

PERIPHERY

58



It was...ance c...
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hovered...he s...
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on. No porti
of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be
wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptati
of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individu
stones.

PERIPHERY

Art and Literary Journal
58th Edition

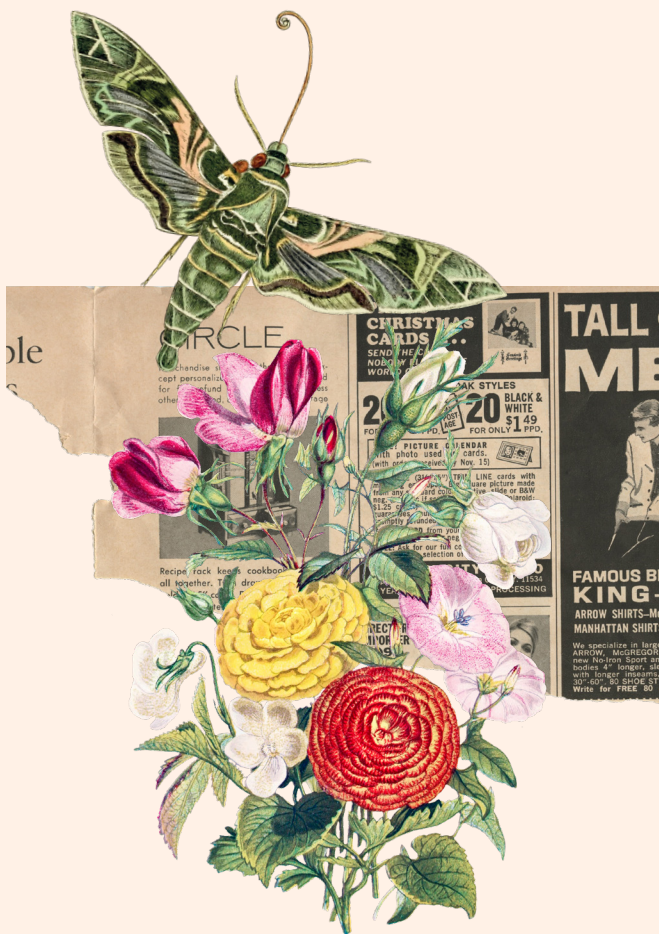


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ABOUT

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SUBMISSION PROCESS

Submission to *Periphery* is free and accepts work from undergraduate students from across the United States, but we are happy to be able to publish undergraduate work from across the globe. *Periphery* accepts stories, photographs, poems, music, essays, paintings, videos, interviews, new media work, sculptures, graphic narratives, spoken word, comics, and genres that have yet to be created or recognized. All submissions are sent through a blind review process by the Editor-In-Chief, Art Director, and Editorial Staff only. *Periphery* reserves the right to edit any and all submissions, but does not claim the rights to any published work.

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Periphery's publication process has always been a team effort, and this year was no different. As such, I would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who has made the creation of *Periphery* 58 possible. First of all, I'd like to thank our Art Director Emily Albers, without whom the journal never would have passed the drafting stage. Additionally, I would like to thank the rest of our editorial staff—Ashley Peldiak, Andrew Reitman, Anna Richardson, and James Simmons—whose dedication and love of the fine arts ensured that *Periphery* 58 highlights the very best in art and literature. Finally, I would also like to extend a thank you to Carol Spaulding-Kruse, Jeff Inman, the Board of Student Communications, and Christian Printers, all of whom played central roles in the creation and publication of the journal.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The past year has, in no uncertain terms, been a challenging one. Across the globe, we have dealt with disease, poverty, and political unrest. We have experienced grief and fear, anger and despair. And yet, we have continued to create. Turning to the pen and to the paintbrush, we have poured our joys and our heartbreaks out onto the page. In the face of tremendous difficulty, we have responded with inspiration and imagination.

This is because to be human is to be creative. As a species, we never would have escaped the Stone Age if an early ancestor hadn't had the creative insight to develop tools out of metal. Human creativity has led to all of the greatest inventions of the modern day—cell phones, laptops, and Wi-Fi, to name a few. What's more, it has added indescribable amounts of beauty to the world. From the *Mona Lisa* to modern street art, and from *Moby Dick* to *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, every single work of fine art started as a spark of inspiration in the corner of a creator's brain. Creativity shapes the world around us in immeasurable ways and has done so since the dawn of time.

Periphery 58 serves as a celebration of this indomitable creative spirit. As you traverse the pages of this journal, I urge you to take a moment and sit with each piece in its creative space. Consider the forces under which it was born and molded, and explore the ideas that it sparks within your own mind. Above all, know that no matter how much—or how little—you have been able to create in this challenging year, the creative spirit will always be there, waiting for you to take it and twist it into something new and glorious.

Abby Bethke
Editor-In-Chief, 58th Edition

LITERATURE

Periphery Art and Literary Journal
58th Edition



MARKS

Ben Black

They have etched black marks upon your body,
Circles, mainly, though within them symbols of
Life, its cycles, as if it could be halted long enough
to capture it under the skin. Of course, you have
chosen them to demonstrate the qualities within
you. Trees - their leaves cascade to meet their
roots, attempting to feed themselves of them-
selves. Above, a beast - it reaches down to clench its
claws around its claws. I wonder, does it represent
the need to keep itself in check? One paw prevents
the other from its own mutilation. If so, this I know,
but, I have wondered how they would respond
to my touch; if the mark I might leave, might stir
life, back, within them, sequestered in the labyrinth
of the prints on the surface of my forefinger, my palm.

THE HAPPIEST PLACE ON EARTH

Rita Johnson

You sit on the blue carpet of the indoor playground with Giraffey, your favorite stuffed animal, laying by your side. A friend you've made on the ship sits next to you, brushing the knotted hair of a beat-up Barbie doll.

"Amanda?" Maya says, struggling to make the hair smooth with the little pink brush. "Yeah?" You say, picking up Giraffey and hugging him tightly to your chest. "Do you think your mom will let us have a playdate when we get home?" Maya lets out a frustrated groan and gives up running the brush through the yellow hair.

"I don't know. Maybe." You give Giraffey another hug, running your hand over his soft brown and white coat and tracing his button eyes. You notice something blue on one of Giraffey's arms and scratch at it with your finger. You let out an irritated sigh when it doesn't come off, but you know Mommy will be able to fix it. You stand up, deciding to join some of the other kids playing on the gigantic green dinosaur in the center of the room. You tuck Giraffey under your left arm and take him with you.

"Wait for me!" Maya calls, running towards the tail of the dinosaur.

Some of the older boys sitting on top of the dinosaur roar and kick their legs around, pretending they are dinosaur riders from the movie your older brother likes. "Boys! Remember to be nice to the toys!" The woman in charge says, raising her voice to be heard over them. You decide that you don't want to play over there anymore and wish that you and your brother were watching movies in your room. You wish that Mommy and Daddy weren't on a date night and instead your

family was swimming in the heated pool on top of the ship.

You'd never seen a ship bigger than your house before. Your family had decided to take a trip on a boat instead of going to Disney World as you had suggested. It wasn't that you were disappointed; they had at least made it up to you by choosing to go on a ship with Mickey Mouse and Minnie and Woody and Buzz and all of your other favorite characters. You just wished that you were spending time with your friends at home and playing with your toys. You also couldn't understand why your parents had decided to take a boat to somewhere cold instead of going somewhere warm like all your friends did on their winter breaks.

You sit back down on the carpet and dig through the blue and white striped chest, trying to find something to occupy your attention. Just as you're about to grab a yellow bouncy ball, you fall forward as if someone pushed you hard from behind. You scream as your hands scrape against the carpet. You turn around to see which one of the boys did it as all the lights in the room go out. After a few moments in darkness, the room is softly illuminated by a single yellow light in the corner. The kids who were once playing peacefully are now sobbing. The woman in charge does her best to calm them down, giving a few of them hugs. Another person in charge runs into the room and starts talking to the woman. Then, a wailing noise fills the room. You drop Giraffey, rushing to cover your ears with your hands. It's the loudest noise you've ever heard. You have no idea where it's coming from or why it's so loud. All the kids around you start to scream. You notice that the yellow ball has started to roll away from you towards the other side of the room.

"Hey! Everyone!" The woman raises her voice, struggling to be heard. "Everything is fine!" She turns towards the TV, pushes a button, and the screen springs to life. She turns around and smiles at everyone. "Why don't we watch a movie?"

The word 'movie' gets some of the kids to calm down, but you're still confused. You pick up Giraffey and tuck him back under your arm, afraid to let him out of your sight. As the woman in charge has you sit in a circle around the TV, parents start running into the room, one by one. There are only a few kids left, including you, and you start to

worry about where your family is. Have they forgotten you?

You feel the panic rise in your chest and start sucking on your thumb. You know Mommy would get mad at you for doing that because she says that only babies suck their thumbs, not five-year-olds. You are too scared to care. You try to count the number of minutes that have gone by while you wait for your family to get you, but you've forgotten the correct order of the numbers, calling out whatever number pops into your head. "Thirteen!" Your voice shakes as your brother runs into the room.

"Amanda!" He exclaims. "We have to go!" You immediately stand up, still clutching Giraffey. You try to walk toward your eighteen-year-old brother, Joshua, but you notice that you can't walk in a straight line. You're leaning to your left. Even the Donald Duck picture on the wall seems to be leaning.

"Joshy, what's happening?" You ask, trying not to cry. You want to show Joshy that you are a big girl and that you don't cry at every little thing.

"I'm not sure, Bug, but let's go find Mom and Dad." Joshy takes your right hand and the two of you leave the room. He races down the light green hallway until you reach the stairs. "Joshy, slow down!" You stumble, your grasp on Giraffey loosens.

"Sorry, Bug." He slows for a moment before picking you up and putting you on his back. "Here, let's do this instead."

"Yay! Piggyback-ride!" You instantly start to feel better. You love when Joshy carries you on his back, especially when he does it at his lacrosse games and all of the other guys come over and say hi after they win. Joshy gives you a weak smile. Your brother carries you up some stairs. When he reaches the top, he throws open a door and begins to climb more stairs. Other people are on the stairs with you. You hear a voice from the black box on the wall next to you that says something about a cabin and things under control.

Joshy doesn't stop climbing. Trying to fight through the crowd of people that have suddenly flooded the stairwell from higher levels, Joshy and you are the only two going up. Everyone else is trying to go down the stairs. Someone hits Joshy's shoulder, sending him into the wall. He throws out his arms to prevent himself from losing

his balance. You start to slide off his back and release your hold on Giraffey to prevent slipping off and falling to the ground. Joshy quickly regains his balance and shimmies you back up to the upper part of his back, tucking one arm back behind himself to hold one of your legs up. You notice that you are no longer holding Giraffey and scream, “Joshy! I dropped Giraffey!” The sea of people has made it impossible for both of you to see where your stuffed animal went.

“Has anyone seen a stuffed giraffe?” Joshy yells, trying to get people’s attention. Everyone ignores him. You start to cry. “Please! Has anyone seen a stuffed giraffe?” He tries again.

Someone further down the stairs announces that they found it and people begin to pass it back up to him. “Thank you!” Joshy yells to the person. You hold Giraffey extra tight and remind yourself that you’ll have to have a chat with Giraffey about wandering off without you. “Are you okay now?” Joshy asks before continuing to climb up the stairs. “Yes,” You say, wiping a few tears.

Joshy continues to climb stairs until he reaches one of the upper levels of the ship. He stumbles out of the stairwell. Windows and doors are open, letting in cold air that makes you shiver. You notice that it’s just as dark inside as it is outside and you’re suddenly feeling very afraid. The ship is now leaning a lot more to the left. A lot of people are here, wearing ugly, bright orange jackets. Joshy fights his way through the crowd to grab two from a person who is handing them out. “Do you have a child-size?” Joshy asks. The person shakes their head and continues handing out more life vests.

“Bug, you’re going to have to get down now.” He says, squatting so you can jump off. You don’t want to get off but something about Joshy’s tone makes you know that something is really, really wrong. You need to listen the first time to what he says. Once you’re off his back, he turns around and gets on his knees to help you put on the orange jacket.

“Okay, Bug. We need to get on some magic boats. Before we get on the magic boats, we need to put this magic orange jacket on you. It’s got special powers that turn you into a princess. Then the magic boats are going to take us to Cinderella’s castle.” You don’t like how bulky it feels around your neck and squirm as he tries to tighten the

strap around your waist as much as possible. You're excited that you're going to see Cinderella soon. Once yours is on, he puts his orange jacket on and does the same. He pauses for a brief second, taking his phone out of his pocket. You wonder if he's going to let you play the candy game you like. He says a bad word before turning it off.

"Where are Mommy and Daddy?" You ask, noticing that Joshy and you seem to be the only people not with your families. Other kids your age are being held by their parents. You wonder if Maya is with her family.

"I'm not sure, Bug, but we'll find them. Let's make sure that we get on the magic boat first. How fun will it be to get on one of those? I'm sure Cinderella and Princess Aurora are waiting for us."

"I don't want to get on the boat. I want Mommy!" You wail. You're scared and confused. You're glad that Joshy is with you but you want your Mommy to rub your back and hold you close. Mommy always knows how to make you feel better.

"I know, Bug, I know. But look out there," Joshy points out the window near us at the magic boat in the distance that's full of people. "They'll probably be waiting for us right over there. Come on, let's go for a little walk." He tries to pick you up but struggles to hold on to you as the big orange jackets are getting in the way. Instead, he grabs your hand and leads you out of the room and onto the bal-something, the thing your Mommy told you you couldn't go out on by yourself. You shiver, the wind whipping your hair in your face. You hear waves crashing against the side of the boat but you notice that you can no longer see the ocean as you did earlier that day, just the dark blue sky. You wonder if you are suddenly getting shorter, perhaps shrinking with every passing moment. You look down at your orange vest and are disappointed that you haven't been turned into a princess yet.

Somewhere inside the ship comes a loud rumbling noise and a high pitched screech. Then, all the lights go off for good. You can't see much and make sure to hold Joshy's hand extra tight. People start to scream and the water sounds a lot louder than it did before. The ship creaks and groans. Joshy looks around frantically, saying a lot of bad words.

"We need to hurry, Bug. We're almost there." He pulls you along towards your left and the two of you continue walking along the slanted

bal-something. The walkway is wet and gets water in your shoes, making your socks squishy. Your shoulder is rubbing up against the wall and you don't like the scratching noise that it makes. You slip on the water but Joshy catches you before you can fall. The two of you walk a little slower, trying to be careful. "It's too hard to walk." You are tired and ready to go to bed.

"We're almost there, Bug. Cinderella is waiting for us just up here." His shoes squeak against the floor and Joshy decides to walk on the side of the wall like Spider-man. He spots someone. "Hey! How close are we to lifeboat thirty-two?" He asks a man wearing a dark blue t-shirt with the words 'Disney Crew Member' on the front who is standing on the wall instead of the floor.

"The numbers don't matter anymore. We are unable to use the lifeboats on the other side of the ship. We just dispatched the last of the boats on this side and our distress call has been heard by ships nearby. Everyone is going to have to wait for the ships nearby to come or the helicopters." He seems too calm. You're confused by his words.

"You're telling me that everyone on board is going to have to wait to be rescued! Why did no one say how bad the situation was? You know there's not enough time before we're all in the water!" Joshy's face gets red as he yells a bad word at the man.

"We thought it was just an issue with the generator. Everything is going to be fine. Just remain calm, sir." Joshy doesn't remain calm. He looks out towards the water and notices that he is struggling to see it.

"Come on, Bug." He pulls you towards the front of the ship. Both of you are using the wall as a walkway and now you feel like Spider-man. You come to the end of the bal-something and Joshy grabs onto the white railing. This morning you were able to grab the railing with ease but now it seems too far away and very high above your head. "Give me a second to get up here, Bug. Don't move until I tell you to." You don't say anything. You have a feeling that something really, really bad is going on.

"Okay, I'm going to pick you up now." Joshy steadies his feet on the railing and bends down, reaching for you with both hands. He pulls you up by your armpits, which kinda hurts but you don't say anything. He puts you down next to him and makes sure you're steady on your feet

before he grabs your hand again. The two of you stand on the railing, high above the wall you had just been walking on.

“Joshy, where’s the magic boat?” You ask. You still haven’t turned into a princess. You wonder if Maya got an orange jacket like you and is with Cinderella already. “Amanda, you remember the little blue and red boat we have at home? The one you use in the bathtub?” Joshy looks out towards the water before looking at you. “I love that toy.” You smile. You never take a bath without it.

“Well, this boat is just like your one at home. And you remember how sometimes your boat fills with water to go under the sea to visit Ariel? That’s kinda what this boat is doing, except we weren’t supposed to see Ariel just yet. Ariel is looking for treasure and wants us to help her, so we’re going to go help her. I know you can’t see the magic boats out there but they are going to come to help us find the treasure.” Joshy squeezes your hand.

“Before we can start looking for the treasure, we need to get in the water. There’s a ladder right here,” Joshy points to the white ladder that’s attached to the smooth, red side of the ship. “We’re going to climb down a little bit and then, just like you did in swim lessons, we’re going to take a big breath and pretend we’re jumping off the diving board. Then we’re going to get on the magic boat.” Joshy’s voice sounds different. He uses his right hand to quickly wipe his face.

“But Giraffey doesn’t know how to swim!” You are terrified. You have to remind yourself to keep breathing.

“We’re going to help him. Make sure you hold onto him tightly and once we’re in the water you can show him how awesome of a swimmer you are. Giraffey will be okay.” Another loud noise comes from the ship. “Okay, Bug, I want you to hold my hand. We’re going to help Giraffey get to the magic boat. Don’t let go of my hand, no matter what.” The two of you carefully walk towards the ladder. Joshy bends down and holds onto it with his free hand.

“Okay. I love you, Joshy.” You whisper.

Joshy loosens the long, black strap around your waist to slip Giraffey in and then tightens it to make sure Giraffey stays put. You can use both of your hands to climb. You know Giraffey will be safe and don’t have to worry about him wandering off or not being able to swim.

“I love you too, Bug,” Joshy says, gripping your hand even tighter. Joshy uses his free hand to grab onto the side of the white ladder and carefully turns his body around to face you. He looks down, placing his feet gingerly on the ladder, and climbs down a few steps. “Okay, turn around slowly, Bug.” He lets go of your hand, wrapping his arm around your waist, and pulls you towards him. “Put your feet right here.” He lowers you down until your hot pink sneakers touch the metal and you are standing in front of him facing the side of the boat. You hear the waves behind you and you try to turn around to see the water but Joshy stops you. “Don’t turn around, Bug.” He climbs down the ladder another step. He keeps his hand on your back the whole time, pushing you towards the side of the boat. Your face is so close to the red metal that you can count the number of bolts holding the ladder in place. You think of the toy tool set Dad got you for Christmas last year for you to play with while he worked on building you a swing set in the backyard.

“Bug? I’m going to help you down now.” Joshy calls. You shake away the memory and loosen your grip on the ladder as Joshy lifts you down so you’re standing in front of him again. You are far enough down the ladder that you can no longer see the white bal-something. Joshy turns sideways, wraps an arm around your waist again, and holds you close to his chest. Your feet barely touch the ladder. You try to peer over his arm to see the water but it’s too dark out to see anything. “On the count of three, we’re going to take a big breath, push off, and jump into the water. Ready? One...two...three!” Joshy pushes off, jumping sideways off the ladder. He pulls you with him and the two of you fall towards the water.

You feel weightless. Time moves slowly. Until it doesn’t. You try to hold your breath. Needles prick your skin. Underwater, you can’t breathe. Icy water rushes into your nose, your ears, your mouth, your lungs. Your shoes make your legs feel heavy. Giraffey is no longer tied to your waist. The world is black and silent. You watch the orange jacket float towards the surface. You can’t scream for help. You can’t scream for Joshy. You didn’t even get to hug Giraffey one last time.

JOHN 2: WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

Maddie Topliff

And suddenly they're all out of cardboard and condemnations
Indoors, the congregation is baptized in an ungodly silence

....

while the pews hold fewer and fewer neighbors
of the "same race: the human race"

After the service, the ones who were never in danger
begin to weep over fallen statues of men
that remind them of white Jesus
...but they topple Frederick Douglas.

"Same race."

But "An eye for an eye" is biblical.

And suddenly, Jesus sends a mirror down to earth, hoping to God the Father
that we see Him in the reflection of a riot
shield and the glint of His eye in the silver
lining of the masks that line our faces

The people who spend Sundays
learning about the ransacking of the temple remain
indoors.

And suddenly, we the white people are feeling centuries of history all at once
while our neighbors feel a kneecap on the windpipe.

“Same race.”

Re: We the People,
It's not sudden when it happens all the time.

PARADISE UNTIL YOU LEAVE

Monkey Room Blues

INTRO: Opening harmony

VERSE 1:

There's a girl of one kind
With the future on her mind
She knows where she's gonna go
And to the present she says no

"I want out of this place," she says
Of where? is only one's guess
It's paradise until you leave
Go out in the real world and you'll soon see

CHORUS:

Wishing time away
Wish those memories had been made
Wishing time away
Gonna be seniors soon some day

Wishing time away
Wish I still had time to play
Wishing time away
Time's already up, it's too late to change

VERSE 2:

Joe's dropping thousands of dollars
On an education he can't afford
He's just worried about those scholarships
Standardized tests and surely more

Missing out on high school events
College fairs consuming the day
Anxiety comes and settles in
And at home is where he'll lay

CHORUS:

Wishing time away
Wish those memories had been made
Wishing time away
Gonna be seniors soon some day

Wishing time away
Wish I still had time to play
Wishing time away
Time's already up, it's too late to change

BRIDGE:

Game nights
School dances
Friend fights
Slim chances

You'll be wishing you were back here once again
When did youthful innocence become such a sin
Wanting to move on to big better things
Just to reach that prized wedding ring

VERSE 3:

Joe and the girl
They married each other at last
Only to find
They missed the past
“Honey, where are the dances?”
“Honey, where are the songs?”
I’m still trying to figure out
Where I went wrong

ENDING MELODY: Final Harmony





“Paradise Until You Leave”

Monkey Room Blues
A Night in the Monkey Room

‘ODE TO ‘OR

Jeremy Pulmano

When I write myself nomadic I think to ask my mother
where I grew into my first bowl of hair or learned heat
to be home or bit into fresh pandesal with two milk teeth or

three or inhaled the rain of a tropic or a cardinal direction—
my mother, forever unforgetful, sends me the address
of our family home in Las Pinas. I take to Google Maps

to drag-and-drop myself, made tiny yellow pegman, onto white
aqua sand or a rice terrace or a packed street sidestepping jeepneys
or brushing overgrown cananga branch or blessing mano to an unfaced

man not quite my grandfather, but who wears his silver hair—
An invisible wall blocks me at the entrance to the road
I called home, beckoning. With every click and drag I suture

myself together, yellow hem of a boy or a man. I must stop
to ask for directions. These streets begin to look identical,
and the easiest way to feel lost is to be born it.

I 'DON'T LIE 'ON THE COUCH

Sylvie Ellen

I wish I could rest, but we agonize.
We're forging new armor; we're working to
stand firm; we're grasping to hold the line.
This is a battleground more than a doctor's office.

With fears for chain links, we knit each anxiety to
the threadbare past I can barely remember.
The tale the shreds weave is so complex that
it sometimes takes months to untangle just one little piece.

The chaos sprawls on the floor like a blanket
threatening to swallow you whole if you don't stay alert.
I don't lie on the couch— we must work each week in the mess,
weeping as we lay wounds to rest.

CATERPILLAR EXPOSED

Becca Gatewood

I run because I enjoy it. I love waking up before students clutter the sidewalks, those intimate mornings I share with the fading sunrise. I love the sound my feet make on the pavement. I love the way my ponytail oscillates behind my head like a metronome keeping time. I love it when I can't possibly run another mile, and then I do. I love the sweat that sleds down my flushed cheeks, my tongue tasting my efforts in their salty, tangible form. This is the narrative I tell myself when I drag my body out from my cocoon of sheets and dreams. It's a good story. Sometimes I even believe it. Why else would somebody run anyway?

Distance running must look positively ridiculous to the outside observer. Participants push their bodies to the extreme only to arrive at the place they started. I used to puzzle at the peculiar practice. But once I began to understand the expectations that greeted me as I continued to grow, my intrigue was captured.

Family photo albums reveal when my body declined. In third grade, I had a silhouette associated with normalcy and health. Fourth grade brought about a more lumpish form. My doctor informed my mother I had "more mass" than the average nine-year-old. He told her that he used the word "mass" to confuse me. Wouldn't want such a young girl to worry about that kind of thing so early on. I tilted my head and furrowed my brows to construct a semblance of confusion. Wouldn't want a doctor to feel bad about the damage of his words. But I understood him perfectly.

This was the first of many doctor appointments to be defined by an

awkward tension, the doctor considering how much to tell me, what amount of humiliation I could handle. I had been shown charts that tracked my weight gain through the years, given lectures about what “normal girls my age” looked like, and worst of all, questioned in front of my sister and mother about my eating habits and what was causing this unhealthy lifestyle. My middle school years were defined by these appointments and the hypervigilance these doctors instilled within me.

My experience was not unique. In fact, it was quite common. Enough girls share this experience that it has become an area of research. Academics and scholars specialize in the shame I felt. Research reveals young students are taught that their physical body is a marker of their “goodness.” Thin bodies communicated discipline and restriction. Larger bodies communicated unruliness and excess. Health isn’t determined by what one can achieve but by what one can resist (Evans et al, 2008).

“Too much mass.”

Simply put, I took up too much space. My body had exceeded the boundaries of acceptability. This realization instilled a host of shame and new rules within me. Lighter colors made one appear larger, but darker shades created a slim illusion. I learned the angle I should position my body to show the least of myself in a photo, how to suck in my stomach and maintain a natural smile. I learned I couldn’t say that my favorite food was “pizza” or “mac n cheese.” I learned that high-waisted jeans could hide rotund stomachs. That knowledge left its mark as seams etched themselves into my malleable flesh, red lines detailing the “tummy hugging” feature of my Levi’s.

I shift in my high-waisted jean shorts while I type this, telling myself I’ve changed. Sometimes I even believe it. The odds of recovery aren’t optimistic, however. The cycle of internalizing societal standards, experiencing shame, and seeking correction is vicious (Ertl et al, 2018). We tell girls to be beautiful, then we make it impossible. We keep things fresh by rotating what body is desirable. Even if you are able to achieve the beauty standard, you won’t hold it for long. Today’s beautiful is tomorrow’s boring.

Keep up.

My shame was validated by the actions of my peers. I didn't have cruel friends, just friends that didn't understand the power their words had over my self-perception. It was lunch and we were talking about nothing and everything, in the way only a group of fourth-graders can. I don't remember the specifics, but I think someone commented on how my thumb looked like a caterpillar. Maybe it did. To test the theory, my friend wrapped her thumb and forefinger around my thumb and pushed the loose skin upward, creating waves of flesh. From that day on, my thumb became a caterpillar, a wonderful little show when conversation ran dry.

It was a spectacle, a party trick. They tried other people's thumbs, but none had the same effect. They were all too normal for that. Their thumbs were thin and their stomachs were flat. My body presented a unique offering: a rumply thumb to match my rumply form. I don't know why everyone found this display so intriguing. Surely, there were more interesting things to talk about! Surely, I couldn't be that strange. Was the skin on my hands that excessive? Had my body run out of locations to store fat? What was wrong with me that my hands, something so unworthy of commentary, were capable of creating such a stir?

Whenever someone pushed the skin up and down my thumb, I was back in that doctor's office, sitting on the exam table. I heard their voices sighting the wrongness I embodied. I would shift on the sanitary paper, the crinkling sound compounding my discomfort. I hated them. I hated the hint of false sympathy in their voices, present in notes of condescension. I hated how they joked when testing my reflexes. How they amplified my shame with their unwavering eye contact. How they talked about my body like a broken doll. How they did it in front of my sister. How they smiled when delivering bad news.

Maybe those terrible appointments can explain the anxiety I feel whenever I'm surrounded by people in scrubs or lab coats. Their words echo in the pounding of my heart whenever I step on a scale. I see their heads shaking in disappointment when I partake in a birthday cake or enjoy a Christmas cookie. Those treats aren't for bodies like mine. I became "other."

It hurts to be outside. I'm hurting.

This otherness wasn't just a social construction; it was a barrier that's felt in the stomach, manifesting in shaking hands and a downcast gaze. Gym class was the worst. We would wear pinnies to signify what team we were on. I always longed to be on the team without pinnies.

No,

I wasn't repulsed by their smell or unfond of their color. I hated how you could tell they were tighter on my figure than most of my classmates. The pinnies hugged me in a way that they didn't hug people with normal thumbs and normal bodies. The elastic would grip my waist, highlighting my shame. I was on the exam table again.

Body shame is pervasive within the school system. The system is founded on principles of performance. You succeed through presentation: presenting your knowledge, your skills, and your worth to teachers with a crying need for validation. The students at the top do more than just internalize knowledge; they embody it, living out each lesson. Our bodies become portfolios. "Achieving the correct size and shape become markers of distinction separating them from others as a measure of how disciplined and 'good' they have become" (Evans et al, 2008). Good students not only act a certain way but look a certain way as well. In a culture of performance, you must put on a good show. While the health, particularly the thinness, of my classmates was praised, my body became a vessel of shame, embodying all the wrong lessons. My good grades suggested intellect, but would a truly intelligent student be so undisciplined in letting their body fall by the wayside? We have a bias against overweight people, perceiving them as less capable. In addition to this broken lens, people are more likely to justify or accept this bias (Schweitzer 2015). Unlike other identities, someone's body is their own fault. And obviously, we are going to hold that against them.

So, I tried to take up less space.

High school was a time for changing. I could get fit. I could become smaller. These concepts were deeply intertwined in my head. They still are. Health was (is) expressed in small waists and flat stomachs. I was (am) determined to get both of these. My method: join the cross country team. To become like the skinny kids, I would train like them.

I would sit at their lunch table and take inventory of their diets, making notes on what was and wasn't acceptable. They held the key to health because they possessed both items on my wishlist. They had small waists and flat stomachs. In my mind, they lacked nothing. It took years to amass the courage, but I finally joined the cross country team my junior year.

I learned how to run. It was in line with every instinct I had, the pulsing rhythm of my legs, the wind pressing against my back, the deep breaths that seemed to connect me to myself. At the same time, it was the most foreign experience I could construct, the soreness I felt in unfamiliar muscles, the blisters that colonized my feet, the chaos of running downhill. But I knew this: when I ran, I felt alive.

Looking back, I wonder if joining cross country was the right decision. I lost weight and gained friends, but this only addressed the symptoms of my condition. My perception of self was not attached solely to the scale. This self-hatred was carved deeper than BMI.

My motivations were impure, sprouting from a fear of isolation and a life of being "other." But I wasn't alone. Lots of women depend on exercise for weight control. While men are more likely to join a team because they enjoy their teammates or like the feeling that accompanies victory, women have expectations to fulfill (Ertl et al, 2018). It's really quite practical. We wash our faces to dissuade pimples and run to dissuade fat. No need for concern.

But I was concerned.

Things began to change; I began to change. I want to say that it was a positive change. Now I'm more active and attuned to my body and its needs. But I've developed an addiction. I feel disgusting when I don't run. I am hyper-aware of other people's weight. Overweight individuals are still prone to obesity bias (Schweitzer 2015). I see fault in others and fault in the mirror. I am confused when I look at my reflection. I thought I had lost weight. Why do I feel worse about myself? This body doesn't represent who I am. This can't be me. If I run so much, why don't I look like a runner? When do I earn my skinny waist and slight frame? Why do I still take up so much space? I have to keep running. Faster and further.

It's a common experience. Body shame is a significant predictor of exercise addiction. Women become fixated on a body that is not their own. We teach this. We give young girls books populated by skinny protagonists and the protagonist's skinny friends. We write magazines worshipping celebrity weight loss. We put all the clothes for undesirable bodies in a different store. We tell them "you look so good!" when they reduce their bodies. All these lessons teach them to hate their body. But there's a remedy! They can lose weight. They can whittle themselves down into the perfect dolls we tell them are beautiful. They become addicted to exercise. Their symptoms manifest in "withdrawal, deleterious social consequences, physical injuries, and psychological distress" (Ertl et al, 2018). But what a small price to pay to be beautiful! They can achieve the best labels a girl can get: skinny and beautiful. The two words are practically synonyms.

My caterpillar thumb and I navigated the abundant and diverse expectations of high school. I learned the laws of motion, properties of calculus, and that I would never feel at home inside my skin. It was a time of turbulent identities and experiences. My body was in a state of constant flux. Seasonal cycles were established. I had a cross country body, a basketball body, a throwing body, a Christmas body, but never my own body. I felt like the caterpillar my friends had likened me to back in grade school: always changing.

I became taller. My cheekbones began to show through the youthful flesh of my face. My body developed curves. My calf muscles became prominent. My hips got bigger. Could it be that I was finally becoming a butterfly? Were my days of crawling around like a caterpillar coming to an end?

No.

There is a key difference between my life and the life of a caterpillar. Caterpillars get to change in secret, in darkness. They spin a cocoon to shelter their transformation. My metamorphosis was a public display. My friends were mistaken. I am not a caterpillar but a snake. I writhe and twist as I shed my skin. It's an ugly process. Everyone watches as the snake casts aside its former skin into a discarded heap. But this new body won't be sufficient for long. Caterpillars only become butterflies once, but snakes shed their skin throughout the year.

I am constantly undergoing metamorphosis, changing and changing until I don't recognize myself at all.

I'm both too much and never enough, at the same time.

I've been told I can be anything. Teachers smile on the last day of school, telling me how excited they are to see the woman I will become. Guilt swells inside me when I think about how I just want to be skinny. They would be so ashamed of my aspirations. It sounds superficial and hollow. I feel superficial and hollow. But surely they would understand. Surely they see the seeds of inferiority that sprout within their students.

According to dosomething.org, 91% of women are unhappy with their bodies. I hate how unsurprised I am. I feel guilty for contributing to the statistic. I hate my guilt. I know I exist as more than a body. I know I am strong, kind, and intelligent. There will be a day when that will be enough for me, but I haven't gotten there yet. My butterfly days are coming, and they won't be brought about by reaching a weight goal or crossing a finish line. They will come when I make peace with the fact that my society defines beauty narrowly and unfairly. They will come when I decide that it is not my responsibility to cater to their ideals. They will come when I will live in my body as if it's my home, my teammate, my safety, myself. They will come.

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KISSING ADORA

Storm O'Bryant

I said, “How do you feel about kissing on the first date?” My room illuminated by a warm desk light glow; the atmosphere was serene yet galvanized, blessed by Aphrodite herself. We were floating on a fantastical sea of purple and blush pink, swaying atop the electric waves. I was leaning back on my bed looking down at you sitting in the corner, your body frigid like a cube of fresh ice falling out the freezer door, except I don’t kick it under the fridge, I pick it up and watch it melt. You didn’t say a word, but glanced off to the side, cheeks reddening. You ran your calloused thumb along your bottom lip and cosmic eyes looked at me like a silent prayer being answered at long last. My body felt as if it’d be supercharged with stardust and the air held a sparkling tension, like antique string lights in a gelatinous ocean. I watched you rise and close the distance between us, graceful and swift like the goddess Athena, placing your strong arms on either side of me, letting your fists sink into my mattress, and I looked up at you, my breath catching quick, chest tight like squeezing thick thighs into too tight jeans. Bodies buzzing, a youthful, pure vibration. Until finally, like supple toes dipped gingerly to test the water, our lips met softly, like-Is this okay?-before: Yes, this tastes beautiful.

DECONSTRUCTION

Allison Whittenberg

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the ... oh, you know the rest....

I'm Sister Ardeth Margaret Katherine D'Arby, and I have just been sentenced to three years. He knows what He's doing. It will be three years well spent, that I assure you. Those souls locked away need my guidance, and it won't be my first time on the inside, as they say. It won't be so bad. I hope we will be able to stay together, though. The others Sisters, Jacqueline and Carol. I pray that they won't split us up. I've known them since I first entered the order. We were so young then, thinking we could save the world.

The judge had such harsh words for us. Such words. He said we were "dangerously irresponsible." To that Sister Carol said, "Nuclear warfare is dangerously irresponsible!" And that Judge told her to shut up. "Shut up," he said. Imagine such talk. Shut up, he said.

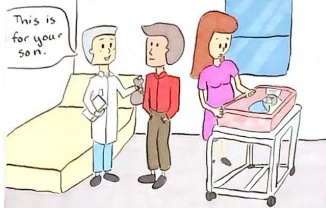
Some government property should be destroyed. All the papers made such a big deal about you, the blood. We used our blood to make crosses on the missiles. I've been with the order for 20 years. I would do it again. And then we used a hammer. Pounding and pounding. If only we could turn it into salt.



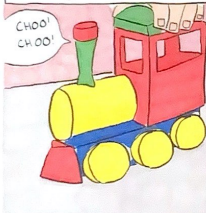
Hello. My name is James and I was born in the year 2085.



In my world, people are given an emotion bag when they are born.



When you experience a negative emotion...

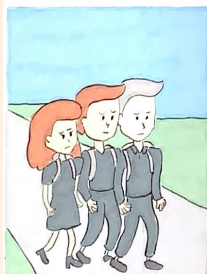
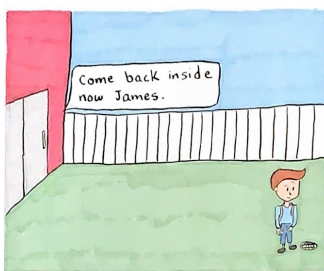
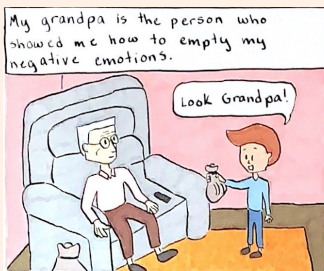


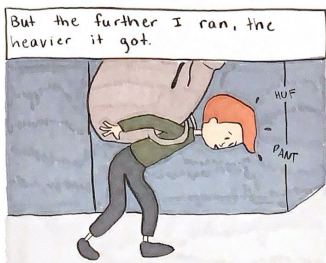
It all collects in the bag.

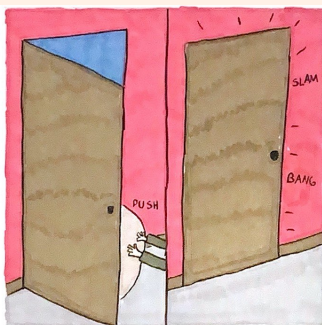
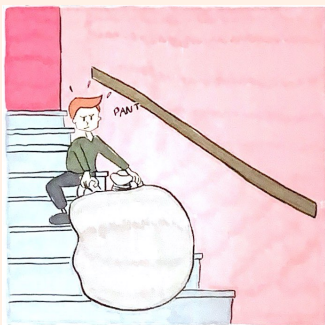


Society thought it would be an easier way to deal with the negative emotions we experience every single day.

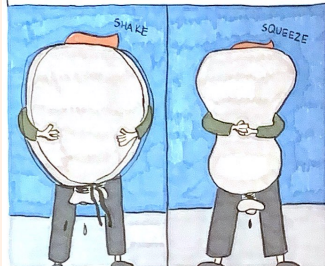




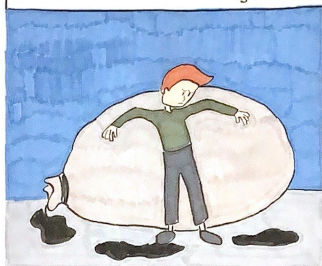


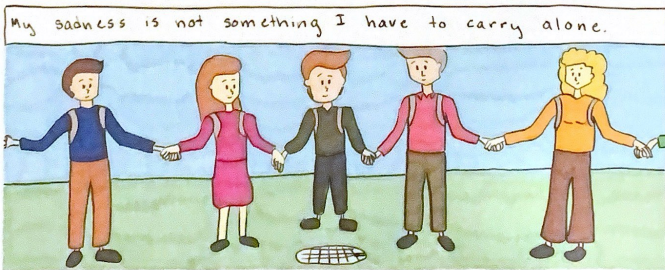
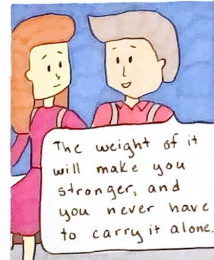


I couldn't handle it anymore.
It had to be emptied.



This proved to be more
difficult than I thought.





THE ADRIATIC SEA, THAT IS, MY BEING

Colin Frier

The story I wish to pen for you, my beloved reader, is a tale much unlike anything literary scholars are well acquainted with. Undue anguish courses through me just at the thought, and yet, I am at ease all the same. Nay, for this narrative I shall not detail the horror that buries itself deep in humanity, rather, a story that lightens the hearts of the petrified some. Deviation from my niche thought it may be, my heart is already flapping its wings upon each pen stroke. After all, what human wishes to read of the grisly slaughters that riddle my works, particularly in the early hours of the morning, when all is still and the smell of dough wafts through the house like a motherly ghost? I suppose this shall be my avowal: I regret the bloods I have chilled purely for my own wicked gratification. Therefore, as I have outlined, I wish to rectify my relationship with the reader by means of the story you are now reading.

I believe the disturbance knocked on my door yestereve. Ere I become adrift in my own penmanship, I must confess now that I was shooting craps with my associates. Lord help my poor soul, for one man's vice is another man's treasure. Many a night have I seen my modicum of gold trade allegiances, all of course due to my sheer machismo. This blasted pride surely does my wife despise, but I am a mule, a mule that wishes never to halt. Needless to say that far beyond the drunken, mindless drivel I shared with my associates that night, I was no more than a man cloaked in debt.

The phantom said aught I could not quite discern, yet its tone was brightly clear. Its voice was teeming with irascibility, as if the matter

were personal. Knowing quite well that I could not in good conscience shut off my ears to this troubled pestilence, I excused myself from my peers and wandered off alone to appease whatever or whomever was ransacking my mind.

The cipher continued to quabble in my ear with a sort of pertinacity much like that of my wife. Soon I found myself in the elements, the salty Earth dancing in my nostrils. We, of course, were located in a house by the grand sea, scenery quite obligatory for a writer of my cachet. On this particular eve, however, the Sun was sinking rapidly, like a great boulder, as if Phaethon himself were driving it. Merely the sight of such a phenomenon was cause for wishing to halt my brief odyssey. But the spirit persevered, like a bull in a red hall, the Spirit of Perverseness, as I have so meticulously described in previous tales, besetting the beast. I felt the frailty of Methuselah overcome me and, in a flash, for the very first time save for my blissful youth, I was frightened to the core.

The sea was angry that day, my friends. Heretofore had I adopted the persona of a cynical animal, finding all things fallacious merely to salvage my own damned pride. As such, the Second Coming of Christ crossed my mind as nothing more than an old wives' tale. But that day (yes, I shall sacrifice my forthright disposition in saying this), the Great Flood had returned to Earth, God's mighty hand once again casting a shadow over the inhumane world. The venerated sailor Captain Ahab was roused from his century-old slumber, thrown once more at the classic helm of his existence, burdened by the might of Moby Dick, literature's esteemed mammal. The waves bucked and broncked as if the Megalodon itself were reincarnated, the ocean straining under the belly of the brute. So vehemently was I injected with crippling fear that I tore across the garden, trampling my wife's magnolias in the process (a shame, though it is, I should like to have my life), and ripped open the door, blood curdling like a venomous stew.

My associates quite possibly got wind of the commotion, however, my momentary state of shock precluded me from conversing frivolously. The past, present, and future rushed over my small head as if time itself were inverting. Only in this deepest pain was I reminded of the Greek god, Poseidon. O, blessed ruler of the sea! Calm thy

waters for a man's relief! This affliction I cannot outrun; have mercy!

Forthwith responded the great overseer of such waters, in haste so divine that I began to sob uncontrollably (I must say I am embarrassed to pen this, but vulnerability I have come to add as a virtue). The stream of a thousand seas erupted, each one an angry geyser having hibernated for as long as this Earth stood, having bided its time in silent animosity for a chance at vengeance. The Great Awakening was come. Sweet Poseidon, however could I thank you! Alas, freedom! Flowing, dense waters so operatic, so majestic, enough to make any grown man cry! I shall remember this piss three times over. Perish could I at forty and still be marked with contentment.

After all: what is a man? What has he got? If not his dick, then he has naught!

-Edgar Allan Poe
Jan 19, 1809 - Oct 7, 1849 (Age 40)

SELF PORTRAIT AS OCTOPUS

Max Brown

NASA estimates that it costs approximately 10,000 US Dollars to send a single pound of payload into space. It would cost \$1,000,000 to send a 100-pound object, the average octopus, for example, into orbit.

By comparison, my travel expenses
to Marianas Trench are negligible,
A voyage to rival Everest, cheaper
than a Greyhound to Decatur.
I should be so lucky, to throw
my net worth to the trenches.

I probably did something to offend
those scientists. I tried investing my worth
in an inviting home. I exterminated scores
of plankton infestations and purged
the worst of the bleach from my coral

But I left the used plastic silverware
all over, and the scientists barely ventured
past my foyer. Over 95% of my efforts
gone completely and utterly to waste.
One of them knocked over all 10,000,000
of my bottles of canola oil, and I know
I'll never get it out of my carpets of sand

How can they know what's good
for me, when they don't even know
I exist? I can give plenty of empirical
evidence to that end, from unwilling
recipients of my tattoos, to hours
of Animal Planet footage. If they care
more about stars that always leave
them on "read" for 4.3 billion years
truly they don't want to see me anymore

There's a story that the world rests
On the back of a turtle. If so, I feel
We'd have met the Cosmic Van Wheel
Of Time by now. Are the sun and moon
Headlights of a driver, waiting the last
4.6 odd billion years for us to scurry
Across the road? How close are they
To getting fed up and flooring the gas?

In their efforts to get as far away
from my welcome mat as possible,
scientists might find the turtle is a myth,
The world isn't a turtle. It isn't flat either
I can't simply dispose of the plastic
silverware by sweeping it over the edge.
It's the law, matter cannot be created
or destroyed, turtles can't live in vacuums

Since they never bothered to check out
my home, though, how certain can they be
that the Sun and Moon aren't down here
somewhere, parked behind a sunken U-Boat,
ready to pounce on the first car to flash
headlights in their direction. Gasoline can't
be created or destroyed, so the car can afford
to be patient.

BROKEN BLINDS

Andrea Chow

five months ago,
my blinds broke.

shit,
i thought to myself,
now i don't have blinds.

so i climbed over my desk, tore the clips off the window,
and dropped the dusty beige blinds into the trash bin,
accordion-folded in a place where blinds were never supposed to go.

i got rid of my alarm clock, too,
because now, the sun peeks in at 6:31 am.
she gently shakes my shoulders every morning and whispers *wake up*,
she reminds me that the only thing that once separated me from my Creator
was a silly piece of cloth,
that i breathe the air she warms for me,
a cup of chamomile tea made of open air.
and as i crawl out of bed, i throw open the sliding windows
tracing shadows of zephyrs present and future but never past.
heroic beams casting kaleidoscope prisms on my pillows
my dreams now come at 7 am, when I imagine the feel of tearing down
all four walls
disco-dancing where lamplights once illuminated my room,
holding fast to the sky's lazy draft

i stick my head out of my bedroom window until i catch my neighbor's eye,
as if to say
i don't have blinds.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S LOVER

Tara Troiano

It had been 30 years since Vincent's death, and Johanna sat silently at the amethyst piano surrounded by everything he left behind. This day was always hard for her. Even after Theo died, even after translating all of his letters, even after marrying Johan. This day was unbearable.

Whispers rippled through society when she moved into Vincent's apartment after his brother's death. A widow with nowhere to go, her brother in law welcomed her into his home. And then again, rumors spread when she remarried, accepting Johan's kind offer. Another painter, they gossiped, the woman has no shame. When Johan died, the whispers didn't stop. They called her the fatal muse. Speculation circulated that she inspired men's best work before driving them to madness. Of course, this was not true. Artists were lethal because they felt too deeply and expected too much from a world that simply could not deliver. She was never the muse. Not for Theo, Johan, or Vincent. She was simply an onlooker who wanted desperately to be part of the brilliant vision.

She wondered how Vincent would have drawn her now. The creases under her eyes had deepened, the rich brown tones in her hair a distant memory. She was glad that he never lived to see her this way. To watch the paint dry and crack, the once bright colors fade, pulled from the canvas by an unforgiving sun. The beauty drained from her face and body years ago, leaving pale skin and muted tones. She became disfigured, soft curves hardened into harsh contours, bones protruded from her body as if attempting to escape their corporal prison.

Johanna sat at the bench, as she had each year on this day. Her

fingers hovered above the keys, trembling slightly. She used to tease Vincent that he was drawn to impressionism because it graciously obscured the unsteadiness of his hand. All sloping edges and vibrant colors. He would remind her in his mild tenor that the technical elements of the painting itself were far less important than the emotions it conveyed. And how boring were the emotions of straight lines and meticulous angles?

Johanna knew he never loved the world. She knew this because he never stopped trying to create one more beautiful. It was an unending task, one he knew could never be fulfilled. However, he persisted, working tirelessly to create a world of benevolent landscapes and harmonious skies. When his mind was cluttered, he painted open fields. When her nights were dark, he sketched dazzling constellations and laid them on her pillow. But the more he created the world he desired, the harder it was to come back to hers. The sadder he became to return to the dissonance and frustration, the dull hues and harsh lines. He rarely ate and only came to bed when she begged.

And all the while he suffered, she was frantic. She wanted to give him the places he painted, to guide his hand across the canvas and show him it was real, that she saw it too. One December evening he sobbed on the balcony, watching the city below. Vincent and an empty bottle of French wine, alone in the cold. She could not bear it. She took a brush and lilac-grey and covered every surface in sight. First the sofa, then the table, then the staircase. And when she ran out of lilac she threw teal at the walls, amethyst at the piano, mahogany on the bed. His sad gaze followed her as she danced around the room, splattering color, imposing beauty on the stubbornly bleak world. By the time Johanna ran out of paint, her dark hair was plastered to her forehead and her dress was drenched in sweat.

But no matter her efforts, she could not give him the world he needed. All she could offer was music. So she played while he painted and they existed like that for hours. She gave him resolving chords and major keys. She played, hair braided, pulled from her face, and sweeping down her spine. He sketched her like that many times but refused to paint her. She never understood why. Of course, he painted himself. Vincent crafted more than 35 self-portraits. No matter how

many times he committed himself to oils, watercolors, charcoal, it was never enough. People said it was vanity. They were wrong. It was his only means to exist beyond this world.

She hadn't returned to music since his death. It felt irreverent, and she knew it wouldn't be the same. But today, it was time. A French composer had corresponded months prior. He sent one letter, then two, then three, and finally, a package of sheet music arrived on her doorstep. The composer's letters explained that his suite intended to resemble impressionist paintings, Vincent's life work. So there she sat. Among the oils and watercolors and sketches that remained of his world. The work she had dedicated her life to selling. Scattering Vincent's vision to every corner of the earth. Hoping that someone would, if only for a moment, feel that the place he created was real.

Johanna turned to the movement the composer specified in his letter. Claire de Lune, or, Moonlight, it read in sloping cursive. Vincent's Starry Night flashed behind her eyes. A 9/8 key signature, D flat major. Johanna inhaled shakily, straightened her spine, and played the first chord. E flat and C, an inharmonious combination. Her fingers gently touched each key as she repeated the chord in higher octaves. The notes blended together, brush strokes depicting a dark sky. A G minor chord in the bass added undertones of deep blue. The notes rose and fell. The page was marked: Rubato. An instruction allowing Johanna to disregard strict tempo, to blur the edges of rests, and emphasize the shades of each note.

She would never have played a piece like this for him. The melody was meditative, beautiful, but deeply melancholy. Minor chords refused to resolve. Themes unraveled just as they began to make sense. She wondered if this is what it sounded like in Vincent's mind.

When she first heard what he had done, she hadn't cried. She understood that it was the only way for him to fulfill his dream to exist solely in oils and radiant hues. Flesh, blood, and bone were not mediums conducive to artistic expression. They burdened him, tied him to the world he wished so desperately to escape. She sat with him as he lay on his deathbed, crimson streaming from his side. His final words, "La tristesse durera toujours". The sadness will last forever.

The arpeggios drowned in pedal, each note caressing the next,

blue fading into indigo fading into violet. Sudden crescendos and diminuendos dotted the piece with bright stars, swirling in front of a moody sky. Tonal ambiguity left the listener unsure of what would come next. Waiting for the picture to come into focus.

And suddenly, he was there, behind her at the easel. Firey hair draped over his forehead; an angular nose sat above defined cheekbones. Dressed in the faded blue blazer that suited him so well. The space between his eyebrows creased in concentration. His hands moved across the canvas in rhythm with hers. They worked together in speechless dedication. Finishing the project he started. They knew it would never be complete, that their work was in vain. Their time was short and fleeting. He painted, long brown hair cascading down a straight spine. Illustrated white keys, and slender fingers. She played reflective unfinished phrases, measures that increased in pitch as if asking a question. He responded with surreal strokes, confident movements, and a sure hand.

As the music ended, there were tears on her cheeks. She did not need to see him. She knew he was there, still standing at the easel, adding final details to his piece. Expertly placed shadows aged the wooden beams above, added texture to her clothing, indicated vitality in her posture.

Subtle highlights playfully glistened off of the piano's glossy lid. Vincent paused, his intense gaze sweeping over his work. His stooping frame concealed the canvas, but she did not need to see it to know. It was her. In rich burgundy and deep hazel. She was beautiful, youthful, lively. Her shoulders gently sloping, fingers delicately hovering above keys. Her satin skirt draped over the bench, falling gracefully above her ankles. She could feel his gaze on the canvas, sweeping from her hair to her waist, to her foot pressed tenderly against the pedal. His brush moved over the painting, breathing life into the figure. Allowing her, finally, to exist in his world.

BEATRICE THE WATER [GODDESS: AN ODE TO MY BONG

Storm O'Bryant

A lighter. Click. Spark. Illuminations. *Bring your flame to my lips and have a taste.* My temptress in the midst of Prospera's tempest. A release from ruin and collapse. Chaos. Yue giving herself to the spirits so red skies can return blue. She gives me that blue. And I cleanse myself in her bountiful waters. Click. Spark. Illuminations. I bring my flame to her lips, indulging in her core; an intimate bolero with Amphitrite, moaning sea mother. *Shhh, a secret affair.* For some it burns, but I descend from Sappho so I'm immune. My Water Goddess kills men; a seductive siren bringing them in for a promised taste like Narcissus and drowning them in the vapor. Click. Spark. Illuminations. An orgasmic exhalation breathes out Aphrodite's sensual form in the smolder and she calls to me.

My love, one of these days I'll wash you clean.

A DROWNING MAN

Gregory Wilder

*"We, in our turn, sought the same escape with all the desperation of
drowning men."*

- The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous pg. 28

The Temptation to drown is all around.

To nosedive into shallow ends
Of Liquor Pools with no Lifeguards.

The Temptation to drown is all around.

To let go and sink back to my bottom
When the weight of the world drags me down.
To never come up for air again.

The Temptation to drown is all around.

I already drowned once before – Sometime in the early 90s,
I think I was 5 – When I fell off the Fun Noodle
After crossing the rope in our Apartment Complex pool –
I guess you can say that was the day
I first went off the Deep End –
And though I survived – Only to die
And come back again, time after time,
Like a mask-less Jason Voorhees
On an Amphetamine-fueled rampage –

The Temptation to drown is still around.

When my 2-year coin doesn't double as a life preserver –
I'm sure it would sink as fast as I can –
Trapped inside vicious circles of condensation
Gathered on tables –

The Temptation to drown is all around:

Every street is paved in Black Tar Heroin.
Every corner a sharp edge I must avoid –
The tips of rigs poised to pierce my skin.
Every church is a block from the Knock Spot.
There's Panic! In Needle Park – I Pray for the Wicked –

Lead us not into Temptation – to drown.

But I can't trust a soul –
Every face that I breeze past
Starts to look like a Relapse –
A six pack of Henry's Hard Soda
Sits at the Bus Stop, waiting
To board the next 40 oz. Eastbound –
To Freedom.
Empty bottles with scratched off labels
Shuffle into basement meetings
And call themselves "Anonymous".
While a run-down looking bottle of Rum
Is in the alleyway taking a *leak*.
(I think he may have had a **CRACK** problem)
A fifth of E&J is playing chess
Against a bottle of Smirnoff in the park.
Mini-Bar bottles riding Merry Go Rounds –
All it takes is just one little push...

The Temptation to drown is all around.

Beautiful bikini-clad bottles on Beaches –
Sexy under clear blue summer skies.
Spin the Bottle – Spin the Bottle,
Kiss your life, Goodbye.

The Temptation to drown is all around.

College campuses and classrooms
Crammed with Cognacs and Coors.
Another case of Coronas caught crossing the border –
I hear they all got thrown in the Cooler...
It always seems to happen during ICE raids.
Jaeger Bombs over Baghdad!

Wine bottle skyscrapers
Span the City skylines.
I see Constellations in the stars,
Of the scars along the crooks of my arms,
And every block must have great cell service
Cause it's never too hard to find Bars!

 Temptations
 To Drown
 To take the plunge
Where that little plume of blood
 In the needle becomes
 The Mushroom Cloud
That completely destroys
 Everyone...

DEVASTATION!

My adolescence filled with Butterfly Effect blackouts –
Entire Weekends Lost from Memory to Madness.
From Tequila Sunrise to Blue Moon.
These Days of Wine and Roses last too long –
And are covered with thorns.

DESPERATION!

Destroying the house in search of
That last one you're sure you hid.
Diving into dumpsters.
Tearing through trash bags
For some empties to scrape...
All I need is enough for just one little taste.

DELIRIUM!

 “A Disease of the Night” –
 The sweating. The shaking.
The raving, screaming hallucinations:
Little Animals! Lions and Tigers and Bitter Ends –
Jails, Institutions, and Death
OH MY!

Trapped in the Halfway House Heartbreak Hotel.
Fear and Loathing in Lansingburgh.
So It Ain't So!
My Pink Cloud Bursteth...
A storm of Life on Life's Terms.

So, here I am...

1,000 Days in Sobriety.
Still drunk off my own pretentiousness.
Passed out in puddles of Word Vomit.

The Temptation will never go away,

So I pray: God,
Grant me the Serenity,
To not freak out and murder
Every last one of my enemies!

3 DUIs – But they can never take my Poetic License.

So I'mma ride this bitch till the wheels fall off
As I trudge the Road of Happy Destiny!

May God Bless Me – And Keep Me –
Until Then...

*Schenectady
January 2020*

THE BOY LOST HIS KITE

Grace Flammang

The Boy lost his kite
But not from a breeze
It was taken from him
by candlelit thieves

They crept in the house
In search of keys to a car
Their plan to escape
and go away far

A new scheme arose
when one spotted the toy
So they stole it from him
From the dear little boy

Creaking floorboards
Stirring up dust
They hopped out a window
and caught a strong gust
They flew away to Maine, then Peru
Sleeping in the sewers
Traveling only by canoe

The Boy woke up in a terrible fright
Where could it be?

It was here last night
One floating clue and his eyes did widen
The tail of the kite
lead to the horizon
It hung in the sky
The ribbon of miles
A trail left by the criminals, so vile

The Boy found an umbrella and
turned it upside down
And set out to sea
for his kite to be found

Drifting through the waters on his parasol boat
A storm rolled in
and no longer could it float
Swirling waters pulled him down
This is the End
The Boy has drowned

Although his remains are at the bottom of the sea
His spirit is with his kite
and they will play
for all Eternity

WONDERLAND

Emma Snyder

“Ruthie, I can’t thank you enough,” Wendy said. She was all smiles as she started stabbing at the ramen. A spatula was her weapon of choice. She claimed to have gotten it from the supermarket with her employee discount, but it looked used to me.

I’d only just watched her turn on the stove, and breaking ramen apart before the water started to boil seemed pointless. To be fair, the humidity of the Georgia summer had soaked through every wall in the house—I wouldn’t have been surprised if she told me that the water was already warm.

“The supermarket’s the only place I’ve been in months, but look at me now—making dinner reservations! Mama would be so proud of how you’re coming along.”

Wendy’s cheeks must’ve ached from so much grinning. The longer she talked with those yellowed teeth clacking together, the less I was able to focus. It wasn’t entirely her fault. The voices were especially distracting today. So far, I’d counted three. There was one in my right temple, another near my left ear, and a grumble coming from my shadow.

The ones in my head were quoting Alice in Wonderland. Wendy and I had stayed up late last night so she could finish reading it to me. I especially liked the ending, when we discovered all of it was make-believe.

Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast!

A new voice. I tilted my head as I stood in the bowed kitchen

doorway, listening for the echo. It sounded like the Queen of Hearts had set up her throne inside my right temple. Wendy was trying to teach me how to tell where my voices were coming from, whether they were inside or out. She said she learned it from this book she kept locked up, a book with a bright blue cover that I wasn't allowed to read. I couldn't read it either way, but Wendy didn't seem to care.

"Those headphones helping at all?" Wendy asked, cockling chapped lips. She was referring to the soft pink ones around my neck, a gift she'd given me for getting better. I'd taken them off to try and focus on her when I first came into the kitchen. Now I was itching to put them back on, but my nails were bitten to the beds. They wouldn't be any good at scratching.

I don't want to go among mad people. Inside voice, near my left ear.
Oh, you can't help that; we're all mad here.

Wendy's voice broke through, interrupting my lilted whispers.

"Ruthie, c'mon now. I see your eyes getting all glazed like they do. Mama told me never to leave you when you were going nuts, and I'm not about to let her down—but Ruthie, I'm asking you to do one thing. One thing for me, Ruthie. It's not that much."

I had to make things right for Wendy. Blinking, I turned to her with nausea boiling like stew in my stomach. Wendy was still standing next to the stove, greasy forehead creased with concern. Bubbles rolled in the pot of ramen beside her, but she wasn't taking her eyes off of me. Sweat gathered under my headphones, forging a tickling path down my spine.

"How 'bout you do one of those grounding exercises I taught you—remember those? Five, four, three, two, one. While you're working on it, I'll make you a glass of lemonade," Wendy said, offering me a somber half-smile as she turned to get the pitcher from the far counter.

I knew each step of this exercise like the way I knew how to get down our staircase without the wood creaking under my feet. Both of these things were important to Wendy, and so they were important to me.

First step: five things you see.

Ramen was boiling on the stove as Wendy reached for the spatula. Above her, the boards nailed over the kitchen windows had curtains

drawn over them. I thought it looked homier that way, especially since those curtains were cut from the tablecloth used at our mother's funeral reception. Under the nearby cabinets was a box of rat poison, taunting me from the counter with the lemonade pitcher resting beside it.

Four things you can feel.

My shirt clung to my skin in the humidity, the stench of its unwashed fabric mingling with my own odor. Wendy kept telling me to shower, but I was too scared of getting pulled down the drain. Sweat slithered down my spine like a garter snake. The skin on my hands was starting to prune. As I stepped toward Wendy, something tickled the back of my arm. I turned, but no one was there.

"If you don't say it out loud, I can't tell what step you're on," Wendy teased, grabbing a glass out of the overhead cabinet. From where I stood, I saw a sweat stain in the armpit of her plaid shirt that stretched a mile wide.

Three things you hear.

The hiss of bubbles coming to a rapid boil, knuckles popping in my ear. I winced, pressing my hands against my head. The inside voices were the loudest things of all. Right now, they were whispering the Mock Turtle's song.

Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?

I almost wanted to, but it would worry Wendy. She was pouring me a glass of lemonade now, oblivious to the box of rat poison beside the pitcher. When she crossed the kitchen and passed the drink to me in an agitated fashion, I noticed the powder hadn't dissolved. White lurked along the edges of the glass.

"C'mon, Ruthie; the clock's ticking. I'm gonna get angry with you if I can't get to the restaurant on time, and you know how I get when I'm angry." Wendy's cheeks were already bloated with rage, so pink I'd bet they were hot to the touch.

Two things you smell.

Rat poison, thick and garlicky. The kitchen reeked of it. I couldn't believe I had only just noticed. When I held the glass to my lips, I could've sworn the lemonade smelled like it too.

Did Wendy want to poison me?

That was a silly question. Of course she wanted to. I was ruining her

night. I was the one in the way of the life she wanted. She asked me to do one thing for her, and I couldn't. I couldn't stop the voices, either. I'd never known my world without them.

Last step, Ruthie. One thing you can taste.

I tilted my head back and took a sip of lemonade. The poison tickled at first, hazy and cold as it slipped down the back of my throat. It wasn't long before it started burning in the pit of my stomach.

You're entirely bonkers.

I don't remember falling, but I will never forget how loud Wendy shrieked. The poison weakened my knees, tugging me down through the kitchen tiles like they were made of quicksand. My head hit the floor before the rest of me, and my ears were still ringing from the voices.

But I'll tell you a secret.

I slapped my head over and over and over, the taste of grout bleeding into my mouth. My throat ached from the hums I made to silence them. Wendy cried with me as I tore at my headphones, the cord tangled like a noose around my neck. It kept cutting into my skin until my vision sang to black.

All the best people are.

"You ruined it!"

I'd never seen Wendy scream like this before, even though she got mad at me on the regular. She'd cornered me in my room, pounding the spatula against the wall like she wished it were my body.

"All I asked for was one night, and you've just gone and messed it up again. I can't do this—I can't keep my promise to Mama no more. I'm leaving till you can speak to me like a real person."

Wendy's face always puffed up when she cried like this. Her cheeks swelled like pink balloons and her eyes went bloodshot. She backed all the way out of my room with her spatula held at the ready like I was some kind of monster. Then she took her sweet time with the locks on the outside of my bedroom door. There was an array of chains and deadlocks that she'd installed to keep me safe.

Most people might worry that they would be forgotten, locked inside forever, but not me. Wendy never forgot. She came every morning, right after breakfast was ready, and freed me.

This was the first night that I was scared she might want to forget.

A few hours later, I was lying awake under this comforter that Wendy had picked out for me when I was six. It was speckled with gaudy pink flowers and hadn't seen the inside of a washing machine in years. I could only guess how long it'd been since she locked me in my room.

"Ruthie?"

Above me, the light flickered on. I bolted upright in my bed, hands already trembling as my pillows yawned and begged me to come back to sleep. I didn't see my mother right away. My eyes were still adjusting to the brightness. As she came closer, I noticed that her black hair was as tangled as it'd been during the open casket. She wore the blue-checkered dress that Wendy had picked for her to be buried in. The fabric rustled with every step she took.

My mother sat on the edge of my bed, weight shifting the mattress. Before she started talking, she took a deep breath. I heard the air whistle as it went into her lungs.

"Ruthie, I've got to tell you something. I've been listening to Wendy, and she's right. You're letting her down, honey. You're always going to be sick, and she's always going to have to take care of you. It breaks my heart to see the two of you like this. Really, it does."

It never took long for me to start crying, and this was no exception. For once, this emotion wasn't accompanied by a swirling, sickening panic. Instead, it was joined by dread pressing down where my headphones were resting. The weight made my shoulders slouch.

"And I know, baby—I know it hurts—but you've got to let Wendy go. She needs to be free of you. Of us. You did your best, and it just... it just wasn't good enough. It never will be. The whole thing is absolutely hopeless."

She paused, glancing at me.

"You know what you have to do."

And then she was gone.

I was still crying. The lightbulb flickered again as the locks on the

outside of my bedroom door began to click. I heard the clinking of chains alongside the slow, sultry thud of each deadlock. When the door swung open, I half-expected to see Wendy on the other side.

All that greeted me was an empty hallway.

The speed limit was 45, but the cars passing me had to be going at least 15 over. I was walking on the grassy stretch between asphalt and a line of Georgia sweetgum trees. Wendy's headphones made the world sound like it was underwater, like me and everything else were drowning in unison. The sound of car engines was numbed, and the branches beating against one another in a gust of wind were no louder than blades of grass doing the same.

I pulled the headphones back down to my shoulders, breaking the surface. Everything grew louder, voices included.

Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.

This one was an inside voice. I tilted my head to listen as I walked. It sounded like it was coming from right between my eyes. Wendy would only let me watch the Wizard of Oz when I was having one of my better days. She'd made the mistake once of playing it when my voices were too loud. I thought I was melting alongside the Wicked Witch, and it took her hours to coax me off of the floor.

I walked along the painted white line now, arms stretched out like a scarecrow.

I haven't got a brain, only straw.

What would you do with a brain if you had one?

Up ahead, the bridge became visible in the darkness. I could see the silhouettes of the railings as cars drove over it, how motionless the water of Flint River was beneath. Sticks and leaves bobbed on the surface, formed into masses of debris from the slow current.

Come along Dorothy. You don't want any of those apples.

"I used to hate bridges," my mother said. "I held my breath every time we drove across them. Do you remember that?" She was walking beside me, her footsteps rustling in the grass. I hadn't noticed her there before. Then again, I hadn't looked.

“I suppose you don’t. You and Wendy both jumped off it once, back when you were younger. Nearly gave me a heart attack.”

Of course I remembered. That was the July I turned twelve, back when I was all legs and knobby knees. The voices were with me in those days then, too. For some reason or another, they’d chosen that day to give me a much-needed break.

Whenever we went down to the river, Mama always parked the car right off the bridge so she wouldn’t have to drive across. Even though we lived close enough to walk there, she wanted the car there so she could sit, trunk wide open with her legs dangling out into the grass while we played on the bridge. Wendy liked to leap off of it, arms spread like she was flying. I preferred to watch, holding my breath in the space between when her body hit the water and came back up to break the surface.

We could never agree on which part was more fun.

“Alright, Ruthie—it’s time to jump,” Wendy called from up ahead, swinging one leg over the railing. I watched as her foot reached the other side, bare toes curled around the bars.

“N-no,” I said, making it to her just as she settled herself neatly on the other side of the railing. I could tell she didn’t like what I was saying; her cheeks were already turning pink. “I c-can’t.”

“You always promise me stuff like this and then quit, and I’m done tired of it. I want you to jump. That’ll make me proud of you.” Wendy grabbed my shoulders, her own balance wavering. Her fingers pressed so deep into my skin, it felt like she was touching bone. “Don’t you want me to be proud?”

I nodded hesitantly.

“Alright then; on the count of three.”

I glanced over at my mother to save me, but she wasn’t paying attention. She’d just lit a cigarette, the smoke curling out of the trunk of the car and into the summer air.

“One,” Wendy said, letting go of me. I swung one leg over, my whole body shaking. The river loomed below, much further down than it had looked from the other side of the rail.

“Two.”

I joined Wendy on the other side, back pressed against the railing

as she turned around to face the water with me. She held out one hand, and I watched it waver for a moment before I took it.

“Three!”

Wendy yanked me down with her, sending the two of us flying. My screams didn’t stop until I lost my voice halfway down, and my mouth didn’t slam shut until I’d already gulped a mouthful of river. I only broke the surface because Wendy came back to get me.

By the time we reached shore, Mama was waiting for us. I remember how flushed her face was, how curdled and black the blood looked as it boiled beneath her skin. She scolded Wendy, whacked her backside, and made her teach me how to swim the rest of the afternoon.

Mama said it was because she didn’t want me to drown next time.

Wendy said it was because Mama didn’t want to save me.

Either way, we never went back to the river. After Mama died later that summer, neither of us were much in the mood to go swimming.

It was Mama’s voice that brought me back to reality. I hadn’t noticed how tightly I’d been clenching my teeth together, but her words didn’t bring me any reason to relax.

“It’s okay to be nervous, Ruthie. You won’t get hurt when you hit the water, if that’s what you’re concerned about. It’s staying under that’s the issue. Don’t worry, though. If you float up, I’ll hold you down.”

A place where there isn’t any trouble. Do you suppose there is such a place, Toto?

We continued in silence. With every crunching footstep my mother made beside me, my heart did a somersault in my chest.

If I run, I may fall down and break myself.

This voice was inside my head too, echoing from my left temple.

But could you not be mended?

Oh yes; but one is never so pretty after being mended, you know.

I faltered, arms coming down to my sides from where they had been suspended. Pins and needles prickled at my elbows.

“Don’t get distracted,” my mother snapped from beside me. She snatched my arm, grinding her nails into my skin. My heart did another one of those somersaults. “You can’t go back now. Wendy knows you’re gone, and she doesn’t care. If she did, she would’ve found you

by now.”

Fear kept my mouth sealed shut until we reached the bridge.

The only thing that separated the road from the Flint River was a barrier that measured just over my knees. A line of raised cement alongside the fence was the only place we could walk. It measured no wider than a balance beam. My mother let me take the high ground so we didn't have to walk single file as she clung to my arm.

The King of Beasts shouldn't be a coward.

“You've got to do this, Ruthie,” my mother said. She let go of me once we'd reached the middle of the bridge, her nails leaving red marks on my skin. “Think of how many times you've disappointed Wendy, how many times you've failed her. I couldn't live with myself if I were you. Knowing how good you had it growing up, how ungrateful you are for all of it.”

She was getting angry now, veins popping beneath her pale skin.

“Wendy did everything for you after I died. She's tucked you in and kissed your forehead more times than I can count. And what have you done for her? Pushed her away when she tried to be there for you? Made her cancel dinner plans because you had an episode? You're exhausting, Ruthie. She's tired of you. I was, too. Why else would I have killed myself?”

I froze, tears smarting in my eyes.

“You didn't know? Oh, Ruthie. It's a pity Wendy never told you the truth. She's only ever helped you because she doesn't want your blood on her hands. She thinks my death is her fault, because she wasn't a good enough daughter—but we both know it wasn't her who was the problem.”

Now I was crying so hard, I couldn't keep it quiet.

“You're a burden, Ruthie. Always have been, always will be. When was the last time Wendy even told you that she loved you?”

My sobs were starting to sound more like screams.

“That's enough!” My mother was growing short-tempered, expectant. She grabbed at my arm again, forcing me back against the metal rail. “Jump off the damn bridge already!”

“No!” I cried, pushing her away as I sank to the ground. I felt her hands grab at my shoulders, fingers cold where they should've been

warm. “I w-want home. I need Wendy. I n-need—”

And that’s when she pushed me over the edge.

It was cold for once. I didn’t register it until the current started tickling at my calves, minnows darting around the swollen skin. My upper body was tangled in a mass of soaked debris, my brittle arms caught between the branches. Liberating myself from the mess of sticks and leaves wasn’t nearly as hard as pulling myself onto the riverbank. That took every bit of my remaining strength. A while later, I managed to sit up in the sand. By then, the skin on my hands was pruned and my wet clothes clung to me, cleaner than they’d been in a long time.

Some of it came back to me in flashes as I started to wring out the edge of my shirt. I knew I’d fallen a great distance, that I’d landed in the river and must’ve bobbed back to the surface. The current was evidently strong enough to carry the debris, which must’ve held me in its clutches until it came to rest on the shore. No one else was there to help me, besides the water and branches. No Wendy, no Mama.

Just me.

Sitting on the bank of Flint River, I rubbed my hands against my arm as if the friction might lift the morning cold. My knees were trembling. To steady them, I tried stretching them out. My heels dug deep into the sand with every stretch, grinding itchy grains into my socks. A few attempts at standing were in vain, but there wasn’t any hurry to leave. I was waiting for the voices to come back. They’d tell me what to do. Even if it was nonsense, I’d listen.

At the very least, I hoped they would know the way back home.

As I was waiting, the sun peering out from behind the morning haze, I noticed my pink headphones on the sand nearby. They were mangled from last night, cord knotted beyond repair. I crawled toward them and dusted off some of the sand before putting them back on. Then I waited, half-expecting for the Queen of Hearts to start singing.

When she didn’t, I got up and started walking toward the road.

THE BALLED OF BURKE AND HARE

Anna McIntyre

There is a town on Scottish soil
Where purple thistle grows
Where families watch throughout
the night
As loved ones decompose.

But in the midnight hours when
The sky is thick with storm
A group of men creep forth and seek
To steal a buried form.

They bring their shovels and their
gloves
A burlap bag as well
They're clad in black, their sack is
lined
With myrrh for masking smell.

When Edinburgh is drenched in dark
And into sleep it delves,
The thieves maraud their target
graves.
They've proudly deemed
themselves:

“The Resurrectionists”

They dredge up coffins newly laid
They kidnap corpses fresh
These Resurrectionists are paid
To haul the bones and flesh

To doctors craving carcasses,
Dissections, and to find
The anatomical array
That's common to mankind.
For under reign of George IV
The law was thus applied:
Cadavers only could become
Through crime or suicide.

With convicts and the dead-by-
choice
The only bodies free,
The scientists and surgeons yearn
For opportunity

To see the inner workings of
A lifeless human being,
To gain a mastery of their craft
With hopes of guaranteeing
That future operations done
On living lads and lasses

Could be performed with greater apt
Due to their self-taught classes.

One such physician who is known
As Dr. Robert Knox,
Professor of anatomy,
Is wily as a fox.

He knows a pair of Irishmen
Who own a boarding house;
Each William's galvanized by wealth
And has a docile spouse.

The very first occurrence was
Fortuitous enough.
A resident of Tanner's Close
Collapses snorting snuff.

He's dead before he hits the
ground—
A heart attack, no doubt;
But he had yet to pay his bill,
The men are left without

The eighty shillings they are owed.
They're livid at the thought,
But William Burke and William Hare
Know corpses are so sought

That some men even pillage graves
And sell their stolen dead.
They also know a rumor of
A man that some have said
Will pay a pretty price for stiff
And won't inquire ahead,

Won't ask about the cause of death
Or where the corpse was found.
So Robert Knox procures their guest
At price of seven pound.

Well Burke and Hare are overjoyed
And thrilled by extra cash,
But this time they concoct a scheme
That's wicked, foul, and brash.
They have another tenant, only
This one's mildly ill.
"Let's count 'em dead" says Hare to
Burke,
Who moves in for the kill.

And so begins the treachery
Of William Burke and Hare,
Who sell the bodies of the prey
Who trust their pied-à-terre.

Their wives assist them in their
crimes
And cover up their tracks.
In 1828 alone,
Come sixteen more attacks.

The homeless and the urchins
Are the victims at the start,
'Till both the Williams, blind with
greed,
Begin to be less smart.

One Mary Halden, ripe and fair,
A prostitute well-liked,
Is never seen again alive
Because her drink is spiked.

When Mary's daughter Peggy
calls
Inquiring 'bout her mum,
Burke tells her she should stop
on by;
Poor Peggy did succumb.

Now both these ladies (ten pound
each)
Are sold as fine cadavers,
But Mary's services are missed
By men who ache to have her.

"Where's Mary?" they begin to
ask.
"I saw her 'ere last week,
This cerner's where she always
stands!"
So they begin to seek.

But rather than lay low and rest,
The hungry killers claim
The life of a celebrity,
James Wilson is his name.
"Daft Jamie" children used to
cheer
Because his foot was lame.

Now this is what arose suspicion
In the doctor's hall.
"Isn't that Daft Jamie's foot?"
The anxious students squall.

But Dr. Knox of course denies
The name of this week's corpse,
Yet instantly his scalpel "slips"—
The body's face he warps.

But Knox and Burke and Hare
cannot
Go on like this forever.
The policemen get a lead and then
Expose the men's endeavor.
In prison they are thrown at once
As they await their trial.
Both Hare and Burke betray the
other,
Cursing all the while.

The end result, you might expect
Would be the three are hanged,
But only Burke receives this
death—
The others are harangued

And flee the country fast pursued
By mobs of angry men
While thousands gnash and jeer
As they await the moment when
The platform drops, the rope pulls
taught,
Burke never breathes again.

The irony of this true tale
Is to this very day
The body of one murderer
Is still hung on display.

For Burke's own corpse was
donated
To honest surgeons who
Could use his organs—draped his
skin
In town for all to view:
A fitting end for heinous sin,
The Public's rage abated.

And even so, for years to come
The local children sing and hum:

“Up the close and down the stair,
In the house with Burke and Hare.
Burke's the butcher, Hare's the thief
Knox, the man who buys the beef.”

ART

Periphery Art and Literary Journal
58th Edition





UNTITLED

Zaam Arif



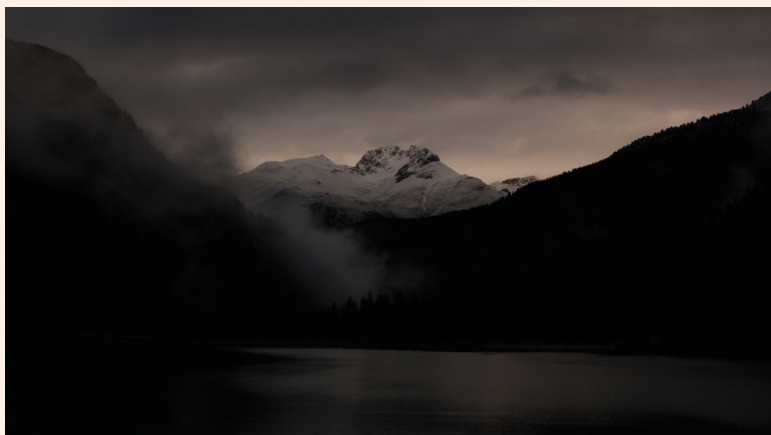
WE MUST DO BETTER

Brittany Freeman



WOMAN IN A FEATHER COAT

Emma Stockman

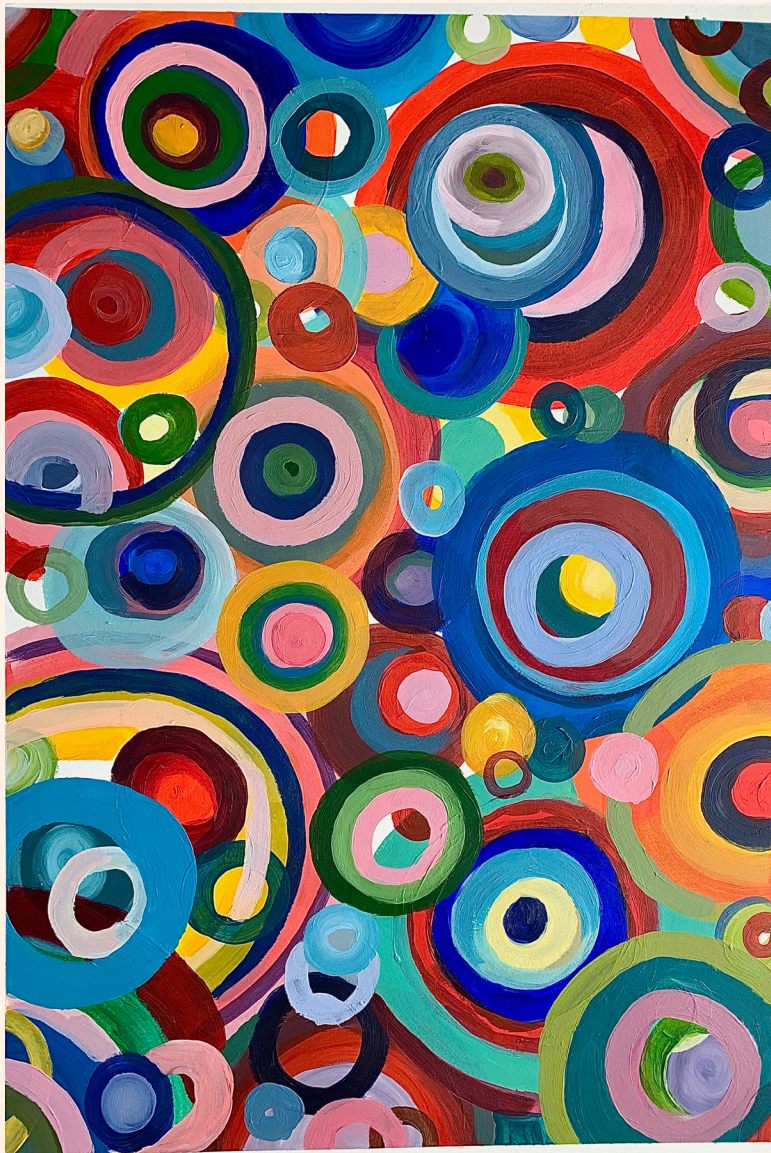


JAYWALKING

Emily Smith

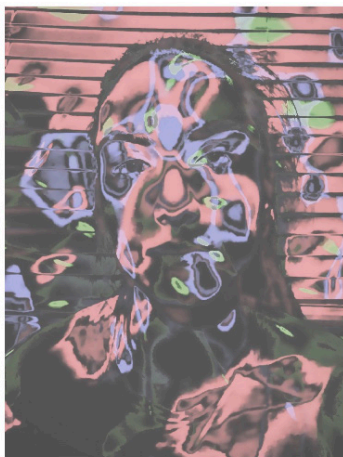
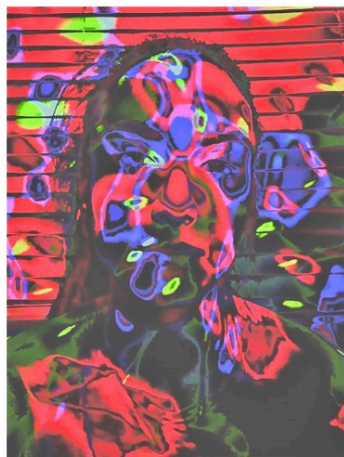
A LAKE IN THE ALPS

Ira Garrison



NEVER ENDING

Emily Smith



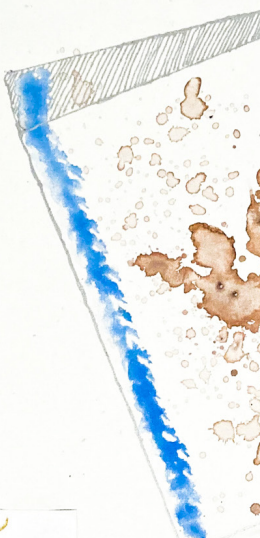
PO RTRAIT OF ARIANA

Bjorn Bengtsson



PICKING SEASON ENDS,
'OREGON COAST

Anji Marth



Sunday Morning

Sweatpants and clear-framed glasses
slide into place.
Ruffled comforter,
hispid still dozing face.

Saxophone still lingers in my mind,
playing ever so softly, with soul,
by The Man in the Yellow Hat.

I stumble into the kitchen.
Half-open, eyes glazed,
I search for my first sip.

Ahhhhh.

This is the Sunday morning
I beg to one day see
for longer than a glimpse.



A' CUP OF 'JOE

Lane Mochow



DEVIL IN ME

Katie Rosasco

PERIPHERY 58 SUBMISSION CONTEST WINNER

Prompt: Contrasts in Identity

PERIPHERY

Art and Literary Journal
58th Edition



