

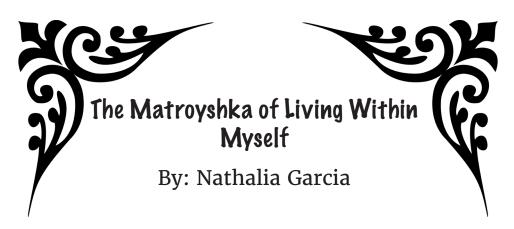
Letter By Editor

When my time at Fountain Spray began, we were in every sense of the word a seed. With the support of Professor Wedlock and Kaitlyn Inderwies, we sprouted roots and set out to bring our vision of what Fountain Spray could be to fruition. In just three short years, our small community has blossomed into the diverse collective that we had always imagined.

Today, Fountain Spray has tripled in size. Because of this, I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge those who provided this issue with its nourishment, if you will indulge me. Just as every seed needs water to grow, so too does it need people to tend to its needs, and our board members did exactly that. This year, Fountain Spray gained four new members whose roles injected the issue with life. To our newest members—Niya, Jaime, Belynnda, and Blake your fresh ideas cultivated creativity. While I may not see what you will grow into within Fountain Spray, what I can say with utter confidence is that you are engaged in all that you do, and it is because of your willingness to step outside your comfort zone that this club will flourish. To John, your sense of humor and extensive knowledge on everything and anything kept us on our toes and ensured that our growth would never stagnate. To Gabby, it is because of your positivity and kindness that Fountain Spray is so welcoming. Thank you for the smiles, laughs, and especially your organization! I would be remised to not mention the efforts of who Fountain Spray will be left in the hands of: Kayla. This issue is yours, Kayla, in all aspects. Seeing you bloom into the collaborator that you have become is truly special to me. Carry the torch and plant the seed for whoever may come next!

The time has come to uproot from the inviting soil of Fountain Spray and plant myself in the untilled land of my future. Thank you to everyone who finds their works within these pages; submissions are the lifeblood of literary magazines, and we would be nothing without you. As I venture to the unknown, I leave you with this: be seen, be heard, and be valued in all that you do.

For the final time, Brandon Downey Editor in Chief



my matron saint is the hydrangea. a repetition of petals, I made her flowers

my home. I am a tiny creature, enfolded in her green, her holiness feeling my tiny movements within.

these spaces between her leaves are forgotten places, quiet places, silent and still as the moment before

a field mouse skitters across the floor, touching the edges of my nightgown. silent and still before my scream breaks through the walls, breaks through

my body, decorated in hydrangeas. The roots curling

toward my belly button. blooming from my center in a repetition of petals. the nesting doll of my insides are thrumming

with small murmurings, like tiny field mice working in clockwork ticking their small feet. I feel their bodies

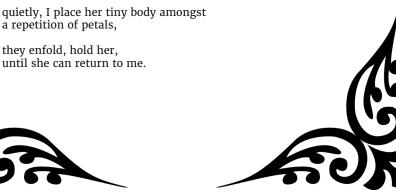
within the body of this house that I have made a home. It was their

I found one floating in my sink. Nestled into the calm soapy water

she was still. eyes closed, as if asleep. I scoop her out, name her saint.

a repetition of petals,

they enfold, hold her, until she can return to me.





imagine if we perceived each other as souls,

minus the flesh, minus the flaws.

Imagine if our shells didn't matter, and we were transparent all the time.

A spirit body, where we are better selves, where walls could not keep us out or hold us in.

We could be the genie, or the bottle, or the smoke, or the wish. How I would wish to be myself, but a patch in the quilt, a fragment within a plane of existence.

I could still have my crayon, which colored me and made me into a self I grew to love,

yet part of the box, part of everything, a slice of love traveling the universe, all knowing and free, yes free.

I had already paid with my humanity, my pain, my anxiety, my fear, my guilt.

I longed to be a spectrum, a specter, and above all, spectacular. And then I was all of these.

I could be with an eagle in its nest, with a supernova at its inception, in a birth canal, in a funeral pyre, and at heaven's door all at the same time.

I understood forever as more than trying to find a parking space at a crowded venue.

It was a new infinity with all the permutations of me.

And everyone was me, and I was everyone, and everyone was God, and everything was love, and every soul was glad.

A dream, a desire, a thought transformed into one breath, one ocean, one peace.

And finally, no words, no boundaries, no beginning, and no end.





The Wonderous Body

By: Kayla Latendresse

The body is filled with life and harbors the soul. It contains power, strength, and resilience as the body allows for each day to be lived on the earth. The body is a wondrous gift that sustains life. The body has a past, present, and future. It performs many activities while allowing them to occur and be completed. The body gives a sense of identity from appearance and the image it gives off. Life's challenges and difficulties are withstood with a body. A body has a unique form as every human being has their own special uniqueness. Physically a body has a shape, features, size, and its own beauty from its own differences from other bodies. A body allows for life and from within contains the mind and holds the heart and soul of a person. Living each day, a body senses all that is around it and makes contact with it. The wonderful body is always deserving of love, care, and respect, so appreciate your precious body.

My body has been through various different years of life. Once new to the world, my body was born as a newborn baby with all of life ahead. As the years passed I developed as a toddler, child, and teen. Then I grew into a young adult taking on each day one step at a time. My body has undergone different changes as I physically, mentally, and emotionally developed. My body has strength and its own unique form of getting through every circumstance, moment, obstacle, and challenging time in life. I have a connection to my body in different ways that allow me to sense what my heart and soul are feeling while also knowing what my mind or gut may be telling me in each moment that I experience in life.

My body and life can take on the symbol of water or even a tree. Water flows and moves. Just as a stream of water can flow and drift without stopping, my life is in constant motion even when my body may want to be a puddle of water instead and stay still. Like water, my body can also feel like it is flowing through each moment in life. Depending on the moment my body is in and how my body may be feeling, sometimes my body may tell me one thing at one time and another at another time. The mind, which is inhabited by the body, may want something and the body may possibly want the same, but other times it may want the opposite. For instance, if my mind wants to keep busy and my body at that time wants that as well then it will go along with the mind but if my body instead wants to be still and only in a relaxing state, then the body will communicate what it wants and that is what will occur. My body can take on the symbol of a tree as a tree can sway back and forth in the breeze just as my feelings, emotions, and thoughts can feel as if they are swaying. Like a tree is rooted to the ground and withstands the seasons, my body goes through all the seasons of my own life as it is cooted with the earth as all of life happens around it.



Upon a littered beach, a little crab finds solace By: Nathalia Garcia

from the sun under a bleached log. He watches intently as seagulls try to fend one another off over the corpse

of a shell filled fish. The dead eyes are shiny buttons. Weighed down by remembrances of a life as a zoea,

little crab waits. He is older now, shell hardened and iridescent as a wave washes him away, the carnage

still taking place.

This ocean is vast but little crab finds his way. Floating, drifting like the softly glowing moon jellyfish, to settle

upon the sand, the pebbles, the little crab scuttles quickly for he knows this is where the wild things lurk. The city of

a luminescent coral reef looms before him. Wading through, his claws reach for passing fish friends, so glad their

colors are vibrant and alive.

He approaches the forest of drifting seaweed so like the hair of a swimmer he once saw

long ago, and pauses at a hefty locket shining like sunlight, rust bound but so bright in the

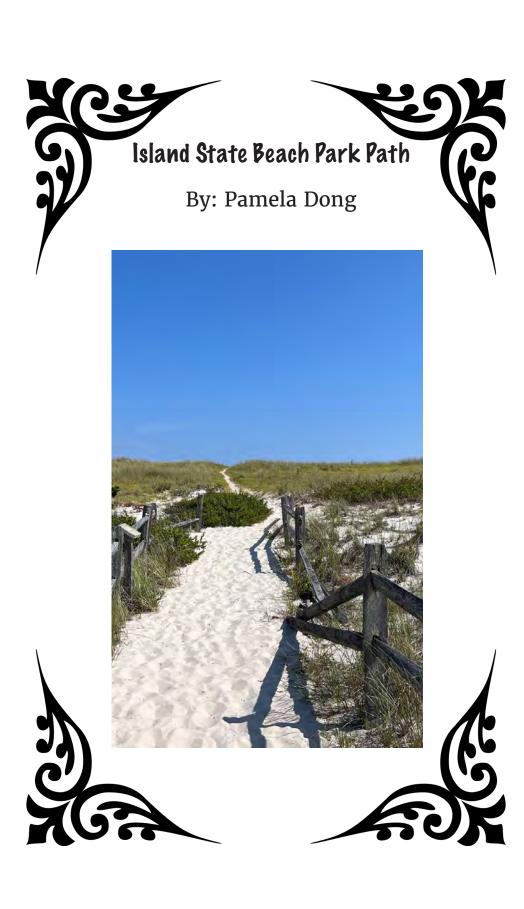
sea. Uneven legs now enter its forever home. He goes from room to watery room. Between

fallen ivory pillars, to arched doorways carved with time, to the head adorned with two

windows (there is no more seeing through those eyes). Little crab, returning for restless

slumber, nestles amongst seaweed, and hides in the dark, in the night,



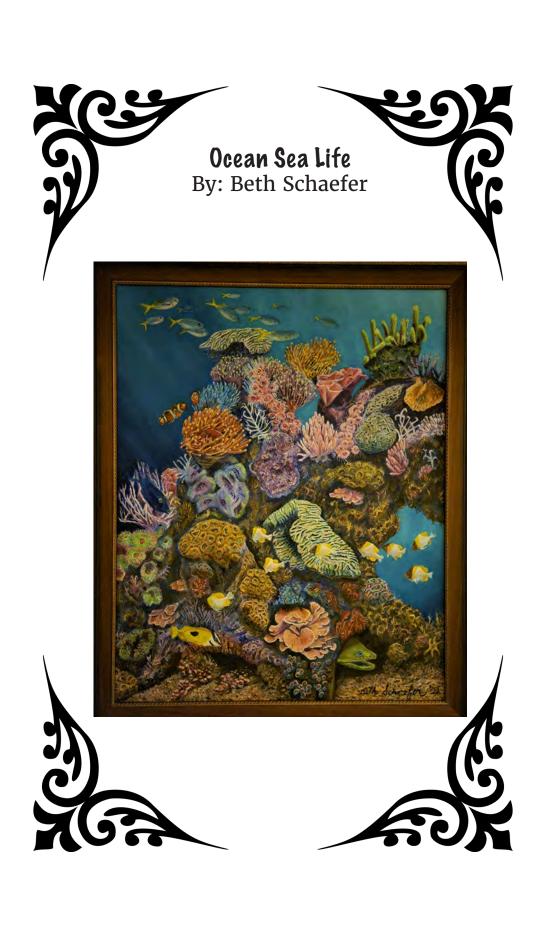


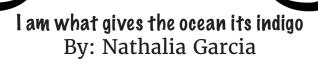












These waters are my fears.

Azure tinged touch. I am a sea turtle, overturned, uncomprehending of what hangs above. But I have no gills, no fins. I am simply a girl, a foreigner in this piece of the world, belonging neither to the depths nor the clouds. The edges of my skin are needling. All that I am is blossoming into teal frost with this endless cold.

My salvation looms close,

beckoning, but going back means

failure.

There is only the white of the sun sea, the tipped wave crests, the hull of the boat. Swim out. Here comes another wave. Inhale. But in haste, my legs stretch, feet searching for the reprieve of ground but find only sinking. I am gulping. Too late, waves devour my head. The salt pushes tongue and air aside.

Plunged under, my body is a kettle. I am tumbling, roiling. There are rocks inside my finite flesh and they only seem to be growing heavier. Swallowing my desperation, my body is trying to swim without seeing. My hands are cupped and reaching. Something moves. I think I've touched Death. My eyes open.

I look down, a lonely maiden's hair wraps around my calves, tugging (or maybe caressing?). My heart crashes, imagining a siren's beauty below. Her hair cold and silken, tickling me, readying to drag me under.

But no, it is just seaweed adrift

amongst not-jellyfish orbs.

They are translucent with no tentacles. I stroke their slick form, let them weave between knotted fingers. The world is shimmering below.

These waters are my fears.

A school of fish disperse. A little one with yellow stripes swirls around me. Others join and I am flurrying. These little fragments of the sun are soothing. The waves are lulls, tranquility etched into my rocking form. The ocean prunes and holds me, swaying. Cornflower, I name these waves. Cerulean, I name this body of sea. Cerulean.

These waters are my deliverance.

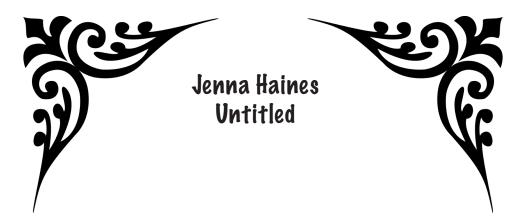
I overcome. And now, to climb.

Above, the world feels loud. There is no color now, only gray skies. The pressure within is lessening. I think I've decided to be a fish. Float on, against the pull of the forgotten boats hull. My breath is light now. Spiraling with arms like wings, I am flying backwards, my feet propelling me away from the known.

I do belong, I realize. My neck, carved with slits, my fingers growing webbed. But no, I cannot breathe, not actually. Perhaps I'm not a fish at all, maybe I would be sand. Sprinkled throughout the world, bits of me hidden or held. One day I might be taken into a shell and made into a pearl.

I know now this is my home.

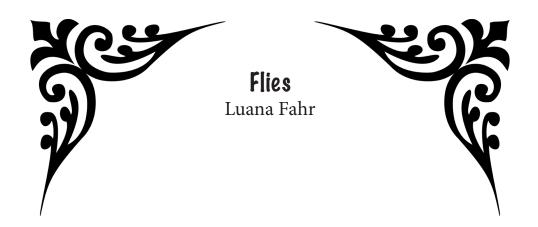




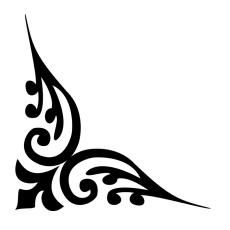




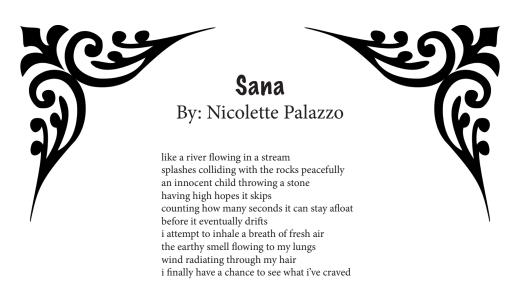




Flies around where flies abound,
Upon a carcass that she found
In the garden that she weeded
On the soil that she had seeded.
A robin that had hit a wall,
And robbed of breath,
Friends came to call,
And feasted on the dinner guests
Who feasted on the robin's breast.
Death feeds life, and she could see
The pain in her reality.



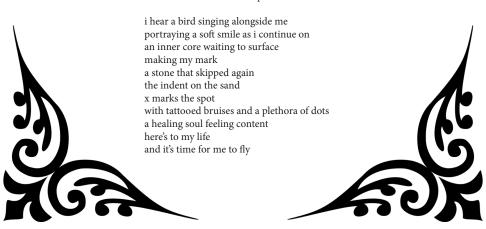




skipping through the lake and not caring about the mud on my feet

the soil meshing between my toes body aching horrifically leeching on to every step i take dancing through the pain finally letting out the loudest scream i fall to my knees the cool water comforting me lowering my head in defeat agony tries to shape me a life of disgust almost kills me

a cycle of life
open wounds surrounding me
water turning to wine in the worst way possible
something inevitable that i'll never face fully
but all i can do is try
try to remember how i can cry
feel the emotions
to surf through the waves
that i don't deserve to dissipate







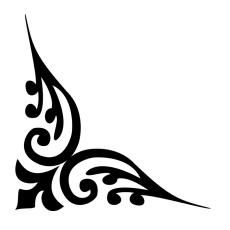






It came forth from where I wept, Knowing that I hadn't slept. Lucid dream, reality, It all felt the same to me. In the space where I was trapped, It knew that I hadn't snapped.... At least not yet, though in my dream, You understood I couldn't scream. And snapping, then, would fuel your glee, As you would be the death of me. You would bask in all the glory Of a sullen, broken story. Nightmare, daymare, dawn of terror, Evil mind, but I know better. It was just an old refrain,

And a dream you would remain.









The spoils of war were his fixation. There were those who were displaced,

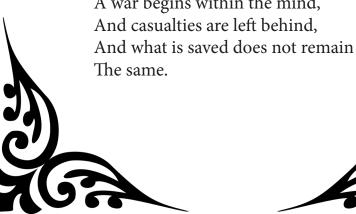
And there were those who had escaped.

Munitions sold and armies bought, And those enthroned who never fought,

And the calls of life or death With no regard of who was sent, And who was someone's son or daughter

Sent to be part of the slaughter. Cost of war, so understated, Benefits so overrated.

A war begins within the mind,



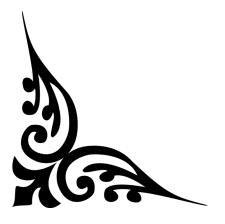




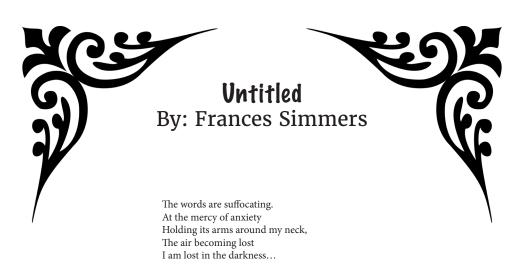


Can you hear it?
This voice of mine, flowing into the abyss?
I hope that my voice can pierce the umbra void.
If the world has meaning, these feelings are not in vain.
I was crushed by my fervor and wanted to surrender
Without ever knowing the color of the endless sky
But one day, I felt the beating of my heart
I am reminiscent of my life, and I heard a voice
I then ran, towards the voice, ignorant that I passed the dark veil
I don't know how much time has gone since I've begun to run
My heart pulses against my chest and the feeling of despair gone
And as I ran, I finally saw the blue of the endless sky
as I ran, gleefully ignorant of the rest of the world's beauty
I ran into the arms of the person with the voice that encouraged me to
go on
She said I know you would come back, she shouted with glee, and

She said I knew you would come back, she shouted with glee, and then I remembered that the world is not always that terrible, don't you agree?







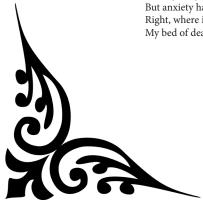
My thoughts are my biggest enemy Putting poison in my veins "Would the words, the pressure, ever go away?" I feel like a prisoner of my own thoughts Underground bars surround me and darkness into nothingness.

The anxiety became my bed of death
The dirt just keeps hitting my face,
Covering my eyes like a blanket of darkness
Until nothing is left of me but bones
Until I feel nothing...

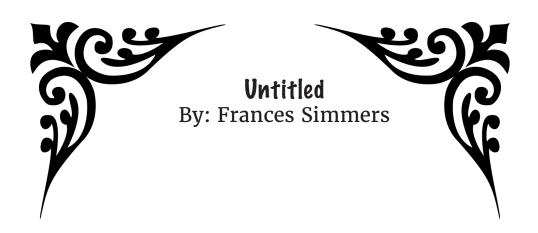
The pressure, how I was never good enough Was my death sentence Signed by the ones who Wouldn't stop pushing me

And now anxiety Holds my neck In an eternity of Agony, Suffering, And PAIN.

"I'm fighting to live." But anxiety has me at its grasp Right, where it wants me... My bed of death...



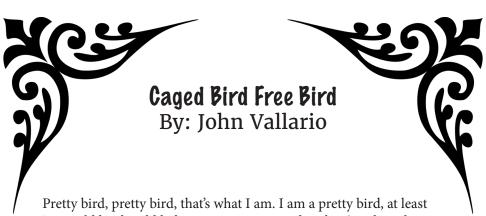




Trapped within the labyrinth of my mind
Searching for the
Forbidden puzzle piece
That lies somewhere just
Out of reach.



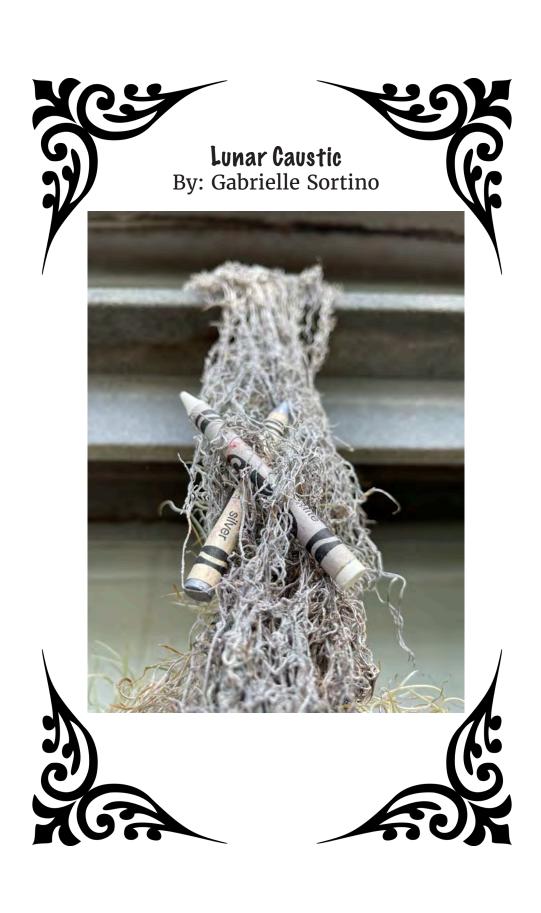




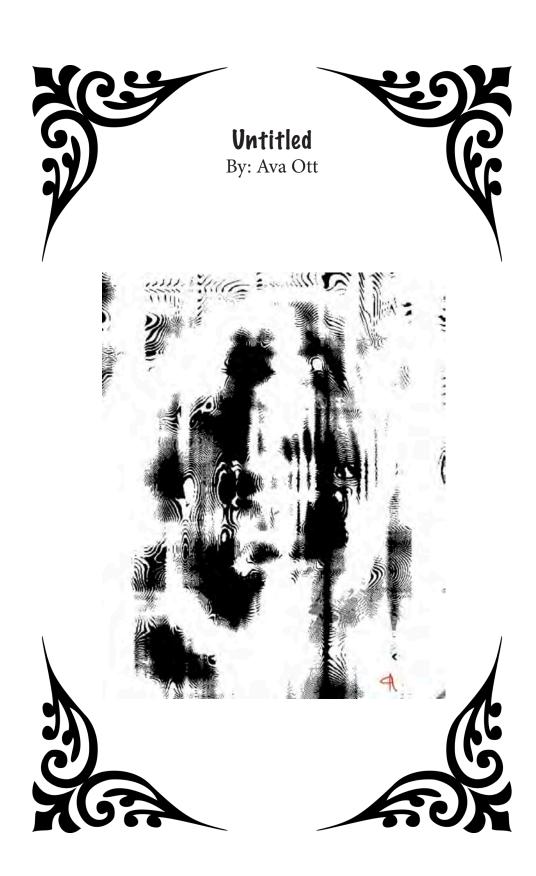
Pretty bird, pretty bird, that's what I am. I am a pretty bird, at least I am told by the old lady, every morning and night, Or when she returns home from places I don't know. She'll sit beside me and groan, "oh pretty bird, pretty bird, where did the time fly"? She opens my cage and lets me fly, but there is nowhere else I would rather be than on her lap, getting head scratches and treats. "Oh Pretty bird, pretty bird, " she says with glee as she strokes my head feathers, and her sorrows melt away. I hear some people say, outside the old lady's home, you are caged, poor pretty bird, pretty bird; why does that have to be? I do not mind it, as long as it is clean. I am fed, well kept, and pay no expense. I have no woes, like the birds outside. Do I ever wonder what it is like to be free; yes, but ask yourself the question, imagine a world with no electricity. The wonders of captivity have kept me well-kept and safe from all the dangers that would present themselves to me if I were free.

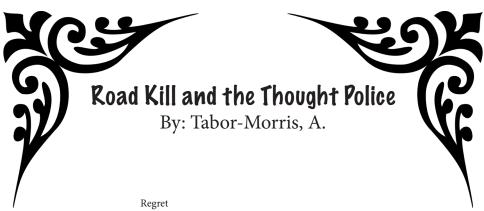
I pity the humans and their concept of free. None can decide what it is to be free. But for me, free is the option to be in a cage and to get snacks from mama and her fledglings when they come to her cage. Because in reality, that seems to me what all humans want, a cage to live in, treats, and pleasant company. We birds and humans aren't so different; quite the contrast, we walk on two legs and sing beautiful songs. I pity the humans and their concept of free. How is it that you own a cage yet pay for it gleefully? For me, life is free, without a care in the world; yes, that is what it is like to be free.











is filigree butterfly wings splayed across the windshield, smeared lard streaks busted beliefs (blanch my sentimentality). The wipers can't come clean.

Ends

justify the means (no not the other way).
sorry raccoon, sorry squirrel
sorry owl spread-eagle across the grill
sirens yowl,
sorry dead deer, dear, dear.
(Sorry my dreams, dear.)

Road Kill!

Turn away, move along, wring your hands but they can't come clean.

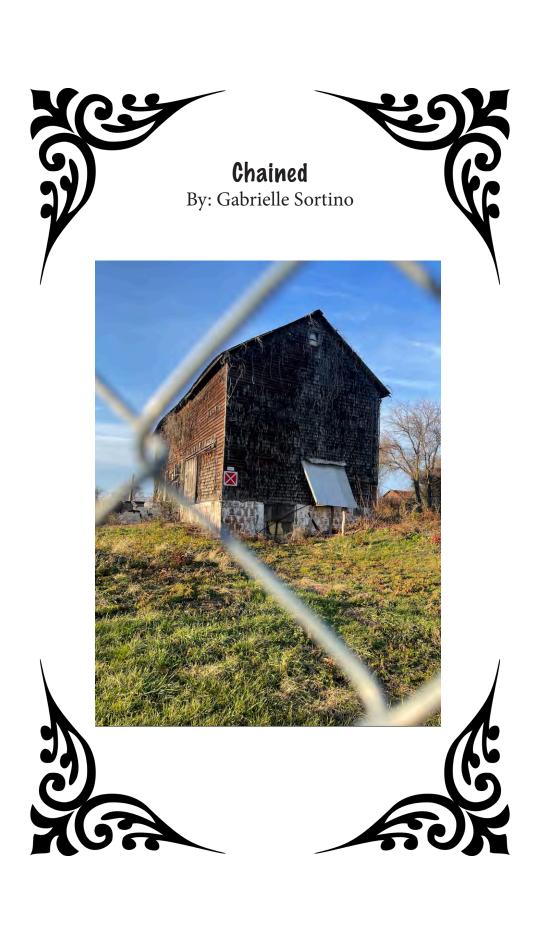
Amends

sense some cost, but loss cannot be allowed to wound too deeply. That is why they call them casualties. (Oh, sometimes it's me!)

Forget

the forest of dreams, gone,
park the car,
brave the black asphalt lava.
it sticks to our soles
(our souls, our souls)
and they can't come clean.







By: 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 his focus on the road and 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 to the main road. It was a long day, but he has 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. 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 his boots. Step after step with petals 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. The lights were draining; it was 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 shudders 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.

Beef stew was on the menu tonight, as it was most nights, and the pot boiled slowly. Still in the kitchen, Ray untied his boots and threw them toward the front door with the hope they might dry. After lighting another match, he walked to the living room in dirt-soiled socks in search of a change of clothes. Leaves and petals outlined the path he had taken coming in, and they seemed to soak up the light as he passed over them. Ray stepped around a make-shift bed of sheets next to the coffee table and found a yellow-stained white t-shirt and a pair of sweatpants. The matches were dwindling, and Ray could feel the weight of the darkness around him. Not too far from where he was standing, Ray made out a faint whisper. Look. He could hear the soup pot simmering; the flavors were surely melting and bursting within the broth. A rapping in the walls halted him. He turned to face the kitchen as his last match went out. Ray closed his eyes. Turning away from the kitchen, Ray took short steps towards the noise. 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 unaturally 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.







"children running ahead, and the mind borne forth that way, to no end—" by poet Jessica Fisher Poetry Daily April 19, 2022

a year I spent unforgiving myself all my misdeeds and mis-thoughts couched with a cup of cold coffee daily ...cried

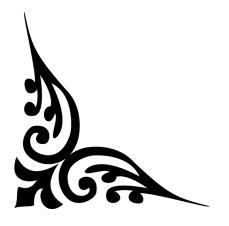
intention is the next step beyond impulse but impulse is so strong it becomes still water pushing the dam wall ... "why?"







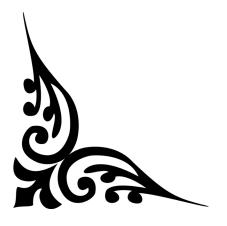
there's a startling trepidation that scars the stem of your heart like fiery petals on a deformed flower — and it reminds you convincingly that the agonizing, star-struck fear exists for some cynical purpose — as if a deity is the murderer, and it is not the singular ghost that stares at you through the mirror.



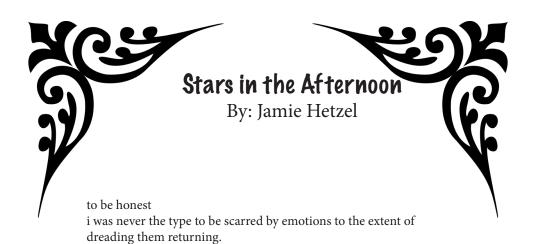




your flowering valley was made out of glass, so when i walked through it it shattered below me, and your words changed languages when they left your lips, twisting the mysterious anticipation i had into the internal manipulation. i don't want to be here anymore.







but when i see you

i have desires to feel the same treacherous loneliness there when we last spoke. so i can sacrifice all my good days for you.

i can debate longingly whether or not you're a vicious succubus, longing for the sweet temptation of cold and dripping crimson.

or i could conclude

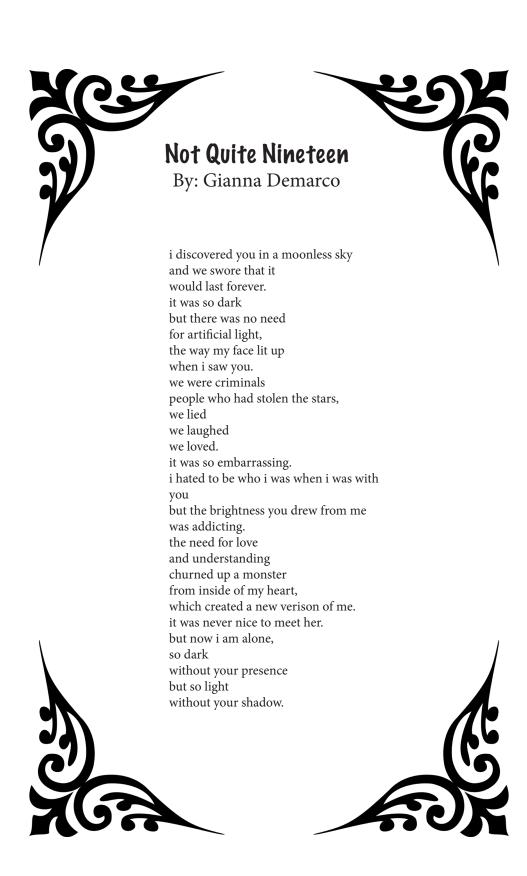
you're nothing more than the brightest star in the afternoon, dwelled by imperfection and hidden behind fascinating light.

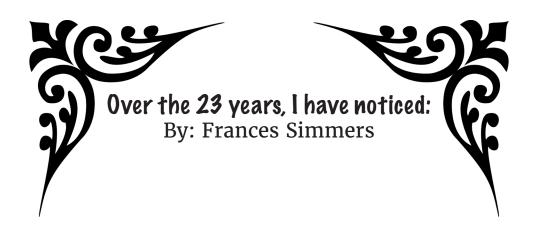
like the fluorescent bulbs

that shine over your head as you read the pages of your future life. i pray my character is more memorable.

after seeming decades of intrusive ideologies and thoughts rambling behind my eyes, i'm so used to degradation

that i've grown comforted.
with you i never understood how much i liked praise, though, to be honest.

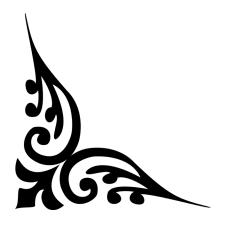


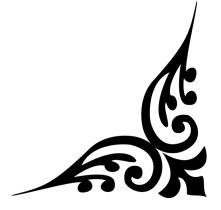


We all try to see the reflections Of the people who have left us In our past in those who come To stay with us in the present.

Though while doing so,
We are often trying to change
Someone into something they are not.
And by the end, we turn them into
The pieces of the same shattered
Mirror that used to hurt us

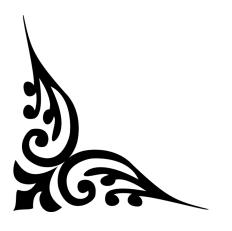
Before they even arrived.



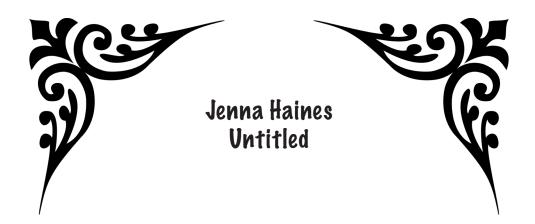




She uttered a stifled sigh
And leaned into her mother's thigh.
Don't take candy from a stranger
(Mother told her of the dangers).
Darting eyes that met her mother's,
She tucked her hand inside her brother's.
Stay right here or I will make you.
Sit right there; someone can take you.
(Why am I the one in trouble,
Forced to live inside a bubble?)
A little girl just shed a tear
For a world she's learned to fear.















Jackie Big Hair slept in her car for days Fire up the engine Gaze at the frozen highway rest stop "I just have to be here" "I don't know where else to go" That was her vigil

A southern Montana Native American New Year's party in Billings The last picture Selena sent Jackie Big Hair On Monday the family confirmed Selena was found "We brought our girl home"

Here in Big Horn County Rolling mountains and ranch lands Contain the Crow and Northern Cheyenne reservation Memory in Big Horn County Mothers and children, cousins, and friends

With modest law enforcement investigations that languish We're tired of our people dying Burned unheeded for generations When families' stories of how their loved ones Gained traction Through grassroots organizing Social media Forcing politicians and law enforcement to take notice

Indigenous women misclassified As Asian or Hispanic Overlooked in areas instead of reservations The families say the problem is More a matter of will and resources Then of difficulty

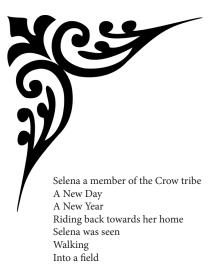
We're tired of it

Taking an urgent public stand Pressure the politicians and law enforcement Provide more aggressive response Raising alarms through social media Keep their loved ones from being forgotten

They are organized, rallying, and marching For days To the steps of state capitols







Her family believes Her relatives heard They began pouring into the rest stop Circling their cars, campers, and horse trailers Into a makeshift windbreak Transforming a frozen spit of asphalt Into a scene of prayer and protest

The vigil played out In frigid weather And lonely surroundings Selena's friends and family cook

At the rest stop
They lit a campfire
Garlanded the fences
And the sign poles
With red ribbons and posters
Saturated social media for help
"Internet Warriors"



At 16 Selena already knew The toll of violence too well

The swift response moves fast Sounding the alarms The crisis flows from generations Native women's lives and deaths

Families wondered why
Their own mothers, sisters, and nieces
Had not sparked outcry
How could she have lain
In someone's lawn for days?
Without being seen
Trouble that her body had been
Shuttled back and forth before being cremated

"Why does nobody care about this?" Their stories have become intertwined Indigenous women This justice That they didn't get







I tried to unkill myself But my soul was Already deep into the Crevices of death

"Beep"

Just waiting for the skies To open so my spirit can Cross over.

My body lying on the grass Just waiting for the wind to Move me My skin decayed like Ashes fading in the air As the wind takes it elsewhere.

I know when you hear the news You'll break to your knees Agonizing and screaming, Cursing out god for this Coming true.

My hand will be on your Cheek wiping your Tears, but you will Never know why They dried so fast. I disappeared into the darkness In silence, I hid it so well Beneath my skin So, you wouldn't Stop your world For mine.

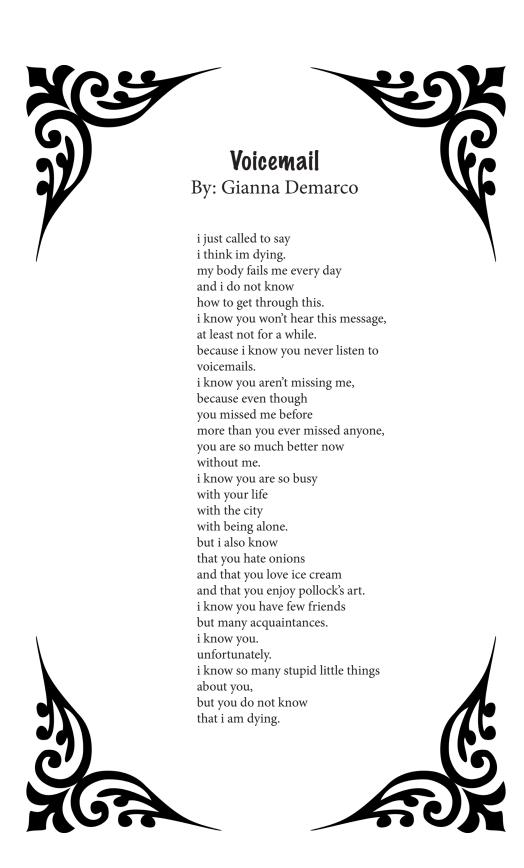
I know this Will be the scar That time will Never heal

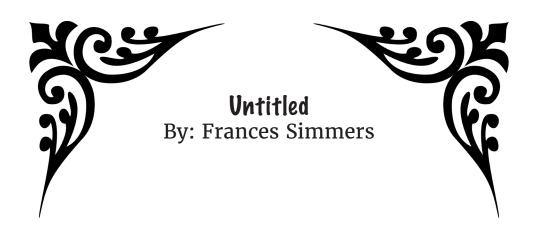
But when the pain travels Through your veins and tethers To your heart,

Remember the reason Why I fell in love with you And that will bring you Back to the light.

Now, "My time is up Goodbye."







The rain whispers your name The moon is so inviting I hear your voice in the wind You are my guide Through the hours of the night.











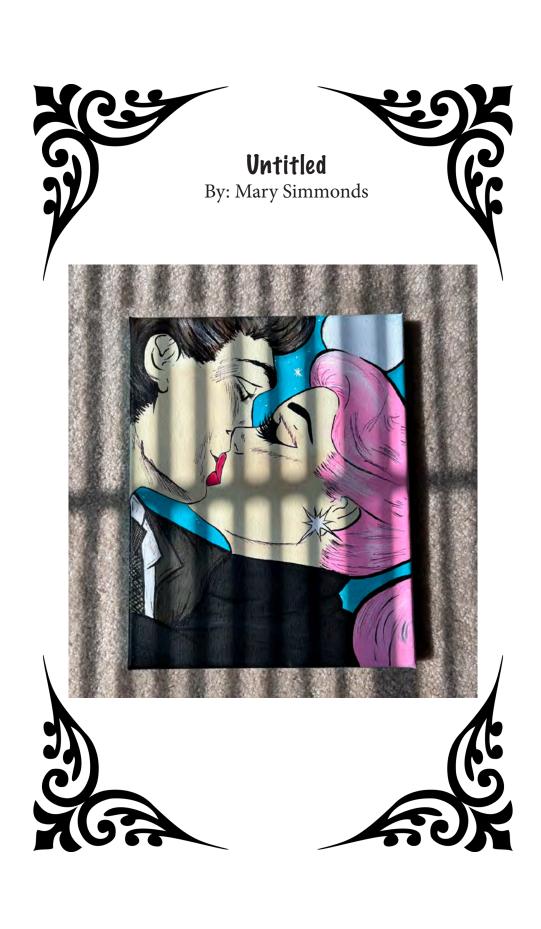


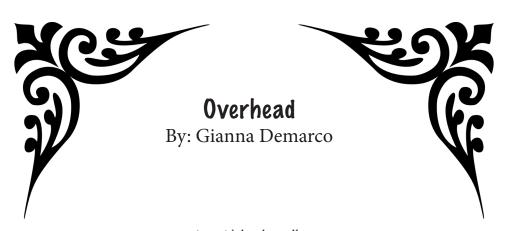












sometimes it's hard to tell whether what's flying in the sky is a bird or a plane. but i know that when i look up, there is always something. eyes that watch with dark intentions, every move i make, observed, judged, acknowledged, scrutinized for each mistake. i will not dare wonder further the existence of this thing, a presence known to all but i must be silent in my questioning. and so i walk, all alone. head hanging low to avoid the gaze of what it is that's flying in the sky the bird or the plane.











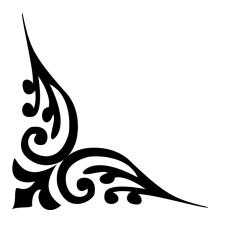




I was framed, I swear. I had nothing to do with the fire that burned the village... But if I did, here is how I would do it. I would probably start with scoping out the village to ensure everyone is asleep, or at the very least, the guards are unattentive. While at it, I would help myself to some unattended jewels or maybe even a goat, hoping not to lose any scales along the way. What would I do with the jewels? Well, what do you think I would do with them? I would put them to good use, and as for the goat, it would end up in a better place.

For your information, I did not steal a goat when the village burned, not that I burned the village, but I am not the guy that would leave perfect goats behind to be burnt to an unyummy crisp. Yes, when they caught me, I admit that I had some gold on me, but it was definitely not from any of the villagers' homes... not that they could or would say anything to the contrary if they were not burnt to a crisp alongside those poor goats.

People in this day and age always blame a dragon for destroying a village; they never consider the more likely culprits, Bandits and wolves.























I remember the unknown Incredible but outgrown

I remember when ignorance made a difference now everyone is a drone

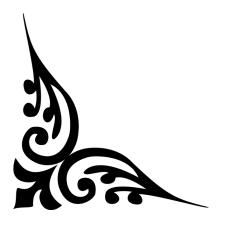
I remember the array of knowledge but unfortunately it is prone to disappear

As intelligence gets watered down when thrown ear to ear

I remember when we thought to consider But now they're too focused on getting

thinner

It's a shame to remember the unknown It left less scars than a phone





Remembering

By: Kayla Latendresse

The elderly man wants his wife back. Living in a one-story home that is cottage-like and antique, objects all around remind him of her. A snow globe, beside the fine china plates that are covered by the thin glass of the wooden china cabinet in the dining room, is followed by several picture frames enclosing past memories on every available table and counter. Tons of things collected over the years. To him, they are precious things never to be thrown away but to remain at their arranged spot. Where did she go? He is having trouble remembering. Maybe the grocery store or the neighbor's house? He walks over to the fridge and sees his latest post-it notes all over the doors. "Remember Susan. Remember her sweet flower-like perfume. Remember her Hazel eyes and her smile that could instantly light up a room. Remember she's not coming back. Susan is gone. She has passed away but one day you will meet her again." A delicate tear drips from his eye. Water fills his tear ducts and starts to flow continuously. The sunlight shines through the small kitchen window and through the lace-dangling curtains that only slightly cover the top of the window frame and glass. Shriveled leaves, crumpled petals, and hanging stems are taking up the window sill. They haven't been watered in a while. Since Susan's passing, he hasn't been able to keep up with the house much.

A tin foil candy wrapper on the wooden countertop jogs his memory of the day's plan. Today he was going to go to the local candy shop. Susan loved those variety chocolate boxes that are shaped like hearts or have an elegant design of some kind. Robert always goes to the candy shop to buy a box for the special occasions that they used to celebrate when she was still alive. Their day of engagement, wedding anniversary, the day they bought their first and only home together, her birthday, his birthday, their son's birthday, and the day she beat cancer—thought she beat cancer. The day Susan beat cancer was one of the best days of their life. They celebrated with a fancy dinner at home in candlelight. Susan sipped from her wine glass—white wine as that was her favorite, and said to her love "well what shall we do now? We have many days ahead to spend with each other. How about a trip? Robert, what do you think?" He was caught in a trance watching her lips move and cheeks form a smile while her hands moved gracefully with each word she spoke —that was the Italian in her. "Robert, are you there silly?" "Oh, right, yes um. A trip huh? I like the sound of that. How about somewhere with gorgeous beaches?" "Robert honey, we live by a beautiful beach already" she replied with a soft chuckle. "Right, well where do you want to go?" "Disney world!" "Disney World?" "That new park that opened a couple of years ago?" "Yes, and I heard from Maryanne next door that it is a splendid place. She and her husband went a few months after the opening. It was so magical she told me. We can stay at one of their resorts like the Polynesian or the Contemporary and go to Magic Kingdom. Oh, honey, it will be so nice. Like we are young once again." "Well, Disney World here we come!" Robert yelled in the air with a motion of his right fist.

Those were the good days. Distant fizzling from the television reminds Robert that the television has lost its signal. Making his way into the living room the static sound bothers his hearing aid. Oh where did that controller go again? he thinks. It can't just walk away. This dang television. Oh, my ears. Searching and searching, the controller finally makes its grand appearance under the sofa cushion. After hitting the power off button he regroups. There is silence except for the chickadee birds that communicate outside the window. What was I going to do again? Oh, this head. Hardly can remember anything these days. Turning around he sees that old candy wrapper again. Right, the candy shop. How can I forget! I must get a box of chocolates for our anniversary tomorrow. To not forget and jog his memory if he does, Robert enters back into the kitchen and places the candy wrapper in his khaki pants back pocket. Time to get my house key. Where is it? Looking at the fridge he sees a post-it note reading "House keys are hanging up on key rack beside the front door. If not there then try the table in the hallway." Going to the front door he sees the house keys on the floor of the hallway. Well, it was in neither of those places he thinks to himself and laughs out loud with a dry yet muffled laugh. To the candy shop, I go.

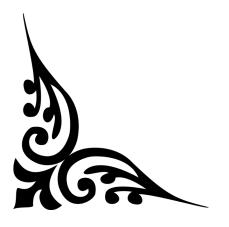
Exiting his house, 155 Smith Avenue, the strong smell of mulch mixed with the sweet, perfumed smell of tulips, honeycombs, and daffodils fill his nose. Maryanne is always planting. Her main garden practically wraps around her home while her smaller ones loop around her trees and align on the sides of her main walkway. Since she is his neighbor, the smell of dirt and flowers consume the outside air every time he leaves his home. Locking the door and walking down his two stone steps, he hears a voice in the far distance and adjusts his hearing aid. Turning over his left shoulder the sun blinds his eyes. Covering the tops of his eyelids like a sailor trying to see a distant ship in the ocean, he makes out the figure of Maryanne. Kneeling down over her pink tulips with a shovel in her hand, she waves to Robert in a repetitious side-to-side motion. "Robert! Hello Robert. Beautiful sunny day today isn't it? How are you doing on this fine crystal blue sky morning?" she yells. Getting closer to the dividing short white fence he replies, "Oh hello Maryanne! Could hardly see you with the bright sun shining in my eyes. It is a beautiful day indeed. I am doing okay this morning. I'm forgetting more than usual." "Robert darling I know. I wish it would all get better for you" she says standing up from the grass and glancing down at her recent additions. "I know I have memory loss and forget a lot but what I don't understand is why it is worse today." "Sweetie, isn't it you and Susan's anniversary tomorrow? It seems that whenever an important day is coming up you forget more than usual." "That's right. It is our anniversary tomorrow. You remembered. I forgot. But I'm sure I remembered a few minutes ago. How could I forget that special day." Now closer to the fence she asks, "Where were you off to?" "Um, I think. A place in town. Somewhere important I feel it, but I can't remember. I know I knew a moment ago." Placing his hands in his back pockets while thinking he feels the crumpled-up candy wrapper. "I know! The candy shop on, um, Elms Street in the heart of our town called, um. Oh, what is the name of our town Maryanne?" "Louisville." "Right! Louisville." "Well I'll let you get on with your errand and I'll see you when you get back. Bye, Robert!" "Bye Greenthumb Maryanne" he stated in laughter.

Walking down his dirt path and past the front of his house, Robert begins his short walk out of the little quaint neighborhood and into the quiet town. With his candy wrapper in the comfort of his palm, he reaches Town Square. This is where all the food places and small yet fully stocked shops are located. Anything you need, Town Square is sure to have it. Passing by each of the store's window displays—one with a family of mannequins dressed in beach attire and another a bakery with baskets of freshly baked bread, bagels, and muffins for the morning—Robert felt that the candy shop was close, but he couldn't find it. A crossing guard recognizing Robert from afar shouts out to him "Hey, Robert! Where are you going today?" "Hello, um. What is your name again?" Robert asks while approaching the crossing guard. "It's me, Nate!" "Oh, Nate. I'm sorry. My mind is scattered today." "So, where to?" "The candy shop but I can't seem to locate its whereabouts." "Robert I'll take you there." "No, it's alright really. I don't want to be a bother-"No, I insist" Nate interjects. He whistles over the crossing guard across the street and motions to Robert. The other crossing guard waves with a smile and motions to go ahead with a jerk of his head. Nate then turns to Robert and asks in almost a whisper, "so you ready to start heading?" "Yes, I'm ready Nate. But where to?" "The candy store Rob." "Oh, yes. Right."

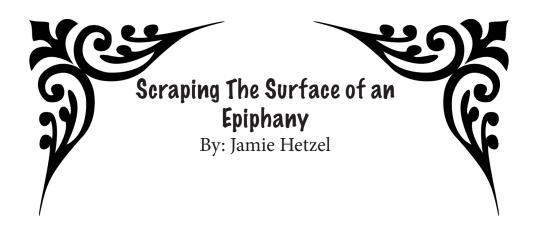
After going down the sidewalk, making a few road crossings, and taking some confusing turns, Nate and Robert arrive at the candy shop. Nate leads him in while holding the door for his entry. A bell hanging from the top alerts the woman behind the glass counter. The sweet smell of sugar encompasses the air. Turning around the woman says, "Welcome to Sweets and Treats Candy Shop!" After recognizing both of them she says "Robert and Nate! Welcome back. What brings you both in today?" The people around town usually know each other's names. It's a small-town kind of thing. "Daisy, my friend here wants to get some candy." "Well, you have come to the right spot." Nate turns to Robert and whispers in his left ear "So what kind of candy did you want to get?" "It was, um. Let me think for a moment" Robert responds to Nate. His right hand then feels the sensation of holding something crumpled. He glances down and loses his grip. My candy wrapper, he thinks. This jogs his memory. "Candy. Chocolate candies. The one's that come in this kind of wrapper. Those ones in boxes shaped as, um, stars, no, um, hearts. That's it! Heart-shaped boxes of variety chocolates! That's what I'm here for today!" "We have several of those. I just made some fresh boxes early this morning. Come, I'll show you your options." Robert follows Daisy over to the back of the store and Nate closely follows Robert behind.



I notice carpet colors newask me to describe I'd have said brown, not seen the blue until now, nor the droplets on the screen, wow safe in this moment.







as i pace the intrusiveness of my once simplistic thoughts -

i find myself standing on the bridge of incomprehensible melodies, and when my gaze peers to the reflective boulevard below me –

i am fast asleep, under the melancholic sapphire of the world i destroyed. and when my boots station themselves on that railing,

there's a second cemented in my brain where all i see are floating balloons, filled with light and exceptionality –

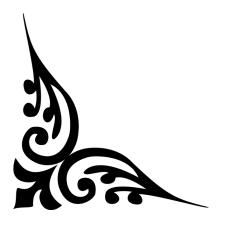
before those yellow circles are replaced with deformed blackness, as the lanterns fall into a miserable pit of noir stillness laced down against that reflective boulevard.

and i smile, because when they die, they are soundless,

barely disturbing my sleeping person as she shifts, as if unphased by even the most treacherous mistakes.

forcing my gaze to path down, i'm staring at the corpses of the lanterns, littering around my comatose body as it floats pacfistically down the wave; so that just when i lean forward to get a closer look,

i realize one of my boots has already walked off the edge.







on summer mornings when i gently ask the rain why its scent reminds me of winter,

the frigid wind collides with my already forgotten memory of what catching dragonflies and succumbing to eight PM glasses of wine could be like.

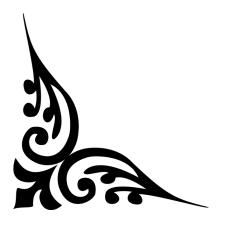
shivering from the cold, drenched in the same ice i got caught under months ago, skating on past butterfly kisses and silver lines of blotchy red covering my skin, not yet silent enough to comprehend why i miss what it feels like to be in pain, but worrying my screams have began to fall to a daunting whisper

in the lake of the february air.

i swallow lakes of hail as the clouds fly overhead and i walk on the boulevard of crimson scars and damaging starlight,

only enough strength past the question for the snowman i built to fall apart in asphalt and granite.

it's ninety degrees



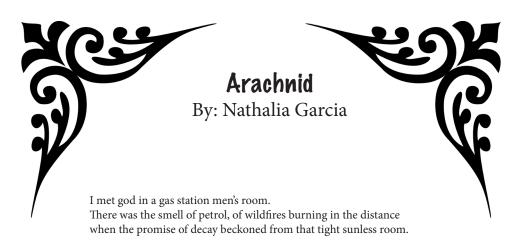












I rushed in, wrapped in clothes and judgment, practically salivating at this atrocity.

You were curled up in a hunched shell between stall and floor those hairy legs and abdomen so exposed on dirty tiles watching me watching you, so small and quiet, thinking only of my face and your hurt.

Not even fully grown yet, I thought. Just a fetal boy-creature hugging the floor. Your body was dark and foreign to me and for a moment, I recoiled. But you held me there, rooted as a tree, to witness. And as our wet pebble eyes met, I recalled a different dying god.

My young face pressed and fogging the windows, I saw a black mound in the road.

This being, this past you, was spit roast in the sun.

Ribbed belly up and fangs primed, venom slipping out of their sheathes.

With this turquoise coated body still bunching, I laid beside you.

"Crawl into my womb," I told you.

"Burrow in a thick web of silk and blood. I don't ever want to be without you."

Sometimes, it seems, ghosts overlap.

My fingers become a woven basket now, your melon soft legs pressed to my body molding to your death.

I take you, a child, into my mouth and let you hide there spinning a home in my throat.

And there you stay. Warm, hidden.

And there you stay. Warm, hidden.

A secret that sometimes visits in the night, in the shower, in gas station men's rooms the smell of petrol and wildfires burning in the distance.



I plucked my mother's love of flowers from swollen womb.

We kneel

in sodden earth,

our fingers working tirelessly to pick pepper.

(The biggest is the size of my thumb, fading from sunset to the green of valleys)

Menina, tome cuidado para não encostar seus olhos /

Girl, be careful not to touch your eyes,

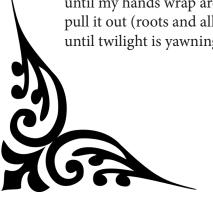
she says as my hand drifts to my face. I smile.

Eu prefiro encostar meus olhos do que esquecer de lavar as mãos antes de usar o banheiro /

I'd rather touch my eyes than forget to wash my hands before using the bathroom.

My mother howls and my laughter rings out in a hyenas cackle.

Back and forth we go until the shrub is bare, until my hands wrap around its throat pull it out (roots and all), until twilight is yawning awake around us.





I recognize, intellectually and emotionally, that the things which bring me the greatest happiness aren't on shelves, in closets, or cluttering-up the table. They're the living things in my home: family members, furry companions, and the rose bush that desperately tries to bloom despite all odds (my black thumb, pesky beetles, hungry deer, and burrowing chipmunks - all dooming it to a meager existence.)

I think about gadgets I fancy and the objects I aspire to get, have, achieve, acquire, or be known for... all those things. I consider the well-known parable of the Prodigal Son, pondering how at one time or other, most of us are tempted to turn away from home, seeking [seemingly] rewarding experiences and possessions from out there across this vast planet. Eventually many of us find the same answer: there is nothing better.

So what stuff should I clean or keep? What inheritance do I desire? I'm tempted to covet more things, but I think I finally understand how this holds me back. The evil one constantly calls to my unconscious like mythological sirens, luring me toward a mirage of riches. Like the prodigal son, I left my spiritual home to conquer the world, discover abundance, and procure "stuff" to claim as my own. Like the prodigal, when the illusion wore off I found those pleasures faded. Each acquisition leaves me wanting the next (bigger house, nicer car, higher titled job, etc.) I'm left alone and empty, spiritually hungry, longing for more. I want to return home to the Father --our Father. I crave what holds lasting value, which no longer includes these baubles and trinkets that surround me. I crave deep cleaning.

I recall stories that contrast long-lasting happiness between princes and paupers, reminding me that true treasure is not found in what I expect, but in relationships, memories, and a richness of purpose. Therefore I'm ready to let go, looking forward to clean, fresh air -- in both my outdoor and indoor spaces. I'm ready to surrender more to God's providence, believing God rejoices, welcomes, embraces, and celebrates this desire as a father celebrates the return of a lost child. I long for the peace, freedom, and lightness that trusting God brings. With desires focused on what really matters, I will find lasting happiness.

Hooray for spring cleaning and freedom from all this weighty junk, opening us to discoveries of new "stuff," which holds fuller, enduring gratification!











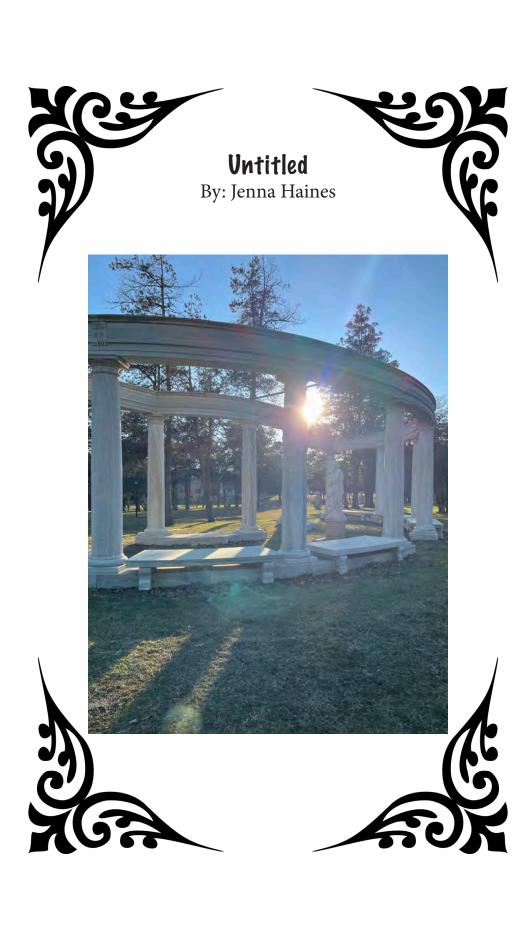












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