

Fountain Spray

Art & Literary Magazine

Spring 2022



Dear Reader,

From the onset, I want to emphasize that the issue you hold in your hands (or that you are accessing digitally) is the culmination of courage, creativity, and collaboration. The goal with this issue was clear: be seen, be heard, be valued. We do hope this issue represents that message.

Navigating post-pandemic society—even saying that doesn't feel true—has been no easy task. We saw the submissions emanating with an unabated yearning to discover identity and a desire to answer the questions of how our lives have changed and how much we have allowed our lives to change us. In the search for identity within the submissions, we heard of struggles, of adversity, of pain, of triumph, of realizations too early and too late. All paths taken were different; no submission was the same. These submissions served as markers for the journey taken to discover oneself, and we at Fountain Spray are the vessel for that journey.

Herein lies the value of this issue: each entry seeks to take us further along the perilous path. It is on this journey that one encounters the following: the mysterious and surreal, naturalistic elements, grief/crisis, and finally the discovery of identity. We valued each submission, and never did we feel the need to force a piece to fit this focus, nor did we feel it necessary to reference someone such as Dr. J. Evans Pritchard to understand their worth. We see you. We hear you. We most certainly value you. As you set off on your journey through our issue, I set off on my own. With my final words as Editor-in-Chief, I leave you with these:

Be courageous in all you do. In a day where people seek to claim the absence of creativity, show them why they are wrong. Never be afraid to collaborate; new perspectives breed new ideas.

Continuing the journey,

Brandon Downey

Editor-in-Chief

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Enjoy!

Lost Sounds

Deborah Frankel

Loss. One word. Four characters. Hearing it brings up so many feelings, so many emotions, lots of which are undefined. Thoughts that are undefined and hazy, you don't know what your mind is thinking. Loss. Most people—if not everyone—experience it in some way or another throughout their life. Do you ever get over it?! How can you breathe when your chest is clot up with aching stones?! Is it possible to fill in that crack in your heart?! What do you do when part of yourself has been torn away in agony, in injury that will last a lifetime?

You were the most beautiful child. Your eyes, reflecting your essence, were always blue as the ocean, reflecting the sky. You knew that that's the limit – the sky. At the age of three, you sat down on the black leather piano bench, placing your hands at a perfect angle, pressing down the black and white keys. You played the most magical music I ever heard.

When you were seven years old, you stopped trimming your nails. Your mom didn't know what was up with you; you explained to her that you couldn't play guitar if you continued cutting them. That's the way she was introduced to the idea that her seven-year-old wants the musical string. The keys weren't enough for you. The smell of the wood drew you into a new mystery. You spent hours on each piece of music, writing down, scribbling, crunching the paper, and starting from scratch. That was your life. That was who you were.

That's who you became.

At the age of ten, you played for the first time a significant role in the concert. You came home from music school so excited, sharing the news with anyone ready to hear it. I remember the auditorium packed with people coming to listen to your piece of art and your charming voice. The lights went dark.

The follow-spot focused directly on you, separating you from the rest of the universe. It was like you were in a different world, letting the audience see some of it, hear part of it. Your blue oceans looked straight ahead, facing the crowd, in peace.

I'm sure everyone took courage from seeing them. I'm sure that everyone was flooded with emotions as you began singing.

I'm sure everyone cried your music, cleansing themselves. You reached every person's soul. You touched every person's heart, giving them hope, affection, and faith. The keys you played told a story. Each string you pulled filled in another hidden detail.

The music was perfect, and you were perfect for it.

You were thirteen when you lost it, in a blink of an eye. one minute it's there, the other it's gone—your voice. You couldn't believe it. You were devastated. Your eyes grew bigger as the doctor spoke; I watched the storm in them, the shock and despair, the loneliness was foundering.

You were sitting in your room for hours. I overheard the cracking sounds knowing that you are trying to sing, knowing that I too will miss the sound of "you."

You were shattered by the broken song.

I don't think I'll ever understand where you got the courage from to pick yourself up. How did you have the strength to strike the guitar and make music again while a part of you is missing?! where did you find the smile you have?

You continued giving; Visiting sick kids in hospitals, making them laugh, playing your music, and letting somebody else take over the singing. You continued going to nursing facilities and senior livings, clapping your hands with an elderly woman, giving her the gift of joy.

Your students loved you, saying that you are an excellent teacher. I knew you aim to perfection. I knew you would get it out of them because you put your heart into them.

Not only were you a good music teacher but a fantastic, outstanding life teacher. When I asked you – how come you are constantly happy regardless of what’s happening – you smiled as an answer. Quoted Jonny Ox: “She’s battling things her smile will never tell you about “: I think this is so “you.”, your inner joy.

I’m so grateful that you chose me for this journey and used the music to make me who I am today. I gave myself the chance to rebuild the broken. From “You,” forming into “Me.” Music is an art. It’s an art of thinking with sounds. The more effort a person puts into it, the more special and unique it’s going to play.

No matter what hardships we go through in life, there is always something waiting on the other end. Yes, It’s tough. Yes, it seems sometimes impossible, but the thicker the darkness is, the prettier the stars shine. At the end of the longest night, the sun will rise and give us from its warmth and hope. Give this chance to yourself, let your own music put your parts in place: remember there is beauty in the broken, creating the melody.

I Can't

Naima Towns

I can't seem to...
Can't seem to do anything right.
Can't talk.
Can't walk.
Can't run.
Can't have fun.
Can't drive.
Can't thrive.
Can't march.
The crowds are too large.
Can't eat.
Can't greet.
Can't give.
Can't live.
Can't fight,
This isn't right.
This isn't what I need—
can't breathe,
I can't breathe,

Officer, I can't breathe.
Please could you remove your
Arm.
Knee.
Fears.
Privileges.
Prejudices.
Body, off of me.
Black Trauma, this is black trauma,
Passed down from my black mama.
You remember her, right?
Her murder played everywhere in
bright lights.
Say her name,
Say her name.
SAY HER NAME,
Is it all in vain?
Please stop, the pain
The pain,
Pain.

Home is Where the Heart is

Ariana Wolf

Super Storm Sandy vandalized the East Coast back in 2012. Individuals were forced out of their homes in search of a place to take cover. The damage was horrific. Families along the shorelines of New York and New Jersey lost their homes and precious valuables. People who owned homes in the path of the storm, could not prevent the huge surge it had created. The rush of water destroyed everything in sight.

My family and I lived in a three-story townhome in Staten Island, New York. Unfortunately, my family and I were affected by this frightful event. We were warned a few days prior to the storm, that we had to relocate. We had to evacuate the home we lived in for eleven years and transport to safer ground. My mother, sister, and I stayed at my grandparent's house, while my father made a foolish decision to stay behind. He watched our neighborhood turn into a seven-foot-deep extension of Raritan Bay. My father was not expecting the storm to turn out the way it did. I am beyond blessed that he is alive today.

That night, as my father saw the water rushing into our home from the top floor of our townhouse window, he panicked. He flew down the flight of steps into our basement. Our garage was connected to this 'said basement.' It was technically our first floor. It included our computer room/toy room, washer and dryer, and door, connected to our garage. As the water began to take height, he bolted into the washroom. He thought that he could prevent a potential house fire if he unplugged the appliances. As he ran inside, he saw that the outlets were already submerged with water. In fear, he ripped them out of the wall. He was extremely lucky to not have been electrocuted. God forbid he did not unplug the washer and dryer, there would be no way for him to escape.

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The morning after the storm, my Mom received a phone call from my Dad. He told us that the height of the water reached about five feet. Our cars and other belongings were completely ruined. I began to feel massive pressure in my chest, which resulted in crying. Getting a message from my father telling me that our home was in shambles, left me devastated. However, as long as my father was okay, and my family was safe, that was all that mattered.

My parents, who were beside themselves, did not know where to begin with the repair process. My joyous and loving childhood home became a powerless, and environmentally hazardous place. After the floodwater receded several days later, the cleanup process began to take shape. During this laborious process, my neighbors and I were displaced from our homes. We had no choice but to live with our family and friends. Families who did not have those options ended up sleeping in hotels. We had to wait until our homes were free from toxins, and had our utilities restored, to be fully functional again. We were fortunate enough to move back in after three weeks. Some of our neighbors had to wait months, or in some unfortunate cases, years to return.

I was majorly impacted by the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy. When I went back to see what had happened with my own eyes, I was completely stunned. All of my neighbors were out and about. Everyone was outside, generators running in the background, removing soiled debris from their home. I lived on a dead-end street. I was located towards the end that faced the wetlands. When I looked over towards those wetlands, I saw two cars piled on top of one another. Imagine how strong the surge was to result in the cars floating down the street and stacked on top of each other...

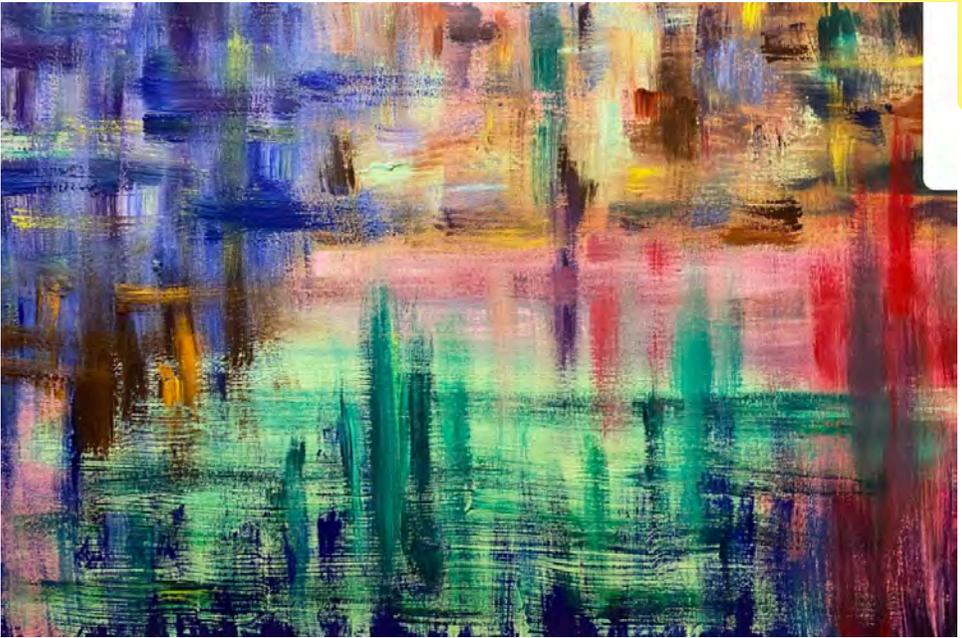


My childhood friends and I were shaken up. We loved to play outside any chance we could get. After school, all day on weekends, and anytime in between. After the storm, no one was able to look at our dead-end street the same. My grades were poor. I did not enjoy being displaced from my home. When you would walk inside, it smelt moldy. It almost had a fishy smell to it. I missed my room and the way things were before. I knew that it would take time and I had to be patient, but I wasn't. My teachers called my parents to explain that my school work was slipping.

None of my teachers, nor my school friends, knew what was going on. I did not want to go to school, I wanted to be left alone.

Several months after cleanup and repair efforts were nearly completed, my parents received a letter from New York State government officials who offered a pre-storm value purchase on our property. The letter explained that they wanted to use our neighborhood as an example of what municipalities should do to mitigate future storm damage in areas known to be 'flood-prone.' By purchasing these homes, knocking them down, and returning the land back to nature, was believed to serve as a buffer zone for future storms. After doing some research, we discovered that a larger storm hit our neighborhood back in 1938. At that time, homeowners petitioned for a buyout but never received one. This time around, the state knew this had to be done. This did not happen once, but now twice. Not long after my parents contemplated the offer, they decided to accept, and move our family further inland to New Jersey.

“A Trace of a Blue Room”



Emma Eisner

My Evolution

Ariana Wolf

1. When the sky cleared, they sighed with relief. The storm was finally over. They went outside their homes to search for the nearest neighbor. Even though the sky was clear, the loss was detrimental. Homes had been flooded with up to five feet of water. Everyone lost their homes, personal belongings, and loved ones. The sky might have been clear, but there were a lot of repairs ahead. Everyone on the street, including my family, came together to help one another. We knew it was not going to be easy. My grades began to slip and I lost my permanent residence. Living with my grandparents was not ideal during this time. My Mother and Grandma were not on the best of terms but we had nowhere else to go. When we moved in with them, there were constant oppositions. It affected my personal mood, and my sister was there to balance me out. I was glad to have her. She understood exactly what I was going through. We had a rough time making the awkwardness of the household diffuse. Even when my sister tried to step in during their fights, they would never listen. It was hard to watch her and my Grandmother fighting. Even though the repairs were completed four months later, it felt like an eternity.

2. The night of Sandy was cold and frigid. As my family and I would watch the news report, we were hoping for a miraculous change in reports. My father was at home, trying to bunker down on the highest floor of our townhome. The nerves were getting the best of us. My Mom and Grandmother bickered at one another over every little thing. My palms were sweaty. As I would look over at my sister, I could see the fear in her eyes. "What in the heck are we going through?" As we looked at each other in distress. "I wish this never happened to us," Danielle muttered. It was sad to look at Danielle and do all in my power to protect her. There was not much that I could do in this situation. I had to carry the burden of comforting her while no one was there to do it for me. I was only eleven at the time. I did not have my own life figured out yet. Our Mother was only concerned with winning an endless battle with my Grandmother. All of a sudden, thunder roared, and we all got quiet.

3. Turning on the lights to a dark bagel store at the age of fifteen felt empowering. The entire place to myself as I would set up for the day. With all of the stress on my mind, working was an important outlet for me. I could put all the drama behind and just simply work. Brewing fresh coffee in the morning and taking down the chairs to the tables were some parts of my setup. As I would continue my morning routine, the baker Michael would be sitting in the back blasting his rap music. I would often think to myself that it was too early to be blasting this kind of music. Overall, I enjoyed the atmosphere of the bagel store. Gayle, Alex's Grandmother had me taking on responsibilities that were not quite appropriate for my age. Although, I wanted to know what it was like to be an adult, so I continued on with the tasks. On the most humid days of summer, I would be flipping eggs and bacon. The other girls my age did not know what it was like to work the way I did. They would be coming into the store right before close asking if I could make them a pork roll, egg, and cheese. The most damaging part is that my parents did not recognize the work I was putting in. All the sweat and tears I would contribute to my work, for it to go unnoticed. I get it, I am a fifteen-year-old working at a bagel shop. But really take a minute think about it: I a fifteen-year-old coming in at six in the morning to open up a bagel shop.

4. My personal relationship with my Mother was always a hard pill to swallow. As a young girl, she and I could never find the means to get along. She is paranoid and extremely controlling. She has a hard time coming to terms with the fact that my sister and I are growing up. We are getting older and starting our own lives without her. Our Mother is not always there to protect us from the bad that we may encounter. Instead, she should be encouraging, than nit-picking the bad from every situation. She is the kind of person that would kick you when your down and never apologize for the wrong she caused. In times of stress, I never knew where to turn. My very own father has a hard time getting my Mother under control. When she and I would argue, you could compare it to young children arguing with each other. There was no authoritarian to control the argument from escalating. It was unhealthy and not the environment I wanted to be part of.

5. Micheal was twenty when I first started working at the bagel store. He and I were like best friends. You might think that it was weird to have a friendship with an age gap such as ours, but you can think what you want. He never had life easy for him and that is why I was so drawn to his story. I had someone who did not have it easy like myself. His parents were divorced and he was paying his way through community college. He was an extremely hard worker but did not know how to apply himself in school. I would constantly encourage him to take more credits to achieve his goal. He wanted to attain an associate's degree. It was hard for him to do that when he was constantly failing out of class. He needed a serious push. He was dedicating a lot more time to the store than his actual work. When regulars would come into the store, he would tell them his life goals. As years passed, he was reiterating the same story with not much progress. Even though he was such a sweetheart, I knew that I had to have some drive. If I had his personality, not much would get done. When I finally went to the same community college as him, he was still there. I give him credit, he was one of the oldest students in the class but kept pushing. I graduated before he did, and he got his associates shortly afterward. It was important to have someone like him in my life. It showed me what I needed to do to get myself out of the bagel store and into a suitable career. It was interesting for Micheal to watch me grow older in my years. He was always extremely encouraging. I would tell him about all of the grades I was achieving in Brookdale, and he was nothing but supportive. That is an extremely noble quality for him to have. Regardless of the issues, he has faced in the past. That is one really noble trait I aspire to obtain.

6. The bond between my sister and me has grown from the troubling events of our past. Before, we constantly argued. Some of the things we squabbled about, were the most obscure. Who wanted the girl doll over the boy doll? Who took whose clothing? Our conflicts were minuscule in a world filled with important issues. We have grown to realize that we need each other more than we even thought. Learning to grow up without the support of our Mother, has developed this inseparable bond. We had to take matters into our own hands, even when the adults around us could not. It was an important wake-up call for us both. Life is too short to have issues with important people in your life. Danielle, my eighteen-year-old sister, is currently in Delaware while I'm in New Jersey. At this moment, I want her here right with me. A bond you have with a sister is like no other. No matter where life takes us, she will always be right at my side.

7. As we would close up shop for the day, we would have a continuous ritual. I would mop the floors and wash dishes, while Micheal would throw out the remaining bagels. As I would mop the floor at the end of the day, the feeling of anxiety was poking at me. It came up out of nowhere and hit me like a ton of bricks. I was thinking to myself what it would be like to go home after my day of work. Was my Mother going to be in a good mood? Was she going to try to argue with me when I step foot in the door? I was unsure of the conditions my household was in before I came back home. As I would mop back and forth, I was attempting to mop away the weight on my shoulders. Scrub hard, and mop in the shape of figure eight. It was quite harder than you think. I had a difficult time swirling the mop around when it was sopping wet. I could almost compare those moments to my life. I was the mop. I was the mop holding onto all this water. I would get tossed around in any direction. I was attempting the clean the messes of my insecurities and past issues. Every day I would mop the floor of the bagel store, I was attempting to mop away my own problems. The floor would not stay clean as I would have to do it again the next day. In my life, I would clean up the messes my Mother made around me. I would have to do it over again each day a conflict would ensue.

Wire of a Woman.

Gianna DeMarco

the heart is a muscle the size of a fist,
but your fists left bruises on my skin and irreversible scars on my
heart.

you broke me down until i was a measly wire of a woman,
thin and malleable,
but not easily broken.

i was resilient as i swam through the months of torture,
facing the quick current that your rage became when you tipped the
bottle backward.

why didn't i leave?
i could have, right?
it was my choice to stay.

i longed for the satisfaction of saving myself.
i wanted to rescue my soul from the torment and rotting it endured,
by being with you.

you ruined me and i hated it.
i drank you down and got drunk off of you,
not knowing you were a thick venom disguised as a good time.

so, again they ask why i let you spin my thread on the loom of life.
i search for answers,
grasping at the puppet strings you've been controlling me with.
you dangle my noose over the bottomless pit that you have become,
as i plummet into you, losing myself at last.

“Untitled”



Jessica Imperiale

Drowning

Hailey Gorman

It's been a week since you're gone, and like a ripple, the waves just continued to crash in, just like the water at the pavilion. The salty water and muggy air felt though the weather set the tone for emotions. Like I was drowning in the current...

The news of you being gone felt as though the storm would never end. Rain and tears fell for days. You were too good for this earth, yet still, no matter how much time goes by I miss you more and more every day. The pavilion is not the same without you. It hurts to go there and not be able to call you to meet me there. Aidan, I will always remember the person I thought you were. You were only eighteen and still had so much life left to live. This disease should have come with a warning, unfortunately, it didn't.

You touched everyone you met and kept every promise you made. I'll always remember you for the crazy life you lived. The races down the pavilion while trying not to slip on the wet wood, the striped bass you always ditched me for at Island Beach State Park, the night of your graduation party yelling "This is my best friend", and the final day I got to see you before you left for school hugging me all night promising that this isn't goodbye.

I replay those words in my head every day... "It's not goodbye Hails... I'll see you soon.". I had planned to visit you a week later, but that week never showed. You were gone before I could even get in my car and see you.

Though you're not here anymore, I will never forget you or our last conversation the day before you passed and cherish it and our friendship forever. This life wouldn't be the same without the love you brought into it over the past 4 years. I stopped crying every day over your passing because I know you wouldn't want me hurt and you were probably punching air every time I cried. I still continue to go to our spot at the pavilion just to reminisce a little bit. It took me a while to grow the strength to go without you. I go there and see you in the grey suit and blue tie, dressed down racing down the pier, teaching me to longboard. All these memories surge my mind as soon as the car is put in park.

You are missed more than you can even imagine.

"I know you're in a better place

And one day I'll see you again

But it's killing me we can't be face to face

I miss my best friend"

Chris Young

I wish Heaven had a phone number, but it appears the voicemail is full. I'll see you when I see you. Until we meet again my angel. I love you to the moon.

“Still”



Emma Eisner

Rock and a Hard Place (Haiku #41)

Michael George Smith

About to open
Up a can of Wes Unseld
On somebody's ass.

Musings on Water

Janine Corgan

If you were to consider an element (compound/mixture/alloy – not necessarily a scientific element) to admire or emulate, what might you choose? The strength of steel? The beauty of gold? The rarity of diamonds? The sweetness of sugar? Maybe the versatility of carbon? C'mon, first thoughts. How about... WATER. "What? You're joking right? Water is... floppy, soft, colorless, plain, common... nothing special... it's just... water." If that's your reaction, you might muse these qualities of water with me.

– Water is fundamental. Water is essential in forming us and creating most everything around us: it's so fundamental, it was created on the first day.

–Water is abundant. Water is the major component of both the earth as well as our individual bodies, comprising between seventy and eighty percent of each. Scientists claim water is among the top three molecules in the universe.

–Water is life-sustaining. Water nourishes all living things. We cannot survive without it very long, though with it, we can survive quite a while. During his longest fast, Gandhi survived three weeks without food. Yet without water, consensus predicts expiration after just a few days. To further illustrate, my elderly cat lived – by his own accord, of course – peacefully and contentedly for months, mostly on water, before he left our family. That amazed me.

–Water cleanses. Water rinses various forms of dirt, both physically and spiritually, from our bodies, clothes, dishes, hearts, and emotions. Personally, I can't help but feel lifted, refreshed and freed when near the vast ocean or a quiet lake.

– Water is dynamic. Water flows, moves, and prefers to be in a state of action. Stagnant substances wither or decay. Circulation not only within human bodies, animals and plants, but in air and water, cultivates energy and vibrancy. (An important concept for life and health which water teaches).

– Water is powerful. Water can create energy, moving through turbines and as steam. So, despite being "soft," water is indeed strong.

- Water is determined. After much patience and persistence, water has shaped the earth as we know it. The Grand Canyon and Bryce Canyon in the US, The Stone Forest in China, The Cliffs of Moher in Ireland, the Twelve Apostles in Australia, and Legzira Beach in Morocco demonstrate the beauty created by water's dedicated and steadfast efforts.

- Water is low (humble). Flowing with gravity, water returns to its source. There's no pressure to climb, to overcome, to attain; a good life just happens. Humans also long to reconnect with our Source and Creator. Water offers clues, illustrating a path of acceptance, humility, and intuition.

- Water is all-embracing. Water penetrates just about anything. Absorbing into much of what it touches, it has a reputation (identity) for "getting inside" or joining. We all know water seepage is hard to prevent without a waterproof seal. I can't help but respect its desire for unity.

- Water supports a positive spirit. If you've ever heard of Dr. Emoto's experiments, you are likely to concur. Dr. Emoto took individual containers of water and attached a positive or negative word to each. After freezing he studied each container's crystals. The water assigned positive words created beautiful crystals, while the water given negative words formed rather off-putting, irrational designs. Dr. Emoto believed the water absorbed the emotional vibrations from the intention attached to it.

- Water is unconstrained/free. Unlike other substances, water exists commonly in all three forms (solid, liquid, and gas), moving between them fairly easily. Other elements able to transfer between states, do so through more coerced change.

Fascinating, no? So what if I choose to mimic these attributes of water? Choosing to "live like water," I discover I may still work hard, but I also live well (do I detect a pun?)

I reflected on becoming a more "life-giving" element; perhaps living out greater generosity, compassion, and harmony. I have the potential to be flexible: existing in, transferring between, and accepting different states of mind or being. I may live more freely by flowing past (disregarding) unnecessary worldly obstacles or pressures. I can be more embracing (absorbent), joining together with others for good causes. I can be steadfast and determined, leaving some lasting mark of beauty after a lifetime. I could hold and intend more positive views, perhaps radiating "exquisite crystals." I can be more gentle yet powerful, using what I'm made of to nurture energies of hope and faith.

By living like water, I may be a source of collaborative, serene strength. Instead of clashing with obstacles (be it persons, circumstances, or events), I might opt to maneuver around or with them, considering the other, as well as my own path, with an openness to amend, modify, improve... When a large tree falls into a stream, water changes direction, goes over, under, and around, continuing along its way. Notice what happens when a rock and tree collide. The two stubborn elements bump, hit, clash, and clang, which is often noisy and painful. I can learn a lot by choosing to adjust in a difficult circumstance. Perhaps there is another – a better – way to negotiate than one of brawn.

Water maintains a sense of lowliness, yet it is still majestic! Why do I stand in awe of the ocean, a waterfall, flowing fountain, or quiet lake? What is it that captures my attention, offering a beauty that causes me to pause? The water runs humbly performing its role, contently living its purpose. Humans strive to achieve, win, or rise up. What ambition motivates me? Am I hard and aggressive, or malleable and adaptable? I find through practicing a sense of humility and gentleness, I can be compassionate, wise, insightful, helpful and successful. On the other hand, when I resist or force, I lose tranquility, control or respect. When I relate to others justly and fairly, I gain greater vision, camaraderie, and help them perform and thrive with enthusiasm.

I've come to understand that when I merge my ideas, dreams, and goals with the concept of living like these qualities of water my own life flows better and greater good

emerges. I am convinced, especially now, in these times of strife and unrest that surround us all. If there is a substance on earth I wish to imitate in order to live well in all aspects: life and health, goals and dreams, relationships and connections... I choose and aspire to live like water.

On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and exclaimed, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. As scripture says: 'Rivers of living water will flow from within him.'" He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive. – John 7:37–39

Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give, will never thirst; the water I give will become in him a spring welling up to eternal life." – John 4:13–14

You visit the earth and water it, make it abundantly fertile...With showers you keep it soft, blessing its young sprouts... The meadows of the wilderness drip; the hills are robed with joy. – Psalm 65:10,11, 13

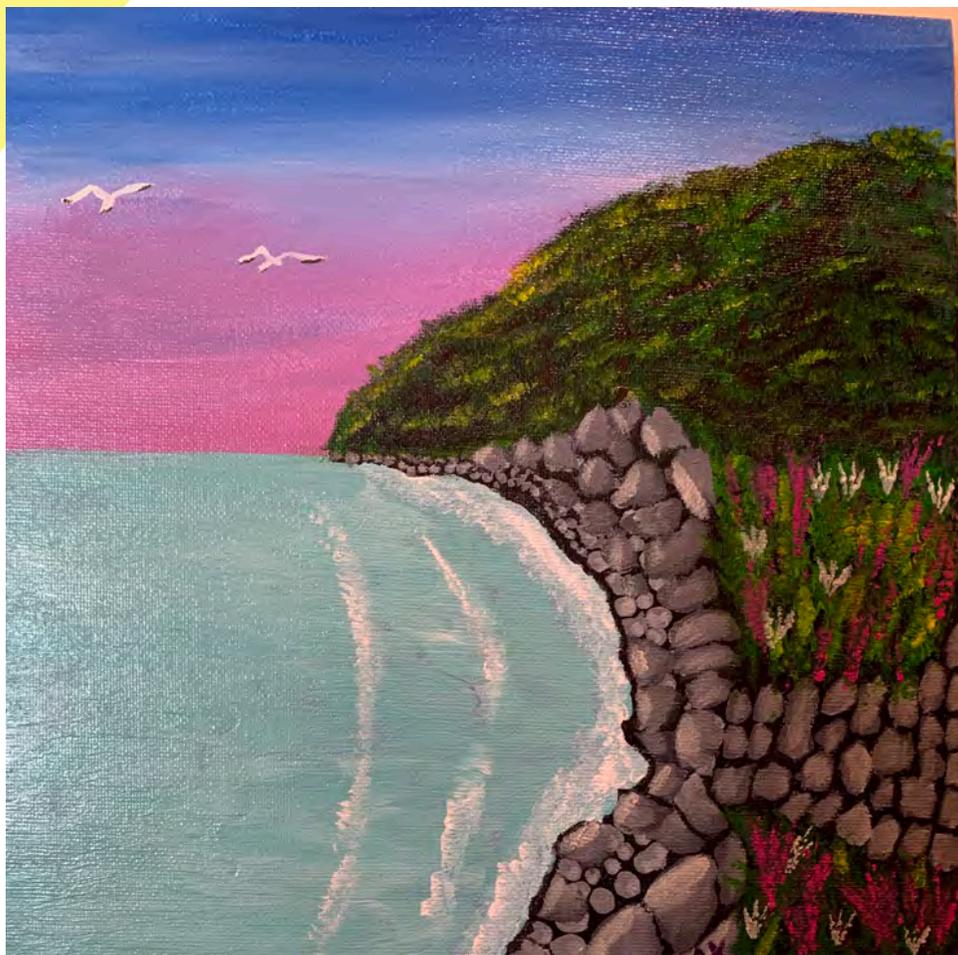
Then the angel showed me the river of life-giving water, sparkling like crystal, flowing from the throne of God. – Revelation 22:1

Wire Wrapped and Weaved



Janice Karluk

Seagull Bay



Janice Karluk

Leaves in the Green

Arianna Wolf

A leaf so innocent and so clean
Where might it be?

Under a tree or hidden in the green?

Leaves change colors throughout the seasons

Everchanging shades of green and gold
Its texture is so rough and bold.

Its veins are smooth and hard to the touch
You might even find it as such.

As I scratch its surface and take a sniff,
The remnants of a fresh blade of grass, resonate as I caught a whiff.

A single leaf blends in harmony with the others

A leaf may blow wherever the wind may go
A leaf so innocent and so clean
Was life ever tough for you?

An Astronomical Sonnet

Dov Rabinowitz

The place of man was lost in outer space,
When tore us Bruno from the focal center,
Copernicus saved the blasphemer's face,
And with his theory turned the sun's defender;
Ptolemy's vision of the great perfection,
Great circles moving in fluid harmony
Off which to base our ethic's predilection,
Stretched elliptic, is all anarchic, free?
Wo to man! For centuries tether torn,
Till science placed us in the whole again,
For of the stars dear humankind is borne,
The self-same stuff made us that made the wren.
Though center of the cosmos can't we be,
Scattered through the stars we wander free.

Sky on Fire



Pamela Dong

“Untitled”



Jessica Imperiale

Wishing

Hailey Gorman

The wind lifted me up
high into the trees
below is where I danced
bundles full of evergreen

“Untitled”



Jessica Imperiale

Answers

Alycia Bardon

Once again Carter found herself sneaking out of her dormitory late at night. She never considered herself to be this reckless but here she was, blending in with the shadows to avoid being caught by the eighth years. She managed to quietly sneak past a few as they patrolled the campus.

She spotted Walley Wolf and his green hair under a lamppost studying his tablet and pressed herself against a brick wall. Carter really hoped he didn't catch her out past curfew for the second time this month. Once he moved on, Carter exhaled and carefully continued her way across the grounds and down the long gravel driveway until she was staring at the

Hunter's Gate entrance sign while contemplating her options.

Using the moonlight, she glanced back at the note in her hand to read its message again for the millionth time: You want to untangle yourself from the web of lies. Follow the map and you will find the answers you seek..

In the back of Carter's mind, she knew that the note was too good to be true. She thought about Kittredge, her cousin, finding her bed empty and the panic she would feel potentially losing another family member.

Kittredge already lost her own mother years ago and her relationship with her brother, Forrest, has been distant and almost nonexistent. Carter thought about the phone call the headmasters would have to make to her uncle. He was stressed enough trying to find his brother and sister-in-law, Carter's parents. Everyone in her family was vanishing and it was all Carter's fault. She had to do this for her family. Even it meant disappearing too,

an attempt at getting the answers would be worth the risk.

Carter had to know.

Walking off this campus and into the unknown was stupid, Carter was well aware of that. She knew she should turn back and go back to bed; that would be the smart thing to do. She should keep her head down and train more before venturing out. But answers are all she has been wanting. She has been lied to long enough. For months all she has asked for is answers but everything has been lies after lies and she just wanted an ounce of truth.

Carter turned over the note to study the hand drawn map on the back and began to walk, and walk, and walk. It was nothing but trees for what felt like a mile. Carter was well aware of the dangers that lurked in the forests and without the protection of the school's border surrounding her, she was completely valuable.

Every creak, every crack, every rustle had Carter grabbing her bow tighter and her eyes darted to the trees. For the past few months, she has been nothing but a target and she just left herself wide open for an attack. Alone. With nothing but a bow and a few arrows.

Why didn't she think of that sooner?

Kittredge was always the risk taker, not Carter.

Finally, up ahead she spotted the town illuminated by just its streetlights. Carter made a few turns through the sleeping town, following the map and found herself where she needed to be.

Carter eyed the collapsing diner with its bordered-up windows and dangling neon sign. She folded up the hand drawn map and tucked it into her pocket along with her fear. Carter pushed the graffitied wooden plank that blocked the entrance and entered into blackness. She reached into her bag for a flashlight.

"Don't bother." A male voice broke the eerie silence and Carter stiffened.

The voice sounded almost familiar but the anxiety overtaking Carter wouldn't allow her to identify who. She took a deep breath to try to calm her racing heart.

"You told me that there would be answers." Carter did her best to steady her voice to sound braver as she spoke into the void of darkness.

There was a laugh that echoed through the building, almost surrounding her, the sound of which made Carter jump.

"And you really believed that? You have always been too gullible."

Carter's heart skipped a beat. He knew her. Carter could hear movement, the shuffling of clothes and steps from heavy boots, preventing her from piecing together the connection that seemed to be just at her fingertips. She should run, go back to the campus, and pretend that this never happened. Convince herself this has been just a terrible nightmare. Yet she found herself gripping her bow tighter even though it was useless in the dark and standing her ground. She had to know who the voice was. She came for answers, not more questions.

Before she could register what was happening, thick arms wrapped around her frame, caging her in. She started to let out a scream but quickly a rough and calloused hand muffled her. She kicked the person's shin as hard as she could with her prosthesis, knowing carbon fiber to the shin didn't feel good. By the grunt she heard it worked, and the grip loosened slightly.

"Carter, don't fight it."

That's when the voice clicked.

"How could you Forrest?" Carter cried out, struggling in her cousin's hold. "How could you turn on your own family?"

"Because he has my mom." Forrest whispered in her ear.

Carter froze in Forrest's arms, knowing that this changes everything.

The Village Without A Story

Michelle Giles

A long time ago, there once was a village surrounded by tall hills and quiet forests. In this village, the adults had minds of the most intelligence and the children, well, they too were a curious bunch. There were the Biologists, Chemists, Physicists, Geologists, Botanists, Meteorologists, and the like. By day, the villagers worked their fields, studying complex problems, solving mathematical equations, testing hypotheses. In the evenings, they dined on long wooden tables, discussing and debating theories from the long day's work. They were quite content as their studies had produced astounding findings and conclusions. But whenever someone, and this would usually be one of the children, mentioned Equation M, the mood would turn solemn.

For decades and on, the families worked side by side in this tiny village solving the mysteries of the universe, but hard as they tried, they could not solve Equation M. The villagers, as they were quite brilliant, knew something was missing, but they couldn't figure out what was preventing them from finding the answer.

One morning, in early autumn, there appeared, atop of the hill to the east, seven travelers dressed in blue robes. The children were the first to notice the visitors and as children do, they made quite a ruckus. Soon the entire village came out to greet this new family.

One of the village boys noticed the girl traveler was carrying a strange thin object in the shape of a rectangle. He became very curious and introduced himself.

"Welcome to our village," the boy said. "I'm Matt of the Mathematicians."

"I'm Lyla," the girl said.

"What is that you're holding?"

"It's a storybook," she said and handed it to the boy.

As flipped through the pages, he was puzzled by the colorful drawings and words in large print. "I've never seen a book such as this."

"In this storybook," the girl said, "the pink roses fly and the goldfish sing and the trees, well, the trees whisper secrets."

"But everyone knows goldfish can't sing and roses don't fly," the boy said. "The leaves of the trees might whisper if there is a northern wind, but they are certainly not capable of understanding secrets."

"Sure they can," the girl insisted. "Anything can happen in a story."

"You mean it's a book of lies?"

"Not at all," the girl said with a bright smile. "It is a book of the imagination."

"I don't think I have one of those."

"Of course you do," the girl said. "Everyone does."

The boy was quite perplexed. "From where do you come?"

"We come from all over," the girl said. "We're the Literature family."

The villagers, as they were both hospitable and curious, invited the Literature family to stay. The family, touched by their generosity, shared with them their golden trunks full of storybooks. The villagers became captivated by these unusual stories, spending their nights reading, staying up well past their bedtimes. In the mornings, the villagers spoke of the stories as they walked through the forests and at night, retold the tales at the camp fire. The children built a small stage and reenacted the stories in long performances. Occasionally, Billy of the Botanists would forget a line or two, and the villagers would have a good chuckle.

Well, dear readers, as you likely can deduce, these storybooks helped the villagers to see the world and their work in new ways. And within a fortnight, the villagers had solved Equation M.

When it was time for the Literature family to bid farewell, they mentioned there was another group of travelers who would soon be passing through, their distant cousins, the Fine Arts.

“They Are Watching”



Emma Eisner

Hungry Ghosts

Ariana Wolf

Why so sad?
Shouldn't you be glad
Grateful for all you have
All that you aspire to be

Feel the ground between your fingertips
The land is vast
It is your home, and oh so glad

Feel the rain hit your cheeks
Life is beautiful, as it may seem
Then comes the fright you feel at night

The monsters that live under your bed
Come out to haunt you, through and through
You wake up in fear
Eerie and wide

Why so sad?
The creatures came out to play

Hungry Hungry

Ariana Wolf

Mighty
Hungry
Hungry

Soar through the night, wanting more and more
Nothing is enough
Nothing satisfies

Feel the gloominess
Feel the cold
Feel the danger

The danger of night

Soar
High
High

Hungry for more

Black of Night

Ariana Wolf

I tried to seek light in the dark of night
Nowhere to go, no one to touch
I was lost

I felt unloved
There was a missing puzzle piece that I was unable to connect

Day 1
Recognize features
Day 30
Slowly fading away

Day 400
Nothing to recognize at all

I overanalyzed.
I felt like a ghost in the presence of my own body
What I saw in the mirror was not beauty
It was pure terror

'I am not good enough,'
'I am not good enough'
No one was able to save me from the negative perception I had
of me
Then came along Andrew

Ajax

Michael George Smith

Spinning and thrashing
At enemies unknown to anyone
But you.

The bleating gets closer
As your friends cannot stop you
From a blindness that
Shreds the peaceful flock

And casts your fate
Into darkness.

“Red”



Emma Eisner

Heading Home

Brandon Downey

Ray tapped his dashboard and hummed lowly to the radio. The melodic hum partnered with the rhythmic thumps of his fingers on the dash kept not only his focus on the road, but his mind at bay. The weather was unforgiving; rain beat on the windshield and forced him to lean his head forward, squinting his eyes enough to see the dirt trail leading back to the main road. It was a long day, but he had grown accustomed to them. The dirt trail was shrinking, and a quick turn was needed, but Ray knew this, and he swung his battered Chevrolet around the bend. The truck shuddered and Ray spun the wheel straight, narrowly avoiding the foliage that had overtaken the road. As he neared the end of the trail, the truck lurched to a stop. Steam seeped from the hood and Ray let out a soft groan.

With a creak, Ray opened the door and took a step out, sinking into the rain-soaked soil beneath. The wind bore down upon him. Not even the rain could calm the steam emanating from the hood. Slowly, the headlights began to flicker until they could no longer retain light. Darkness consumed him. Unconsciously, Ray looked down. Through sprawling and winding hills, he made out the distant glow of lights leaking over the tops of the trees below. The lights were calling, they begged his attention, and yet he turned away. Leaving the truck behind, Ray began the trek back on foot to the cabin he called home.

A collection of Carolina Silverbells, Magnolias, and Basswoods kept the cabin from view of others. Leaves of green and petals of white and pink lay muddied on the road, but Ray took no notice of their seeping into the soles of the boots. Step after step, leaves and petals settled into the soles, expanding, and squishing through each groove, and yet, his eyes remained fixed on the streetlights. Stretching above the trees, the lights gave off a faded-orange glow. He took note of the years of dirt caked onto the bulbs and with each pulse of light, he had difficulty recalling what they had looked like previously.

It felt to him as if the lights were draining him, as if it was their goal to sap him of what little he had left. He allowed the wind to drown out the buzzing of the lights and blow through the trees, occasionally kicking leaves and petals into his face. Unfazed, he continued, a man against the elements, inching nearer and nearer to his destination.

As he met the end of the weather-beaten road, the gravel driveway came into his view. Rocks of various sizes crunched and shifted with each step as puddles took form within the numerous potholes. In the distance, the chimes on his front porch—made from a myriad of brown and green beer bottles—serenaded the night. At first glance, the cabin would presumably seem abandoned. The shutters hung loosely on their hinges and cracks were visible in every window. The front steps were warped at an oblong shape from years of unrelenting Tennessee sun. Nails protruded, the lawn stones had a thick layer of moss, and the fishpond remained stagnant. None of this mattered to him. Ray went up the stairs and reached for his keys. With a click, the door was open, Ray grabbed it behind him, and he walked into the darkened home.

Ray flicked the switch on the wall but didn't expect light to appear. Rather, he moved towards the kitchen, careful to avoid creaky boards, in search of a match. Without the light to guide him, Ray followed the walls of the kitchen. His hands glided across the spiked-green foam on the walls of which a new layer was needed: the foam was beginning to wear down. In locating the drawers, he began to comb through takeout menus, aluminum foil, and coins until he felt a pack of matchsticks. They were damp, as were many things within the cabin, and it took 3 strikes to spark a flame. Yellow flames danced across the cabin, weaving around the oak paneled halls, dashing through the dark spaces in the foam, and briefly settling on the opposing wall. Ray kept his eyes on where the light sat until the flame reached his fingers and snuffed. Turning to the stovetop, Ray lit another match and began cooking his dinner.

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Keeping his feet close to cold-stone floors, he felt the reverberations increasing. The whispers grew louder. Daddy. Look. Open your eyes, it's okay. He wanted to, but he knew he couldn't. Ray's calloused hands twitched: he dropped the match. The bubbling in the background was muted by the ever-increasing taunts. As he approached, the whispers increased and grew louder until his outreaching hand met the wall. It was unnaturally wet: the rainwater laid dormant within the wallpaper and moistened Ray's palm. Please Daddy. Please Honey. Please. PLEASE LOOK. His muscles tensed as he fought to keep himself from looking at the wall. The stove fire shot above the pot and stew blasted out. Ray recoiled and involuntarily scratched his hand. He couldn't move. With a crackle of flame and a gust of wind through the exposed roof, fire engulfed the room. The foam quickly caught flame: the fire danced from patch to patch and the walls erupted in orange-yellow light. As a dark mass of smoke began to billow and thicken, Ray found himself face-to-face with the portrait. The portrait. Something was off. Their eyes. Their eyes were gone. PLEASE LOOK AT US.

No.

Flicker

Kayla Latendresse

fear inside
to not accomplish all
of what I dream to have
and dream to be

to not make a difference
in the lives of others
even if small

for this, I fear
the fear inside
but still hovers over
constantly making appearances

even if small
simple yet powerful
to bring forth happiness
I wish this fear away

no fear inside
a strength within
accomplishing all
of what I dreamed to have
and dreamed to be

My Adoptive Mother

Michelle Martinez

For as long as I can remember
I have been Sadness' son
She adopted me when I was young
And visited every so often
I thought she would abandon me
In my later years
But her motherly love
Only grew stronger

Today she embraces and cuddles me
Like a newborn baby
A baby I am not...
But I do not run from her either
Still I Stay
Comfortable in my adoptive mother's arms

Although she is not warm
She occupies space...
Space...
Coldness...
Her heaviness
Reminds me

I
Am
Alive.
That I live &
Breathe.

That I once loved
And breathed happiness
My adoptive mother Sadness
Reminds of what once was
And what I can one day have again

Although I once asked my birth mother Happiness,
“How long will I be Sadness’ son?”
Now, I do not wish her away
Not even a little bit.
I have accepted her role in my life
I hope my adoptive mother Sadness
Stays with me
Forever.

Two Faced Woman

Naima Towns

She's so two faced, have you seen her?
Out in public, always smiling, always happy.
Not a care in the world, pleasing others with the way she acts.
Everything is always fine with her, never any problems.
Not showing us the screams that happen at home.
The fear of the unknown and what will come next, or how he'll
feel when he comes home from work.
Opening the door forcefully as he drops his belongings on the
floor, knowing she'll pick them up with a smile on her face.
Her, hating every minute of it.
Believing him every time he says he's sorry, and "It won't happen
again."
How she cries herself to sleep, regretting every life choice she
has made up until this point.
The thoughts of disappearing, crossing her mind.
The worry on her face as she watches her children sleep.
Yearning for an escape.
Blue and Black tears staining her face.
Waking up and applying her makeup with a frown, her mask,
sitting on top.
Plastering on a smile for the day.
She's so two faced.

Two of Me

Naima Towns

I was pure, clean.
Free of any blemishes.
But also living a reclusive, uneventful life.
Spotless and shy
Anointed and afraid.
Suffocated by the hard times of life.
Having to keep up this unsoiled image.
Expectations grabbing me tightly like the collar around my neck.
Pristine promises kept, never speaking truly.
An immaculate image
But deep down I wanted to be like the woman inside me.
Free, loose, going with the flow of life.
Like a leaf dancing in the wind
My fearless friend.
My colorful counterpart.
I longed to be her, to cut ties with the ideals I was given.
To learn myself, to learn her.
Until she told me,
“I am you, just waiting for you to give yourself permission to realize that”
At that point, I cut the cord holding me back from getting to know myself.
Blood flows, painting me like I was a masterpiece.
The red droplets hitting the white fabric a sign of freedom.
She grabs my hand.
Now, we are one.

Chances

Pamela Dong

Life is full of experiences
Some opportunities happen once in a lifetime
Deciding to take a leap of faith
To open one's self to be vulnerable
Moving out of one's comfort zone
To view all the options
Trying to keep my head on straight
Looking at the situation at all angles
Not wanting to be disappointed or to get hurt
Afraid the world would implode if I fail
Not wanting to live with any regrets
Building enough confidence to take a chance
Going for it, not looking back, taking the chance
Regardless of what happens, I won't regret it
I will learn from it and grow from it
I will take a leap of faith
I will take the chance

Letting Go

Pamela Dong

Life is not eternal
Sometimes we have to let go
Clinging on to the past with both hands tightly holding on
But you know you must let go
It hurts, as if the world is crumbling
“It is for the best” you keep telling yourself
Trying to be optimistic but I am falling down an icy slope
Birds are chirping a melancholy tune
The pain is unbearably real
Gasping for air in the middle of the ocean
Crying in the rain, so no one will see my tears
The pain is with me where I go, it is permanent
Time goes by
The seasons change
Leaves fall from the trees, to be replaced with new buds
The pain slowly fades like rain seeping onto the ground
It is now replaced with an emptiness
An emptiness that is slowly being filled with fond memories
Echoes of voices fade into my head
I can now feel the warmth of sun rays on my cheeks
Life is becoming more bearable
I can now breathe the fresh air in
Daffodils buds breaking through the ground
My heart beats in rhythm to a metronome
Today is better
Taking one day at a time

Cinna the Poet

Michael George Smith

There is no greater calamity
Than to be edited down

To the commonplace
To the misinformed
To the lost

For those who do not fit
Or those accused
And those who simply stand aside

Cinna waits in the lobby
To claim his prize

Mind (brain)

Hanna Thrains

There are not enough words
or too many simultaneously

cellophane
separates the two hemispheres
of my mind (brain)
see-through but ill-permeable

I know prodigious words
but none of them can capture
the turmoil of thoughts that
enter exit enter exit enter exit

there is a storm (blizzard) (cyclone)
in my spine

one hemisphere knows
colossal words to describe ideas
the other knows 103 words to describe snow

Violet Valley

Hanna Thrains

All the time
All of a sudden
I am back in that house
terrified of moving too abruptly
triggering an outburst of laughter
or an episode of insufferable rage

All of a sudden
I remember the multiple evenings spent
eating microwave popcorn on the sofa
and watching old musicals that I hated
on the tube television in the basement

All of a sudden
I remember the length of your fingernails
and that I always found them appalling
remember how your voice didn't break
when you told me why they were coming

All of a sudden
I remember compulsively brushing my teeth
scrubbing my face with rubbing alcohol
and swimming in the lake for hours
to wash the invisible stains of my chest

All the time
All of a sudden
I am back in that body
that was unanimously deemed the least desirable
still stained despite the countless trips to the lake
slowly disappearing as my fingertips cracked open

All the time
All of a sudden
I am back in that body
I am back in that house

“Jinx”



Jessica Imperiale

Tequila is for Men

Dov Rabinowitz

Tears are for children
Tequila is for men
The one a young body
The world yet unknown
Cannot hold the liquid within:
Tears are for children
A liquid catharsis
A purging of woe
Of woe it can't handle:
The one a strong specimen
The world having conquered
The pain another experience
In a panoply of experience.
Come to my body
Sweet liquid of grief
I don't fear the dark
I embrace and overcome it:
Tequila is for men
A bountinoues of liquid
A river of grief
To power me onward
Negative, but energy no less:
I don't fear you Satan
I don't fear Hades
The sickness you bring
I will take upon me
Though you be purged
In time not so far
Stay with me now
I can handle you
Tequila is for men

Untitled

Brandon Downey

A maroon bike is standing on the street corner,
Rider unattached.

A day passes.

Dew has deposited across the leather seat,
Still no owner.

They realize it can be taken right?

Still the same day.

Sun lingering a bit too long,
Shining its rays on the spokes.

I wish I could ride this bike.

They know this is a normal neighborhood, right?
That they shouldn't be clogging our sidewalk like that,
Discarding things they clearly don't care about?
Why. Are. They. Doing. This.

If I were them, that bike would be appreciated.
I would massage WD40 through its chains,
Greasing it up for the journeys we would take together.
They leave it out to rot.
It's trash.
A simple toy.

Please be mine, Bike. Take me away from here,
Far from everything.

A boy brings the bike inside his garage.

Essentially Existential

Brandon Downey

They want to be buried in a grave so that people know they existed.

Some with gaudy monuments or sepulchers or tombstones, but some with just enough so that they know.

Maybe a stone, engraved with a phrase like:

"He loved life and also his wife"

Or

"You can't see her, but she can see you!"

Nope. Too much.

How does someone squeeze their life, their memories, the best things about themselves, all onto a rock that no one will read in a place that no one will visit but the people that are paid to do so?

They pay for a plot of land.

They pay to be lowered into a hole.

They pay for the words that will be spoken about them.

They pay for remembrances that are broken down to: He/she/they was/were ___(adjective)___ and ___(adjective)___ and ___(adjective)___ and he/she/they loved to

___(verb)____. He/she/they survived by ___(noun)____, ___(noun)____, ___(noun)____, and ___(noun)____.

Tombstones are condensed into:

__(First name)__ __(Last name)___

(Year of endless potential–Year potential ran out)

I don't want this. I don't want any of this.

My memories shouldn't be confined to 84in x 28in x 23in. mahogany box.

My soul shouldn't be spread along the sand or in the mountains or trapped within an opaque vase.

I want to be.

Not was, has, did, or said.

I am who I am, I say this, and I say that, I do what I love, and I see what I see.

When I cannot speak for myself, I want to live, not be remembered.

I want to grow, not deteriorate.

I want to shine, not fade away.

I exist for no purpose but my own and the one that I project onto others, and I do not wish to be buried in a grave to prove that I exist.

I exist.

1 2 3 4

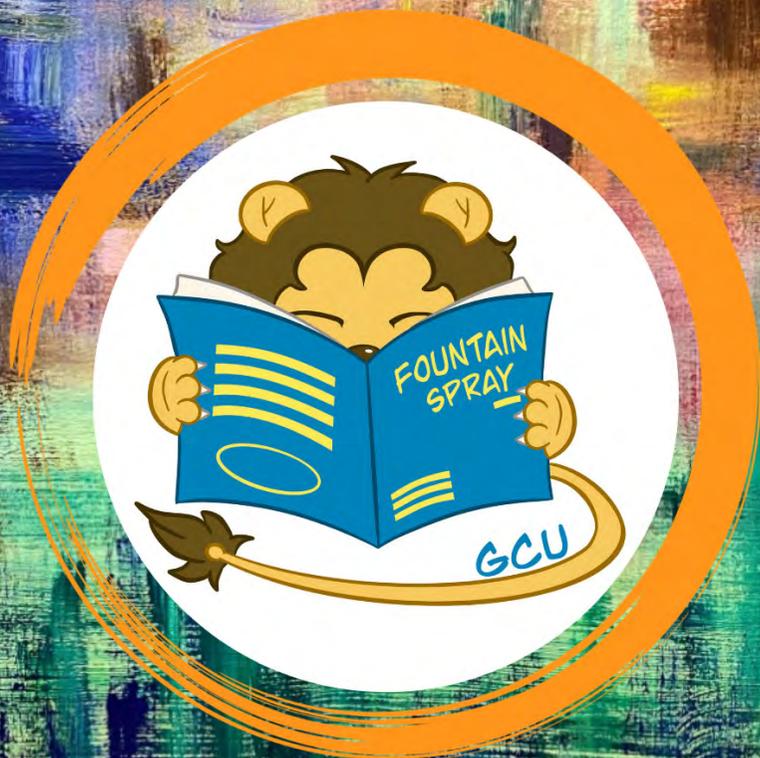
Gabrielle Sortino

Angels are trying to say something to me

Embrace this new chapter
Consider all things a factor

Have faith in the universe
Think of it as a free verse
It is time to immerse

Never give up on the goal
It is worth trusting your soul
It may be out of control
But in the end, it will feel whole



GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY

THE MERCY UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY