

The Watermark

UMass Boston's Literary & Arts Journal

Volume XXX
Spring 2020

Acknowledgments

Editors-in-Chief

Joy O'Halloran
Alexa Koch

Associate Editor

Stephany Castillo

Cover

Hajah Conde

Advisor

Charles Henriques

From the Editor

Reading through the many submissions for publication in this issue and piecing together the journal, I found myself making thematic connections between artists: a poem unknowingly entitled for pairing with an illustration, words destined to sit across the page from a photograph showcasing the imagery between the lines...

Considering together works that were not created in tandem, I realized what is shared within these pages of words and visual art: perspective. Many of the authors and artists published in this issue explore the concept of *home*, the body, spirituality, and nature as cyclical ideas through their respective medium(s)— themes I found to be most fitting for a spring edition. What resulted is a collection of varied views on similar subjects, a collection you'll find in the following pages.

Thank you to our writers, artists, photographers, and submitters, our editors, UMB faculty, and administrator community, for your continued support and making publication possible. Enjoy!

Alexa Koch
Editor-in-Chief

Table of Contents

Poetry

6	Ann Doyle	Maude Who Lives Upstairs
7	Autumn Nutile	When We Were Saints (Stained Glass)
9	Madison DeBaker	fibonacci body
10	Aldo Gatón	I'm not SHIT
11	Aldo Gatón	Fame
11	Aldo Gatón	Thirst
12	Elaine Happnie	Fine Wine
12	Elaine Happnie	Happenin' on the Red Line
17	Swastik Mukherjee	Skin
18	Bill Valentine	Dean and David Go for a Walk
19	Bill Valentine	Dean and David Have a Scotch
20	Kate Flaherty	Home
21	Gautami Patel	My Destination
22	Zoya Gargova	Words
30	Amanda Tran	Ballad of the Moon
32	Zoya Gargova	The Birthday Present
33	Paola Flores	Regurgitating
34	Kate Flaherty	A Tree Dies in Dorchester
35	Misha Asif	Home at Last
36	Zoya Gargova	Morning Traffic
37	Autumn Nutile	Pins and Needles
41	Elaine Happnie	Princess of Dreams
44	Madison DeBaker	charcoal
44	Madison DeBaker	frigid hearth
45	Stirling Newberry	A journey through a night news story
47	Kate Flaherty	The Color of the Sky
48	Ann Nguyen	Ocean View
56	Lynn Butler	Cathedral
58	Victoria DiPrizio	Candle Wick
59	Victoria DiPrizio	Birthday Wishes
60	Virginia Bradford	childhood injuries
68	J.H.	It's gonna be alright
69	Virginia Bradford	flash flood on the highway
72	Gautami Patel	Hope in Storm
73	Misha Asif	Déjà Vu
74	Autumn Nutile	Upon Finding the Scar Above Your Knuckle (Missed Connection)

Prose

13	Ann Nguyen	The Ghost I Left Behind
24	Benjamin Grzyb	Good Sleep
38	Ann Nguyen	Someplace New
50	Cody Reeves	Call My Name
63	Amanda Tran	You
71	Sarah Hayek	Holy

Visual Art/Photography

7	Ellen Foust	Looking Through the Cracked Glass Window in the University Catwalk
8	Elaine Happnie	Mermaid cynotype and hand embellishments
16	Megha Nair	Arms Around Me
23	Megha Nair	I Can't Breathe
31	Megha Nair	Child of the Universe
40	Elaine Happnie	Diana Queen of Hearts
42	Megha Nair	untitled (me)
43	Megha Nair	Dress Casual
46	Ellen Foust	Sunset on the Plaza
49	Megha Nair	Of the Ocean
57	Ellen Foust	Sunrise in University Hall
61	Megha Nair	Touch
62	Ellen Foust	Student Lost in Thought in the Plaza
67	Amanda Tran	untitled [art accompanying "You"]
70	Virginia Bradford	horror
75	Megha Nair	Burning with Passion

Maude Who Lives Upstairs

by Ann Doyle

I stare at the ceiling. I wait and listen.
Finally, the sound of soft leather slippers
kiss the floor over my head as she makes
her way to the dented silver coffeepot.

I creep up the back stairs in babydoll pajamas,
to be greeted by the scent of warm vanilla cake,
powdered sugar and melted milk chocolate.

Wispy white hair, parted in the middle and tied
with multi-colored yarn climbs down her back
like a shiny silver tail. Tiny wisps of cottony curls
rest upon her neck.

She speaks in musical notes that hover in the air.
Magic and secrets and strawberry dreams
mingle with white linen and ebony brown eyes.

She fixes my coffee, mostly thick cream and sugar,
and kisses the top of my head.
My childish troubles dissolve
in this enchanted kitchen.

My endless questions gather in a pile
on the wooden table
To be examined and addressed
with her sacred care and wisdom.

When We Were Saints (Stained Glass)

by Autumn Nutile

These pews are too strict; narrow and orderly.

They dictate us to sit upright.

My palms are raised upwards, the choir is singing,

Their voices lift me from my mind.

I find the stained glass mural looming above us.

Blue, like the veins on the back of your hands.

Red, like your cheeks, like communal wine.

Gold, like the flecks circling your irises.

Like I am looking at the skull of an angel.

Good God, Gracious God, I want to smash you into pieces.



Looking through the Cracked Glass Window in the University Catwalk by Ellen Foust



Mermaid cyanotype and hand embellishments by Elaine Happnie

fibonacci body

by Madison DeBaker

i lost my body
where wind blows in August
where the sea meets the sky

a cotton body, soaked in blood,
stained red, I hung my tattered body, out to dry
the ocean pulled me away,
with the summer wind

my bruised body met the sky
kissed him with bloody button lips
and tears running down my cotton cheek
i watched it float away, and as all goodbyes go, bid a forlorn farewell

i built a new one with ashes
made it from leaves of fire, twigs, and rotting branches
earth soaked, dirt binding the very pieces of my being together from the core
god made me an alchemist, i built a body from the forest floor

I'm not SHIT

by Aldo Gaton

Reasons,
It's what I can't
Type,
It's what I can't
Say,

I deserve to be in a
Cage
Or a display
As
"Him"

"Look at
Him,
He just woke up."

I'll remain in here
As
Another species,
Another evolutionary mammal,
The human
That does smile,
The human
That abstractedly thinks,

But,
Doesn't know how to
Feel,
Feel,
What

Chad,
Simon,
Liam,
Summer,
Kendra

My description will be,
Born
Without feelings.

"Look at how
He eats"

Feel,

Fame

by Aldo Gaton

It's true,
Gives a shit about you
Until,

No one
You light yourself
On fire.

Thirst

by Aldo Gaton

After
Three nights of drinking for

Amusement,

The fourth day
Left me wanting,

Needing,
And craving

L,

To forget about my

Hangover.

Fine Wine

by Elaine Happnie

You were on a stage of smoked mirrors
 Glazed with a flashy luster
 Intoxicated under your spell
 I thought you were like
 Fine wine
 Of vintage rare
 Until you got on the table
 And I read your label

Happenin' on the Red Line

by Elaine Happnie

His look caught my attention
 a punster with James Cagney swag
 Blue headphones, red sneakers, black Fly Society hoodie
 our eyes meet and the windows
 allowed me to see in
 A whisper of a moment
 As I stood my hat fell from my lap.
 “You dropped somethin.”
 Picking up the hat he asked
 With a grin “how ya doin,’ honey”
 Sweet, like candy in his mouth.

The Ghost I Left Behind

by Ann Nguyen

“Bring the bags down here!” my uncle yelled, from downstairs as we hauled our bulky suitcases out of the guest room upstairs. My mother, sister, and I were staying in Vietnam for the month of June to relax and catch up with family. The vacation was nice, but I couldn’t wait to go home—I could no longer tolerate the extreme humidity that made my skin sticky as honey cake.

Before we left for the airport, the three of us planned to have breakfast with my grandmother. My sister Amelia and I hurried to descend the stairs, but my mother firmly stood in front of us with her hands on her hips.

“You girls say goodbye to your grandfather,” she demanded, her dark eyes fixed in a penetrating stare. “I can finish getting the bags.” Amelia nodded quickly then grabbed me by the arm, pulling me to the prayer room. The turquoise tiles of the marble floor glistened underneath our feet while white paint chipped off the walls. I moved toward the large glass window to get a view of the sunrise. Soft, wispy clouds rest over streams of orange, yellow, and blue. The sun glowed at the horizon, like God Himself was so inspired to use the sky as His canvas.

I lingered at the window for a while until my sister motioned for me to stand in front of the shrine decorated with flowers and ornaments; our family used it to commemorate our deceased grandfather. As we positioned ourselves upright, we held *nhang*, a thin, red stick composed of special wood and herbs. The stick burned at the tip, sending swirls of smoke around the room. I smelled incense and gazed into the weary yet purposeful face of my grandfather in his picture.

I was too young to understand who my grandfather was when he passed away on the eve of my third birthday. However, I got to know him better through the stories my mother shared growing up. I could easily imagine him constructing a house with his bare hands, mixing herbal medicine in a large pot, and reading books on his rooftop.

After bowing three times at the altar, Amelia and I headed downstairs to join my mother. She wore a wide-brimmed hat over her head to defend herself against the sun’s relentless heat. “Be careful,” Uncle Vo said to my grandmother in Vietnamese as he escorted her to the door. We all stepped outside.

In the early hours, the people of Long Xuyên moved in the hustle and bustle of the city. We strode past rectangular buildings people scurried in and out of. Food vendors lined the streets. An elderly woman sold hot waffles, fresh from a cast-iron grill pan. Motorcycles whizzed by, their engines rumbling and horns honking. In the presence of sunshine and palm trees, people beamed.

“My back hurts,” my grandmother grumbled in Vietnamese as we walked past a group of men smoking cigarettes on red plastic stools, “and your uncle forgot to buy me insulin needles last night.” I glanced over at Amelia but she looked straight ahead. My grandmother’s bitter remarks didn’t surprise her.

“Uncle Vo is busy with work,” my mother scolded my grandmother in their native language. “Don’t rush him.” I caught a glimpse of my grandmother pouting her lips. The previous summers she had ventured into the caves of Tuc Dup Hill with us. This summer she could barely walk two blocks from her house, her heavy feet shuffling slowly in a pair of tattered sandals.

I sighed in relief when we reached the restaurant. A variety of tropical trees provided shade at the outdoor seating area. Amelia perused the menu and decided on *hu tieu mi*, a savory soup with pork and quail eggs. I copied her order. My mother chose *bun rieu*, which consisted of crab and tofu in a tomato broth. My grandmother complained of feeling full from a late-night dinner.

“You need to manage your time better,” my mother huffed, shaking her head. “No more large meals past your bedtime.” Amelia and I nodded in agreement. When we glanced up to gauge a reaction from our grandmother, there wasn’t any. She was staring down at the table with a blank look on her face.

“Grandma?” Amelia said, reaching out to hold our grandmother’s hand. “Can you hear us?” My grandmother remained slouched in her seat, her eyes appearing dull and cloudy. This seemed more like a worldly disconnection than a simple hearing problem.

“She’s fine,” my mother assured me and my sister. “We can wait for her.” I lifted my glass of water and took a large gulp. Even though I was sitting directly across from my grandmother, I felt distant from her. I thought, What does she hear when she’s away from us? Where does her soul go? I supposed my grandmother wasn’t happy in our world. She couldn’t even take care of herself, going out in public with unkempt hair and a stained blouse.

The waiters eventually set our steaming bowls of soup onto the table, and we thanked them. As we ate, my grandmother suddenly nudged my mother. “I wish I were you, Thuy,” she murmured in Vietnamese, “living a good life in America.” My mother’s cheeks burned flaming red.

I wondered, Does my grandmother really believe my mother enjoyed a life of luxury? Back home she worked overtime shifts despite suffering from migraines. The fishmonger at the local market gave the lady in front of us a discount on tilapia only to give my mother a dirty look afterwards. Amelia and I understood our mother’s hardships, all of which she faced alone.

“You have a family who takes care of you,” my mother flatly reminded my grandmother as she poked a chopstick into the crab meat. Those words flew past my grandmother’s head and into the ground. We devoured the rest of our meals in silence.

Back at the house, our relatives helped us stow our luggage into a cargo van. “Have a safe trip home!” Uncle Vo chuckled heartily. My mother patted her brother on the shoulder and then opened the passenger door. Before she could go inside, my grandmother departed her ghostly state and suddenly turned human, sobbing passionately and letting out heavy gasps of breath.

“Bà sẽ nhớ con,” she uttered in a quivering voice. *I’ll miss you.* My mother reached out and gently touched my grandmother’s arm. I watched both of them embrace one

another. My mother shed no tears.

As we drove off, I pressed my face against the window and watched my relatives wave in the distance, becoming smaller and smaller until they were specks of dust. The one speck I couldn’t sweep from my mind was my grandmother with her pale skin and bloodshot eyes. She lost herself once she lost my grandfather.

When I returned to the States, I remembered my grandmother as a lost spirit. Her fear and anxiety grew along with her aging body, prompting her to slip into an unknown dimension to avoid the pain of reality.

No matter where she ended up, I loved her.



Arms Around Me by Megha Nair

Skin

by Swastik Mukherjee

I've got skin,
miles and miles of skin;
covered and adorned with colors,
be it of cotton, silk or others.

It's perfect in concealing
my cells and the scars I possess
But your eyes would lurk somewhere that has
deeper and deeper crevices.

It would cross the pellucid skin
and the fine thread of cloth.
Diving into my essentials that I
forbid not to show.

Not to show the trillions of layers,
that have value, life and luster in it.
Which could get demolished and
fall like dominoes beneath.

Out of pure disgust,
my white colored shawl might turn blue.
I might get hurt;
my skin and integrity too.

You might be thinking,
it's not skin rather a
sheer sheet of fragility.
But I would say, it's open to all gazes but,
not to voraciousness and typicality.

Dean and David Go for a Walk

by Bill Valentine

On their annual summer visit,
Dean and David walked along Dorchester
Bay,
past Carson Beach and the volleyball
teams,
towards a hot dog at Sullivan's.

They walked and talked, or
strolled and reminisced.

"I remember our fathers
midway across Fordham Road.

The light changed. They
held up their hands
like crossing guards and
kept going," Dean recollected.

"I don't remember that," David replied.
"I don't recall much about
it except we, thirteen, stood
laughing from the corner," Dean ex-
plained.

"They were slow," David said.
"Your father with his angina.
My father with his weight.
I don't recall them ever going for a walk."

"That's what's unusual about this
memory," Dean ventured. "Why
were we walking with them?"
David spoke, "There was a gin mill

Dad liked on Webster Avenue. They
might have walked there for a brew,
taken us along for a soda.
Mom was dying."

"It was sixty years ago,
but I can see our fathers: calm,
crossing, hands demanding compliance,
slowly, slowly heading to the corner."

"I don't remember," David said again,
"but I can imagine them doing it."
Dean and David stopped at L Street,
changed their route, waited

to cross Day Boulevard and
continue their slow perambulation
to the L Street Tavern where
Dean would share his concerns

about his wife's health
over a cold brew.

Dean and David Have a Scotch

by Bill Valentine

"...Her son moved from Pelham Bay to
Astoria," Dean said
as he swirled the ice cubes in his scotch
glass.

On the TV, the news whispered. On
the radio,
Sondheim's "A Little Night Music."

"'Night Music' was a gem. I could under-
stand every word," said David
as if quoting Walter Kerr of *The New
York Times*.

"His mother said it was the gay gangs in
the park."

"Of course, the energy of *Hamilton* was
amazing,
but I couldn't understand a word, not a
word."

"The gangs threatened him as he rode his
bike."

"Gay gangs in Pelham Bay Park? Attack-
ing? With what? Boas?"

"Would you like another scotch?" Dean
asked
as he gripped the frayed armrest of his
green wing chair and stood.

"Fine. Not gangs attacking gays?"

"No. Gay gangs. I think she mentioned
chains."

"We hate to do this really, but
the President isn't telling the
truth...."

"Of course, he isn't. Twelve thousand
lies so far. Who said that, Dean?"

"Nicole Wallace, MSNBC. I'll get your
drink, David."

"But, maybe the son is... you know... I
like Wallace."

"I can't wait to hear Hannity on this,"
answered Dean
from the kitchen as he added ice cubes
to their glasses.

"His mother is such an innocent,"
David noted as he accepted his fresh-
ened drink.

"She voted for him," Dean noted. "Fox
will have a field day.
Miranda's like Shakespeare. You have
to educate your ear. "

"Why Astoria? A handsome boy... con-
flicted....,"
David remarked as he savored his
scotch.

Home

by Kate Flaherty

Home is where you go with a boo-boo:
For mercurochrome, a band-aid and
Maybe a hug or kiss.
It's sometimes a kind of bliss.

It's where you go when the world's
Thrown everything at you:
Mud puddles and sleet,
Bad boys lobbing stones,
A rip in your dress,
Your shoes a mess,
A big dog barks in your ear.
When you get home,
There's nothing to fear.

Home is the place where you don't
Have to "mind your manners" and
"put on a pretty face."
It's just not that kind of place.

It's where Ma's cooking daisy ham and cabbage
And she doesn't even groan
When you tell her
You could smell it at the corner.
She's just glad to see you home.

It's just as easy as your fuzzy pink slippers,
And if you have trouble with your zipper,
Your sister's there to help.
That's home.

If your homework turns your soul black
With wrath, big brother Jack
Can help you with your math.
That's home.

And if Dad's grouchy when the news comes on
You let it a-go, because you know
He'll be better soon.
He's home too.

My Destination

by Gautami Patel

In the midst of nothing and
everything. With words, ink and my
purple heart I will come to you.
And write to you. I will rain on you,
the poetry. The way I water the
flowers. Guide me to home. I hope
you remember, my address is on
your name.

Words

by Zoya Gargova

I speak and think in different languages:
French and Russian, English, and Bulgarian.
Submerged in one, learning all the others—
grammar, spelling, rules, and verbs and tenses.

French is the happy language of young age
English—learned latter well with British tutors,
serves me well, every single moment of my days.
Russian—softly sings of my students' days.

There is a time when well-learned words just
go away—
forsaken or dissolved into thin air.

My words to babies and small kids and things
are in Bulgarian: “Milo moe chedo”
fills my mouth—words sweet, and true and light.
Words of poems, sonnets, of mom’s lullaby.

All words blurred or thought with lots of care
are the secret code, to make us who we are.



I Can't Breathe by Megha Nair

Good Sleep

by Benjamin Grzyb

He is lying on a bench, feigning tranquility under the abrasive orange lights that make his skinny limbs flicker as they move past his beady eyes. He has a headache; he's also cold, even though it's summer. He's tired because he's stayed up all night searching for good sleep.

Puddled on the cracked concrete is a thin jacket, meant for the winds that make him shiver on summer nights. Heaped on his chest is a bag made of nylon and steel. It had cost him approximately seventeen meals, but it was necessary. In his pocket lay a crumpled up note long forgotten that calculates proportions of supplies, food, clothing, and luxury items from a life savings of exactly 3,477 dollars. Jobs are many, and questions are few if you know who to ask, but there are many miles between where he is and where he wants to be.

A vague anxiety tugs at the corners of a brain that has given up a long time ago. A brain that has been exhausted from explanations and wordplay and stretching the truth so much that it has stretched itself too thin. The result: headaches.

A familiar wave comes over him that makes him want to bash his head against the bench until the brain inside regains its shape. He wants to reach into his temple and pinch the vein that won't stop complaining. He wants to climb that light post and smash the orange light to broken bits that he can stomp on. He wishes he wasn't too tired to do any of that. The streetlight hurts like insomnia and pale blue computer screens in the dead of night, and he doesn't want anything that reminds him of home.

He pokes his eye out from under the crook of his slender arm thinking that he hears a train coming. There is no train of course, just a plastic bag cartwheeling down the tracks, what his old friend would have referred to as an "urban tumbleweed," and the empty station itself. The station is an eyesore to him, and to pretty much everyone else just by how obvious that fact is. The station exists as a concrete slab naked under the stars or rain clouds with rusted steel bridges that arch over tracks so straight that they could be categorized as brutalist, and unkempt chain link fences. But no one was ever there for the aesthetic. He cups his eyes with the crook of his elbow again wondering why journeys always had to begin on the bleakest of overtures.

It's the kind of night where he expects someone to come out from behind the bushes that hug the concrete slab and shoot him, leaving his body strewn not over the tracks but somewhere further. Someplace where it can meet up with his mind somewhere past the orange lights.

Wondering if the train is running late he reaches into his pocket looking for a phone to find only a wallet, and the reminder that he had left the phone at home.

It pings, and that's how they find you. He assumes that they're looking for him right now, he thinks that they've found him already, and are just waiting behind that pillar or under the bench he has been lazing on. Pulling up the jacket he expects a hand to reach out from underneath him and pull him back all the way home. No

hand comes out and he's saved for now. He's not so sure about the pillar, and has to investigate. There's no one there either, but it never hurts to make sure.

Sitting back down on that bench, spooked by his nerves but trying not to be overly concerned about the specters of his own paranoia, he tries to relax. He's not a fugitive, after all. He doesn't even know how many days will go by until someone realizes that he's missing. He doesn't even know if the train cars have security cameras. Airports, definitely. Train car, probably. But would they even look at them? Does the internet just have its ways? Not if he left the phone at home, right? Do they have a lead?

He leans back on the bench, bouncing his knee, and sighs into the night sky. Nerves prick at the back of his brain in a way that could feel almost comforting if it wasn't so familiar. He remembers the first time he drove a car on the highway, and the adrenaline that felt so similar. But that was back when this sensation was new and exciting and didn't foretell insomnia and shame, and the worst accident of his life. He doesn't want to fall asleep; he can't if he tries. Yet he feels that familiar sickening feeling of falling in his stomach. The weight of the headaches and nerves in his brain meets the sickening feeling of falling in his stomach to crush his jaw until he's grinding his teeth.

The bells of the approaching train don't make these feelings subside, but they at least distract him long enough with the first stepping stone to something that would hopefully make him stop grinding his teeth. The conductor looks almost as tired as he does and ushers him onto the train. He takes a seat on the top level, and is careful to take the first seat in the row on the left—the seat where no one could see him but he could see everyone else. Lucky for him the seat he's chosen has been well-used and the dip in it sinks his visage under the threshold of the seat in front of him.

Confident that he has secluded himself from those omnipotent security cameras, he waits for the conductor to come to him. Thankfully he's not left to stew for long, another advantage of his seat choice. The conductor is a lanky red-haired man who looks far too wrinkled for his age, bright yellow eyes staring him down under the shadow of a white windbreaker that's dulled from repeated encounters with engine grease and station soot.

"Where you heading to, buddy?" The conductor asks.

"..." He hesitates.

"South Station?" The conductor asks.

"Sure," he replies.

"Figured. People never get off between here and the city coming this way, so that leaves you with only three options for destinations."

"Never?"

"Rarely. Money, please."

He pulls out his wallet, bulging with bills saved for time spent away from ATMs, but this is a time for card purchases; ATMs were plenty, and civilization close. Then he realizes that something is etched into the plastic: Aaron R. Kaczynski.

"Wait," Aaron says, accidentally too loud. The heads of the three people in the car turn towards him. "My apologies," Aaron says, pulling out a more anonymous twenty dollar bill. Too memorable, shit, he thinks placing the note in the man's

wrinkled hand. The conductor pockets the cash, fishes out a five and four ones, and leaves a purple slip pinched in the fold of the seat in front of him, and moves on to other patrons.

Aaron sinks lower into the seat dip in despair. How could he have forgotten about his bank account? Surely they could track and find him that way. He hasn't even made it to the start of his journey, and already the calculations on the crumpled up piece of paper are coming undone.

He slumps further into the seat dip and stares at his own reflection. It's not a pretty sight. His jaw is slack and his cheeks dip into his skull like the cushion he's sitting on. The bags under his eyes look and feel heavy enough to pull his entire face down, and his hair is long and greasy, and promises only to get greasier. All that remain of his well-kept wild, bright red mane are the faded pink strips hanging loosely by his shoulders under messy strands of dirty blonde. If he turns his face to the side he can almost see the vein in his temple that is giving him so much trouble. He lazily squints to blur the image of his gaunt face into the muddy summer night, wishing that the glass didn't make such a good mirror.

His head gets placed on the glass by sheer fatigue and it feels strangely cool in a summer where everything felt just a little too hot, and too humid. The familiar feeling of falling sinks into his chest but he knows that he won't be falling asleep tonight. Aaron never falls asleep on public transport. It used to be a childish vanity of his, to outlast whatever parent was snoring in the passenger seat on a long drive. Now it's nature to him, made even worse by how restless his aching muscles make him. His body cries out incessantly for a comfortable position to fall asleep in that it can never find.

Aside from his reflection, his view of the outside world left little to work with, and little to build upon. Building off of what is already there is what most would call "world-building," but you can't pluck something out of the void. The dull moments where Aaron has tried and failed to fall asleep are where he likes to hide. So he just closes his eyes, then winces, and tells himself over and over again that there's a population problem: that the world isn't as empty as it looks on this train. He tries to plant cities in the empty blackness for him to look at, but they all come out warped, and dream-like, with too much rust.

He notices an ache in his forearm, then a breeze from an unseen air conditioner, and suddenly he's shivering. He bundles himself in the jacket that he almost left puddled at the train station. The lights on the train are fluorescent, which hurt his eyes almost as much, but at least they don't make his limbs flicker. He dare not darken the room with anything other than his eyelids though; good sleep comes later.

Aaron glances at the ticket the conductor had given him, and remembers which station he had selected. He doesn't even know if it's the best station for him to get to the airport from, but he hopes that it's some great junction as the name suggests. Instinctively, Aaron reaches into his pocket for a phone sitting at home. Oh, wait, he thinks, a memory coming back to him. I planted it at a bus station as a decoy. Even as tired as he is, Aaron can't help but be a little proud of himself for his on-the-fly ingenuity.

Without the landscape to look at and not wanting to stare blankly into his own sunken face, Aaron just stares at the ground. His eyes are tracing the dents in the seats and the scrapes on the windows that get illuminated by more of those orange lights, like crystals against a flashlight. It's the middle of the summer and it's so cold in the train. He's trying to think himself awake, trying to latch onto anything that will keep his molecules moving. Once when he was on another train going somewhere else, a man who sat two seats from his twelve-year-old self was hauled off by the police for carrying a firearm within spitting distance of a pre-teen. This incident was enough to get him to swear off trains altogether and instead walk to Boston *Stand By Me*-style at the age of thirteen. He was saved by an old friend who knew enough about him to notice his disappearance and know to ride the train to inform him that the space between safety and the tracks ended after another tunnel. It all brought to mind the last words of the movie, being scrawled out by Stephen King on an old DOS computer: "I never had friends like I did when I was twelve. Jesus, does anyone?" He prays that she doesn't have that kind of dedication to him anymore; he has thrown it all away....

Aaron wishes for the gunman to come back and snap him out of his... lethargy... fatigue... insomn— no... somnolence! he thinks, the thoughts coming dangerously close to his lips. Shouts turn heads and when heads turn, so do cameras, he's thinking, somewhere more isolated.

Aaron can't make a mistake tonight. He wants to be alone but to be alone he needs to go into the heart of a place where there are too many eyes and too many ears and too many people who will tell. He can't stand out from the crowd, so he can't make a mistake. He has to melt into the city like he was made out of it. He's not running away, he's coming home, and he'll be back home after he comes home from the trip to his grandparents' house, sure. They live in... somewhere in Washington, sure. And they're gonna be there to give me a ride from Portland to... Bend? he thinks wildly. He remembers that Bend is still in Oregon, and that his grandparents actually do live there, and that surrounding that town is all desert so he must walk straight into that town's jaws. Who knew an oasis could be such a devastating thing?

He can't claim to be going to Seattle unless he is actually going there because there's always this twitch in his face that lets people know when he's lying. Aaron is very new to this whole lying game, and he isn't very good at it. He hopes to just plead the fifth his whole way to the Pacific and then make up some mythology to whomever happens to take a liking to him on his walk back to the Atlantic. If he doesn't plead the fifth the whole way there the journey will be paved in his mistakes, as if it isn't already. But tonight is a night to dwell on mistakes, but worse, it's a night to be scared of them. A night full of bright screens at night and headaches, muscle aches, bone aches. A night full of half-assed reactions and everything moving too fast for his weak, skinny arms to do anything about. A night where he picks apart other peoples' mistakes to fit in, like the way that the conductor has forgotten to check a new passenger's ticket, how three cars in the parking lot had tickets on them. Aaron looks around and finds so many minute mistakes to populate his tired brain that the revolver turns all the way around to where it started. His mistakes and his mishaps and how he has made

too many and will make too many more and that one day they will kill him.

He reels in his seat, praying that no one sees him as he does it. He white-knuckles the edge of the seat like a steering wheel and feigns tranquility again but the memories are all around him. He thinks to go into the bathroom but he isn't strong enough to stand up, let alone walk, let alone stop. He couldn't have stopped, couldn't have. I couldn't've, I swear, says the thought too close for comfort to the outskirts of his brain. The one that's eaten up the inside and is looking to get out again and thrive in the outside world where it can blend in with all the other mistakes.

A train hurdles past his window, and for a second the red lights on the front look to him like the brake lights on a car, and finally Aaron R. Kaczynski flinches.

The plane has been loitering on the flat top for an amount of time that Aaron has long lost track of.

Aaron did not succeed in blending into the city. Getting him to melt into the crowd was like trying to hammer a gold nugget into a half-baked iron ingot. He doubts that anyone noticed him, but there is always the chance. He slumps back into his seat thinking that security cameras may be on the flight as well. Aaron doesn't even want to remember how airport security burned into the back of his neck as he slumped his way towards the metal detectors.

Hopefully the plane ride will be a little more pleasant than his last encounter with transportation. It's day now, and the windows are too clear for him to see his face, which is a satisfying start. He even has the cash ready for a lanky red-haired man that will ask him where he's going next. He places the cash back into his pocket after twenty whole minutes of anticipation.

He closes his eyes just to give them a break. That free fall feeling so familiar to insomniacs engulfs him. He hears the scuttle of feet. And the clicking of tags. And clicking-scraping of bags. And those talking heads. And the tink of a shot glass.

Are shot glasses allowed on the plane?

A calm breeze blowing over his face makes him open his eyes. The window is broken. He's expecting to be sucked out of the hole. But all he feels is the cool soft breeze. A pain throbs wildly in his fist. Agony. Blood trickles out of the shards embedded into his knuckles. Then another drop appears on his wrist. Then another comes from somewhere below his eyes and puddles onto the back of his hand. Is his migraine that bad? It feels like someone has smacked him in the forehead with a cutting board.

Then he tastes the blood. Then he throws it up all over his arms and legs and the seat that seems to be a lot smaller than he remembered. He needs to pull the shards out of his fist to stop this.

His fingers pry into the gaping wound. He rips open the wound and tears up and up his arms until only bone remains. Everyone is looking at him. And none of them are concerned.

Then the gash in the plane takes effect and everyone gets sucked out.

His head slams into the front seat and he passes out. He looks forward into the

dashboard that his head just crashed into. It left a spiderweb crater in the plastic. He looks to his right. The woman next to him is dead. Her wide beady eyes stare at him, unmoving, accusingly. But he doesn't want to get out of the car. He just wants some good sleep. Maybe if he had good sleep he could walk on the heavy air. Right up into the clouds. Maybe he would find the plane that would carry him to the—

Aaron wakes up. Somewhat startled.

We are rarely completely lucid right after a dream. So he doesn't just jump up bolt-upright, and attract even more attention. He just shudders a little bit, and only thirty seconds later does it occur to him to check the window. He smacks it with his palm.

It's intact.

His watch tells him that he still has seven and a half more hours to sit and sulk until he arrives in Portland.

Greeted by the setting sun to his back he begins to sleep-stumble through the city. At the rate he is going he will have been awake for a record-breaking twenty-four hours. And that luxury purchase is long-gone by this point. He needs to sleep, but not in the city. So he begins. Turns his back to the sun in search of some new things to see. In search of deserts. But mostly in search of good sleep.

Ballad of the Moon

by Amanda Tran

Your every curve and angle is beautiful
It's hard not to admire you from afar.
I just want to be with you
But alas, it wasn't meant to be.

My life orbits around you,
Spinning me in dizzying circles
In hopes that you'll notice me
From three hundred eighty-four thousand, four hundred kilometers away.
But you, your life revolves around her,
Her stunning golden hair
Her dazzling white smile
Her gravitational pull.

You're hypnotized by her,
Like everyone else here,
You don't notice the people
Whose lives revolve around you.

I only wish you acknowledged me,
Someone who's always
Been there for you and
Adored you every single day.

But that's not how it works, because
She, will never notice you
And you, will never notice me
And that's okay.

Because, really,
You, will always love her
And I will always love you
And that's the way it was meant to be.



Child of the Universe by Megha Nair

The Birthday Present

by Zoya Gargova

Today she is eight—
ponytails, grey uniform,
birds flipping in her chest.

She dashes in the room:
searching for something in a box
and with a bow.

She stops, forgets to blink
—it's big and black,
it fills the room.
It's a piano,
it's a dream.

Small finger gently pressing keys
to alternate
the deep and low
with bright and high.

Regurgitating

by Paola Flores

Responsibilities and expectations.
Such long words that carry specifications.
Words that mean nothing without the experience.
Rejection, frustration, confusion, drowning.

Such long strides as the waves come.
Focus on the scenery before you, not the water.
The water is harmless.
Above the ankles. Sand rushes past the feet.
Above the knees. Water crashes against the thighs.
Above the chest. Water envelopes the body, only the eyes stand a chance.
Above the hair. Body and soul trapped under the surface.
The pressure ending all struggle.
The sun blinding any exits.
Still, unmoving, alone.
I can't breathe. I can't.

I can but I won't.

Gasping for air that is unwanted.
Grasping at the numbing sand, a bitter touch.
Groaning the pain away.
My body not letting me recover as it purges.
My body that chose to breathe.
My body that is not my own,
But is a part of me.
All the sand that once settled within me.
All the water that made its way into my bloodstream.
All the salt that fused to my core.
From the depths of my body.
From the secrets embedded in my heart.
From the intangible memories scorched within me.

Stripped me bare. Ripped itself without warning. Shredding its way through. Hurt,
abandoned, betrayed. I, the me who is left, is done,

yet free.

A Tree Dies in Dorchester

by Kate Flaherty

Some days are made for doom and gloom
Where skies are gray, the air is gritty
Others go from zip to zoom
And everywhere you look is pretty.

I have been ailing for quite some time now
I felt it first in my upper limbs
They flailed, they crackled, then they
bowed
To the onslaught of feisty winds.

Seeing them scattered all over the ground
I knew the disease had advanced so far
That no remedy could be found
Though I tower yet over houses and cars.

Last week they brought loud cutting knives
Began to ravish my aching boughs
Guiding them gently as if still alive
I felt only as much pain as I'm allowed.

Today they have another long saw
Two men wield it at my trunk
A strong chain guides it to the maw
Of a waiting truck.

Yet another machine is chipping my limbs
Rendering them sawdust wings
When at last my old trunk comes down
limp
They stoop and count my many rings.

“Two hundred years,” I hear one say
I recall how Washington was at the Blake
House
Around the corner. He did not stay
Over as the story goes. I saw him on his
horse

Riding over Boston Neck to a nicer
house
Across the river where he drew up his
next plan
His man shot a speckled grouse
And picked some of Blake's pears for
horse and man.

Now the children home from their
school day
Hover over the shoulders of the men
Who count the rings. They gasp and
say
“How old this tree is and I'm only ten.”

Some days are made for doom and
gloom
Where skies are gray, the air is gritty
Others go from zip to zoom
But nowhere I look is pretty.

Home at Last

by Misha Asif

The picturesque green still tattooed inside my eye
Why must these invaders mix blue and turn it red
What has my beautiful Swat Valley become
Try Malala, don't cry for your visions and dreams
For this country, will only because of them, once again fly high
When peace, now has all the scope
Then why do the civils have no hope
Why not pause and understand this
Hopelessness is wanted by the cause
The battle had bluffed and burned, yet I am baffled
Because of the pause, now is the time to fight for my cause
Now that the fire is tired and retired,
There is room again to replace the red with green
Sending our daughters to school is our cause
Because no human right should come to pause
No more trusting the lusted for war
God will be our “Talwaar” in this war
Home at last my Swat Valley shall roar

Morning Traffic

by Zoya Gargova

Grey clouds,
wet grass,
raindrops on my windshield.
Start, stop, absurd.

So many cars.
Am I going to arrive?
Stop and start again.

All reasons—washed away,

Lost in traffic.
Trying to find a beginning.

Pins and Needles

by Autumn Nutile

Folklore states we are all connected by a red string of fate.
I thought the one we shared was tightly braided;
a permanent display of passion.
Day after day, the string thinned and lessened into threads.
The charms fell out, the middle frayed,
and you snapped it.
I learned you cannot manipulate your own pattern in the crimson string.
A forced needle through the skin brings pain,
and endless, infinite knots.
One cannot alter their fate for their own sake.
I will feel the tug towards what loves me.

Someplace New

by Ann Nguyen

People flocked to Rosa's Baked Goods for its beloved desserts. The quaint bakery in Albany, New York, consistently received high approval ratings. When Rosa sat down to chat with news reporters, they blurted out questions like, "What motivated you to achieve your dreams?" Rosa's face lit up like the morning sun.

"My cats."

On a November afternoon, workers frantically bustled about the bakery, piping cakes and refilling trays with bread for the front display. Bree the Burmese cat slipped her slender body through the crack of Rosa's office door, trotting to the tables packed with customers. When they petted her, she squinted her sharp green eyes and purred in delight. Meanwhile, Prince the Persian cat sprawled on the floor in a back corner with his plump body. The color of his thick fur resembled that of orange meringue pie.

Prince managed to stand on his stubby legs but panted heavily as he trudged over to Bree.

"Look at who Rosa's talking to!" At the front of the bakery, Rosa welcomed a man inside. He wore a navy blue suit and carried a rectangular object in one hand.

"I saw him here last week," Bree murmured. "I think his name is Mr. Seaton."

"I don't understand them," Prince whined as Rosa and Mr. Seaton shook hands. "They talk fancy."

Mr. Seaton accompanied Rosa to her office. Before they could enter, Bree pounced on Mr. Seaton's suitcase as if it contained kitty treats. He let out a girlish shriek and recoiled in horror, prompting Rosa to grab the Burmese cat.

"Bad Bree!" she scolded her. "No hurting people! You're coming with me." Bree scratched at Rosa's stained apron as Rosa lifted her onto her shoulder.

Rosa then bent down to pat Prince on the head. "Good boy," she cooed. "You keep behaving yourself here."

After Rosa led a pale-faced Mr. Seaton into her office, Prince retreated to his personal corner. He was curious about the mysterious man. "Does he want to trick Rosa?" Prince muttered to himself. "Is he trying to change something?" Prince liked a lot of things about Rosa's Baked Goods: the Impressionist paintings on beige walls, the dusty broomstick by the cash register, and the golden bells that chimed when a customer came in. He hoped Mr. Seaton wasn't trying to take away what he loved.

Prince closed his eyes for a nap but the sound of loud clapping made him jerk his head towards the front door. The weekly guest musicians had arrived.

They wore fedora hats, which Prince had never seen before. He paid attention as they set up their instruments, introducing themselves as a jazz band from New Orleans. A man quickly counted and suddenly the room burst with rich noise from the drums to the trumpets. Some people got up and danced while others cheered from their seats. Prince found himself tapping his paws along to the rhythm of the

music, amazed at how the musicians played with such passion. He particularly liked the smooth sound of the saxophone.

Meanwhile, in Rosa's office, Mr. Seaton sat rigidly in a swivel chair, prepared for another cat attack. Bree, lounging in Rosa's lap, flashed a smile at the businessman. He took quick glances at her. "Make yourself at home, sir," Rosa said cheerfully. "Bree won't bother you no more." Rosa's office radiated the same warmth and energy as herself. The sunny yellow walls complemented the baby blue furniture. A vase of roses sat on a table stand in the corner. Rosa kept a portrait photo of her hugging her cats on the office desk.

"Let's begin!" Mr. Seaton declared. "So, Ms. Ramirez, you've got another place all set up in San Fran—are you ready to go?"

"Of course!" Rosa replied. "You hear that, Bree? We have a new bakery on the West Coast!" Bree cocked her head to the side. She supposed this was all a dream.

"You should expect to stay there for about six months," Mr. Seaton said, scribbling numbers on his notepad. "The business needs your help setting everything up."

Bree raised her tail upright and wriggled out of Rosa's arms. As Rosa and Mr. Seaton started signing papers, Bree paced the office in circles. "We're finally going someplace new," she quietly gasped.

Prince was still enjoying the jazz music when Rosa's office door opened and she walked out with Mr. Seaton, repeatedly thanking him. Bree hopped down from Rosa's arms and sprinted toward Prince. She could barely keep still, raising her paws up in excitement. "What is it?" Prince demanded. He glanced at Mr. Seaton who chuckled to Rosa before heading out.

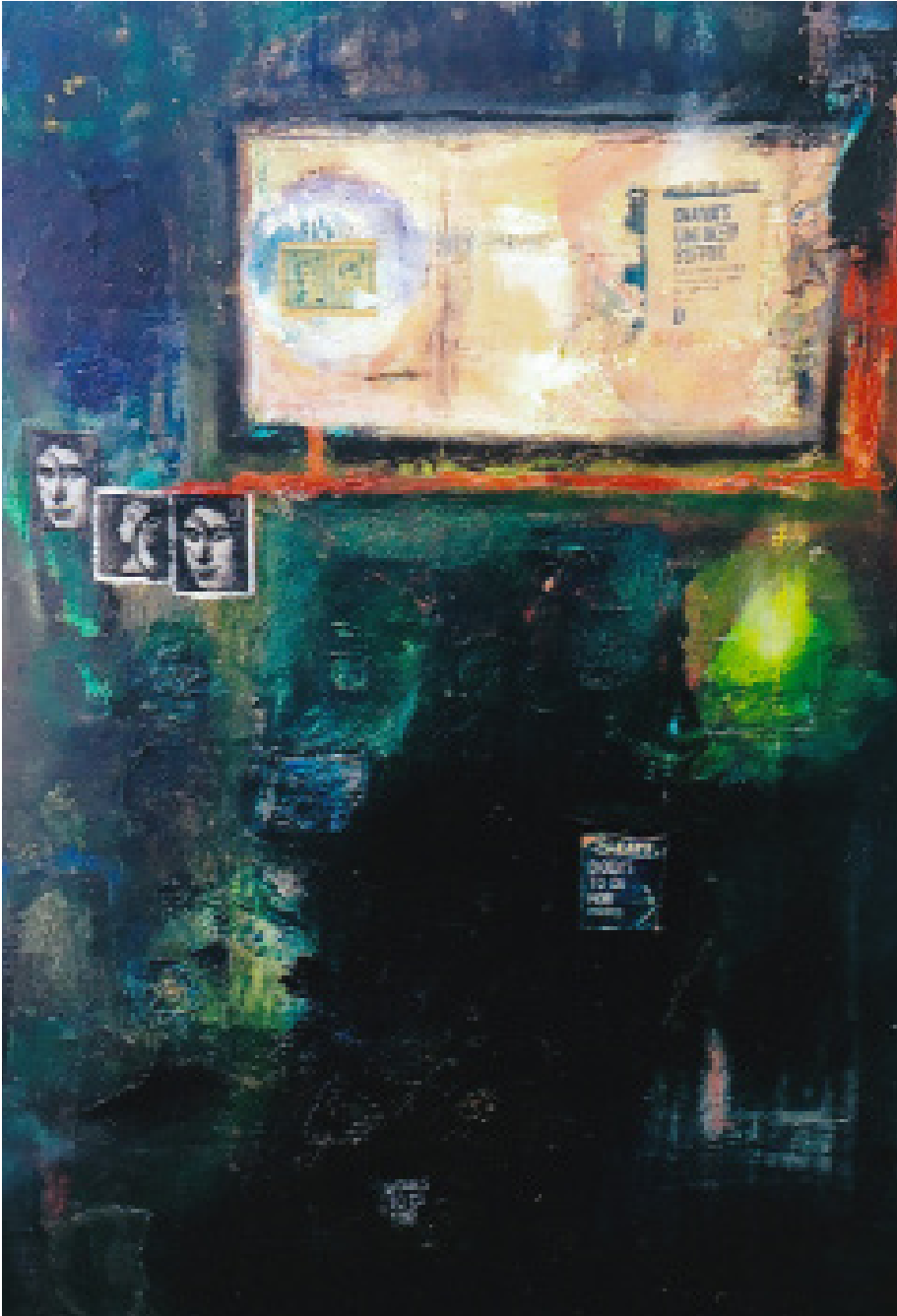
"Rosa just opened another bakery location in California!" Bree squealed.

Prince gaped at Bree and uttered, "That's great!"

Bree twitched her whiskers. "Huh? You're not mad about that?"

Prince shook his head. His change in behavior didn't faze Bree for too long. With her head in the clouds, Bree began rambling, "This is so exciting! Imagine all the places our bakery can go." Prince pictured himself seated at the front row of a jazz club drinking cocktails. Going someplace new didn't sound too bad.

The two cats smiled at each other and climbed atop stools by the bakery's glass window display. It was now evening. Sitting behind the neat arrangement of cakes, they saw the tall buildings and barren trees of Albany against a violet sky. Soon there would be a different view.



Diana Queen of Hearts by Elaine Happnie

Princess of Dreams

by Elaine Happnie

It was a sunny morning in August 1997. I just finished making a cup of cappuccino and sat to watch the morning news.

“Princess Diana dies in car crash in Paris.” This can’t be true.

The Princess of dreams / a goddess shining bright. / Dashed dreams
dark nights

Fragile, a pearl cast before swine.

She wanted warmth and yellow flowers but found ice and thorns.

Overwhelmed by a life that was not her own, courageously found her voice reached
peoples’ hearts.

Diana the huntress / hunted like a rabbit / chased by mad dogs.

She thought she found love again liked the venom from Dodi’s lips / loved the way
the poison dripped.

A flirtation that ended her life / Another mad dog basking in her light.

The gates of the palace were flooded with flowers and tears

“Royals” were shocked seeing people cry, no one protecting her

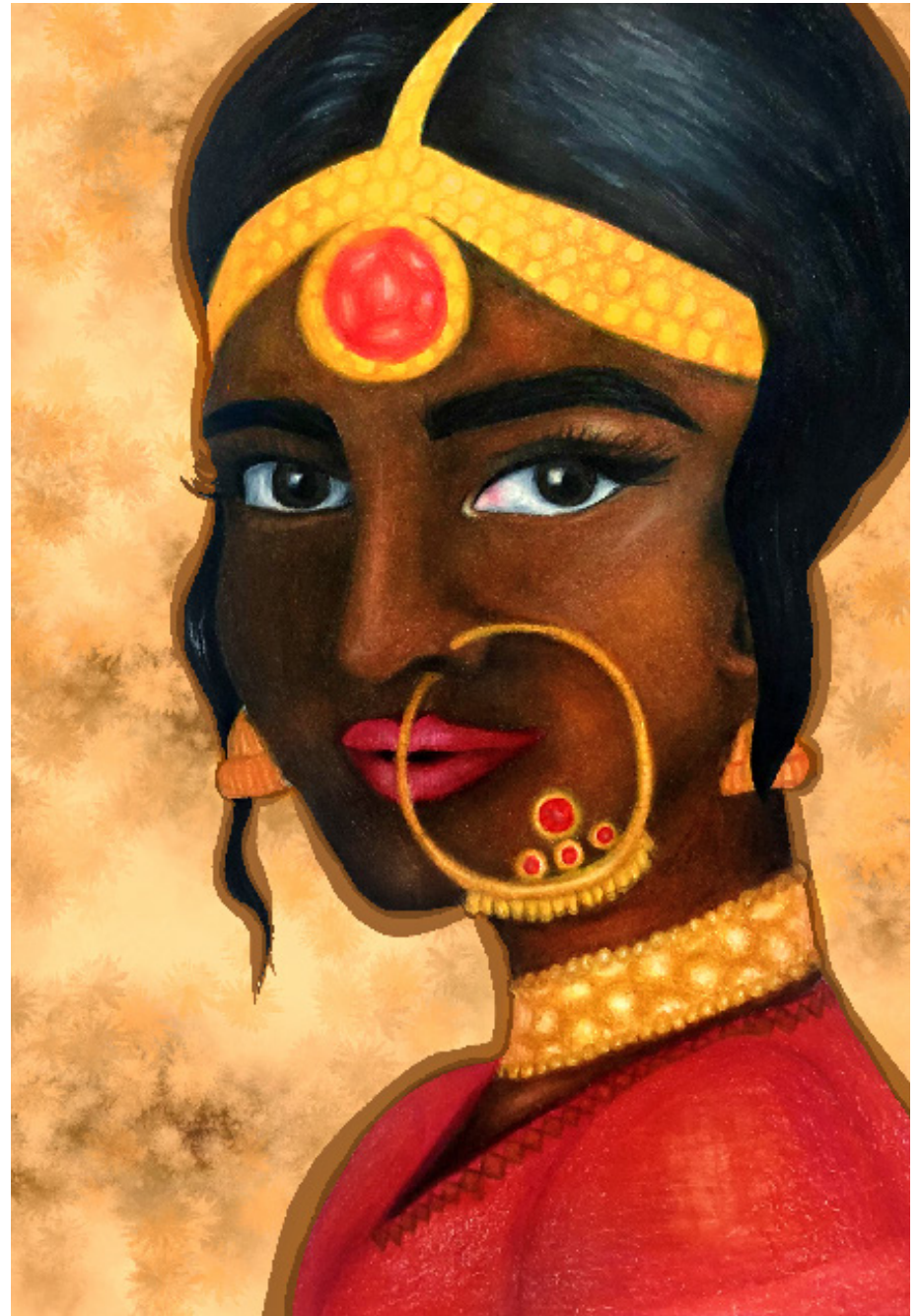
Feminine and gentle princess your life was lived / like a candle in the wind.

Thirty-six years young and died in a car crash.

I finished my morning cup of cappuccino and went for a long walk by the sea.



untitled (me) by Megha Nair



Dress Casual by Megha Nair

charcoal

by Madison DeBaker

you saw a song in me
long forgotten melody
frozen, impartial detachment of a heart gone bitterly cold
sour ice in a mortal body and nothing else
you retold the story of the hearth full of fire, sitting in my chest
[I am singing again, can you hear the flames?]

frigid hearth

by Madison DeBaker

i once had a song,
that had been buried alive
clouded by volcanic ash
you heard harmony erupting dirt
when I couldn't hear it myself
[and that's when I thought: finally, someone who can hear it]

A journey through a night news story

by Stirling Newberry

Jaded.
Persuaded:
Elated!
Belated?
Bladed.

The Color of the Sky

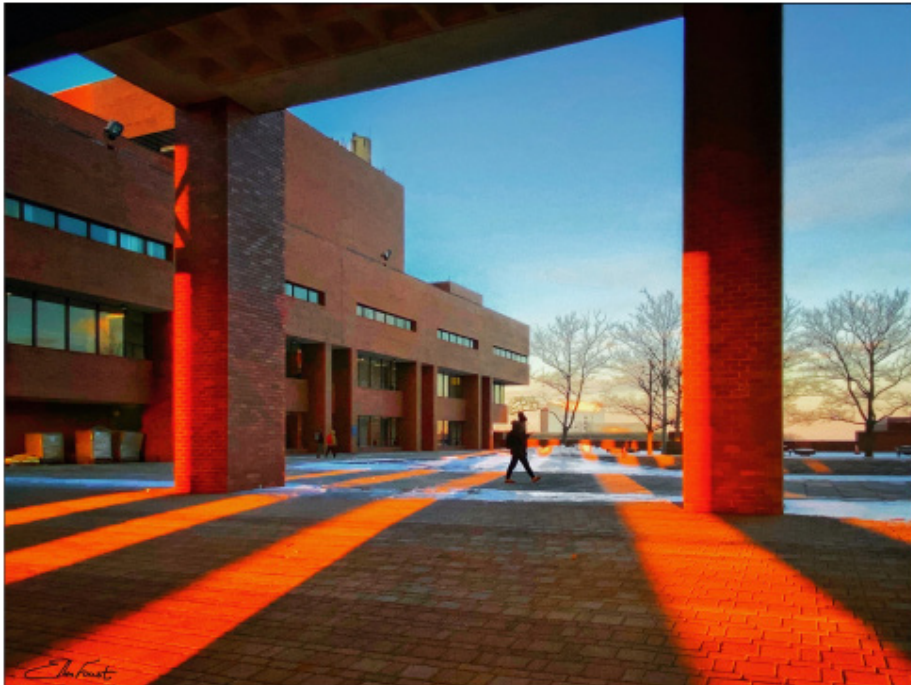
by Kate Flaherty

They try to tell you that the sky is blue,
But you know that isn't true,
It can be a hundred different hues.
It can be speckled gray, pink, and gold,
White and fluffy like marshmallows
Or threateningly charcoal bold.

It can be red at dawn,
by noon be fawn—
colored with funky clouds
climbing one another's backs,
by night be black—
taffeta crunched with stars
so numerous you forget where you are.
It can be blue and white
Cirrus-striped,
Or green when hurricanes start to blow
Or white and fat with snow.

And don't get me started
on sunsets and rainbows,
you must know
a whole carton of Crayolas
gets flung at the sky
just to knock you in your eye!

What do they know,
Who says it's blue?
Your eyes can tell you what is true.



Sunset on the Plaza by Ellen Foust

Ocean View

by Ann Nguyen

One August day, holding on
— to the summer before it
slips away, you take me to
the boardwalk, and we breathe
the sharp scent of sea salt.

To me, the ocean is a tyrant
with waves that shift in swift
motions, and force that strikes
fear in my soul. It threatens
to drown deep.

To you, the ocean is a tapestry
of blue aligning with the green
fields and brown soils of Earth.
Your eyes twinkle as the waves
reflect light.

Despite the chatter of tourists
and squawking of seagulls,
I hear only you say,
It's beautiful. These words stick
like glue so I take in the view.

I play with the freckles on your hands,
making constellations
like the ancient Greeks, exploring
you. I see now how the ocean
shines through.



Of the Ocean by Megha Nair

Call My Name

by Cody Reeves

I would tell you my name, but it would change by the next time that I told you. See, my name is unique. It has no predetermined amount of letters, it has no specific chronology of sounds and no proper enunciation. Most of you don't know how to talk; you just know that you can, and you do. Most of you don't know the mechanics of speech. You don't know that the back of your tongue snaps off of the rear roof of your mouth to make the "C," clearing a path for you to pronounce the bellowing "O" with your lips as the tip of your tongue taps the front of the roof of your mouth for the "D," simultaneously changing the pitch in your throat by raising the back of your tongue up, almost to the starting position to make the "E," even though you do it every day. A name is nothing but a short collection of sounds that represents the substance of the named. *My* name, unlike most, changes as I progress. Sometimes my name is Cody. Usually it's C-C-Cody, or Uhhc-c-c-cody. Perhaps Mike or Nick if it's easier to say at that moment, and the inquisitor is somebody of lesser importance that does not need to know the word on my birth certificate. The way I pronounce my name this time is my real name, to that person at least.

I never quite felt like I had a learning disability or was "retarded," but being seen walking into a special room with the therapist every week didn't convince me, or my classmates. Being born with a stutter, I am a medical question mark. There is no rhyme or reason for a stutter, nobody knows where it comes from and nobody knows how it is triggered. All I know is that I can never order what I would really like at a restaurant, or tell my parents about my day because of the pending humiliation. Speech therapists, who speak fluently, attempt to pick apart this phenomenon with little success. The only thing that helps is practice, just like with any other sport. I would read books aloud, sing along to rap music and analyze speech patterns of stand-up comedians, practicing each syllable one hundred times, then move on to the next. One hundred "at"s, then one hundred "but"s, then one hundred "Cody"s, all the way to one hundred "why"s. Why? That's the disadvantage I was awarded and it is the battle that I lose every day. But failure breeds success... so they tell me. Easy for them to say. Literally. You can say whatever you want when you can say whatever you want.

What you do subconsciously is a war for C-C-Cody. I would sit in my room, hours on end, and study the movements of the jaw and the tongue, confounded by how I could not seem to speak as fluently as I murmured to myself under my breath. I was obsessed with where the tongue would strike inside the mouth to make each particular sound that comprises each word of each sentence of each introduction. In a class of twenty-six students including the teacher, it only takes fifteen seconds to make twenty-five first impressions, and my condition withdraws my status as a regular student, and replaces it with a stigma of being defective. A condition that can not be visibly forewarned, like most disabilities. I seemed sufficient in society until I

attempted to communicate. I sit in astonishment as a student flawlessly, effortlessly introduces himself; it's like watching a great athletic display when somebody can speak perfectly. My turn to talk was rapidly approaching and as the voices of the other students steadily faded out, I was too focused on trying to slow my cyclic heart rate to pay attention. It was my turn. My vision had become blurry, and seemed to zoom in and out like I had been too close to an explosion. A silent but thunderous discharge rattled my own brain from within, giving the sensation of passing out from blood loss as I stood to address the class.

"I-I-I-.... M-My name is C-C-C... Reeves. I play ba-ba... football and I like to wrrrrr-wrrrite...."

My name had changed yet again that day....

Nobody spelled her name correctly. Her name was Ariana with one "N," but everybody spelled it with two. Her "A" was soft, like her sensitive emotional entity. Not how everybody else pronounced it, with a hard, aggressive "A." She's the girl I had been hopelessly dreaming about all year, and she's at her locker as I roam through the middle school hall after class. She's the kind of girl who would give you her seat at the lunchroom so you wouldn't have to stand alone, despairingly searching for an open table, trying to dodge the piercing glare of a thousand sets of eyes. She was popular, so she could sit anywhere she pleased. She would read the poetry scattered throughout the school bulletin boards and softly whisper endearments toward the anonymous artist past her divine lips. Long brown hair as sleek as China's finest silks, skin that could sell the most luxurious lotions and complexion of crystal. I loved her as much as I hated my disability. Even more. My heart spoke louder than my brain which was urging me not to make a mockery of myself as I approached her, humble.

Against her neighbor's closed locker I leaned, and I tried— oh, I tried— to make my speech as charming as my thoughts. I relaxed; I was so calm that I should have known a storm was coming as I formulated the lyric in my mind that would convince her to ignore everything she already thought she knew about me. To her I was Cody. I gazed into her infinity pool eyes so deeply that I touched bottom. I went into her mind and I could see the hope she had for me to be able to break the barrier between classmates and our potential future.... I looked at her lips, parted mine and began to think of everything I had always wanted to tell her. I would finally tell her that she was my sole inspiration to set my alarm each night, because in the morning when the teacher called attendance, I wanted to be there when she answered. "Here!" in her voice was my favorite song, and I got to listen to it for one second every morning. That was enough to get me out of bed. I would tell her that nothing else mattered except the privilege to wake up before her in the morning, run my fingers through her hair, behind her ear and gently kiss her sleeping lips as she lay safely, comfortable on my chest. I would tell her that even the word "her" sounds more beautiful when she is the subject and that every poem on the school bulletin board was written around tear droplets on the page on my desk... for her.

In that moment I was normal. Not even normal, I was my own hero. I had overcome my greatest crutch and I could envision the euphoria that I had given her because of it. Before I knew it the bell had rung to start the next class. I had been by

her locker for almost three minutes, too trapped in my imaginary bliss to realize I had been stuck on the same sentence, and never finished it. The last morsel of strength I had remaining was a desperate attempt to retain any dignity that I was clinging on to.

“Well... I should probably get going to my next class....” She excused herself with a pitiful inflection and a short, sympathetic chuckle as I silently nodded and let her go.... I let her go, and we would never speak again. My name had changed to her, like it had to everyone else. I was still C-C-C-Cody, the dreamer who tried and failed at even the simplest of tasks. Even still, I would rather be a failure who dreams than a success who would have been content with mediocrity.

Having a name with a number of “C”s in a row is a textbook example of how to become a target of relentless verbal and physical bullying. With nobody on my side, and the presumption that I would never report to an authoritative figure, I had no defense when my classmates decided to throw me into a trash can and roll me down the hallway. The labeling theory suggests that if a person is constantly branded, they will eventually come to believe that the distinction is true, and develop the very characteristics of the label assigned to them. With my head submerged in semi-spoiling milk from that morning’s breakfast, and warm ketchup sneaking its way into my shirt collar, it was hard to ignore the symbol of what they perceived me as. There was seldom a day I came home from school with less than a few bruises, cuts or fat lips, but that’s what I’ve come to expect being named a grotesque, submissive stutterer. Not a man, not a student... a stutterer. I was beginning to surrender hope that I would ever be adequate or have the ability to be successful. I would never have a distinguished career or even a conventional relationship because nobody had the patience to listen to me, and I didn’t have the self-abasement to ask them to. I would eternally be at the mercy of anybody who was socially inclined to me, which was the great majority, if not everyone that I had met up to this point.

It took years of involuntary body hardening before I decided to do something for myself, so I began illegitimate boxing and other martial arts training. The next time there was an upperclassman suffering from a superiority complex waiting for me as I stepped off of the bus, I wasted no time. I remembered what my step-dad had taught me: “Grab with the left, swing with the right. Once you’re holding him up, let him drop.” I didn’t have many other options so I did exactly that. As he went to shove me, I reached between his outstretched arms, grabbed a hold of his name-brand fleece jacket with the grip that turned my knuckles as white as the snow on the ground beside us. I balled my right fist like my fingers were glued to my palm and thrusted at his face.

Connecting with his upper teeth, I left a scar on my knuckle, and a dental bill in his mother’s mailbox. I continued to swing as I felt the overpowering rage from years of torment blitz out of my heart, into my gritting teeth and into my fist that was creating a drum roll on his fracturing bones. He could no longer see my punches coming, and I almost forgot about the “let him drop” part of my stepdad’s quote. When my vision had cleared and my mind slowed down to a comprehensible pace, I let his semi-conscious body fall into the snowbank, not realizing the whole right side of the bus got to witness a live boxing match. The driver wasn’t quite as entertained as the

students, but she still let me have a two-week vacation from going to class. By the time I reached high school, with more than a few suspensions on my record, the bullying had stopped entirely, and that was an epiphany for me. I was more powerful than I ever had given myself credit for. I had become accustomed to being incompetent, but I wanted to be forceful now. I wanted to be a Marine. The pinnacle of physical perfection and moral, ethical sacrifice. Honor, courage, commitment. Marines had respect, something I had always longed for, and desperately needed to acquire.

Still in high school, I had gone to the recruiter to begin the process of joining the Marine Corps, until I was denied because I had too many “C”s in my name when I was being interviewed at the processing station. Once again, I had to overcome the ever-evolving mountain that had grown inside of my own throat. I was ordered to see a speech therapist, but this time I had a greater incentive to cure myself of this disease. As I speak, or even as I write this, what I am saying is not made up of words, but rather individual sounds that make up a longer sound that people *then* refer to as “words” and “sentences.” Words and sentences are man-made inventions, the sounds that structure these words are natural, and those are what I needed to master. There are 31 possible sounds that can start a word, whether it be a hard “E” or a soft, the soft happening to be the catalyst sound for a lot of other letters. This mental deconstruction of speech allowed me to trick my brain.

For some inconceivable reason, when I sang or rapped I could have been mistaken for the recording artists themselves, but if I were to speak those same lyrics, you would miss your reservations waiting for me to finish talking. When I attempted to say my name my jaw locked, unless it came after a vowel sound, and I could pronounce words that started with a “K” easier than words with a hard “C,” even though it was pronounced the exact same way. I needed rhythm, and I needed to change the spelling of the words in my own mind to believe that I was attempting a “K” instead of a “C.” If I swallowed just before I had to speak, that would activate the muscles in my throat so that I could force the next syllable out of my mouth before my brain realized that I was talking. To accompany all of these mental deceptions, I had to consciously control the finite movements of my tongue and jaw to produce the right sounds. After months of practice and speech tests, I had gone back to the civilian who told me I was unfit to be a Marine. Armed with my test results, I was granted the opportunity to go to boot camp.

“Take the fucking cock out of your mouth, bitch!” a Marine Corps drill instructor requests as I didn’t answer his first question to satisfaction. Maybe I had not relinquished my stutter entirely. Even so, I thought it was hilarious, much more creative than the generic “broken record” insults that I had been so used to from high school students. “Everybody get out to the sand pit and get on your fucking faces! Except you, Pitter-Patter!”

There is no shortage of clever ignominy in the Marines.

“Electric Tongue is gonna say the Rifleman’s Creed. Every time he fucks it up you’re all gonna do twenty-five burpees. Now scream, ‘Aye, Sir!’” the Drill Instructor directed.

“Aye, Sir!” we all confirmed. I still know the Rifleman’s Creed to this day. I had

plenty of time to think about it while I bear-crawled to and from all of the trees around the squad bay, apologizing to each of them for working so hard to provide me with the oxygen that I was wasting by stuttering. Again and again, I rushed back to my comrades to assume whatever piece of the punishment that I could. Their cammies bestrewn with sharp sand eroding their skin into a raw, shaved steak appearance; sweat turned to tears halfway down their afflicted faces with genuine struggle in their eyes. I had expected retaliation by nightfall; all I've ever known is to fight out of the corner I was predestined to be backed in to.

I quickly felt gratified in the Corps; it was a community of fighters, warriors. All that the Marines cared about was how thick my skin was, and after my childhood, it was. Before long in the cult, my speech impediment wasn't of any concern. The tough love had been a better remedy for me than the state-mandated coddling from Massachusetts public school faculty, which only led to a harsher communal response. I even enjoyed the slandering to some degree. I had never believed in euphemistic language, and neither did the Marines. I am and always was a stuttering, socially rejected outcast, so why should I lie to myself and pretend that I'm not, instead of addressing the problem and finding a solution? My story is not about accepting who you are. To take my situation at face value and use it as an excuse to be substandard. That's fine for some, but not for me. My story is about surpassing your obstructions, putting yourself into an advantageous position regardless of what hindrances are between your circumstances and your objectives. A combat veteran had said to me: "It's not where you're at, it's what you're doin' where you're at." To me, this summarized how I still had the courage to go to one of the hardest training camps in the world, indifferent to my crippling impairment, while everybody back home on their self-proclaimed pedestals has yet to consider personal sacrifice in the repertoire of their character. Criticism is not a factor of courage, and tyrannizing the weak does nothing but reverse the status of the significant and the false.

My tough upbringing influenced my compassion for others, and quickly led me to the rank of Corporal, and after three years of opposition I had achieved the Military Occupational Specialty of 1st Degree Black Belt, Marine Corps Martial Arts Instructor. The significance of this title was not the belt, nor the fighting ability that it symbolized. Not even that I would be able to use this skill for the remainder of my life.... It was that this title meant that, for the first time ever, people cared what I had to say. U.S. Marines, whom I had respected so immensely growing up, were now standing on the tips of their toes just to hear the tip of my tongue tap the front of the roof of my mouth to make that sound that they needed to hear, no matter how long it took me. This title meant that I had done with disability what most people could not do with all of the advantages in the world. My name had become "Sergeant," "Instructor."

No matter how many times my name has changed, and will continue to change in time, these names among others make up the entity that is subconsciously seen and felt when you hear the pitter-patter of "C"s that always come before the bellowing "O." Sergeant, a masculine, ferocious leader of war, or a sentimental caretaker for his subordinate Marines. Instructor, a knowledgeable, seasoned fighter and martial

artist, or somebody who has suffered remarkably and is eager to assist others with his story any way that he can. Cody, a boy born a man, who would venture to surpass impediments that defined his dreams as fantasies; or Uhh-C-C...Cody, a timid, stuttering idealist who lusts of premature partnership. I have more names now. Though they have no predetermined amount of letters, no specific chronology of sound and no proper enunciation, I know what my name is. So call my name. Whatever name I am to you.

Cathedral

by Lynn Butler

I am a cathedral with walls made of worn-down stone and windows made from perfectly etched glass, my doors made of the finest oak and my ceilings painted by the artists who captured my memories. My beautiful silver bell lays up top to bless the ears who hear its song.

The floors do creak from years of wear and my pews have knots and indents from years of having visitors sit and weep to the tall altar that welcomes all. My oak doors acting as my arms, always open for those who wish to enter, my altar that of emotion for you to lay out what you wish. To leave it there in safety's unconscious state.

Though it's been years since a visitor has traveled within, the many that used to once come and weep now flee to other cathedrals while I am left to degrade with time. My windows are smudged by old handprints and the glass's color now faded. My doors need oil at the hinges but they still rest in an open position for any that walk in.

My altar still lays at the center stage, the items placed upon it covered with dust, but left there, never forgotten. The pews stay the same as none have come to sit and pray and weep, and confess. My floors creak still but this time due to the foundation's movements instead of footsteps.

Though I am an empty cathedral, my body still stays, for those who have remembered but don't return, I understand. For those who don't remember and stumble back to me, I welcome thee. My oak arms are always open.

My arms stay open though my shoulders and elbows crack and pop, my eyes though smudged by tears stay a glazed glass, my altar... my heart, stays open to those who wish to place anything within it. My brain, the cathedral bell, only rings twice. The day I opened my arms and the day they finally close.



Sunrise in University Hall by Ellen Foust

Candle Wick

by Victoria DiPrizio

I
strike
the
match
off
the
box, a slight hiss fills
the room. Darkness is
consumed by light. The
wick flicks back and forth
like the air is slapping it.
The light moves like a small
ocean wave before the storm
happens. You know that kind
of wave? It is a nice tranquil
wave. At first. Then gives way
and is one of the greatest you
have seen. And destructive. But
not this candle. This candle is
calm, like the calm wave before
the storm. And it will stay calm
in this dim room. From the wick.

Birthday Wishes

by Victoria DiPrizio

Make a wish!
Everyone is staring at me.
Make a wish!
I better make one quick.
Make a wish!
The candle wax is falling on the frosting.
Make a wish!
I have to make one quick.
Make a wish!
I blow out the candles.
Yay!
I didn't—
Yay!
Get to—
What did you wish for!
Make a wish....

childhood injuries

by Virginia Bradford

There's something nostalgic about a skinned knee when you get to a certain age,
says my mother in so many words.
I told her about how I fell down in front of the line of buses,
ripping my leggings and my pants and my skin,
but I got up and walked away without showing anything.
If that had happened a few years ago, if I'd been a little younger,
I would have cried over my bleeding knee.
It was just something that I thought, feeling that sting that woke up that younger me
inside myself, a patch of bandage covering what had faded into a scar.
Like unblemished skin where there used to be mosquito bites and rug burns and
scratches from thorny branches, and a stubbed toe from a panel in the wall that
stuck out too much.
My mother said I never got hurt anymore because I never ran anymore.



Touch by Megha Nair



Student Lost in Thought in the Plaza by Ellen Foust

You

by Amanda Tran

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

—Langston Hughes

Do you ever wonder what happens to broken dreams? Or where forgotten thoughts go? What happens to lost hopes? And aspirations? Desires long past? Do they just disappear without a trace? Or do they become something more? These ideas don't become lost in an unknown Abyss and left to rot. This idea, of recycled and lost but unlost dreams, is explored through this story.

It is a balmy summer day. Very quiet, very calm, very blissful, very wonderful. You wake up early, early enough to go to the beach without too many people there. The sunlight shimmers along the waterfront, little diamonds flitting on the rich expanse of velvet blues.

As you stepped out of the back door of your beachside home, a salty summer breeze fluttered by, the sand filtering through your sandals. Warm sunshine envelopes your skin as you walk along the water, cool waves lapping at the bottom of your feet. You feel a strange calling towards the other side of the beach, an area you haven't yet the chance to explore. To this day, you still are not quite sure why you followed that pull, perhaps because you had time, or perhaps you thought there was something more?

Curiously, you oblige. First, one step, two steps, three steps, four. Small, cautious steps turned into confident strides, confident strides into an urgent thumping against wet sand. One, two, three, four. Breathe in tasteless air, one, two, three, four. Breathe out, one, two, three, four. Wow, the fog rolls in fast, you think. Breathe, one, two,

three, four. Where'd the sun go? Breathe, one, two, three, four. Where is everybody? Breathe, one, two, three, four. It feels kind of dreamy.... Breathe, scentless air, one, two, three, four. Why is it so dark out? Breathe, one, two, three, four. How long have I been running for (and why am I not tired)? you wonder. Breathe, one, two, three four. My name... who's calling me? Breathe, one, two, three, four. Music. Breathe, one, two, three, four. Breathe, one, two, three... four? Getting very sleepy, and... rather hungry.... Breathe, one, two... three... four.... So very sleepy... Breathe, one... two... three... four.... I'm gonna take a nap.... Breathe... one... two... three... four.... Why am I running again? Breathe... one... two... three? ... one... two... three... four... Breathe... one... two... three... three... three... four....

And then, a sudden weightlessness. Your body expecting the impact of feet on concrete, or perhaps sand, maybe water, grass even? But meeting... nothing. Absolute weightlessness ensues, a light yet heavy feeling, a coolness like being plunged into a pool yet the warmth of blankets on a rainy day, a state of both conscious and unconsciousness.

Darkness, indiscernible sounds, and then blurry lightness, colors spilling from the lightness then shapes coming from the colors, shapes turn into forms, forms into... life? A fuzzy shape forms before your eyes, stretching and contracting, a hand, fingers, *your* hand and fingers. You think, "Oh yes, that must be the rest of me, lilac knees, lilac legs." Lilac skin? Well that's new. Your back stretches, followed by your arms and legs, your clothing a washed out gray. You shift yourself onto your bottom, taking in the scenery. Blues and greens and light pinks and whites and purples blend and melt in the water. Water? Is that really water? Yes, the "water" flips and laps at the ground the way normal water does, smells like normal water and... feels like normal water.

You get up and look around. Where to? Well, you think, it doesn't matter which direction I go if I don't know where I want to be. You take a step in... *a* direction.

The music, you realize, is calling your name again... in the opposite direction. Well, looks like I'm going the wrong way! you think. Your feet, with a mind of their own, shuffle along in the direction of the music.

You follow the sound of the music, like two lean hands with slender fingers are pulling you along. Airy notes pervade the atmosphere, bouncing off the water, creating swirls of color against the sky. You continue following the direction of the music, the colors washing over your skin. Light greens smell of peppermint, the blues smell of the ocean... or maybe rain... the little wisps of pink are like honeysuckle... the whites smell of fresh laundry... with maybe a note of vanilla.

You keep walking, wondering why you haven't encountered any people yet. It's so incredibly lonely here... wherever here is... Perhaps it's the middle of the night?

A slender hand grasps your wrist lightly. You gasp, the sweet taste of vanilla flooding your mouth for a moment, the cool touch shocking you, the music changing again. You turn around and see a girl, a literal embodiment of mist. A thin, wispy frame, skin a lot like your lilac, but washed out and grayish, long dark hair, with a hint of that gray, and clothes that, unlike her washed-out skin, has more vibrant colors.

She beckons you to follow her, tugging on your wrist with her cool fingers. You follow, curious as to who this girl is. She seems harmless enough, a quiet but gentle

person with an unearthly kind of grace. You nearly trip over a log that washed ashore, only now realizing that she didn't *step* over the log, but instead, *glided* over it.

She leads you along, the music and the smells getting stronger, the colors swirling faster. You begin to see a couple more people, all walking towards the swirls of music and color and smells. You open your mouth to ask a question, then close it again, the crescendo of the music brushing against your tongue and the taste of mint lingers for a moment.

You trip, not realizing that there is a flight of stairs going up to... somewhere? You make the trek up, the colors and scents wafting up, swirling and bubbling, then sinking back down. You keep walking, the girl and others gliding up the stairs effortlessly. Then, the colors and fog and music and scents part for a moment, revealing the platform atop the stairs, and a sign: "The Land of Forgottenness."

You take another step up. The sun (is it really the sun?) peeks through the curtain of gauzy fog and colors and music, illuminating the scene around you, shining through (through?) the people and musical, flavorful scented fog around you. The sun shatters into little beams of light, crinkling little speckles scatter across the "ground" and sky.

The girl tugs on your wrist, dragging you towards, towards, somewhere. You follow blindly, musical fog sometimes brushing gently across your cheek, sometimes whipping viciously. You look around, noticing that the others, like the girl, have washed-out, graying skin, yet more vibrant clothes. Some are a gray-blue, others a light pink, many are indistinct, flat gray, but all wear clothing in brighter hues of their skin.

She leads you forward and stops suddenly, and the railed edge of the platform presses against your stomach. You peer over, realizing that the source of the music and flavors and scents come from this darkness, and the "water" (could it even be called that?) is actually a dark blue that emanates it all.

You look into the Abyss, mesmerized, and hum along quietly to a foreign, yet familiar, melody that you heard once, a really long time ago. You remember a day, when you were little, when your mother took you out to buy ice cream. It was warm out that day, and your mother held your hand as the two of you walked down the sidewalk towards the ice cream shop. You recall that you bought a mint chocolate chip banana boat, and your mother joked that that would have to be your dinner, too, as it was so big. You and she walked down towards the beach and along the sand, the water lapping at your feet and the almost-but-not-quite autumn breeze fluttered along the waterfront. Your mother, seeing that it was getting close to dinnertime, decided that it was time to go home. You walked up towards the sidewalk and heard a street musician playing a song and you hummed along.

You open your eyes, the mint chocolate chip color of the ice cream brushed against the sky with little whipped cream clouds, the same melody from that day still lingering in the air. As quickly as it came, however, the sky quickly shifted back into the blueberry and raspberry swirl as it was before.

You notice whispers, some louder than others, some cotton-y, some a fiery anger, some a quiet melancholy. The girl's whispers become more perspicuous, she gains more... mass?

She whispers, quietly, “I want to change the world, really, I do. There are so many things wrong and...”

Another man walks by, whispering, “...I know this can be done. I want to leave a permanent mark on the world, but...”

A small girl, maybe eight or nine, whispers, “...they say I’m too little. Nobody believes in me. They say...”

A young boy. “...you’re a nobody. Who listens to nobodys?”

A distressed girl, so faded that she can barely be seen, spits, “***And I can’t take this anymore. I can be so much more than this, but nobody believes in me,***” and jumps into the Abyss. Her body melts into the “water,” releasing swirls of pink and white, strawberry and vanilla ice cream. The fog in the air turns peach for a moment, then fades back into a swirl of colors but now, with an additional pink streak.

Silence. Nobody blinks an eye. Nobody is surprised. The whispers ensue.

Then, something magical happens. Out of the water, another “person” comes out. A brighter peach with swirls of green covers her skin, her body no longer faded away and with new life. She skips away happily from the platform, towards the way you came.

This is where forgotten dreams, hopes and aspirations, and thoughts go. They all gather here, slowly fading away until one day, they terminate themselves and become one with the Abyss. Of course, from this tragedy rises new life and all is not lost. Most melt away into the backdrop of “you,” the background music and colors and scents and smells that drift in your mind and make “you,” you. The rest, like a Phoenix, rise out of this Abyss as new ideas, new thoughts, new hopes and dreams, and go on in hopes of doing great things. Some may not succeed, but return to this cycle of “life” and “death” and are recycled, either as new ideas or as a part of the “sky,” leaving a permanent imprint of their existence. Those that *do* succeed become a part of the “you” that the outside world sees.



Amanda Tran

It's gonna be alright

by J.H.

I'm breathless here!
The awe-inspiring *people*—
It's a hive of adventurers.
Ghosts, ghouls, fairy-folk,
Living by the sea,

Listening at night to the sound of the dorms,
Banging doors, thumping music, and laughter from people ready,
Reaching through the darkness,
Trusting, that this is where we should be.
That this moment means something.

This moving mass has to be moving somewhere.
I doubt it but I shouldn't, I know it'll work, it'll be, I'll be.
It's because of the people— I know anywhere there are people,
Living and dreaming, I'll be safe.

flash flood on the highway

by Virginia Bradford

The ever-moving earth was still;
a summer afternoon stopped
the sky was wide and dropped a storm,
water flooding through the highway,
the high-speed blurry gray asphalt and white lines
on a place that doesn't exist—
now the water rose above the wheels,
cars stopped in lines like toys,
(miles along the drowned road)
and I opened the door.
I was walking in the newest river in the world.
The asphalt was hot and glistening heat,
cool flood waters above my ankles.
It was like a dream.

Holy

by Sarah Hayek

My heart aches, and my soul is drained. Every night lying underneath the window sill, lying in my lonely bed, sheet covers cold as my heart, I watch the stars as they glisten so beautifully, hoping if I admire long enough, they will feed me the answers my heart desires. Every night, I fall asleep with tears in my eyes, wondering when love will find me. Exhausted of waiting, clinging onto hope with my last, as I am terrified of letting go. Terrified of closing up my heart. The idea of love oxygenates me, for it is the only thing my lungs are able to breathe. When my soul is crashing, compressing and fighting for its light, the hope to love and be loved keeps it enriched. I deserve love. My heart deserves to be held in with caution as my body to be held with warmth. My green eyes who so hopelessly cry at the world for it has killed such a thing as intimacy. I crave it though. I crave what I am denied. Mind so deep of knowledge, it intimidates men who are broken. Those broken souls, as I am as well, fail to realize that it is okay to be broken, because my love... that is how love finds its way in. I am a woman of love. I am a woman of compassion. I am a woman of the heavens with God in me. Waiting for a soul to cherish the holy in me. I carry a light beneath this soft skin. Body of curves and marks, body of invisible bruises that awaits a being to caress it with love as gently as I choose to love it as so. I am a woman created off of the foundation of love. Built with the one necessity a child lacked growing up. And now, I spend my youth falling in love with strangers and broken souls. I fall in love with souls who are so desperately in need of warmth. Funny, the irony of how I seem to inquire everything my heart screams for. I became a home for the world. I became a love donor, a symbol of hope, but the question I seek every night is, who will love me and become my light as I choose to be for the world? ... the stars answered, whispering in my ears, "My brave soul, you are your own light. You are your own love."



horror by Virginia Bradford

Hope in Storm

by Gautami Patel

Sometimes I feel there is a storm around me. Sky is getting dark. And spreading darkness everywhere. Heavy winds are blowing. I feel I will fall down. But I am standing there. Facing the power of wind. Letting it ruffle my hair. I don't know when it will end. But I am letting my life take a free fall without any ropes. Because something inside me is telling me there will be a golden sky at the end of the storm.... There will be a golden sky at the end of the storm....

Déjà Vu

by Misha Asif

I restlessly roll down the blind shades to the little light that was exposed to my life at the eleventh hour. Just as the warm, joyful colors of the sky are drowned and overthrown by the sober and punishing cold hues, I'm reminded of the little time I have left with you.

Time is unforgiving, no amount of prayer or regret can undo your damage. Nothing will ever take the pain away. Little did I know this pain has eased the other aches away.

Time is permanent in its effects, yet it is little and temporary. Just as your memories are permanent, but your love was as temporary as time.

Sunsets being as melancholy and depressing as a slow suicide in a graveyard from the overdose of heroin when you're tired of the plague. But one cannot compare that sunset when you pass that empty smile every time an acquaintance brings up her name.

Like sunsets, all love must one day fade. But this torturous eternal love promised to you will always remain.

Upon Finding the Scar Above Your Knuckle (Missed Connection)

by Autumn Nutile

I am laying in your bed.

I grab your hand to hold it. You are lost in thought.

I ask who I am doing this for.

Is this intimacy?

What is human connection, if not a constant yearning?

It is an attempt to drown in frozen water.

It is the warmth that comes from the screaming silence of blanketed snow.

I am losing my mind in someone else's arms.



Burning with Passion by Megha Nair

Want to see your work in the *Watermark*?

We're always looking for more contributors! Have a poem you'd like to share? A story that you can't wait to see in print? Want to show off your creativity with a canvas or a camera? Send us your poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, drawings, photographs, and whatever other written and visual art you've got.

Email us at:

thewatermarkjournal@gmail.com

Visit us at:

thewatermarkjournal.com

Follow us on:

[facebook.com/thewatermarkjournal](https://www.facebook.com/thewatermarkjournal)

We can't wait to see your submissions.