

The Works

fall 2019 and spring 2020

The official arts publication of
Sauk Valley Community College



The Works

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2019-2020 Student Art Contest Winner, Poetry

Ghost

I don't even know what
I am anymore.
I don't know where
I am. I don't know
When I am. Am
I a spectral point
Of tangency waiting?

How long ago you
Last called to me
From the bedroom
To the kitchen. In
A sort of stasis I
Stand stuck.
And I've lost my keys.

I think I've seen this before
In a dream; You can't leave,
You've lost your pants
And you no longer say, "please."
I'm a "mean drunk". Laughing,
Listening to mean music.
You're a mean sober.

Sometimes I mourn some dead love.
A jealous captor who demanded answers
But I kept it inside and would step aside
From myself, making way for endless answers
Interrogations
Auditors of time, accountants of actions.
That's what you get when you keep secrets for fun.

We're all visionaries these days,
With creeds and kudos
And philosophies. And because
I've thought of that, what about
The other after that?
Between the open doors.
Ignore him like the wind

Somewhat like the space
Between rooms.
I hide your sweatpants in my drawer.
But you always wear my shoes and
My words are soundless gusts.
And since no one is listening
I can speak madness to myself.

-Nic Bullock

2019-2020 Student Art Contest Honorable Mention, Poetry

To Those Who Look To The Stars

Do you look up to her and see salvation?
Those unveiled nights of clear black splendor,
rays a soft hand
each cradling your cheeks so gently,
the darkness not a thing to fear but to hide in.
Does she block out the deafening world for you?
Nothing to hear but blessed silence
or perhaps a low humming
or perhaps a cat purring
or maybe it's just her singing softly to you.
Does the clear night breeze bring favors to you?
Bring scents of vanilla
of flowers
of everywhere
and anywhere but here.
Does she fill the void in your being?
The one that cries out for anyone to answer
for one to wipe away the tears

for one to hold your heart in their hands
and make it whole again.
Does she return the breath to your lungs?
Spirit you far away from here
and call the stars back.
Back to your soul?

-Carolyn Graham

2019-2020 Student Art Contest Winner, Prose

Death

by Naomi Meeks

The horse galloped through the midnight sky and threw back his head into the moonlight. It dashed and galloped and flew through the silent night waiting for his master to return. His master was death. Where was this violent steed's master? He was only searching for someone in particular. Someone he must meet alone. Death slowly wobbled through the night. His jet black hood hiding his face and his intentions. He walked into a silent village, and slowly dragged his arms across the brick walls, and smiled to himself. A cat hissed, birds flew out of sight, but death still trudged forward. As he walked the cold and darkness grew through the village. A shudder in every home, in every brick, in every heart. Death roamed the streets of that village until he turned and saw a small girl. The girl's cheeks were rosy from the cold. Her hair was fastened into two messy pigtails, and her eyes were a defiant grey. Her legs sturdy as mountains, her heart fearless. The girl approached death with a fiery indignation.

"I'm not afraid of you."

Silence.

The girl once again repeated the phrase. "I am not afraid of you."

"I am not meant to be feared." Death answered his voice softer than the girl expected.

"Why do you take what is not truly yours?"

"I am merely a messenger."

"A messenger for who? For God or for the devil?"

"Do I serve God who controls the essence of life itself? Do I serve Satan who waits for new victims to drag into their fiery torment? Or do I just bring people to what they want? What do you believe about me?"

"It's hard to say."

"Even for me, I cannot comprehend the whole. I bring rest yet I bring grief. I bring peace yet I bring fear. What do you believe about me?"

"Lower your hood."

"You will regret that request."

"Lower your hood."

Death in the dark of the night lowered his hood exposing a ghastly sight burned in the young girl's vision. The white bone shone like ivory. Death's deep empty eye sockets searched the girl's soul. In return the girl froze in terror, her lip trembled. Death quickly threw his hood up covering his face.

"I'm sorry. Everyone regrets the request to look at my face."

"Have you come to get me?"

"No it is not your time."

"When will it be my time?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Do you even know?"

Silence.

"Death why have you come here tonight?"

Silence.

Death without an answer disappeared from the girl's sight. Years passed the girl grew and so did her grip on reality. Loneliness overtook her. The bleakness of life, the hate of others, it was more than the young woman could bear. It was then she met death for the second time. Death once again moved through the silent village. Once again he made the birds fly, the cats hiss, and the villagers fear. Once again he turned the same street corner. There he met the girl now a young woman. Her grey eyes were jaded. She hugged her body to shield her from the coldness of the wind and the world.

"I'm not afraid of you." She said her voice quiet, her breath ragged.

Silence.

"I'm not afraid of you."

"I'm not meant to be feared."

"I know that now. Come sit with me."

Death gently sat beside her.

"May I rest my head on your shoulder?"

Death nodded. She leaned on his shoulder which was softer than she expected.

"Do I come from God or Satan?" death asked. The woman sat up and looked into death's jet black hood.

"Lower your hood."

"You will regret that request."

"Lower your hood."

Death lowered his hood. The woman's eyes smiled. She quickly raised her hand up to death's face.

"You come from God."

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Death's ivory white bones shone, his empty eye sockets still looked into the woman's soul. But the woman saw the kindness in it. She laid her head back on his shoulder. Death left his hood off.

"Have you come to take me away?"

"It is not your time yet. I must go." Death bolted up.

"Please stay."

"I must depart."

"Please take me with you." The woman clung to the edge of his cloak tears filling her eyes.

Silence.

"Don't leave me."

Death met the woman's eyes, and for a minute he stayed that way gazing into a human's complex gray eyes. He slowly reached out his hand towards her but stopped himself.

Silence.

In a blink of an eye his night black horse appeared, and he was gone. The girl now was alone.

The final time death came was different. Years upon years had passed. The young woman now was an old lady. Her face was etched in wrinkles. Her mind etched with knowledge. And her heart etched with memories. She had lived a full-filled life. She had seen the darkness and had fought through it. Because of this she was fully able to see the beauty. She was tired and ready to move on. Her family surrounded her on her death bed. It was a scene so full of love. It's hard to imagine years earlier the loneliness that enveloped the woman. Death was shocked to see such a scene. The woman's gray eyes were soft and crinkled up in a smile.

"You know I'm not afraid of you."

Silence

This time the woman gave out a hearty laugh.

"You know I'm not afraid of you."

"I'm not meant to be feared."

The woman nodded. Death kneeled by the woman's side.

"Have you decided yet?"

"Hmm?"

"Am I from God or Satan?"

"Well I guess I'll find out soon enough." Her eyes met Death's jet-black hood.

"Lower your hood"

"Most regret that request"

"Lower your hood"

Death lowered his hood. Spring erupted from the depths of darkness. The ivory bone was now soft skin. The bottomless eye sockets now were two gentle hazel orbs. Death was tall and lanky. His hair was wild, curly, and adorned with a flower crown. His cloak was now a bright green, pink flowers were braided through out it. His scythe was now a beautifully engraved walking stick.

“You’ve come to get me haven’t you?”

Death nodded and grabbed the old woman by her hand. Everything felt right. He smiled as he pulled her out of her death bed into a spinning world of green. She was a child again. Death held her hand tightly. This was always the hardest part for him. He led her up a tall green hill. At the top was two paths. His hand shook as he let go of the girls.

“This is where we part ways” he mumbled.

The girl nodded.

He met the girl’s gray eyes, tears filled his hazel ones. Death never understood how human’s made him feel the way he did. Their recklessness, their imperfections, but most importantly their ability to love moved him in ways he couldn’t comprehend. He didn’t know his purpose. All he knew was he was a messenger leading people where they must go. The question he always asked, he always wanted to know never was answered. Was he from God or Satan.

The girl ran and embraced death. Death’s tears ran freely now.

“Please stay with me. No one ever stays with me.” Death pleaded.

“You know as well as I do that I can’t”

“Please there must be some way.”

Silence

“Please!”

Silence

The girl was forever gone, and Death’s question never answered. Everyone meets Death, but no one stays with him. Death continues, leading humans to where they must go. He hopes one day he’ll finally find the human who will stay.

2019-2020 Student Art Contest Honorable Mention, Prose

The Gene

by Kali Nave

After 27 excruciating hours and 9 miserable months, on September 12, 2013, I finally got to hold my precious baby girl. In all the excitement, combing my fingers through her soft auburn hair and counting all ten fingers and toes, I couldn't help but wonder if she too had the gene; the gene that was passed down by women from generations before me. I had it, my mother and grandmother had it. I didn't really know how far back the gene went, but it was something no woman ever wanted to pass down to their daughter.

As I looked around for my daughter's father, he was nowhere to be found. He had stepped out to make a phone call I was told – to his other girlfriend I assumed. To tell her that this miracle child I was holding was no doubt in fact his; those ears were a dead giveaway if my faithfulness was not good enough for him.

As I looked around the room, my grandmother stood talking with my mother, both in awe that they were blessed with a new addition. I wondered if they wondered about the gene as much as I did.

The gene started with my grandmother, as far as I knew. Maybe it went back to grandmothers before her, but I never met them. My grandmother got the gene in the late 1960s. She was in high school then, going to a dance when she caught the eye of a slick-haired, leather jacket wearing, smooth-talking, drop out that just so happened to be the brother of her best friend. They had never met before that night, but when they shared a dance to "Blueberry Hill" under the dim lighting at the Masonic Temple, it was then that she caught the gene.

The Bad Boy Gene.

The gene that for generations kept mothers up at night and daddies loading their shotguns.

Despite being the daughter of the town constable, my grandmother ran away to be married to the man that later became my grandfather. They enjoyed dinner at a diner outside of town while an APB broadcast over the radio. Nobody in the diner

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would bat an eye that night and nearly 50 years later, here we are.

About 25 years later, my mother would become infected with the gene. While young and in high school, she too fell for an older dropout, with long dark hair, and a fast car; a red 70's Nova with orange and yellow racing stripes. My mother could smell the trouble in him from a mile away, which led to her finding out she was pregnant the day before she graduated high school.

That leads to me. I should have by now been prepared to take on the gene and protect myself from any bad boys in my path. But then it happened. I met him when I least expected it. He seemed nice, charming almost. Blue-grey eyes like the color of the smoke he exhaled from the Newport he smoked. He had a killer pitch on the softball field and a criminal record I failed to acknowledge. He fit the profile, and I was infected. In the end, he broke my heart, as most Bad Boys do. But out of the heart break, and coming down with the gene, I got my baby girl. And I hoped she would never go through what I had, or the generations of women before her.

But boy was I wrong.

At the age of 5 years old, sitting in the front seat of bus 1943, my daughter developed the gene. She sat next to a "nothing but trouble," sonic blue eyed, ADHD but downing a soda for breakfast 5 th grader who was only sitting in the front seat only because he caused trouble in the back. He had received handfuls of school and bus suspensions, but it was as if the spirits of our ancestors told my daughter at the ripe young age of 5 that this was the boy to oodle over.

Every morning as I made my way through my route, collecting children on the West End of town to deliver to the middle school for 6 ½ hours of proper education, my daughter sat wide eyed and smiling, sharing her breakfast with the boy who was "her love."

As they departed from the bus, the boy took her hand and walked her to her other bus, the one that would take her to the elementary school and her kindergarten class. The boy saw her as no more than a little sister, helping her to her bus before following his friends inside, blaring rap music over a Bluetooth speaker.

But for my daughter, she got the gene. The gene that would know grow with her. The boy on the bus may be her first bad boy, but he certainly would not be her last.

To this day, there is no cure, or vaccine to prevent the gene.

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**2019-2020 Student
Art Contest
Winner, Photography**



Untitled

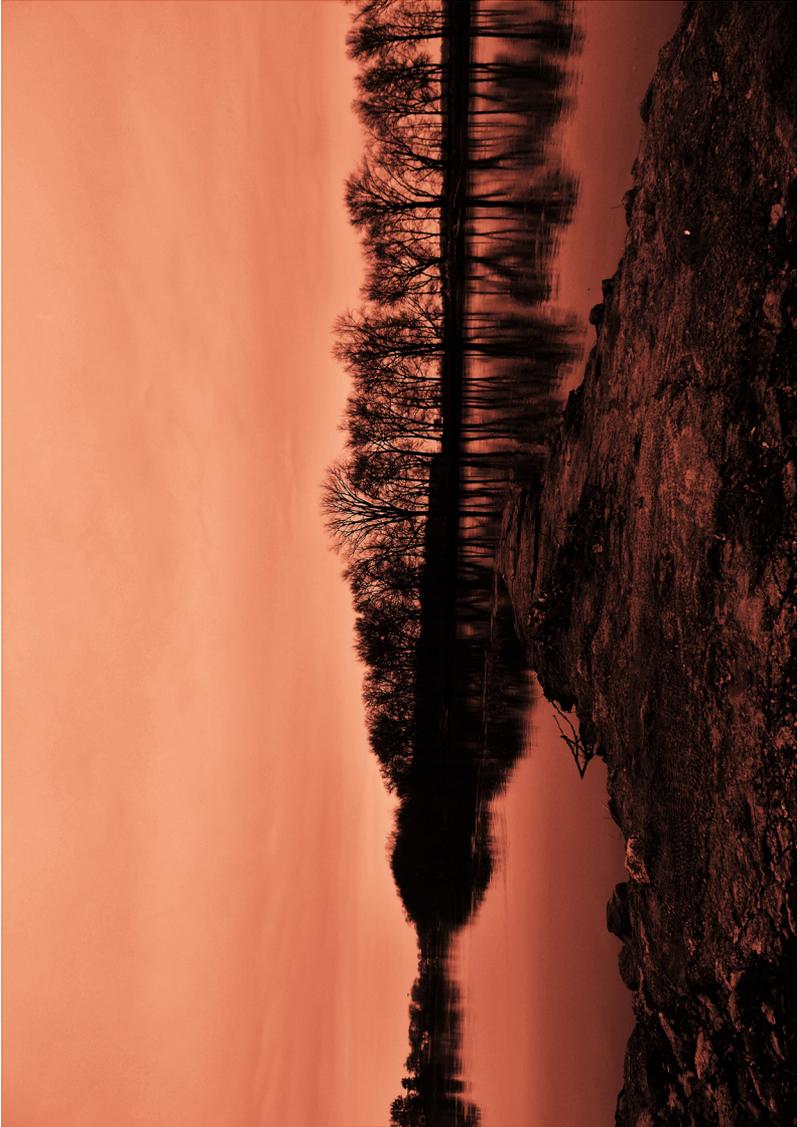
by Elmma Torres

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Art Contest

Honorable Mention, Photography



River

by Eliot Casson

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**2019-2020 Student
Art Contest
Winner, Visual Art**



Rotting Stomach

by Keanna Alba

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**2019-2020 Student
Art Contest**
Honorable Mention, Visual Art



Puppeteer

by Eden Spring Buyno

[Those who follow the scorched bodies]

Those who follow the scorched bodies
will ignite themselves with the flames
that rain from their captive touch.

Like sunny skies before the storm,
its all a disguise for what awaits.
The biting clouds whip through the air
and swallow the screams of the blue.

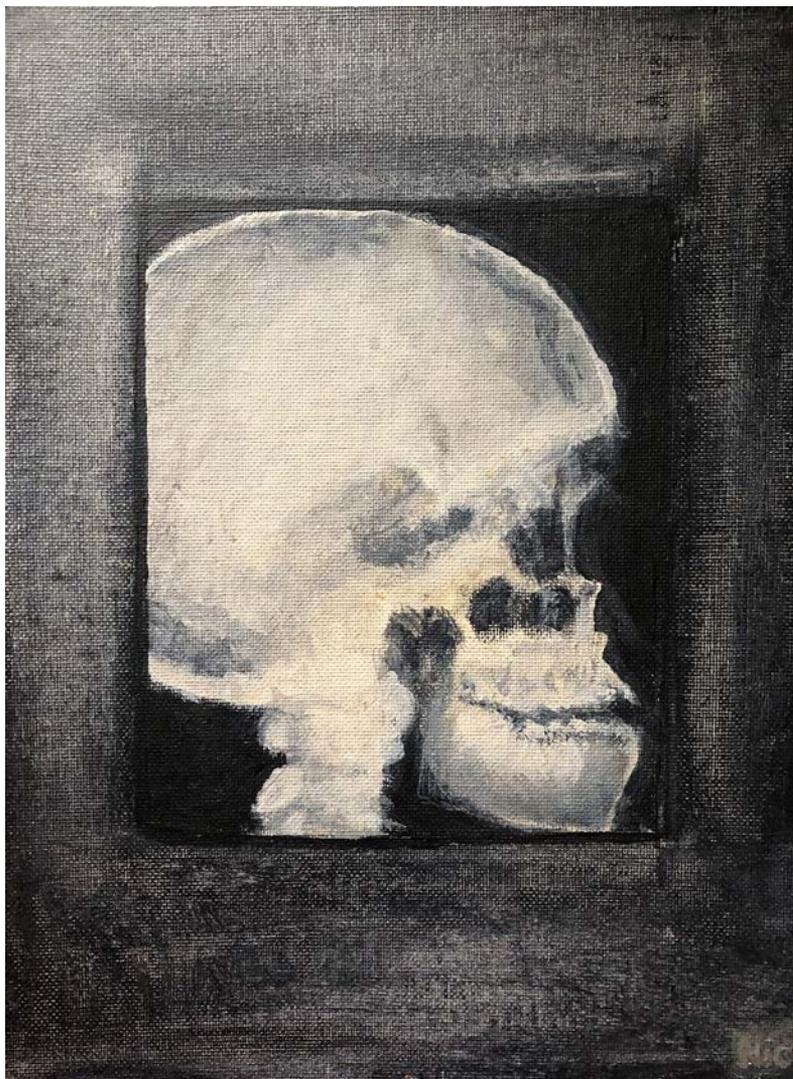
Darkened souls cower behind
the faces of the beautiful-
the faces of the bright.
The sun reins power
over the weak.

They mark their path with
hands that burn.
Ashes trail in the footprints of
our sorry states of mind.

Angry laughter booms in the night,
masked in joyous smiles
and pretty faces.
Our ears ring with the sound
as they dance in the hooded moonlight.

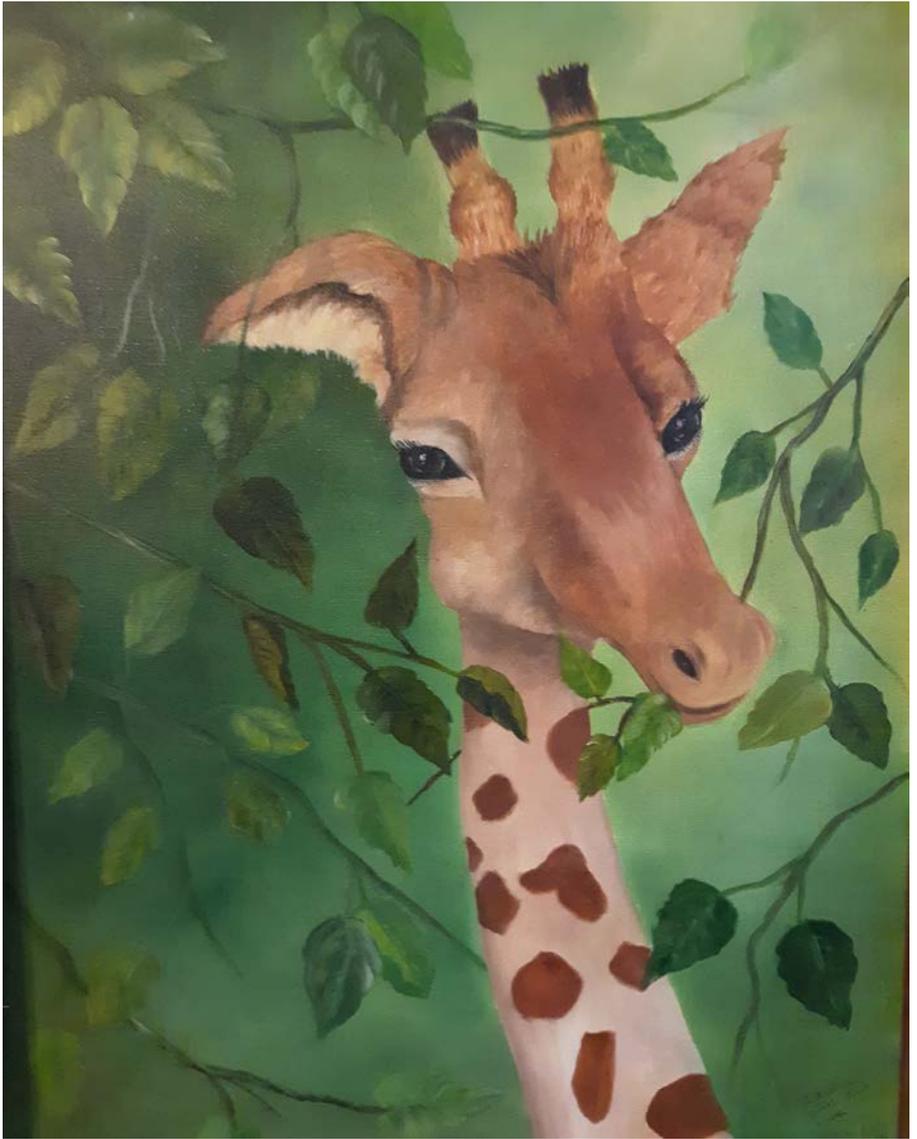
No one to blame but oneself,
prisoners in our own game.

-Madelyn Tennyson



Untitled

by Nic Bullock



Andrew's Giraffe

by Connie Blackburn

Stay

Why can't we dance the night away?
As light reflects upon the snow
Relax and let the music play

If barren trees still move and sway
No broken hearts am I to know
Why can't we dance the night away?

You hesitate when asked to stay
Your heavy limbs you try to tow
Relax and let the music play

Words in the air hard to convey
Take your time, I'll say it slow
Why can't we dance the night away?

Uncertain of what your heart will say
This fear will fill you up with woe
Relax and let the music play

To you, my love, I won't betray
Emotions still left to unstow
Relax and let the music play
Why can't we dance the night away?

-Ashley Neiman

Notre Dame

The tragic day we saw it burn,
ash filling the air with embers of red.
We watched the spire fall,
Stone gargoyles the fire tried to engulf.
No one saw the spark,
there was no stopping the flame.

Was this a godsent flame?
Our desire to save it that day would burn,
a movement of repair was sparked.
The tears the French shed, made their eyes red.
Within minutes the fire began to engulf,
in hues like the leaves of fall.

In horror, people began to fall.
As the fire went up, hope was a diminished flame.
Feelings of sadness I could not engulf.
Yearning to see it whole again, my heart will forever burn.
The fire not caused by red,
but began from an accidental spark.

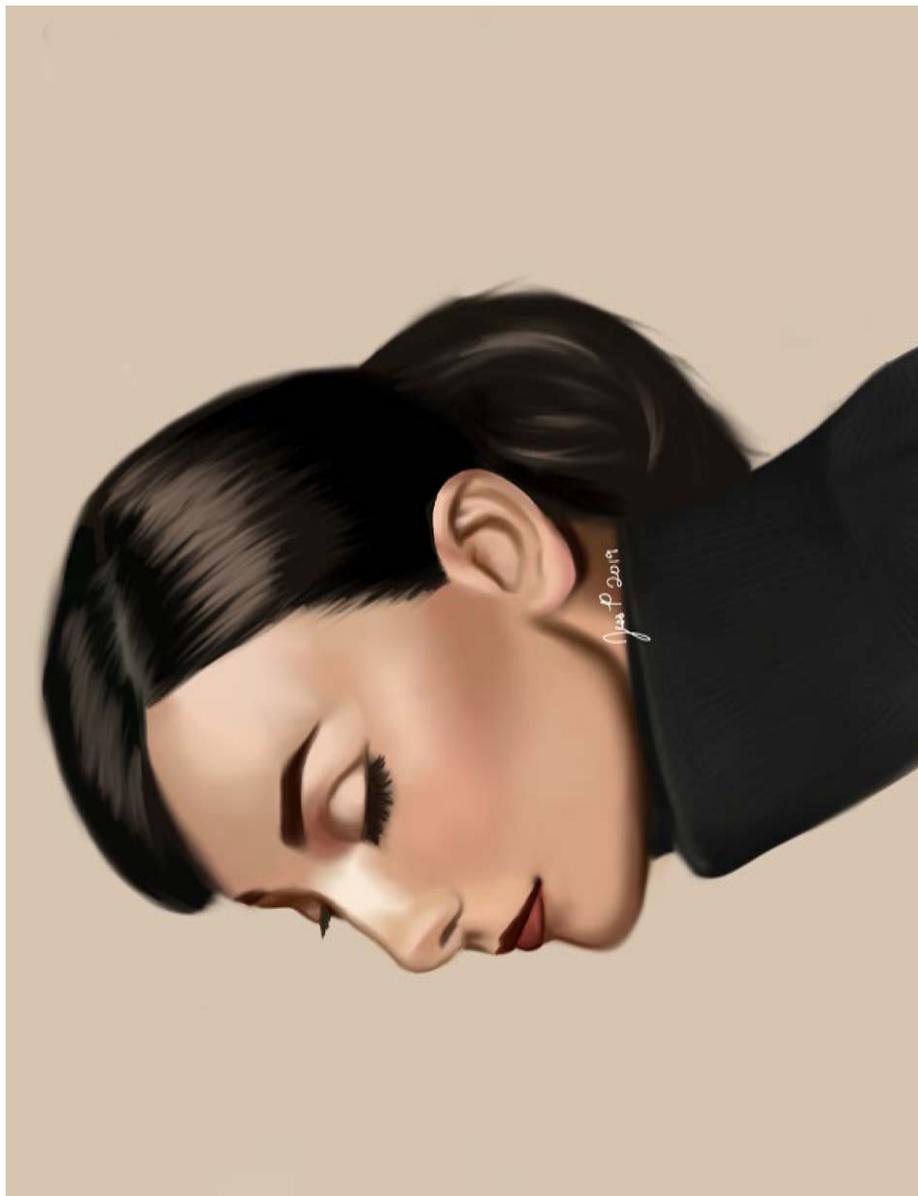
When seen uncharred, wonder it would spark.
That day in Paris, you could sense tears fall,
some with sorrow, some with vision filled with red.
The fire becoming a famous flame,
famous for what it had to burn.
No other piece of history do I wish God's fire to engulf.

News of another tragedy I couldn't engulf.
After the fire diminished, donations sparked,
holes in the pockets of donors began to burn.
Money fell from trees like leaves in the fall.
Passion for rebuilding burned like a newborn flame.
The face of the church accused and turned red.

Guarantee came from the church clad in red.
Donations towards repair they promised not to engulf.
An equal passion for repair from the pope fed the flame.
No fire brought by an electrical spark,
will make the people completely fall.
Love for the damaged church will forever burn.

United one day because of a small red spark,
No longer allowing emotion to engulf. Letting new passion come forth like the aftermath of fall.
A somber flame for Notre Dame, Paris' heart will always burn.

-Linzie Severson



Audrey

by Jessica Payne



Grape Soda

by Rebecca Cutsinger-Cox

The Second Bang

by Michael A. Jenkins

“Hello, my name is Ella Albright with Channel 6 news. I’m currently aboard news shuttle 2 in orbit of the Atlas and Eden on what scientists purport to be the last day of the universe. Or rather I should say it’s the first day we will be able to see the light from the predicted Second Bang. We’ve invited our cosmology correspondent Marie Sanford to join our coverage of the event, Marie if you would, please tell us about what we’re hoping to see tonight.”

“Thank you for having me Ella. As we all know, the Eden, and its partner ship the Atlas, were constructed to allow us the opportunity to observe the Second Bang by surviving the Big Crunch. The Big Crunch is gravity reasserting control over the expansion of the universe, eventually drawing all matter back to the center. The prediction is that this has initiated the Second Bang we hope to observe tonight. For eons, mankind has survived aboard the Eden, held aloft by the mighty thrusters of the Atlas. Not since the maiden voyage of these mega-structures have we even seen a star out in the void. This is exactly what we are hoping to see tonight through the Oracle, a telescope that cuts through the breadth of the Eden, we will be looking for the first stars of the new universe.”

“That was Marie Sanford our Channel 6 cosmology correspondent, thank you for informing us. I have just received word that the Atlas will soon be cutting its thrusters to reduce light pollution so we can get a better view. Let’s quickly switch to the surface of the Eden and hear a word or two from celebrators on the ground.”

“Hey Dean, would you switch that thing off already? We’ve got a job to do.”

“No way Joe, this report is the entire reason we’ve been working our butts off. I want to hear it.”

“You can always catch the rebroadcast later.”

“It’s not the same! Aren’t you even a little interested in what we’re gonna find?”

“We aren’t going to find anything, it’s the brainiacs on the Eden that are looking for it.”

"They can't do it alone and you know it. If the Atlas wasn't here to prop up that big metal ball they'd all be toast."

"I guess I can't argue that. Still, if you actually want to know what they find you've gotta do your job and get ready to cut those engines."

"I know. I know. Already prepared, just give me the signal."

"Alright, cut it."

"Cutting. Thrusters winding down, maintenance teams en route preparing for emergency reignition. Now can we watch the broadcast?"

"Fine. . ."

"Hey, where'd the feed go? It's blank. Is the screen even working?"

"No, it's working. It was just chattering a moment ago and the light is still on, just wait a moment. The Oracle must not be seeing anything yet."

"Okay, fine. I'll wait. I'm just nervous okay? I don't know if we're actually gonna see it."

"I don't think anyone really knows for sure."

"I really hope we do see it. If we don't then that just means I got covered in sweat for nothing."

"That's not the problem Dean, if we don't see any stars that means we're done for. No Second Bang, no new universe, just us and entropy."

"W-what does a star even look like? How do we know we've even found what we're looking for!?"

"You heard the lady earlier, the only thing glowing nowadays is the thrusters on the Atlas. It'll probably be some kinda light."

"Well. . . I guess you're right. Gah. We'll be finding out soon enough anyway so I guess no use getting to riled up just yet. . ."

"Ladies and Gentlemen, if you're just tuning in, this is Ella Albright with Channel 6 reporting on the Second Bang. It appears the Oracle is starting to pick something up! As you can see on your screens, right in the center that small light is in fact not being generated from either the Atlas or the Eden. Marie, your take on this?"

"Y-yes Ella you're right! This is a completely foreign source of light. So this is a star? I never thought I'd live to see the day. This is astonishing, we're currently picking up light from the Second Bang. We were right. We've done it. We survived it. That right there, that light right there is our new beginning. Our new universe!"

"Ha! We did it Joe! That's a star! So that lil' light is our new home? Get over here and let me hug you!"

"N-no let go of me! Dean, this means we've got more work to do!"

"C-mon, just a little?"

"Attention Atlas crew, this is your captain speaking, I suggest you belay your celebrations and instead get to work reorienting the thrusters. We're going home!"

My Red Balloon

I had a red balloon
I tied it to my wrist
Took it everywhere I went
And every day I was blisssed

Whether you are far away
Or if you are here to stay
You will always be my red balloon

Balloons are free spirits
But I am anchored by life, without any flight
I have always been your rock
But rocks can't leave, can they?

I know you want to fly
To go up and see the sky
Please don't leave my side, my red balloon

I'm losing you, but memories I hope I can save
Good times to help me let go
And if I do forget someday
It will not matter because I won't know

I know you want to ride with the stars
Fly so high and maybe rule Mars
So...I let you fly away, my red balloon

You deserve to roam free
To see the jewels of space
And I hope you can be happy
Whether or not you remember this face

Cutting you loose has brought me much pain
Perhaps one day you'll land and we will meet again
But until then...go and see the world, my red balloon



Night Snow

by Elliot Casson



History of the Greek Temple

by Debbie Thompson



*With Love, Your
Granddaughter*

by Alyssa Devine

Kintsugi

Porcelain doll sitting pretty,
precisely painted eyes staring straight ahead,
never seeing.
The dainty handle of a teacup curled elegantly,
pristine pale golds and pinks perfectly preserved,
never holding tea.
Thin white lace draped over even thinner fabric,
swirling spirals of flowers playing across,
never gracing a form.
Beautiful as the setting sun,
as stunning gemstones,
as the sea.
Never touched.
Never used.
Never worn.
Worthless.
Afraid to be fractured,
shattered,
ripped.
Sitting pretty, nothing more.
Sitting pretty, no more.
A porcelain doll with a cracked face.
A pink teacup with a missing handle.
A white lace dress with a torn off sleeve.
All fixed up with loving gold,
their wounds more beautiful still.
Not sitting pretty, anymore.

-Carolyn Graham

A Friend with the Dark

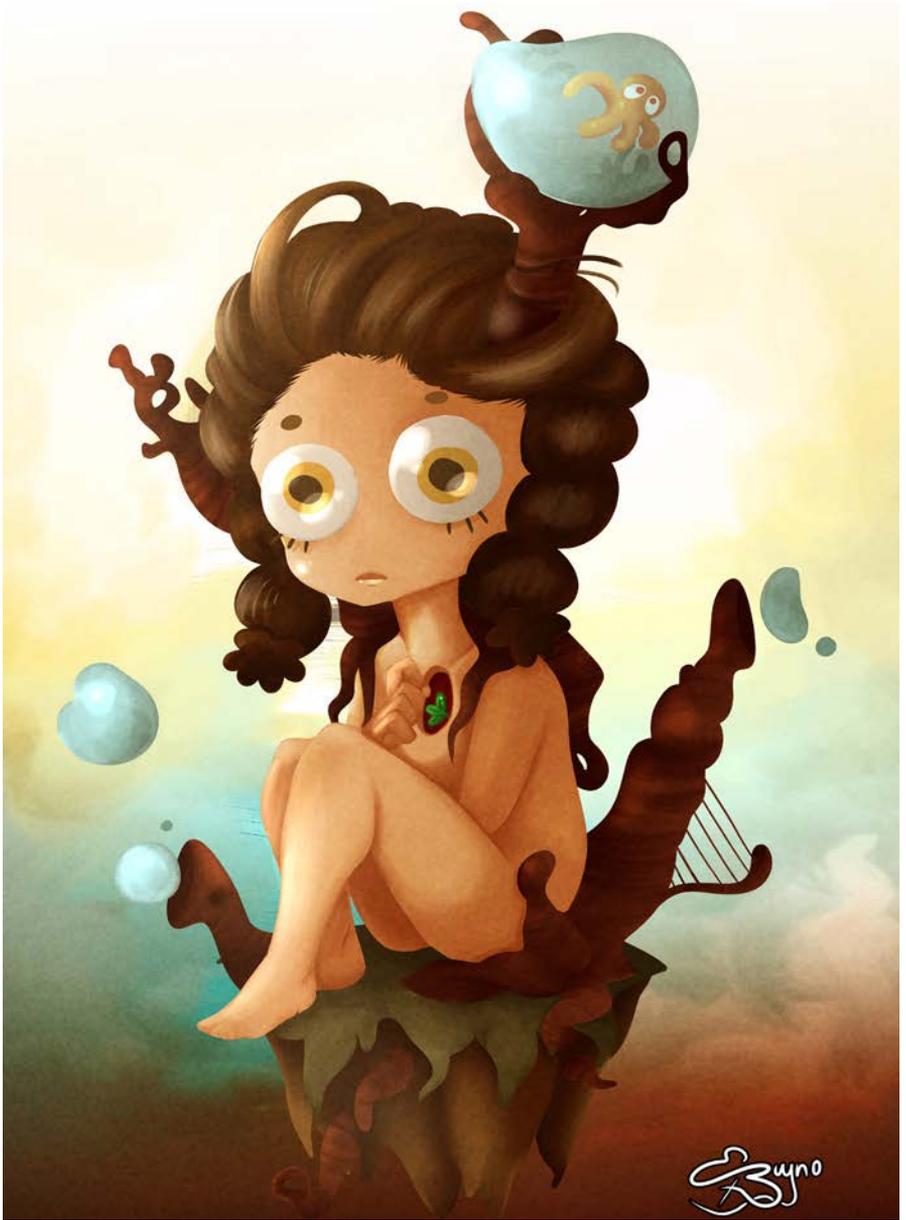
It's a heavy sadness
the kind that makes it hard to breathe
and laugh and eat and blink
Crawling up your chest
cutting off the air
strangling you silent

A weight that drowns
and chains your heart
with an ice cold touch
that freezes and sinks
The shadows a mask
feeding on your eyes
and breeding in your lungs

With every breath
the heavier it becomes
you wake up screaming
but no sound comes out
It takes control
and all that's left
is quiet

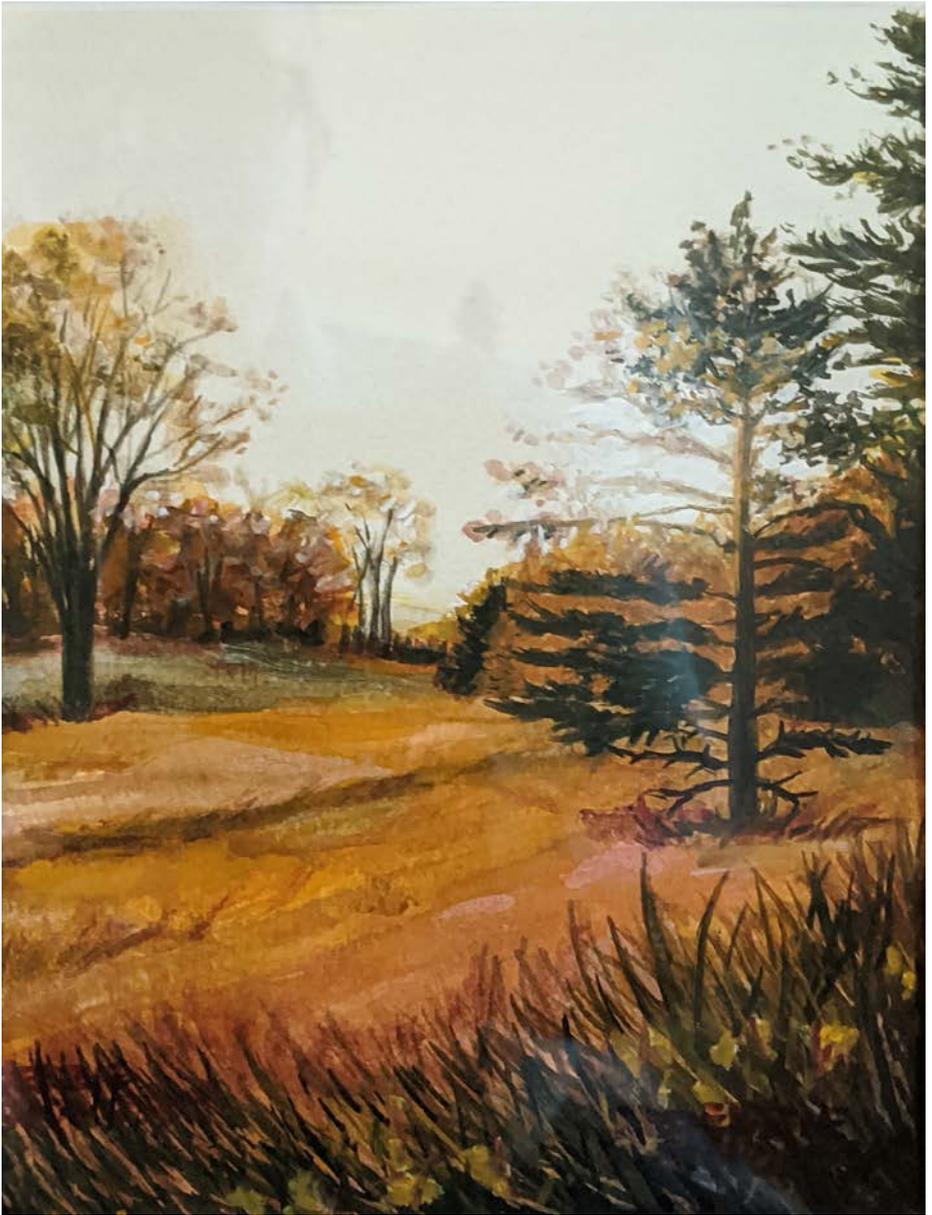
It basks in the echos
left behind by ones who once cared
You start to think
am I alone or just lonely
But deep down you know
how can one be alone
with such shadows
holding you caged
and heavy
in the
dark.

-Madelyn Tennyson



Life Cycle

by Eden Spring Buyno



Crete's Woods

by Debbie Thompson



The Hand of Wonder

by Keanna Alba

Water

In her eyes were pools,
Clear clean water.
They were deep and blue,
A void of calm.

When they joined
he only saw the surface.
The calm waves,
and the gentle horizon.

He didn't see what lied underneath,
The dark depth,
Unexplored and haunting.
Memories hidden but not quite forgotten.

He took her hand,
and together they took the plunge.
He saw rolling waves of pain,
and lakes of sorrow.
Black water riddles with suffering,
bottomless oceans of grief.

Together they took the water,
The waves of pain and sorrow,
And with her hand in his
They forged a stream.
A narrow creek of hope.
Together their gentle current
Calmed the violent tides.
Together they formed a calm,
And quiet,
Future.

-Jessica Payne



A Cabin for Dad

by Connie Blackburn

Man

Lightning streaked through the sky.

Thunder boomed throughout the night.

Rain fell from the heavens above

Until it crashed onto the rocky shore

The highest mountains are rooted in the earth

The lowest shores are lovers to the sea

The sea is a mystery to man

And man is a mystery to me

-Naomi Meeks

. . . This One Shall Be Called Woman (Genesis 2:23)

by Odile Blazquez

“Hurry up! We have to leave in five minutes or you’ll be late for school!” she shouts.

“Mom! I can’t find my ruler! I need to bring it!”

“Where did you last use it?” she asks, knowing the answer perfectly well.

“It was right where I left it!” the little boy wails.

She lets out a long sigh and runs downstairs to the basement. He always does his homework curled up on the old beat-up couch with the even more beat-up, chewed up old blanket, the dog’s favorite spot. The ruler is buried underneath the folds; she grabs it and runs back upstairs.

“Did you finish your waffles?” she asks another slightly older boy.

“I’m not really hungry, mom. I’m not a morning person!”

“You need to eat something so you can be alert. . .” But he’s already out and can’t hear a word.

A third boy runs down the stairs, balancing an open book, a jacket, and a backpack. “You’ll do just fine,” she tells him. “You studied hard.” She rubs his shoulder and gives him a reassuring smile. He grins back revealing a mouth full of braces and keeps going. That reminds her - she needs to call and change his orthodontist appointment because it coincides with the dog’s grooming, which is actually harder to reschedule. On the way out, she grabs some winter hats from the hooks by the back door.

In the kids’ bathroom, she yanks three large towels from their holders and

picks up two smaller wadded-up ones by the sink. In theirs, she grabs a few more and adds them to her bundle. The mountain in her arms is now so big she can barely see, so with a groan, she heaves the pile over the railing down to the first floor, where they land with a thud scattering over the last few steps.

She works her way through the bedrooms, pulling up sheets from every bed and making more bundles, which she promptly flings over the railing as well.

Waiting downstairs is a giant basket overflowing with jeans and sweats and grimy scrunched-up socks. She takes out her 64-loads jug of Tide and begins sorting.

What to wear. . . She wants to look professional but being comfortable is important too since it will be a long day with that evening workshop. Professional yet comfortable; trendy but understated. The black pants would be perfect, but she wore those yesterday. She cares about that. A dress? No, no dress. Brown? No, it makes her look washed out. Why did she ever buy this! She decides on silver gray pants, a white top, and a black blazer. The blazer is rather trendy, she thinks. Small silver earrings will complete the look. She puts everything on the bed and ponders the outfit. A scarf? No, too fussy. Yes, this will do.

“Ms. B, I’m really having a hard time with this. I need some help.”

“What is it that’s giving you a hard time?” she asks.

The young woman is clearly concerned. “I don’t like this introduction I wrote,” she explains.

“Do you have time after class? We can go over it then. Will that work?”

“Oh, yes. Thank you!”

Back in her office, she checks her calendar. Committee meeting tomorrow afternoon. . . webinar the day after. . . Forms due next week. Got it. She looks up to see her student and welcomes her in with a smile.

The deli looks packed as always. Inside, she immediately spots her friends waving from a corner. In no time they’re chatting away over bowls of steaming home-made soups and plates of fresh salads.

The deli’s soups and salad bar are legendary: Tomato Florentine, broccoli-cheese, stuffed green pepper, cream of potato, and Navy bean are made from scratch every day. An old-fashioned cart complete with canopy and smack in the center of the room displays heaping trays of crisp, colorful, veggies. The aroma is simply mouth-watering. They love this place.

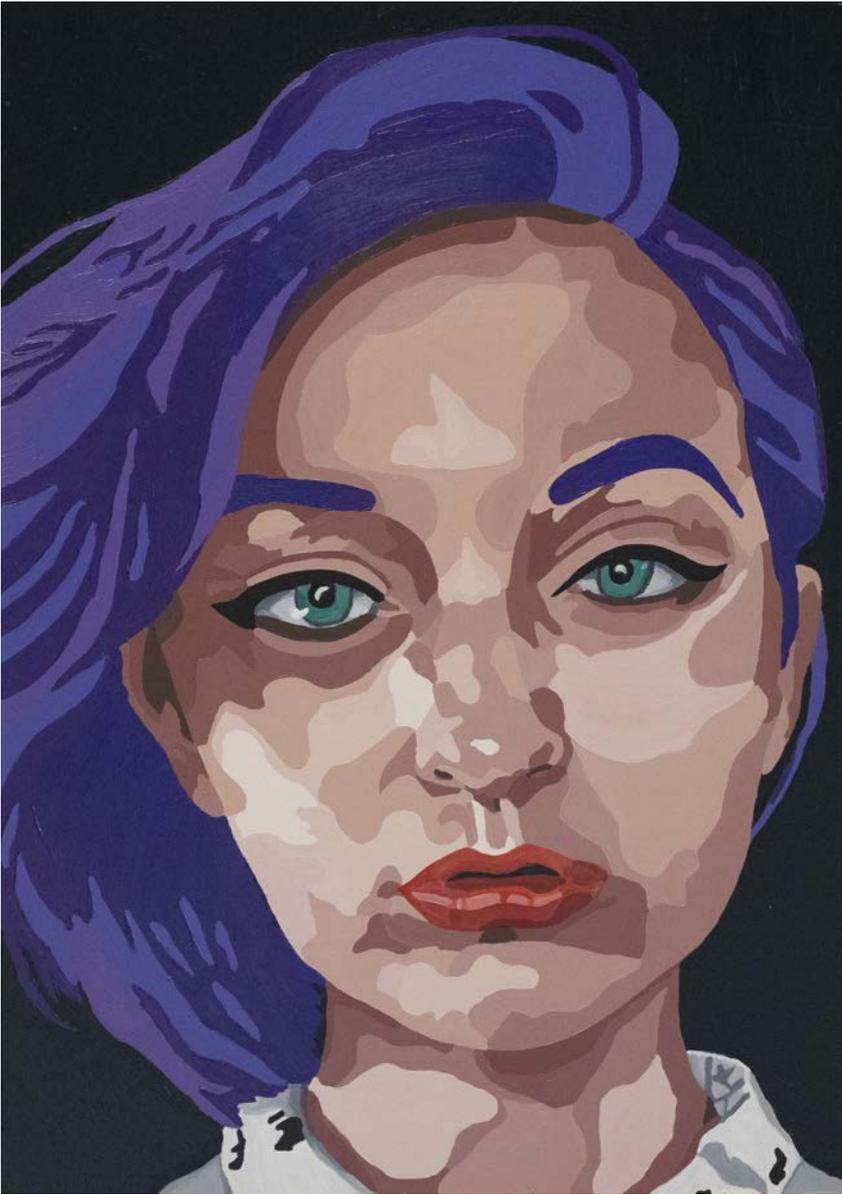
Barring unforeseen or unavoidable events, the five of them meet here every other week. They bring each other up to date on their lives, their families, their jobs,

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and gripe and gossip about current events. They talk, they laugh, and sometimes tear up at someone's tragic news. They have been through divorces, surgeries, accomplishments, joys, worries, and deaths together. But they always leave the deli feeling good, light, unburdened. It's group therapy. It's a sisterhood.

The back door opens and closes. Her honey is home. "Long day, huh?" she says with a smile, not expecting an answer. All his days are long, and she can see the weariness on his face. He smiles back as he always does. It's their little routine. Then he'll lose himself in the day's paper and savor some quiet time alone. She has many things to tell him, but they can wait until later.

Wom-an \ 'wu-mən, n, pl wom-en \ 'wi-mən 1: Keeps track of a thousand little things. 2: Nags her kids because she loves them. 3. Never shirks from mundane chores. 4. Fusses about how she looks. 5.Takes pride in her job and works hard. 6: Treasures her friends and always makes time for them. 7: Encourages, comforts, and understands. 8: Makes time for it all, day after day 9: When tired and wiped out, still makes time for it all.



*Girl with the
Purple Hair*

by Rebecca Cutsinger-Cox



Derelect

by Elliot Casson

Be Still The Beating Heart

I mind my own business
I stumble upon a stranger
I think nothing of it
I feel my heart beat
Dun Dun Dun Dun Dun Dun

I see the stranger follow me
I feel my business becoming his
I think he's starting to walk faster
I feel my heart beat
Dundun dundun dundun

I run down a dark alley
I hide behind a dumpster
I try to stagger my breaths
I feel my heart beating
Dundundundundundun

I sprint as fast as I can
I am stopped by his icy grip
I find my wallet forced into my hand
I feel my heart beat
Dundun dundun dundun

I am ashamed of myself
I judged a book by it's cover
I can't help but wonder how
His heart beat felt after the chase was over

-Tanner Thompson



Killer Queen

by Alyssa Devine



Eurydice

by Jessica Payne

Stockholm

he watched her until she woke
eyes opening like a drawbridge
unaware of his presence
rockets in her conscience
ropes constricting her
the fear bursting through
heartbeats too loud
he looked away
but her glow drew him in
a siren call
she had noticed him
and her struggle began to subside
she burned under his stare
bulls racing in her mind
analyzing his movement
she lifted her eyes
when their gaze met
the forests of green
and oceans of blue
hiding within their irises
collided
the beginning of the end

-Ashley Neiman



Untitled

by Linzie Severson

Payback

by Greg Smith

Joshua had just emerged from the firing range with a big grin and carrying a target filled with holes when he noticed the gun shop's overhead lights had started going off one row at a time.

"I'm heading to a junk yard to shoot some cars," said Randy, Joshua's shooting instructor. "Wanna come along?"

Joshua didn't answer. His focus was on the AK-47 Randy was carrying. It was the same one Randy has used to show him how to take one apart and reassemble it.

"With that?" Joshua asked without looking away from the assault rifle.

Randy nodded with a head consuming smile on the way out the door toward his army surplus Humvee. Joshua climbed in after he glanced at his watch. Supper wasn't for another two hours. With Metallica blasting from four Bose speakers, they drove through several neighborhoods on their way to the countryside.

"I didn't know Humvees came with such good speakers," Joshua yelled over the music.

"They don't," Randy yelled back. "Installed them myself."

Joshua looked around at the open wiring leading to each of the four speakers.

"Kinda loud," Joshua shouted.

Randy's toothy smile grew bigger as he turned up the volume. People stared at them and a few covered their ears as they went by one quiet neighborhood after another. Randy occasionally flipped someone the bird. From time to time he would laugh and try to give Joshua a high five. They connected after three attempts. By the time they reached the junkyard, Joshua's eyes were wide and his smile was even bigger.

"I can't believe I'm going to do this," Joshua said. "This is crazy."

Randy winked and said, "You're gonna love it. We're doing this to celebrate leaving the army 10 years ago."

A landfill surrounded the junk yard on three sides. Scraps of paper and plastic bags floated on a light breeze as they softly blew through the stacks of flattened old cars, trucks and vans. Other than the occasional burst of automatic gun fire, the place was quiet. Joshua and Randy went directly to the gun fire. Three men were watching a tall skinny guy shoot a rusted white Buick Century. They all turned to greet Randy and Joshua after the firing had stopped.

"Who's Mr. Khaki Pants and Polo shirt?" asked a man wearing a black t-shirt with the National Rifle Association's logo. The other men laughed.

"You needed worry about him," Randy said just before he and the man bear hugged. "Terry, this is Joshua."

Terry studied Joshua for a few seconds before he took the AK-47 from Randy and handed him the gun. Joshua could hear some of the men snickering.

"Strip it down and reassemble" Terry placed his hands on his hips. "If you can do it and you get to shoot, otherwise..."

Joshua looked over at Randy, who nodded. Bolstered by his instructor's show of confidence, Joshua walked over to a nearby Ford pickup truck to display the parts he removed.

"I don't suppose anyone has a towel I can use?" Joshua asked after he had made sure the weapon was not loaded. Someone who had just arrived said he had one in his truck.

With Randy and now five men wearing black NRA t-shirts watching, Joshua carefully removed the stock and barrel. Only the firing pin gave him any trouble. After he had everything displayed on the beach towel the way Randy had taught him, he began to reassemble the gun. After each piece snapped in place, he could hear approving grunts from two of the NRA t-shirts. Terry was among those still waiting for him to finish.

"Now that the shows over, let's shoot some cars," Joshua said. Randy came over and slapped him on the back. The others came over and shook his hand. Joshua could barely remember any names, but he soon learned he was the only one in the group who had not served in the military.

Terry led them on a winding path through the stacks of flattened cars and trucks until they came to a clearing with an old light blue Chevy station wagon parked in front of a large dirt berm. The windshield was the only window still in one piece.

"The nozzle will rise when in full automatic," Randy said after he showed Joshua where to stand. Then he backed away to join the cluster of black t-shirts.

Joshua pressed the butt inside his shoulder and stared down the barrel. He looked back and found they were all waiting. He aimed for the nearest side view mirror. As if reacting with just a thought, a bullet blew most of the mirror off. Satisfied, Joshua put the gun on automatic and blasted the station wagon for about four seconds. With his ears ringing, he turned to face the black t-shirts. Someone handed him a flask. The whisky burned his throat. A warm sensation filtered from his gut to

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the rest of him. His loss of hearing reminded him how he felt after walking out of a rock concert. He hoped Randy had a spare pair of ear plugs.

He continued struggled to hear as the evening went on. The ringing in his ears nearly drowned out all other sounds. By the time the flask had come around for the third, or was it the fourth time, his head was spinning. Then someone handed him a Browning AR-15.

"It won't go full automatic," Terry said. "Just pull the trigger and have fun."

Joshua carefully squeezed off two shots, each one hitting exactly where he wanted. Satisfied he turned to see everyone was armed and heading toward him.

"Time for the big whoopee-doo," Terry said.

Terry handed Joshua a new clip. The men lined up and on the count of three, they all blasted away at the station wagon. Joshua had never heard so much gun fire at once. The others took turns swearing and laughing at their imaginary tormentors the station wagon represented. Randy continued to pass around fresh ammo.

"I you like the AR-15 I could give you a really good deal on one," Randy said. "Hell, you can keep that one and pay me later."

A smile crept across Joshua's face as he slammed a full clip in place.

"Let me think about it." Joshua winked.

Randy nodded.

"Let's give it hell," Terry shouted just before he counted to three.

This time Joshua didn't see a junked station wagon. It was personal. Each time he emptied his gun, he took a deep breath and inserted a fresh clip. By now the ground surrounding the group was peppered with spent shells.

"You better fucking listen to me now," Joshua shouted.

Joshua's vision of revenge was interrupted by his cell phone vibrating in his pocket. It was Nancy and the time on the watch said it was after 7 p.m.

"Sorry honey," Joshua shouted over the gun fire. "Hey guys, I'm on the phone."

The men stopped for a second, scowled and started shooting again. Joshua began to walk away from the noise. Before he got very far, Terry ran up and asked who he was talking to.

"Hey, Mrs. Khaki Pants and Polo Shirt, your husband's a bad ass with an AK," Terry shouted before attempting to give Joshua a bottle of beer. Joshua accepted it and took a big swig before returning his attention to the phone.

"Has Mr. Khaki Pants stayed out too late," one of the men shouted while grabbing his crotch. "Pussy whipped."

"Tell Mrs. Khaki to get her ass over here," another black shirt shouted. "We need more beer and we're hungry."

"Hey, Mr. Khaki, you better tell that bitch who's boss," Terry shouted. The rest continued to shout insults and asking when Nancy was going to bring them food and beer.

"That's Terry, a new friend." Joshua hunched his shoulders and put his free hand in his pants pocket. "I guess I lost track of time."

The phone was silent while the black t-shirts took turns shooting. Joshua checked to see the line was still alive.

"I guess you can hang out with your friends all night, if that's what you want," Nancy said, parsing each word.

Joshua knew that tone. He had only heard it two or three times before.

"Everything's okay," Joshua said. "I'm sorry I didn't call."

He waited for her to say something. The other guys were reloading and calling for him to join them.

"You don't really mean I shouldn't come home?" Joshua asked.

Most of daylight was gone and only the headlights from the trucks the shooters came in kept the place from going dark. Part of Joshua wanted to go home. A larger part wanted to shoot more.

"You know how I feel about guns," Nancy said, emphasizing the word guns.

"Right now I don't care what you do as long as it doesn't involve guns."

Joshua straightened his posture and tightened his grip on the phone.

"I guess we'll talk about this when I get home." Joshua hung up and turned to the other shooters. "It's my turn."

His phone vibrated. It was Nancy calling. He dismissed the call and grabbed the AK-47 from Terry.

Plague

I felt nothing waiting by the fire,
as I watched them all fall.
They didn't know their condition was grave
as they wandered in their sickened state
Groans and moans from those who lie
But their time to die isn't until the next stage.

For them, this is the final stage
before they too are put into the fire.
Some are feigning content, but that's all lies
and it's only a matter of time before they too fall,
but none wish to speak, not in this state,
and like always they avoid their graves.

I hear them say the posies and coughs are grave,
many have fallen, but it's not yet time for me to exit stage.
The streets reek of vomit and blood throughout the state,
maggot riddled bodies fuel the fires,
and the lingering smell of it all is worst when comes fall,
I moved through them all whether or not they lie.

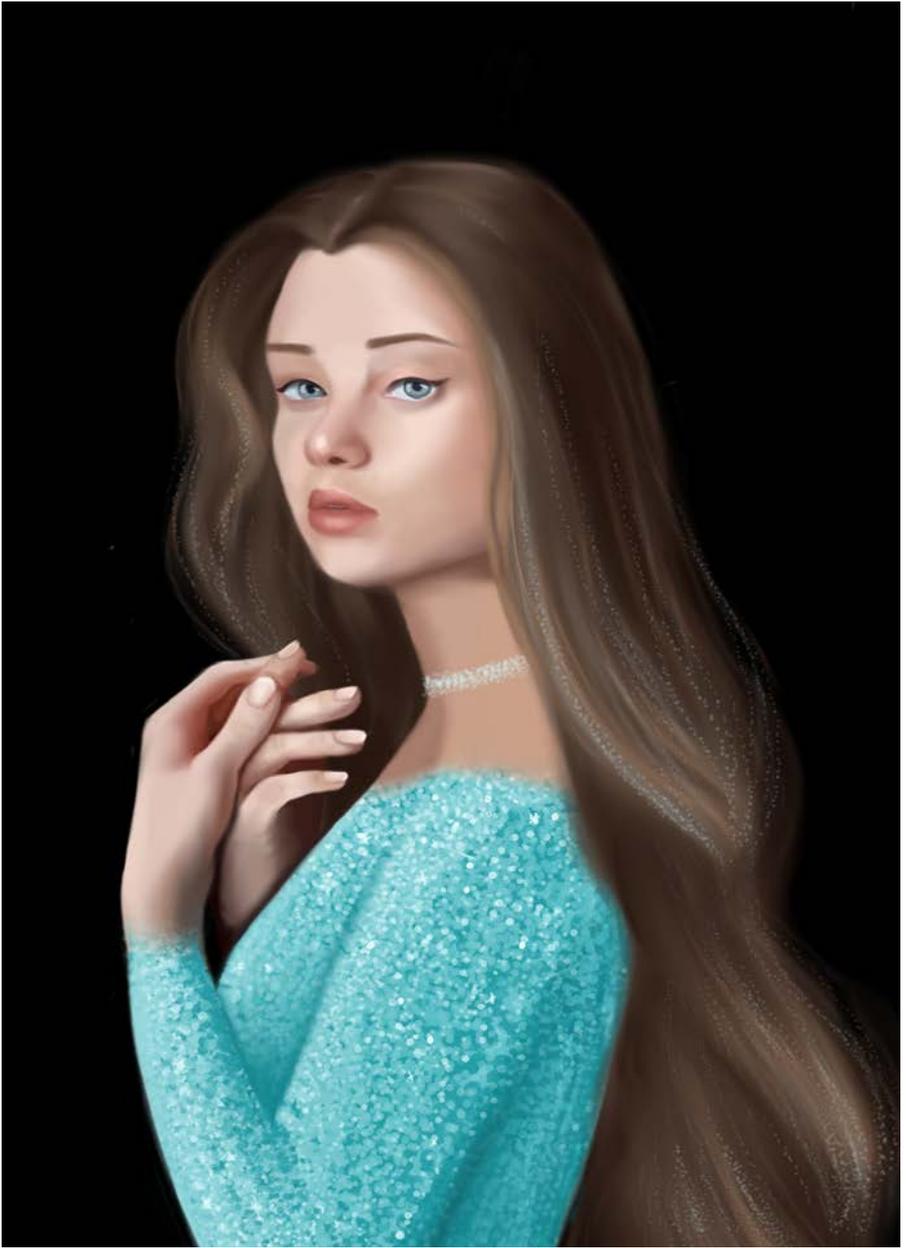
Telling themselves, it'll be ok to wait and lie
down in bed as I bring them to their graves.
Their necks and chests swelled, as they died before the fall.
More cough blood and beg to leave stage,
for them, it's only begun, and only now do they fear the fire,
as they can no longer flee their sorry state.

Mortals cannot run from this state
it follows them like lies
as flies are consumed by fire,
for that is their grave,
no burials for the sickened stage,
they have to burn after they fall.

Trees wither at beginnings of Fall
the last people ebb from their living state
now it's time to exit stage
to let the dead fester and lie
waiting to be put on mass graves
to top the hellish fire

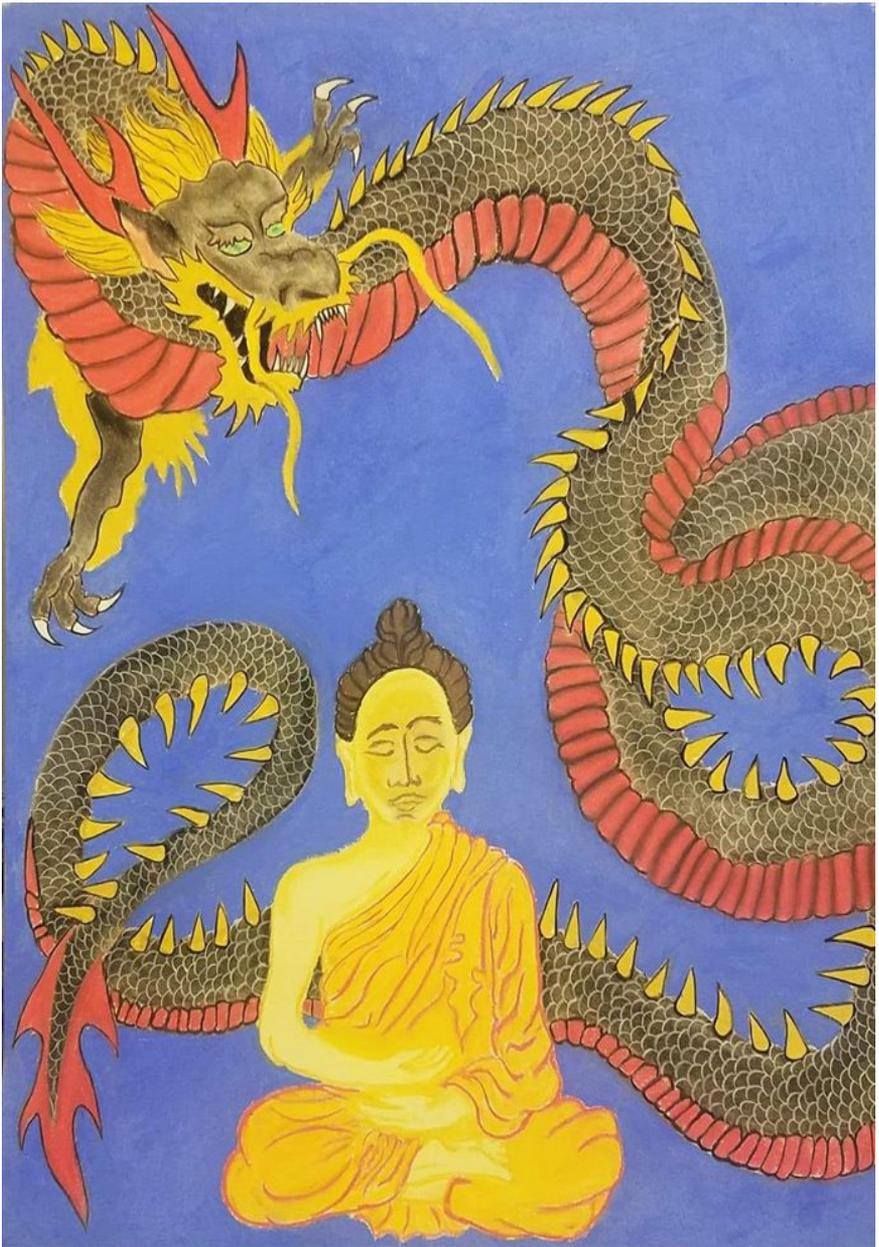
The graves are full, Fall has come.
And as the fire's roar, the state growing silent,
Corpses lie, and poets' dream. Nothing could stop me at my final stage.
I am Pestilence, destroyer of kingdoms, I'll be back again very soon.

-Cole Johnson



Untitled

by Jessica Payne



Ryu and Buddha

by Joe Magana

I am From

I am from dirt roads,
from muddy boots and dancing in the rain.
I am from the summer night bonfires.
(Red and orange, crackling
that rises to the sky.)
I am from the big red barns,
the muddy horse stalls
that are home to some of the best friends
a girl can ask for.

I am from t-shirt tan line,
from a small town,
that seems to have a population of six.
I'm from a simple life
with small complication along the way.
I'm from the hard work will pay off,
the dusk to dawns.

I'm from long drives,
Radio set to the same old local station.
From the Ford vs. Chevy,
the Case vs. John Deere arguments.
From the Luke Combs fans,
the radio up with the windows down fans.
The burnouts on a back roads,
the friends I take along
and the memories we share.
I am from the late night calls
to reminisce in all our stupidity,
our memories we will some day call
the good old days.

-Emma Frank



Thunder Bay Falls- Galena

by Keanna Alba



Untitled

by Emma Torres

Body Bag

Was that a body
Or a bag? The road-stained
Pink purse spilling its guts
A small filmy circle mirror, a cap-less
Eye pencil, tissue entrails
Faded pastel bits of broken bone plastic

And this is it, the last of my youth.
I hear death is like jumping
From the grass to the sky,
From stone to water, from river to cloud.
I had a dream about it, but dreams
get lost like that drunk girl's purse.

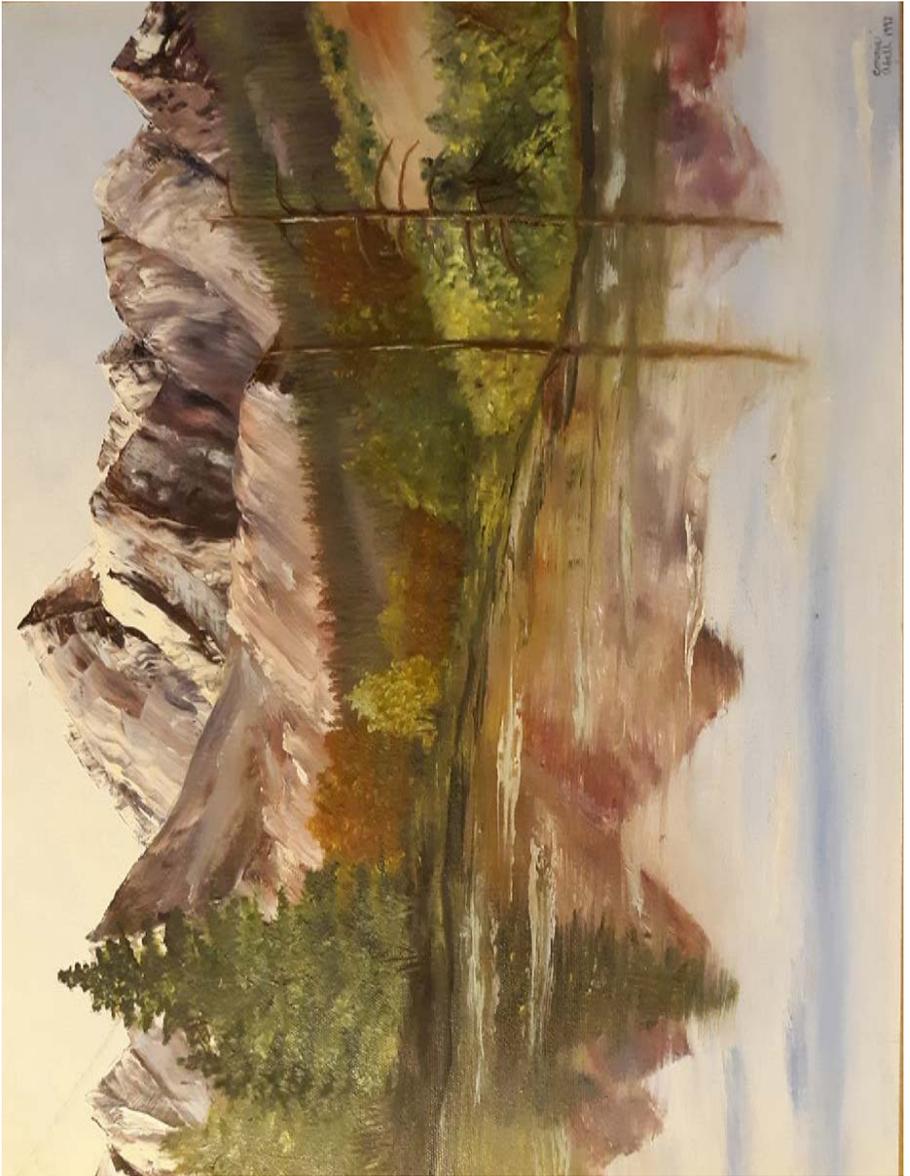
Outside of dreams you're still steeped
In the physicality of the body.
You scrape yourself up off the street
and your puppet body controlled
by the little ghost floating around your head.
If you're thrown in jail, you're trapped in jail
Head, body, ghost and all.

-Nic Bullock

Petals

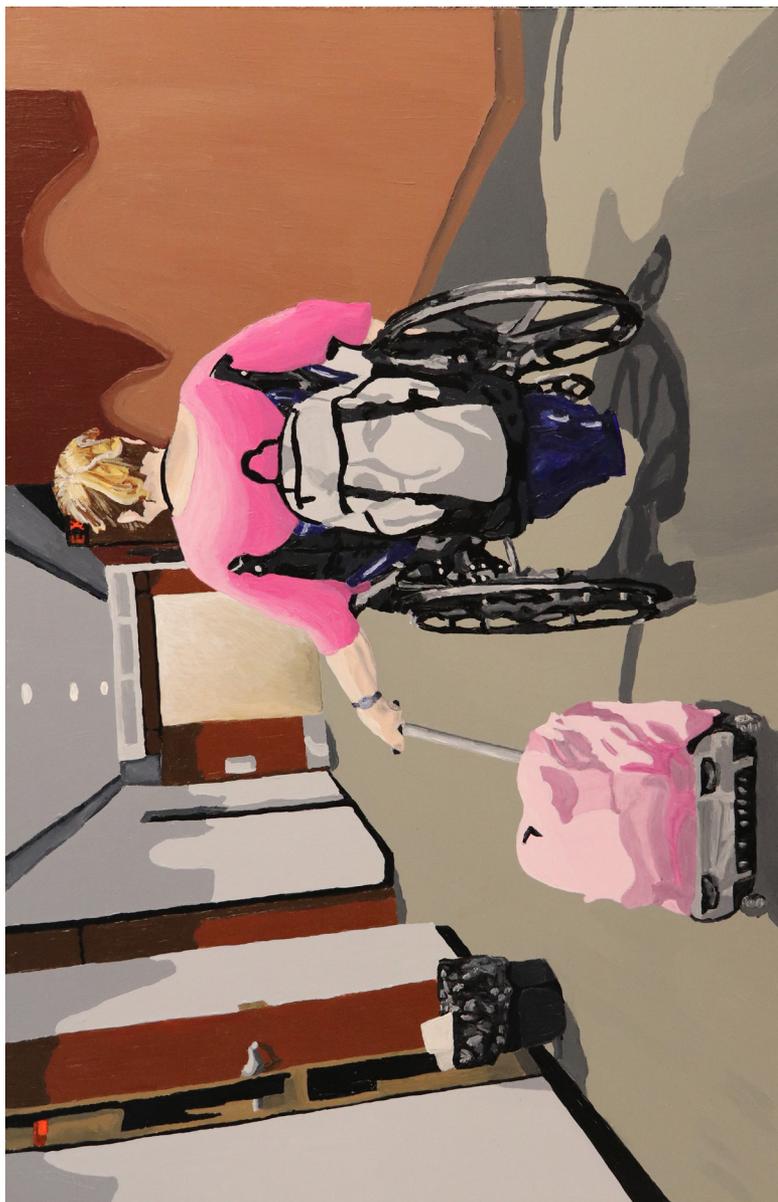
Her dress was made of petals, hues of pink and blue, her smile lit
the world, a candle that burned like a fuse. He saw her from
below, as he sat upon his throne and her brilliance drew him
above, away from his kingdom of gloom. In his kingdom of
darkness, her light burned like the sun. He watched
her fingertips, soft like the petals of flowers,
a blessing to any being they may touch.
He took her hand, a blooming
flower, and he took her heart,
an untamed animal, and
took them both to his
kingdom down
below.
He reached
out a hand and
she held out her
light. He took her
light, and he took her
soul and brought them
both down below. He gave
her a crown of darkness and
gave her a throne of deceit. In
the blackness she flourished, her
life and light cherished by those who
had lived in the dark for countless years.
They ruled together, their story told wide and
far, of a girl made of spring, and a man made of
spite. Their love, a flower that grew in the night.

-Jessica Payne



Purple Mountainside

by Connie Blackburn



Carrying My World

by Rebecca Cutsinger-Cox

Singing in the Shower

I step on the stage
I feel the burn
I have left so much to learn
But now's my chance to show them all
I might slip but I will not fall.
I raise my voice up to the mic,
Never really asking why
Singing all the love songs that once had made me cry
Now make me sick of you, our love was a lie.
But I can't wash away our fate,
I will only have to wait,
I have to hold a whole lot of hurt in
Between these three white walls and a plastic curtain.
Slim Shady couldn't take me
Machine Gun Kelly couldn't shake me
But both of them could feel my pain
Like a nightmare I'm standing naked and afraid.
As it rains.
I close my eyes as tears mix with rain drops
And my heart stops
Because not even lyrics can numb the pain.
I walk off stage to face my reality, only wanting more.
There's a knock on my dressing room door.
"Mommy, are you done in there?"
I guess I can never just enjoy a nice long shower.

-Kali Nave



Open Smiles

by Priscilla Tennison



Cass

by Alyssa Devine

Chin Up, Darling

As far back as I can recall in time,
I was never proud of my spark.
I did not want to glimmer gold.
I would sit amongst the crowd in silence,
healing my own wounds, letting my emotions mend.
My head always down, with a barely-there crown.

They saw me and cared not of my lopsided crown.
Cared not of my wounds, not yet fully healed by time.
Cared not that I was broken, that I needed help to mend.
Cared not of my lusterless, muted spark.
Cared not that I would sit and stare in silence.
All that they saw was gold.

And I would give to them my gold.
I offered up my crown.
I gladly kept my silence.
I gave up all my fleeting time.
I dulled myself, to not outshine their spark.
All that I wanted was their help, so I could finally mend.

My wounds festered still, they did not help me mend.
Like thieves, they stole away my gold.
Like choking smoke, they consumed my spark.
Like oozing grime, they tarnished my crown.
Like spiraling depths, they drained away my time.
Like constricting vines, they demanded my silence.

I would not keep my silence.
If they would not help me, I myself would mend.
No longer would they siphon away my time.
No longer would they discolor my hue of gold.
No longer would they mar my crown.
They will no longer darken my spark.

Now, brilliant stars shine through my spark.
I refuse to sit in silence.
I'm regaining the radiance of my crown.
I'm using my strength to mend.
My soul shall shine like gold.
I will not squander my time.

My spark grows ever brighter and my soul begins to mend.
My silence is my choice, and I glow ever more gold.
My crown will never slip again, no matter what is wrought by time.

-Carolyn Graham



Camo-boar

by Debbie Thompson

I'm Fine

Your empty smiles and dead eyes

Your inner self's desperate cries

Hiding your emotions and who you are

Behind your façade are many hidden scars

Bruises and burns that don't seem to heal

Your opinion, your beliefs, you conceal

I thought you were my friend, but you hide

I'm happy, it's nothing. You always lied.

"How are you?"

You give me your answer

"Fine."

No you're not!

You're hurting, you're broken

The truth about how you feel is never spoken

I smile back, my eyes just as dead

"How are you?"

Fine was all I said.

-Naomi Meeks

Confusion

It reminds me of rotting fruit.
The smell sickly sweet,
but the inside blackened with decay.
Mold incased in soft peach fuzz.

The moment,
when the sun hides its face
behind the shadow of the moon.
Its radiance dulled,
secluded from curious eyes.
Why should one hide
when their purpose is to shine?

It is the dissonance of music,
the close harmony
turning what should be a beautiful ballad,
into an assault.

This feeling I'm feeling,
Is a hurricane,
and I am trapped,
between the eye,
and the edge

-Jessica Payne



Ordinary Miracles

by Bethe Hughes



Night Light

by Eden Spring Buyno

A Piano's Heart

The untickled keys
Black and White

Modestly waiting
Detuned and silent
Stillness in strings
Calm and quiet

Then the brute hand of a madman
Smashing my rust-stringed heart

A song to scream
A pain to play
A song for me
You'll just say

Thunderchords
Thunderclouds

Loud as my sound
I've been found
You do pound
Down with a frown

My body, dirty and black
Scuffed and chipped

Tomorrow you will play in the room
Down the hall, leaving my keys to the dust
And then you'll be gone and me without a song.

-Nic Bullock

Overthinker

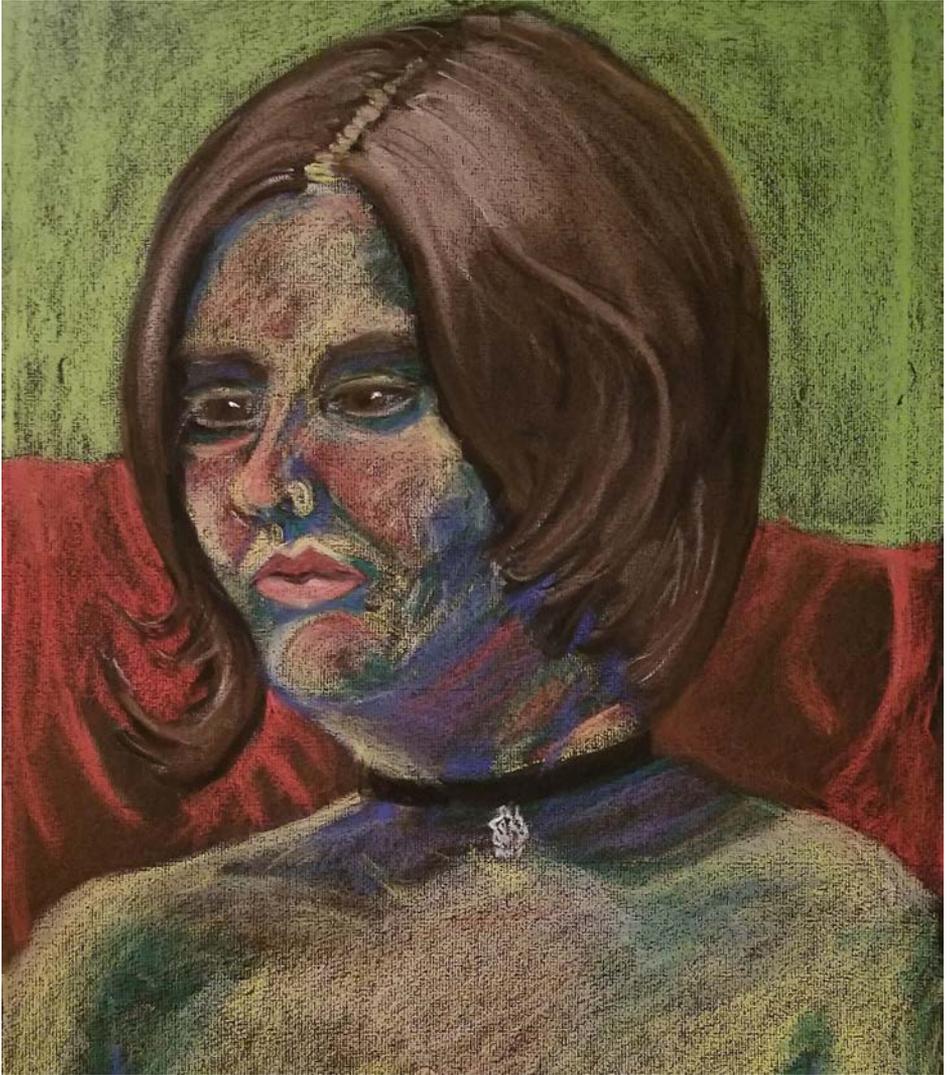
spinning around in the silence
searching for thoughts in the quiet
is this mind of mine empty
or too full to be understood

my overflowing brain drips words on my tongue
but I swallow them down before they come out
they flow to my stomach but can't be digested
they sit there and fester causing terrible messes

sometimes the thoughts slip loose before they're swallowed
they break the silence and bounce off the echoing walls
they ring in my ears and go back to my brain where they belong
but now they don't spill out they just sit there and play on repeat

i think and I think about those few words spoken that should've been swallowed
do other people think about them as much as I do and see me in a different way
why can't I understand the cluttered mess of thoughts that run through my head
why is my brain such a mess that thoughts spill onto my tongue when they shouldn't

-Graycyn Bennett



Woman in Pastel

by Rebecca Cutsinger-Cox



Barn Owl in Autumn

by Keanna Alba

[He's swimming out of reach]

He's swimming out of reach
with bricks tied to his feet
that weigh more than himself,
out of depth.

We stare with tearful eyes
at the fool who wants to drown,
but each time he cries for help,
suddenly we are sightless.

Water fills his lungs like
sand fills an hourglass,
unhurried but steady-
lethal.

As he reaches his final breath,
the fish start to panic,
swimming around in a flurry,
causing bubbles to erupt.

The sky booms in an anger
that makes the sea collapse.
With no sun in sight,
it's the final battle.

And once he's one with the ocean,
we're no longer blind.

-Madelyn Tennison



Graffiti

by Eden Spring Buyno



Determination

by Jessica Payne

Experiment 9

by Carolyn Graham, Cole Johnson, Jessica Payne, and Linzie Severson

Setting: A sterile white room flooded with glaringly bright lights. Scientists in white lab coats rushing about, some carrying clipboards, others with various lab equipment. What looks almost like a radio show control panel in one corner of the room with one scientist, Sophie and an intimidating looking scientist in the other.

At Rise: The scientist places a small headset on Sophie, fidgeting with it to make sure it was secured tightly. Sophie is frowning and looks vaguely uncomfortable.

Characters: Sophie, Professor Ludwig, Scientist 2, Anya, Woman, Male #1, Male #2, Husband

Directions: When (over the headset) is shown, play dialogue over intercom

SCENE 1

Sophie

So you're telling me all I have to do is walk down some stupid hallway for you guys and I'm free to go?

Professor Ludwig

That's right. Report to us your findings, and we'll just go ahead and forget that any of this ever happened.

(Voice over intercom)

Subject 9. Given Name: Sophie Kurzaghaust. Gender: Female. Age: 29. Family Status: Unknown. Criminal Status: Pending.

Professor Ludwig

Subject 9, are you prepared?

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Sophie

I'm as prepared as I'm gonna get. What am I looking for in there anyways, Professor Ludwig?

Professor Ludwig

I assure you, you'll know it when you see it. Do this for us, do it well, and you'll be able to see your daughter again.

Sophie

Well then, let's get on with it then.

Professor Ludwig

Subject 9 is prepared, ready the door.

Scientist 2

The door is ready, send her in.

(Sophie pushes open the door and exits the stage, loud creaking sound plays when the door opens)

(Voice over the intercom)

Subject 9 has entered the hallway. The test will now begin.

(fade to black)

(new scene)

SCENE 2

(Sophie is cautiously walking down the hallway, glancing around, taking in every detail. There is no one in the hallway with her.)

Sophie

(talking into headset)

So how many people have you sent in here?

Professor Ludwig

(talking from headset)

It doesn't matter Subject 9. Just keep going.

Sophie

Why, I think it does matter, what did they find?

(unknown character appears behind Sophie, wearing the same headset Sophie has on)

(Unknown character taps her on the shoulder, Sophie jumps)

The Works

Sophie
(screeches in surprise)
Who are you?

Anya
(throws her hands up in a placating gesture)
Easy there, I'm Anya.

Sophie
What are you doing here? Are you helping them with the experiment?

Anya
I sure am!

Sophie
Why would they let a little kid like you in here?

Sophie
(talking over headset)
I thought you guys said I was the only subject in here, why is there a kid?

Professor Ludwig
(over the headset)
What are you talking about Subject 9? We would never use a
kid for these purposes.

(Sophie looks over at Anya)

Sophie
(over the headset)
You know, it's not nice to lie to people when the proof is
standing right in front of them.

Anya
Well, I'm not that little.

Sophie
You are little, about the same age as my daughter as a
matter of fact.

Sophie
Why don't you come with me, I'll get you out of here.

Anya
Will you help me then?

Sophie
Help you with what?

Anya
Help me find my way back to my friends!
(Anya starts walking ahead of Sophie)

Sophie
Hey, wait up. What friends? Are there more kids here?

Anya
No, silly! They're all back home, with the others.
(Anya runs even faster before disappearing down the end of the hallway)

(Sophie chases after her)
(exit stage left, scene fades to black)

SCENE 3

(enters stage left)

Sophie
How many people are here?

Professor Ludwig
(over the headset)
Subject 9 you are the only person in the testing site.

Sophie
But that can't be... I just saw.
(A middle-aged woman appears, coming from behind Sophie)
Who are you?

Professor Ludwig
Who's there with you Sophie?

Sophie
It's a woman. She looks familiar but I don't know why.
(The woman begins walking away)
(To the woman) Wait! Come back! Why are you here?

The Works

Woman

Dear Sophie, I'm here because of you.

Sophie

What? What do you mean because of me?

Woman

You know why, deep in that heart of yours you know why. You couldn't really think your actions would go unpunished, did you? Dear Sophie, you still have so much to learn.
(The woman disappears down the hallway, on stage left)

Sophie

Wait! Come back! What do you mean?
(over the headset)

She's gone. Where are all these people coming from?

Professor Ludwig

Sophie we've sent no one else into the chamber with you.
Please proceed through the site.

(Sophie exits the stage, stage left)

SCENE 4

(stage lights turn back on, Sophie entering the stage from stage right)

Sophie

(over the headset)

So you really expect me to believe that you've sent neither of those people in here to mess with me?

Professor Ludwig

(over the headset)

Believe it or not, we have sent no one in there with you Subject 9.

(unknown character opens door into hallway,from the middle
Sophie notices them)

Sophie

(over the headset)

Oh yeah, then who's this guy then?

Professor Ludwig

(over the headset)

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Who are you talking about?

Sophie

This guy here- hey! Who are you?
(Unknown male ignores her)

Sophie

Answer me, who are you?
(She runs up to him and grabs his arm.)
(He still takes no notice of her.)

Sophie

Don't just ignore me like that, I can help you get out of here.
(She pulls him around to face her)
(His eyes are gouged out. He is smiling.)

Male #1

Hello again, Sophie.

Sophie

Oh god, are you alright? How do you know my name?

Male #1

You tell me, Sophie. How do I know your name?

Sophie

We've never met before, why would I know who you are?

Professor Ludwig

(over the headset)

Who are you talking to this time?
(Sophie's hand is still on his arm)

Sophie

(over the headset)

There's this guy, his eyes are missing, and he knows my name.

(Unknown man yanks his arm back, still smiling)

Male #1

I know you, but you don't know me it seems. I'd have to say it's you who
needs help here.
(Unknown man launches himself at Sophie, going for her eyes.)

The Works

Sophie

Get off! I've never done anything to you, what the hell?
(She throws him off)

Professor Ludwig
(over the headset)
Run, Sophie!

(Sophie runs off the stage stage left, lights go black.)

SCENE 5

(Stage lights turn on, Indicating beginning of the scene.)
(Sophie is walking slowly down the hallway. She comes across a door on the side of the hall)

Sophie
(Moves hand to adjust headpiece)
I found another door. What do you want me to do?

Professor Ludwig
(Over the headset)
Approach the door Subject 9. Do it with caution.

Sophie
(Begins moving towards the door.)
There's nothing there. Should I move on?
(A shadow effect moves across the stage.)
Wait. I think I just saw something move in there.

Professor Ludwig
(Over the headset)
Open the door and go in. Describe your surroundings Subject
(Sofie opens the door. Takes a step inside. Blackout for set change)

Sophie
(Sophie stands on stage alone.)
(over the headset)
There's nothing here.

Professor Ludwig
(over the headset)
Look arou-
(Electronic Static sound effect cuts off Professor Ludwig)
Sophie

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(over the headset)

Professor? Everything alright?

(Beat)

Wait! Something is in here with me.

(Spotlight illuminates to reveal unknown person standing in corner of the room)

Male 2

Hello.

Sophie

(backs into wall, startled from new person)

Who are you? What are you doing here?

Male 2

You don't know me? I thought you would have remembered me.

Sophie

Remember you from where?

Male 2

(Steps closer in the direction of Sophie)

The trial of course. The one for my sister, who you killed.

(Beat)

Sophie

Now I remember.

(Sophie smirks and moves away from the wall)

Is this some sick game Professor? Part of your little experiment?

(static sound effect plays.)

Male 2

They can't answer you.

(moves closer to Sophie)

Sophie

What are you going to do to me?

Male 2

I'm going to make you feel the same pain she felt while you killed her.

(the hallucination now stands about 5 feet from subject 9)

Sophie

I had to kill her.

The Works

Male 2

No you didn't! She was young! She had a life to live and
you took it from her!

(The hallucination lunges forward and begins to strangle Sophie
against the wall next to door)

Sophie

(laughing hysterically)

The scientists won't let you kill me! They need me!

Male 2

(screams and continues to strangle subject 9)

No! You need to be punished for your crimes.

Sophie

Not by you.

(Sophie escapes from the hallucination's grasp and escapes
through the door back into the hallway.)

(Blackout.)

SCENE 6

(Sophie enters stage right)

Sophie

Hello? Who's there?

(Beat)

I know you're there; I can hear you.

(A man enters from a door in the dark hallway)

Professor Ludwig

(over the headset)

Who is it? Who's there with you?

Sophie

(over the headset)

I don't know. It's a man, tall, dark hair.

Husband

Sophie is that you?

Sophie

Who are you? Stay back!

Husband

Sophie... You don't remember me? How could you forget?

Sophie

Stay Away! Stay away from me!

Husband

Sophie don't say that! You can't pretend that 3 years of marriage didn't happen, come here baby.

Sophie

No! No! please don't touch me!

Husband

Come on baby. You know you love me, come here and give me a kiss.

Sophie

(Standing her ground)

I said no.

Husband

(Angrily)

I said get your ass over here! Why are you like this? Why do you always make everything so difficult? Now, I said get over here and give me a kiss!

Sophie

No! I'm not listening to you anymore. You don't control me. You had a hold on me for too long, but that's over. With you gone I finally had the life I wanted. A life where I was in control. A life I enjoyed.

Husband

Is that why you did it? Is that why you killed me? That's why you snuck into our room late that last night? Why you pointed that gun at me... Why you pulled the trigger?
(blood appears on his shirt)

Professor Ludwig

(over the headset)

Subject 9, what's happening? Subject 9, report.

Sophie

(over the headset)

He's here, my husband is here. He's.... He's bleeding. I think... I think he's dying.

Husband

The Works

You know I'm dying Sophie. You killed me. You killed me with hatred in your heart because you only care about yourself! You're a selfish little bitch who doesn't deserve what you have. You never deserved me! All I did was take care of you, and you never appreciated it.
(He collapses to the ground and dies)

Professor Ludwig
(over the headset)
Subject 9, what is your status?

Sophie
(over the headset)
I'm fine.

Professor Ludwig
(over the headset)
Is your husband still there?

Sophie
(over the headset)
No. He's gone.

Professor Ludwig
(over the headset)
Continue through the chamber

Sophie
(Whispered) He's gone and it's my fault
(Sophie exits stage left)

SCENE 7
(Sophie enters stage right)

Sophie
(Sofie walks down the hallway. Alone at the moment)
I need to get out of here. Professor! Let me out of here! I know you can hear me!

Male 2
(off stage, played over intercom)
Oh, dear Sofie, no one can hear you and no one ever will again.

Sophie
(Mumbling to herself, visually scared)
Shit.

Male 2

(Past Hallucinations walk onto stage from stage left)

It's time Sofie.

Sophie

What do you want from me?

Male 2

You are but an insect in the cruel game of life. You took matters into your own hands and took what wasn't yours to take. A killer like you needs to be punished.

Sophie

Please, I don't want to die.

Male 2

Did the people you killed tell you the same thing before you watched the light fade from their eyes? When you let that little girl die, knowing you could have saved her?

(Beat)

(Sophie looks away in shame)

I suspected not. These people in front of you, how do you feel when you see them? They are the ones you killed correct?

Sophie

Yes, I killed them.

Male 2

And what did these people do to deserve to die by your hand?

Sophie

They didn't do anything. Except for him...

(Sophie points to her husband)

Male 2

(moving closer to Sophie across the stage)

No man, woman or child here deserved to die no matter what they did to you. Their time would have come eventually. You were in the wrong Sofie. Look at these faces. These lives. You will pay!

(Hallucination holds out arm and Sophie falls to her knees as if in pain)

Sophie

(Sophie on her knees crying)

Please stop! I realize what I did was wrong! I'm a killer. A cold-hearted killer.

Male 2

Good. I am glad you fully realize your mistakes.

The Works

Sophie

Are you going to kill me? To pay for the lives I've taken.

Male 2

Death is no punishment.

(Blackout)

SCENE 8

(Sophie enters stage right)

Sophie

I have to get out of here! I don't want the deal anymore. I'm tired of your games, LET ME OUT!

Professor Ludwig

(over the headset)

Subject nine calm down, do not turn around

Sophie

(over the headset)

Who else did you put in here? Any other bodies you want to dig up? Any other nightmares you want... to...
(all previous hallucinations enter stage left)

Husband hallucination

Sophie...

Sophie

Stay away from me! You deserved it! YOU ALL DID. All but

Husband

What did we do? Why did you hurt us?

Sophie

GET OUT OF MY WAY!

(subject runs past the hallucinations)

Husband

You will be back.

(subject runs down hall)

Sophie

(out of breath)

Where am I? Why did you put me in here? Why me?

Professor Ludwig (hallucination)
(over the headset, distorted)

...You are in a hallway with anomalous properties we have yet to have an understanding of. We chose you because it is cheaper and easier to use criminals for these experiments than it is taking a random civilian.

Sophie
(over the headset)
That's disgusting, using people for twi18

Professor Ludwig (hallucination)
(over the headset, distorted)

Subject nine, you killed multiple people in fits of rage. Half of them were people you never met before. You are in no position to lecture anyone on what is morally right or not.

Sophie
(over the headset)
I'm not like you.

Professor Ludwig (hallucination)
(over the headset, distorted)

No, you are worse. Turn around and go back through the hallway.

(subject turns around and continues to walk)

Professor Ludwig
(over the headset)
-nine? Subject nine do you read me?

Sophie
(over the headset)
We were just talking though.

Professor Ludwig
(over the headset)
Subject nine we haven't heard from you in four hours. Where have you been?

Sophie
(over the headset)
I just want to go home. I don't want to be here anymore, how do I get out?

The Works

Professor Ludwig
(over the headset)

Just keep walking forward, you will get there eventually.

Husband

I knew you would be back. There is no way out, you do realize that?

Sophie

Why did it have to be you? I just want to leave.

Husband

We all do, you've been carrying us with you for a long time. It's time you let us go.

Sophie

Who are you? What are you? You aren't him, you can't be he is

Husband

Dead? Yes, you killed him. You killed all of them. As for what I am? You will understand eventually.

Sophie

Why did they send me here?

Husband

I do not know. You are not the first one to be blindly thrust into my home, I doubt you will be the last.

Sophie

Can you take me out of here?

Husband

Follow me, or rather, follow us. Take that thing off first, you won't need it anymore.

Sophie

...Alright...

(subject removes headset)

(black out, Sophie exits, stage is empty)

(Lights come back on, empty stage)

Professor Ludwig
(played over intercom)

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---Subject nine? We lost you again, what's happening there?..... Subject nine?.... We lost her, log the time. Experiment is over.

At 1500 ECT, Subject nine failed to respond to Professor Ludwig's hails. The experiment lasted three days and four hours. Requests to the Administrators have been sent to continue experimentation. Request approved by Administrators Tests will resume in two months time.

(beat)

ADDENDUM:

Four months after the disappearance of Subject Nine, or Sophie Kurzghast, the radio signature from her headset reactivated and she began asking for Professor Ludwig. Audio went as following:

Sophie
(off stage, played over intercom)
Are you there?

Professor Ludwig
(played over intercom)
Sop- subject nine? Where have you been? It's been four months how have you survived?

Sophie
(played over intercom)
It's a very strange place, this hallway. It illuminated myself, I feel free. I'm so very free. Nothing remains of my wrong doings, my own faults and blemishes on the face of the people. Nothing of ME remains.

Professor Ludwig
(played over intercom)
Subject nine, Sophie, you are rambling. How did you survive there? Did you reach the end?

Sophie
(played over intercom)
Oh yes the end is mine, I have reached in and have shared it with them all.

Professor Ludwig
(played over intercom)
Who is 'them?' Are the other subjects still alive?

Sophie
(played over intercom)
The thing kept us alive, wanted us NEEDED us. It is a benevolent God.

The Works

Professor Ludwig

(played over intercom)

Subject nine, you are making no sense. What is in there?

Sophie

(played over intercom)

What I have done, It was horrible. I was wrong bad EVIL...
they didn't know they didn't deserve

Professor Ludwig

(played over intercom)

Your victims families have been compensated heavily after
your conviction.

Sophie

(played over intercom)

Money cannot bring back life Ludwig, you should do well to
remember that. What is at the end of the span is not for you or
your greedy compatriots. You will not have it. I was wrong in
the past, I harmed in the past I killed as you do now. The
bodies of the other subjects that could do it. Those that cannot
that never could hang from the ceiling and their names are
carved in the wall for the Thing to remember them. Do not send more people
in this is your final warning. (Sophie breaks the radio headset, bashing and
cracking sound plays)

Intercom

Ludwig petitioned the Administrators to send teams of people
in, rather than only one at a time in order to keep better tabs
on the events transpiring in the hallway. REQUEST: pending

(curtain falls)

**Hey You! Draw something!
Right here!**

While you're at it, take a
photo of your creation and email it to
litmag@svcc.edu for next year's issue!

