer dull and lacking in purpose, there is
so much that I learned about healing with humor
I have a goal to share my fountain of knowledge
There is much to laugh about and heal on the path as
humor is needed in all that we do
We CAN change our body chemistry with laughter and a
little humor added too,
I cannot wait to incorporate all that I learned with my
family, as I laugh my way on the Path of Life

Self Care

Brandon Downey

Looking through the
windowpane because the
pain staking process
is complete, and
yet still I compete
with myself
so that I may
pluck one hair
to reveal the grey
that may move through my
mind to unwind
all confidence
which leaves me
lost in a reflection,
with no recollection
of why this faucet
drips cold water for
my hands to hold
ideas that make me
so quick to
self-diagnose but
still not dying to know
the cause of the
throb in my chest.
Add another
cool splash to wash
away the hardened ash
of memories past leaving
nothing but subtle scars
and fading stars

and
my smile is true no
matter how much the world
construes because pearly
whites
belong to me.
I see now
that combs need not
be alone if
hair is strong
and I sing my song
to its completion

Quarantime

Kim Markland

Time, time
Never enough time.
We rush to and fro,
We come and we go,
Never enough time.
We work and we play,
We study all day.
We meet and we eat,
We dance to the beat.
Never enough time
To get things done.
Life speeds by amid the
fun.
But now, all we have is
time.
Time on our hands,
Time together with those
we love,
With kids and spouses
and partners
And roommates, locked
together
In Quarantime, and
Home is work and
Home is school and
Home is the gym and
Home is the church and
Home is the bar and
Home is the Doctor's
office and
Home is the hospital of
our souls.
All is one in Quarantime.

It's time.
Time to play.
Time to run.
Time to smile,
And have some fun.
Time to laugh and
Time to cry.
Time to work and
Time to cook.
Time to serve and
Time to browse.
Time to share
And fool around
Time to pray and
Time to grieve.
Time to listen and
Time to live.
Time has taken a turn and
Rearranged our lives.
We are locked down,
Alone and apart and to-
gether,
But we are not alone,
Never alone.
He is here.
The One who transcends
time.
We are all sharing this
time.
Time, time,
Never enough time.
Yet, you and I share this
time.
For survivors, time contin-
ues
But regrets remain.
Time, time,
Never enough time.

Back to Basics

Janine Corgan

So... Sigh... Look at us... confined and confused. We cannot control what is going on out there. But maybe we can consider what is going on inside. What's happening in ourselves and our families? I am witnessing a lot of "going back to basics" - back to simple times.

Often I wonder if God would like me to slow down, to remember what is important, and to appreciate the gift in simplicity. You know how I feel about those small moments which are often overlooked - a primary quote in my novel; another quote reflects the same idea daily shown in my email signature (both quotes below).

I believe God does not cause bad things to happen. I also believe He is present in them and that He can use them for good. Maybe through all this we get to reassess and RESET some of our perceptions and habits which have strayed a bit out of control. Think about how busy and filled with chaos our lives have become (complex schedules, constant striving for more, anxiety, fatigue). We forgot. We forgot that God's graces center around PEACE. His values include truth and compassion, care and gentleness, a zest for life and living, not achievements, recognition, or pressures to perform. What I see now are families that dine together again, and visit (really talk and listen), walk or play out on front lawns (outdoors, in nature), and enjoy old favorite card games. I hear a resurgence to take up that passion... those "if only I had some time, I would ." I notice people coming together to support the struggling - like my elderly mother's neighbors leaving supplies at her doorstep. Our heavenly Father may be sad about much amid the current state of the world, but I bet He's happy to gaze upon that part.

After we look at how we've gotten caught up in hunger for material things and individual success, let's consider how we might use this time as an opportunity to refocus some priorities. Indeed, we may be in close quarters, now and then annoyed with family members constantly on top of one another. Remember each is acting in confusion and disappointment; they're hurting too. That may lead to lashing out. The best response I know is less rigidity, a little "giving way." So when we notice frustration brewing, we can choose to go for a walk, work on a puzzle, find a remote spot to read. I remember the old days when we siblings shared small bedrooms; no one had much privacy. We grew up with strong bonds and solid family values. Perhaps we can take advantage of possibilities now: time to journal, call old friends, send cards through the mail (remember how fun it was to receive a greeting card?), face-time loved ones with whom you cannot visit.

I feel this fits nicely into the themes of Palm Sunday. The people treat Jesus as King, but a worldly one - a King concerned with conquests, honors and riches. Jesus knows that was opposite to His mission of love, forgiveness, compassion, to the point of incredible sacrifice. This time is our opportunity to live out of kindness, forgiveness, compassion, and a bit of personal sacrifice. I will contemplate Jesus' heart today for sure.

I feel very deeply for all those affected by this illness and the situation it has caused. I pray for the healing of individuals, families, communities, and our country. I also find hope. I rejoice with awe in rediscovering bonds and forging deeper relationships. I contemplate how this time of isolation is ironically bringing back old fashioned connections!

Royal castles are built from bricks; majestic mansions are constructed with sticks. Everyday moments build a lifetime of love, friendship and treasured memories - Lillian Corrigan, *The Bricks and Sticks of Life*

You can find something truly important in an ordinary minute - Mitch Albom, *For One More Day*

Sometimes when in a dark place, you think you've been buried, but you've actually been planted - Christine Caine
Creativity can see past problems and find solutions. Nothing is more important than reconnecting to your bliss - Depock Chopra

Your life, more radiant than noonday, will make a dawn of darkness. Full of hope, you will live secure, dwelling well and safe - Job 11:17-19

For I know the plans I have in mind for you, plans for your welfare, not for woe, to give you a future of hope - Jeremiah 29:11

Hope in the LORD. For with the LORD is unfailing love, plenteous mercy, and redemption - Psalm 130:7

The Last Ski

Pamela Dong

The air is crisp
The moon is glowing
The snow glisten under the moon-
light
The starry sky is smiling at me
Swoosh
I exhale my problems
I inhale tranquility
Swoosh, swoosh
I exhale my worries
I inhale happiness
At the bottom of the hill, I know
this is my last ski
I am filled with serenity
Love surrounds me
Euphoria overcomes me
I exhale
I'm going home

Untitled Photograph 3
Matthew Schroeder



Seasons

Amanda Ricci

As bright red leaves fall from trees
Children play in piles on knees
As trees grow dry and warm starts to die
Birds sigh at the sky
As snowflakes unfold and bring us cold
Warmth grows tougher to hold
As flowers grow, fireflies glow
And sing the songs we know
Birds swarm and remember warm
As summer appears to form

Spiral Jetty

Chaim Nussbaum



Smithson, Robert. Spiral Jetty. 1970, James Cohan Gallery, New York. Land Art.

Looking at the “Spiral Jetty” image from Robert Smithson gets me thinking. I see in this image a lot more than a winding jetty jutting into the ocean. I see many life lessons we can learn from it. To me, this is the epitome of “a picture is worth a thousand words”: this sculptural piece takes the trope of landscape painting and interjects – it offers a place to walk, listen, write, and think about our lives and our relationship to place.

The first thing that comes to mind when I look at this image is the following. I see a windy spiral pathway leading from dry stable land, leading into the sea and ending nowhere. This reminds me of the world we live in. There are many people who are truly happy with themselves. Many times, this is because they focus on themselves, who they are, what they have and need and where they are heading in life based on their own goals and aspirations. This group of people are truly happy because they are not constantly comparing themselves to others. They can then focus on themselves and their own personal growth. This usually leads to a happy and more content life. Contrary to that, there are many people who are solely focused on others, constantly comparing themselves to others and what other people have and aspire to. This is what we call, “living the rat race”. This is such an unhealthy outlook and attitude because it makes it so much more difficult for

a person to appreciate their own strengths, capabilities, and assets. By viewing life and the world through the lens of simply focusing on others, I believe leads to so many negative results. An example of this is our image of the Spiral Jetty where one would be leaving and forgoing the firm ground and stability of where they are and what they have, and instead running in circles and searching for things that might be on shaky ground or will lead them to a dead-end in middle of nowhere. Many times, this will lead a person to a state or place where they will be worse off than when they started. The spiral as a symbol exposes the binaries of external/internal, ambition/aspiration, public/private, and product/process. When we are running in the “hamster wheel” Rat Race, we are privileging the mindset that happiness is outside of ourselves (and our grasp); when we are walking in the spiral, we are subverting this message and embracing the inner life.

I take another look at this image and I am struck by the starkly different waters on the two sides of the jetty and murky and dirty water in the middle. On one side, we see a bright and light-colored water, whereas on the other side exists a dark, intense and gloomy type water. This is a lesson in life. On a daily basis, we are faced with choices and options. At times, the choices will be differentiated by a clear divide. There will be the Right and Left or even the Right and Wrong. In our image, we have the bright and clear water on one side which represents a positive and bright outlook. On the other side, we have the dark and gloomy water which represents negativity. In this scene, the difference is stark. One side is bright and positive, while the other is dark and negative. The water towards the center of the jetty is murky and dirty water. This represents very familiar scenarios many of us find ourselves in. Many times, the choices, and options are not so clear. Is it right or wrong, positive or negative and we are torn, in which direction to go. By exposing these natural binaries this sculpture Smithsonian reinforces that we do have a choice: we can run the Rat Race or we can take the Spiral Walk?

Zooming in to the Jetty image a bit, I see rocks lining the pathway of sand. The rocks represent that we must be careful of the pitfalls and challenges alongside the journey through life. All people are faced with challenges and pitfalls. Our job

in this world is to face the challenges, tackle them and not allow ourselves to fall off the edge. The rocks in this image teach me another lesson. These rocks are surrounded by a large sea. Many times, in life, we are surrounded by a raging sea where the waves are threatening to topple us over. How can we protect ourselves so that we don't get washed away and uprooted? Do we grow down and deeper, thereby anchoring ourselves with a stronger foundation or do we only grow up where we look good, but can get blown away in a storm? The Spiral Jetty teaches us that we must create strong barriers with deep roots that can stay strong and will protect us so that we do not get washed away. This is so much better than the contrary which would mean allowing one's hard work to get uprooted and destroyed when the storm gets too strong. In between those strong and sturdy rocks is the land and stable ground lying right in middle of the sea. We live in a tumultuous world. We need to look for the stable and sturdy ground and keep our footing. By displaying how nature holds paradox - the hard rock as both obstacle and safety AND the soft sand as both blanket and shifting - Smithson reasserts that our choices are complicated and dependent upon our mindset. If we are in the deep inner world or grasping at the fleeting approval of others.

Standing at the edge of the beach on the pristine coastline, we are faced with a choice. Run out to sea or stay on land. Sea, at times can be good, as it can represent new horizons and opportunities. Other times running out to sea might not be the answer. The sea can be quite enticing with all the shiny and sparkling lights drawing us out to sea. In our image of the Spiral Jetty, the pathway ends nowhere. The lesson from this is that many times, the shiny and enticing lights can lead a person down a dark and endless road. The land has something else, which the jetty in the sea does not have. This is growth, which represents clear and proven potential versus the sea where there is just sand and rocks with no growth.

Zooming in really close, I see the millions upon millions of grains of sand which line the jetty pathway. This makes me think of the story in the Bible when God blessed Abraham. "That I will surely bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand that is on the

seashore, and your descendants will inherit the cities of their enemies.” (Genesis 22, 17). He said that Abraham’s children should be like sand on the oceans’ edge and like the stars in the sky. Up close, each grain of sand might seem insignificant but from afar, every single grain contributes to be part of the beautiful beach. In life, we are faced with a choice. Do we view ourselves as little and insignificant or as large and great? The sand in the Spiral Jetty can teach us a powerful lesson, that we should not undermine ourselves and our abilities by thinking that we are insignificant. If we respect ourselves and play as a team, we will contribute our part, so that together, we can create a beautiful masterpiece.

In conclusion, I would like to present the following. We are living in a challenging time. There is so much disunity and upheaval in the nation and around the globe. The political divide has gotten explosive. Many disagreements become personal when they should be healthy discussions. I believe that we need to do the following. First, we need to be more confident and respect ourselves more by valuing our “grain”. Then, we need to view the other “grains” surrounding us on the same stage as ours. Respect other people and recognize that they add to the conversation and are part of the beautiful masterpiece. I believe that if we all do our part by respecting other people and their opinions, the world will be a better and more peaceful place. I ask you my dear reader; do you think the world would be a better place if we viewed the world through the lens of the Spiral Jetty?

America's Poets

Carline Zonis

“Of all races and eras these states with veins full of poetical stuff most need poets, and are to have the greatest, and use them the greatest...” -Walt Whitman

When did we forget?

When white water cut through the canyons, was there gentle persuasion, or did ferocity pave her streams, change her course?

When the children march, are their footsteps any less thunderous than those that came before them

Perhaps heavier, for the weight they carry hangs heavy round their necks, strains their wrists, and their feet are calloused with consistency.

In me, in us, there is something to be said, creation is in our fingertips because of all that's been destroyed

Surrounding us is conductive chaos

The children are global descendants, painted by their elders, washed by the acid rain

Because we have all forgotten our station.

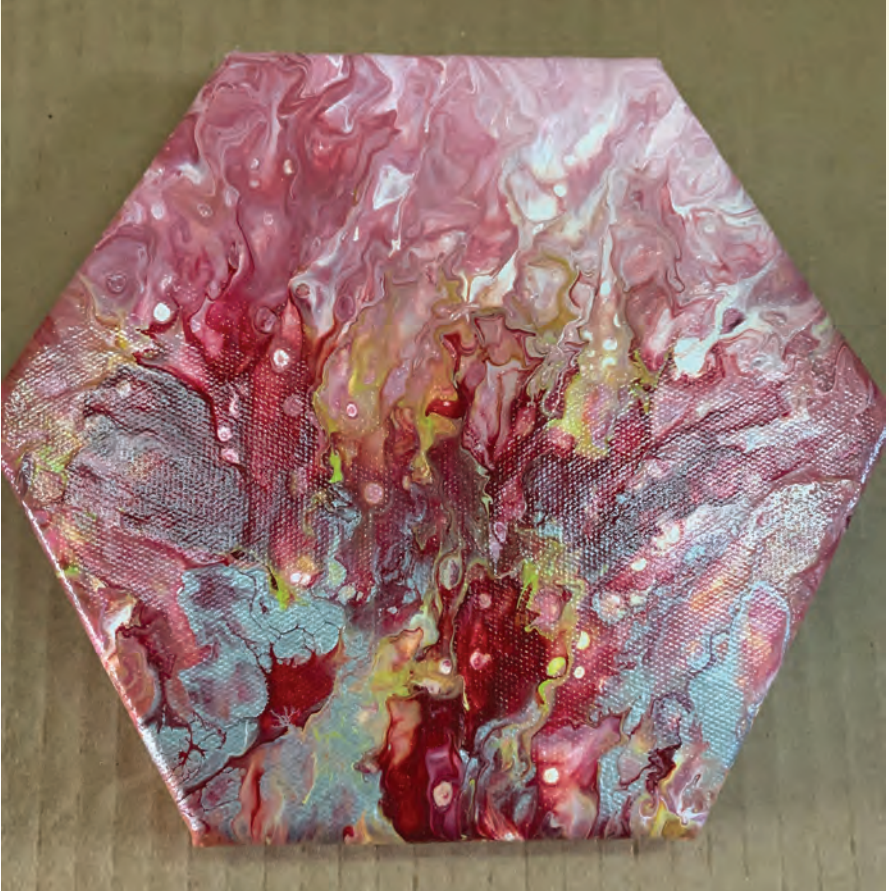
Why conquerors? Why isolation?

When we could live for prosperity

Conflict-ion
Anne Tabor Morris

I spoke these words
 shouted my words
 pouted the words
 whispered words
They are yours now.
What will you do?

Fairy Magic
Janice Karluk



I Got a Hug from God

Michelle Smith

I got a hug from God today,
I swear that's what it was.
It wasn't an actual embrace,
But I know who it was from.

The hug was in the grocery,
When I got my stuff to pay.
Not a credit card, but cash,
And I had the exact amount of change!

It was in a perfect flower,
With all its petals intact.
The stem, leaves, everything,
God's nature doesn't lack.

It was my makeup that I wore,
Cause it went on right away.
No flaws or makeup wipes,
Just perfect for all-day.

It was dinner that was gobbled up.
(My family's hard to please...)
The food had turned out pretty good,
Made it was worth all the unease.

It was the pretty sunset,
All the colors and the shades,
Gold and pink and red and blue,
The prettiest ombre.

It's the people that I love
The friends and family,
The ones that are alive,
And ones who watch over me.

And so I see God's love
Now you can see it too.
That God shows us that he cares,
In these little "I love you"s.

Soft Commotion
Kristen Park Wedlock

feet shuffling around laughter the
way even the fabric of the casket
holds yours
 and the pockets
 we are pressing as
 eyes meet over
masks—the nervous laughter, the nerves
bundled up as the space between us gathers
 our memories thresholds
for passing sage for smudging for passing over
the painting—
disturbs my grieving
behind you, hanging
the wall presses a nun
in habit, her hand
 on the Native child’s head—
 painting I know that story, now—loss—
 of what happened
happens to her hair and the way her scream
is muffled—lost—in a field or brush or—but I am slipping into
this history
 this communal pot to pull
me away from the wood box and the mask below which
the sound of blood—loss—
in my ears as I remember
your laugh and shuffle—her hair unbraided—I shuffle
it sheared—what does support mean
in the well-intentioned faces
the habits
that gather when

grief

cannot separate
 below or
 behind
the mask

unasked

Anne Tabor-Morris

absence
in
indented
margins of
everybook
you
claimed you
read
me
like
book
proclaimed
self
right
justified
as if
not-asking
not-hearing
was better

The Hate U Give

Michelle Smith

[This poem was inspired by the novel, The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas.]

I was there
I saw it
The blood
The bullets
One-fifteen
My friend on the floor
Dead
Gone
An accident?
On purpose?
He was more than
A thug
A drug dealer
He was my friend
Loved
A giver
A Family
A big brother
He deserved more
Than death
Than bullets
Than his guts on the floor
He deserves
We deserve
More
Than
The
Hate
U
Give

Untitled Photograph 4
Matthew Schroeder



Excel-lent

Pamela Dong

I am stuck in a cell
Wanting to break through the column
Climbing up to the next row
Hoping to see the magnificent ribbon
Only to find the sum of all things
Going to the left to see the name box
Falling all the way down to the bottom of
the tab

Dearest World,
Michelle Martinez

Though you see me idle
I do not rest
My mind races
My heart beats
With ways to get back to you

It is true that society has invaded many
home...

My dear there is noise!
Noise everywhere!
They want to pull me away for you
I cannot
I have not
Forgotten you

Are you there?
Please wait?

Reach your hand out to me
For I cannot see you
Reach your hand out to me
For I have sat idle
Over a year now

King

Alycia Bardon

Phoenix's heart sank with disappointment as the stars started to fill the night sky. She had to start heading through the dense forest soon if she wanted to make it back before curfew. Phoenix was put under so much pressure to find Hawthorn that she hated to let another night pass without any sign of him. She scooped up a handful of snow with her gloved hands to put out the already dying fire. As she was about to toss the snow, she saw something come out of the shadows, outlined in the dim light of the smoldering embers. Phoenix slowly pulled back the hood of her black velvet cloak afraid that any sudden movement will scare him away. A grey fox with silver eyes that shone brightly in the moonlight sat across from her.

"Hawthorn." Phoenix acknowledged the fox.

Your hair is a mess, Phoenix heard him say inside of her head.

She chuckled, "do you always have to point that out?" Phoenix could never quite tame her frizzy red hair, even tonight when she had styled her hair in two dutch braids. Her twin brother always teased her about it especially when they had special occasions to attend.

"Why are you doing this? Staying away?" Phoenix continued. "People are growing anxious waiting for you to take the throne. For the King's son to step forward and bring our people peace of mind again."

I've uncovered something and before I can accept the crown, I must follow through so I can bring justice.

"What!?" Phoenix jumped to her feet from the fallen tree she was sitting on. "Why didn't you tell me so I could help?"

The fox growled, too dangerous. It's not a job for a princess.

"I am more than a princess!"

Then lead our people, Phoenix.

“You know well enough that I have never wanted to lead our nation. And are you really willing to turn down the crown, something you’ve always wanted, just like that.” *I can’t do what needs to be done while wearing a crown.*

“If you think you are being some great hero, you are wrong. You’re being plain selfish!” Phoenix snapped. She blinked her honey brown eyes, and before her stood her brother in human form.

“I am not being selfish!” Hawthorn barked. “I’m doing what needs to be done!”

“You are acting like such a child Hawthorn! What needs to be done is for you to take the throne.”

Hawthorn ran his fingers through his long sliver hair as he mumbled, “you don’t get it.”

Phoenix gave her brother a puzzled look, “you didn’t actually find anything...you ran away because...because you are scared. You are scared to become King.”

“What if I don’t meet our people’s expectations?” Hawthorn’s voice started to tremble, “what if I do our nation wrong...”

Phoenix slowly walked over to her brother, her boots crunching in the snow. She placed a hand on Hawthorn’s shoulder to comfort him but couldn’t find the words. She was afraid that if she was to continue to try to convince him to be king, he would leave again. At that moment, Phoenix could feel the weight of the world settle on her shoulders. She had to wear the heavy crown and lead the nation. It was her duty as princess and soon to be queen to do what was necessary for the people. They were always taught that the needs of the nation and the people come first.

“You would have made a great king. A kind and honorable king.” Phoenix kissed Hawthorn on the cheek.

Without looking back, she started her long walk back home, thinking about how much trouble she was going to get into especially since she was coming home without the prince.

“You think I would have been a good king?”

Phoenix stopped and turned back to face her brother.

“Everyone knows that you will do our nation well. Hawthorn, I believe you can do this. We all do.”

There was a long pause and Phoenix was worried her brother would turn fox and leave, intimidated by the pressure.

Phoenix added, “you won’t have to lead alone, I will be by your side. I know that we thought we would have years to prepare, but you’re ready Hawthorn. You are ready to lead this nation.”

“What would I do without you, Phoenix? You’ve always been wiser beyond your years. You would have been a great queen.”

“Does that mean...”

“I’ll accept the crown.”

Wolf Mountain
Janice Karluk



“Miserable Desperation”

Angela Pollock

Loud crash below, leaving me nowhere to go.
I cannot see the source of my sudden pain,
But it burns my flesh like something fierce!
Like sticking my body over an open flame,
Which quickly spreads to my throat and lungs.
My life begins to flash with many pictures from my
past.

My mind soon wanders in a painful daze;
Will my family know the pain I felt today?
My newly born daughter left with no memories
Of me in her life, like a slate wiped clean.

My son who has just begun little league,
Will be left with no more pitches from dad!
And my wife, my sweet loving and dedicated wife.
Will she be left not knowing what to tell our kids?
What memories will she reminisce of my past
When our children ask about their loving father?
Good ones? I can only hope she will tell
About the immortal love that I will always have!
The pain snaps me back into my burning reality.
I feel my body being cremated before I even die!

The pain is past unbearable as I begin to choke on
The mysterious black smoke this September day.
My colleagues lay all around me, gone...
It is unbeknownst to me, them being alive or dead.
I hear the screaming from the floors above.
I hear glass breaking and see bodies flying!
Is this what fear has come to? Desperation?
Men and women would rather fall from 100 flights
Than be caught in the infirmary of misery and
death?
I begin to plummet toward earth! Bye World!

Please

Kaitlyn Inderwies

"Please don't break into my car. We'll both be disappointed," read the bumper sticker on the beat-up, green Subaru.

The car looked ancient and had clearly seen better days. The sticker made Charles laugh, but at the same time...*hmm, challenge accepted, buddy.*

He casually strolled over and pulled on the handle.

It was unlocked.

This guy really just didn't care, did he?

Charles climbed into the passenger seat, flicked the novelty air freshener, and took a look around. All he found was some insurance papers in the glove compartment, loose change in the cup holder and a pair of cheap sunglasses hanging off the mirror.

Well...the sticker did warn him that he'd be disappointed: there was nothing fun here at all.

He had been hoping for *something* exciting. Giving it one last chance, Charles turned around to rummage in the back seat and stopped.

What the...was that...a *muppet*?

Sure enough, in the back seat of the car was a muppet wearing a cowboy hat strapped safely into the back seat. Before Charles could start asking himself some serious questions, the driver's side door opened, and the slightly disheveled owner of the car plopped into the seat with a coffee in hand.

Turning to put his coffee in the cup holder, they made eye contact and it was silent for a beat. The car owner threw Charles a deadpan stare and sighed.

"Dude...come on...it said *please*."

Motherhood

Gabrielle Serkus

Motherhood,
The great gift of life,
The endless days of teachable moments, heartache,
and rainbows,
The questions of how I'm doing as a mom that for-
ever go unanswered, The constant praise from oth-
ers,
But the mental degrading from within, I know I
could do better, be better,
If you ask my son I Am better,
But somehow I feel as if I missed something, could I
have given him more,
Could I have had it all together and began to give
him the life he deserved from the start,
I'm still working, it wasn't how I planned it to be,
Frowns, tears, sleepless nights,
Turned into smiles when he awakes and sees me
there,
Hiding all my feelings and constantly showing only
the strong side of me, The super hero mom,
With the giant cape, imaginative stories, happiness
and laughter that fills his air, He doesn't know, I
struggle too.
Motherhood, it's hard. Motherhood, it's euphoric,
Motherhood, it's constant worrying, Motherhood is
pretending to be a superhero.

Authorial Shame

Caroline Zonis

I daydream
About before, now, and then
About things unsaid and undone and im-
probable
The other day
I had the privilege of meeting my favorite
writer
A master of horror and chill
Very sheepishly I admitted to the inspira-
tion he's given me
Quite accidentally, I assume
With eyes piercing he asks if I do any writ-
ing myself
And I am ashamed to say I try
Yet I do not like the writing of my contem-
poraries
Which leads me to believe my own falls
just as flat
And being, in my mind, who he is
He asks what I am most afraid of
"Unoriginality"
To write a line
uninspired
One that means nothing
With it being rather difficult to even try
And being, in my mind, who he is
He says
Not everything that is difficult
Is worth celebrating

Trigger Warning:
Content recounts and confronts
childhood abuse and sexual as-
sault. Please, turn to page 84 if
reading this poem might be re-
traumatizing.

Angela Pollock
"Hurt No More"

Youth is what you took from me
Many times, over, flooded gates.
Nightmares are what you gave me,
Visions of you standing over me in bed,
Pressure, paralyzing my body from fear.
Sinister smiles all around me,
Controlling from unknown distances.
Power is something you no longer have.
Once, overwhelmed darkness inside
Overcome by defeat of my horrors.

An invisible wound to live with until,
One day I will no longer need to fight.
My inner demons are what
I became all too familiar with.
Screaming at me from my tarnishing brain,
Encroaching on all my defensive confines.
Fracturing every brick wall,
Like a bone, but unseen like all things intangible,
The damage you caused is imperceptible.
I now glue my fractured barriers, transiently.

Time was bought with each small
Move, talk, pressure, and touch.
Pushing further each time,
Hoping his hand will not be caught.
Memories come, each as a sense,
Smell, taste, sound, and touch.
Each one is cutting deeper wounds,
Into my soul, into my...innocent self.
I was only a child then,
But now I am grown, a fighter.

Dreading every night in bed,
Finishing my brothers' good nights,

Trembling in my bones,
Like an earthquake on a slippery fault.
Nowhere to run, protection
Is now my deepest offender.
My savior has become my new prison.
Barricade closing in on me,
Left me to suffocate, alone.
Freedom is all I breathe now.

Footsteps in my hallway, approaching,
Each one getting louder as I close up.
Anxiety far too extraordinary at only five,
Hysteria begins to fill my dome,
Like a party for my split characters.
Sheltered by my own imagination,
I fade away from reality, enter my haven.
Flashing eyes, in and out, evil inside.
Taking control of me, drawing me back,
Today, I cull demons from my soul.

Insecure man, still insecure as a defiler.
Did this make you feel powerful?
Because it made me feel sick,
Like being hit in the stomach
By a thousand sledgehammers.
Each plunder delivered you a smile.
Your excitement was my trepidation.
Powerless, was my five-year-old self.
Your power means nothing now,
It can no longer cause me to suffer.

I remember the smell of your breath,
The nasty musk of your cologne,
The ugly waves in your hair
As you topple over me.
Memories of you I do not want.
Fade away from my past now,
Because you forced it to my future.

How many more lives did you take?
Strip of their innocence? Too many.
Your reign has ended, but fear resonates.

Fear of anyone finding out the truth,
Constraining my words to exacerbation.
What is causing this pain inside?
It was my fault, right? Condemn myself
For what a family friend did to me.
Chastising the foreign mind in my head,
For a grown man forcing himself on me?
Ten years of age, the devil left my side,
Leaving his demons in the wake of joy.
But hurt me, you will do no more.

Untitled Photograph 5
Matthew Schroeder



Women Don't Owe You Shit

Naima Towns

I don't owe you anything.

Yes, you sir.

You think I should smile? Do you know what I have been through? Have you thought that maybe, I don't have anything to smile about?

No. You didn't.

You are so obsessed with the idea that I must look approachable, so you'll feel more comfortable harassing me.

Don't think I don't know what you see.

The way you undress me with your eyes and imagine the ways you could violate me.

To place your vile hands on my pure temple.

I see, you want me to accept your fantasies, and go along with it.

When all I'm doing is going about my day.

Taking a walk.

Dancing.

Hanging with my friends.

Studying.

Playing in my front yard.

Riding the bus.

Breathing.

Being.

My body is not your toy. Your opinion is unneeded.

I saw what I looked like in the mirror this morning, no need to remind me.

I can't even walk comfortably without thinking you're following me.

How would you like it, to live a life of criticism, in fear?

To be second guessing yourself in all aspects.

Having to assimilate to what others thought of you.

Ah Never mind, maybe I should just give you a nervous smile and a slight giggle so I can continue my walk-in peace.

Overall, I don't owe you a damn thing.

None of us do.

The Girl Next Door

Michelle Martinez

The girl next door jogs around the neighborhood every-
day

Rain, Sunshine, or Snow

She's on the go

She's determination and a working mom

The girl next door awakes up every morning at 5am
Monday through Friday she turns on all the lights
and makes herself a cup of coffee

At 5:45am and she out the door

She's kindness and a teacher

The girl next door comes home at 9am

And sleeps all day

She rises at 6pm and runs out the door

To do it all over again

She leaves a trail of perfume behind

She's strength and a nurse

The girl next door is everywhere

And she's extraordinary...

So next time

Stop to take a look.

Look next to you

Behind you

In front of you

Look at yourself...

Who's that girl next door?

Daily Sins

Caroline Zonis

My guilt is that of the glutton
Taking more than I'll ever need, and constantly asking for
more, I have gorged myself on daydreams
Little wishes I thought would never come true
With love and beauty and talent, I have been blessed
And for what?
What have I done to give thanks
I have been loved, and begged for proof
I have seen the honest mirror, taken note of the color in
my cheeks, the strength in my legs, and was filled to the
brim with dissatisfaction
And I have written, page after page, my heart's melancholy
song, aching for the melody that would be the catalyst. I
don't know if I've heard it yet. Maybe I wouldn't know if I
did.
I have committed all of this
It is my shame
Blessed, and cursed be blind to it

Pen to Paper(An Ode to Writing Materials)

Naima Towns

Pen to Paper

Dear pen...Long time no see.

Paper...How have you been?

Have you missed me like I missed you?

Do you remember the feeling of each other?

The glide of the pen, and the caress of the paper.

Do you have any inspiration for me?

What will we create together, as a team?

Will we create a beautiful piece, that millions will read one day,

Are we gonna use a reference, or are we gonna freestyle?

Maybe declaration of my love for...maybe not that.

A song that will play all over?

Will we draw a quick doodle to pass the time?

Or will I blank again? Anything but that. Please.

Will I use you to get all of the cluttered thoughts in my head out?

Would you give me permission for that?

Can we create a different reality for me to escape to? That would be nice.

Am I ever gonna write that letter to them, or are we not ready yet?

It would be nice if you could speak to me and tell me what you want to be filled with.

Tell me that you love and appreciate me as I do you.

Give me the words to say.

But it seems I come to you and you give me nothing!
This is pointless isn't it?

But wait, you're right.
I'm sorry.
It's not up to you.
You can only support me.
And you're doing just that.

I think I get it now.
With you, I get to be real.
Exposing all the parts I don't want seen.
Becoming vulnerable, naked.
Becoming a child again.
Becoming the woman, I am.

But all in all
Hidden in you, is the real me.
So, Thank you.

Webs we Weave
Janice Karluk



Credits

Editors

Brandon Downey
Kaitlyn Inderwies

Layout Design

Kaitlyn Inderwies

Cover Photo

Emma Eisner

Moderator

Professor Kristen Wedlock

Special Thanks

President Joseph R. Marbach

Provost Janice Warner

Dean of Arts & Sciences Mary Chinery

Dr. Jinsook Kim

Professor Leo Morrissey

Kim Casino

Chris Gunderud

Department of Art

Department of English

Department of Graphic Design & Multimedia