

kíosk





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On the Cover:

digital illustration

Masquerade

Sudem Ayar





The background features several thick, overlapping brushstrokes in a muted purple color, sweeping across the frame from the bottom left towards the top right. The strokes have a visible texture and vary in opacity, creating a sense of movement and depth.

kiosk

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About Our Judges

Sarah Seltzer

Sarah Seltzer is a writer in New York City where she lives with her family, surrounded by books, records, CDs—and a lot of snacks.

She is an editor at Lilith Magazine and has been a journalist for many publications (some that still exist and others that no longer exist!), reporting on activism and culture, and writing essays, cultural criticism, and the occasional opinion piece.

Karri Jamison

Karri Jamison is a professional nature painter from Wisconsin. Her unique style of art merges two painting genres: abstract expressionism and realism. Karri graduated from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee-Peck School of The Arts in 2007 with a Bachelor's Degree in Painting & Drawing. She has been professionally selling her art for 17 years and is honored to be a judge and juror for many art fairs around the Midwest. You can find Karri's work at the Museum of Wisconsin Art, Catiri's Art Oasis in Iowa, in Hallmark stores, Wild Birds Unlimited stores, and on Esty.

Letters from the Editors

Samantha Giesen

Editor-in-Chief

Readers of the 87th edition of *Kiosk*, thank you for taking the time to read and admire the hard work of Morningside University's students. While I did not envision a specific theme for this year's edition, I wanted to ensure that we highlighted the unique individuality of each student chosen for the publication.



Each piece chosen for publication provides commentary on the complex emotions that come with living—centering around events such as love, death, exploration, and objectification. To assist these pieces in their exploration of life, we chose to have brush strokes branching throughout the pages of the magazine. These branches serve as a reminder that while all experiences are unique to each individual, they are, ultimately, connected through our shared humanity.

I would like to thank Jordan Kwarcinski, the Art Director, for their creativity and attention to detail that made the magazine a stunning example of what is possible with hard work and dedication. I would also like to thank Madison Mozak, Social Media Coordinator, and Saline Osborn, Web Editor, for their commitment to highlighting the magazine in digital formats. Thanks as well to my Associate Editors of Poetry, Fiction, Non-Fiction, and Visual Art: Danielle Thompson, Zizi Odigbo, Destinee Martin, and Byanka Olivarez. Finally, I would like to thank the faculty advisors, Brendan Todt and Kent McCuddin, for providing valuable insight and direction.

Jordan Kwarcinski

Art Director

When I was asked to be the Art Director for this year's edition of *Kiosk*, I had never been so excited—or so nervous. I hoped I could make this magazine something that everyone on the team would be proud to have worked on, and that all of the contributors would be proud to have their art showcased in. I hope that with my efforts over the past months, I have made that hope into reality.



However, if I did make that hope into reality, I didn't do it alone. I would first like to thank our Editor-in-Chief Samantha Giesen: she had clear goals for the look and feel of this year's *Kiosk*, and her ideas were instrumental in shaping the identity of the magazine you're holding. I would also like to thank Kent McCuddin and Brendan Todt for advising me throughout this process; this publication wouldn't have been possible without them as mentors.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude for my Associate Art Directors: Itzel Gonzalez, Amber Waters, and Shelby Kastner. They were an enormous help in the process of laying out the magazine, and I hope the ones who are able will continue to contribute to *Kiosk* in the future. I'd also like to give special thanks to Amber Waters for stepping up and organizing the special project for this year's edition.

It's been a privilege to work on *Kiosk*, and I hope you, reader, enjoy taking the time to experience this magazine. Thank you.

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stamped print

Balancing Act

Elijah Boyd Harris



Apparition

Stephanie Meza

How is it possible you've become a ghost in your own home?

So invisible

So quiet

So unnoticeable

They seem to see right through you

A phantom

They don't know you're there

And don't look for you when you're gone

You try to be involved but you go unnoticed

You decide to stay out of the way

A spirit

You won't know where I am

You know about me

But you don't know who I am

I'm right here

I've been here but I leave

You don't notice either way

What difference does it make that I'm in the house with you?

Nothing.

photography

Bethesda

Itzel Gonzalez



poetry

Kidnapping

Danielle Thompson

As a kid, I was so lonely
that I wasn't scared of kidnapers.
I wanted that.
I wanted someone to want me,
to choose me,
to pick me out as their favorite.
I'd sit alone at recess, hoping maybe it would be my turn
to feel wanted,
to be picked up and hugged,
just enough to feel a warmth in my heart.
The kidnapper never came—
even they didn't want me.
I spent years waiting,
invisible and small.
As if someone might finally notice
the emptiness in my eyes or
the sad girl
alone at lunch,
alone at graduation,
alone in the crowd of people who never looked
close enough to see me.

Mourning Doves



Tori Bouska

“Leah, wait here.” Mom had stopped me from entering the room with her.

“Why can’t I go in? I want to see grandmother.”

“She didn’t want you young kids to see her like this,” my aunt chimed in. Her face was still blank. “Noah. Luka. You boys are old enough to see her if you want.”

My mom, dad, aunt, uncle, Noah, and Luka all went into the room before I could protest. I was stuck in the waiting room for what felt like forever with my little brother Leo. He was in the corner playing with some block thing the hospital had. The block thing looked boring, so instead, I picked up a magazine. I couldn’t really read the words in the magazine so I just looked at the pictures.

“Can we go see gran-gran? I’m borrrreeedddd.”

“No we can’t. Aunt Mia said we were not allowed in. Only the adults and older kids can go,” I angrily said.

After another 30 minutes everyone came outside. Dad drove us home while mom quietly sobbed.

It seemed to me that she was trying to hide it from us while she stared out her window.

Soon Saturday rolled around, and we still hadn’t left.

“Mom, shouldn’t we be heading to grandmother’s house now? You’re going to be late for work if we don’t leave soon.” Mom was still staring at her computer, had been for what seemed like

an hour now. I tried looking over at the screen; I couldn’t make out what it said, but that wasn’t important right now.

“Leah, we aren’t going to grandma’s house.”

“But what about Saturday breakfast? Me and Leo are going to miss out!”

“Leah, honey. We aren’t going back to grandma’s house.”

“HUH! Why not? She’ll miss us. She loves hanging out with us. Why can’t we go?”

“It’s just what happens when you lose someone you love. You lose the life you had with them.” Mom kept staring into the computer. “Oh, sorry. There is cereal in the pantry; could you make your brother a bowl as well?”

As I pull the cereal out, I feel a wave of sadness wash over me. I always loved Saturday mornings. Yes, they were crazy, but they were all worth it.

By the time all the kids got to grandmother’s house, she would already have pancakes and sausage waiting for us. The boys would always take all the sausage before I could get some, so grandmother started hiding some for me. She always did little things like that for me.

I never liked baseball, but the boys loved it. They always played it right before lunch. However, grandmother would stay in the house with me and play with dolls. One time, while the boys were playing baseball, they broke one of her windows. She wouldn’t stop screaming at them for 40 minutes. Throughout her screams she kept saying, *YOU BOYS WILL NOT GET A WEEK’S*

WORTH OF SLEEP WHEN I DIE AND COME BACK AS A MOURNING DOVE. YOU HEAR ME?

“Grandmother, what do you mean when you say you will come back as a morning dove?”

Grandmother had just calmed down from her screaming fit. She was now in the kitchen preparing lunch. *No Leah, mourning dove. Anyway, when I die I will come back as a mourning dove. I know the loud bird in the morning.*

“Why a mourning dove? They are so loud, and no one likes them.”

Because, your grandpa—oh I’m sorry, grandfather—would always wake me up in the morning whenever he got ready for work. I would always tell him that in our next life I would become a mourning dove and wake him up early every morning as payback.

“Okay guys, ummm, so we are going to see grandma today, but, ummm, it’s going to be different. While we are there we must be respectful and follow all the rules. It is very important that we don’t act out at all.” Mom seemed on edge all day. She made sure every detail on us was perfect.

“Mommmy, can I take my tie offfff. It’s itchy.”

“No, Leo. it is very important we look our best.”

Seeing Leo in all black was weird. He always wore bright colors that never quite matched. I didn’t mind my black dress; actually I really liked how simple it was.

When we got there, mom second guessed almost everything. She wanted us to see grandmother, then she didn’t, then she did, on and on. Finally

dad stepped in.

“Honey, we should let the kids see her. This will be the last time they get to. I will admit Leo is probably too young, but Leah is old enough. Let her say goodbye.”

Dad stayed outside the room with Leo, keeping him entertained, while mom and I held hands as we walked in. The moment we entered the room, I felt a shift in the air. We walked up to the casket and my heart dropped. She was just lying there. That was my grandmother. I couldn’t stop the tears from falling down my face. Mom hugged me tightly and rubbed my head as I tried to cry softly.

“I know, baby. Come kneel with me, and pray grandma’s soul makes it safely to heaven.” When I looked up at her there were tears running down her face, too.

After our tears and goodbyes, we joined Leo and dad in another room, where they had food and desserts.

“Leah, Leo. why don’t you head outside for a little while me and mom go talk to people.” Dad walked over to the food tables, grabbing each of us a plate. “Take these. And eat ALL of your vegetables.”

Leo and I found a bench to sit on. We stared into the forest behind the building while we ate. The image of grandmother was still fresh in my mind. Grandmother had been my best friend, and now she was really gone. We would never play dolls again. She would never braid my hair again. She would never wipe the tears I had after the older boys were being mean to me. She would never do any of those things again. Suddenly, a familiar coo broke me from my thoughts.

When I looked at the tree ahead of me there was a mourning dove sitting on a branch. The tree appeared to engulf the bird. Its bright green leaves and strong branches let the tree stand tall and stable. Trees didn't have any worries. They didn't have any natural predators. Their job was just to grow and be a source of shelter. A source of comfort. The bird cooed again. Then another mourning dove landed right next to it. They nestled into the tree together. For some reason I wanted the birds to notice me the way grandmother always did. Just as I was standing up to run at the birds, one of the birds cooed right at me. Almost telling me *don't you even think so*. I sat back down. The two birds rubbed their heads together then flew off into the trees.

"Leo, when you die, what do you want to come back as?"

"Hmmmmm. OH! I want to be a dinosaur!" Leo jumped up and started stomping and roaring as if he were a T-Rex.

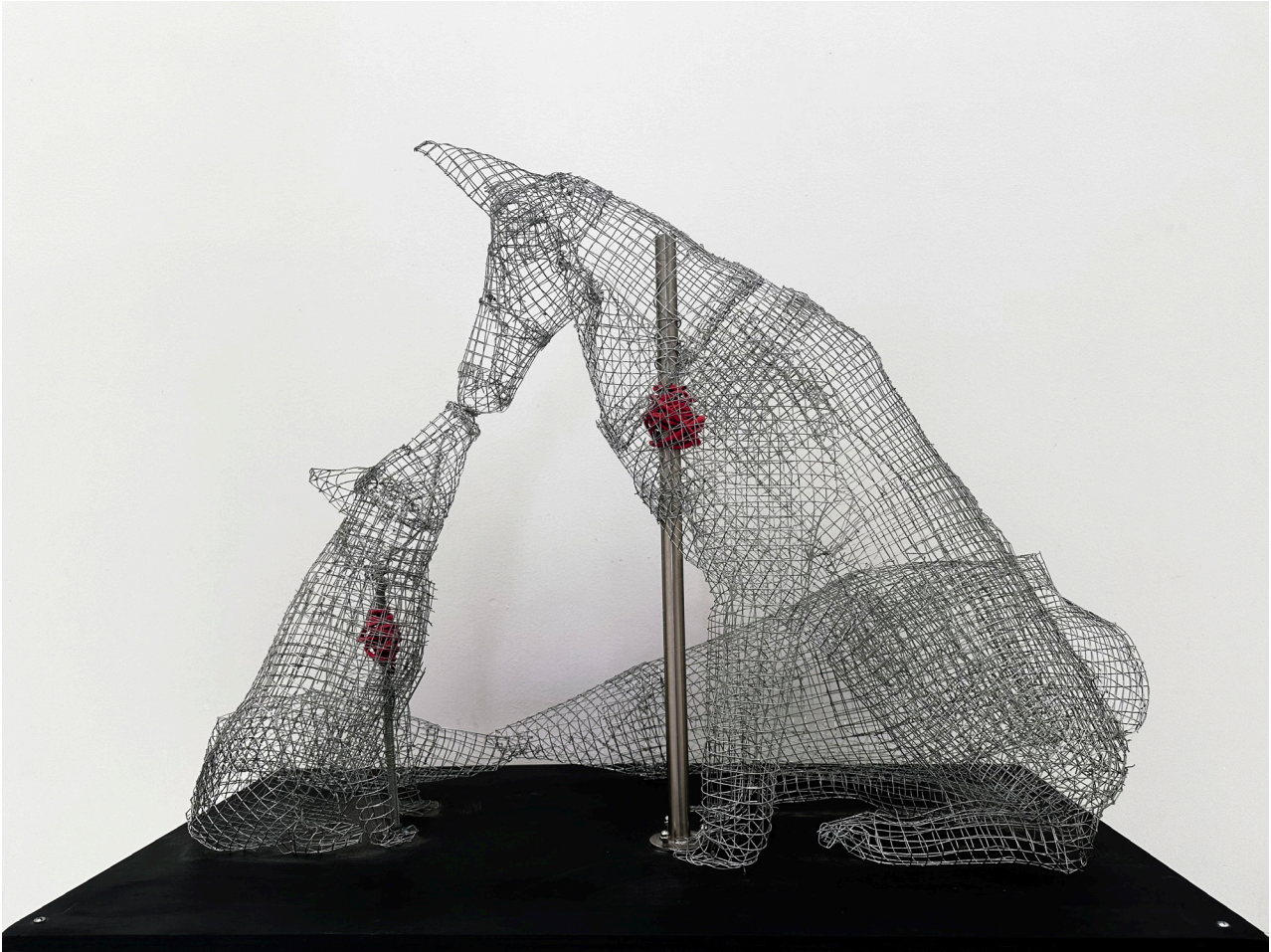
"In my next life, I think I want to be a tree."

wire sculpture

A Mother's Love



Azaria Meals



The Space Between the Pieces

Lexi Carey

The pieces of a chair sit in front of me—
wood, metal, screws that will hold it all together,
but I don't know where to start.
Each piece is different from the next,
a splinter here, a rusted bolt there,
and the instructions are unclear,
written in a language I can't speak.

I try to fit the pieces into a shape
I can understand,
but the wood is rough against my palms,
the metal cold and unyielding,
like a conversation with someone
who doesn't see things the way I do.
I turn the pieces over in my mind,
searching for the connection
that will hold everything steady.

But the angles don't line up the way I want them to.
The screw goes in crooked,
the frame too loose to support the weight
of what I imagine it to be.
It's hard to find common ground
when the foundation is not solid,
when the language is foreign
and the tools aren't quite right for the task.

I think of people who are like me,
the ones whose hands fit in mine,
whose thoughts slip into the same grooves.
Building with them is like breathing,
the pieces connect without struggle,
without doubt.

But with someone who doesn't understand
my shape,
who can't quite see the way I see the world,
each turn of the screwdriver
feels like a small fight,
an attempt to bridge the gap,
to make something work
that doesn't want to fit.

watercolor

Grace in Motion

Kaylee Ptak



Laundry

Josephine Biffar

I hate doing laundry.
The endless sorting, folding,
The quiet hum of the dryer,
The tediousness of it all.

You know I hate it.
Yet you ask, with that small smile,
Can you help me?
Put the shirts on hangers.

And for you,
I do the laundry.

A task that feels pointless, minute,
But with you, it becomes something else.
Each shirt draped on the hanger,
I can feel your gratitude,
A wordless thank you in the air.

Then come the socks.
It's my favorite part,
Watching you match them up
One by one, folding them into pairs.

You hold each, warm from the dryer,
Cradling them in your hands,
And I see the care you give
To even the smallest things.

In that moment, I do laundry for you.

The warmth as they nestle together,
A pair, tucked into each other,
Bound by something simple,
Something soft.

And as you hand me the folded socks,
I smile, feeling the warmth left behind.
For just a moment, I don't mind the laundry,
This tiny ritual we share,
The gentle closeness,
The warmth of being seen.

Best Essay You've Ever Read (First Draft)

Zizi Odigbo

“Thank you,” I reply calmly when the counselor remarks that I am very emotionally aware. Despite the fact that I am sitting in a sterile counselor’s office relaying my emotional troubles, desperately trying not to cry as if there has ever been a more appropriate time to, I find myself quite pleased about the compliment. Through a thin film of tears which threaten to fall, I scrutinize her curiously to determine if she really means it or if doling out compliments is simply part of the job. This distinction is very important to me.

The label of perfectionist is one I wear like a heavy coat on a scorching summer day. It’s uncomfortable and burdensome and not quite the perfect fit. At first glance, I don’t appear too much like one. My room is cluttered, I don’t care much for ironing, and I’m not the annoying

classmate who cries when they get a nearly perfect grade, at least not anymore. Yet I think of how when I was a kid I would stand

by the sink, unmoving until I had brushed each tooth exactly ten times and how stupefied I was in secondary school when others in my group project did not understand how necessary it was that we used Garamond in comparison to the banal, lesser Comic Sans.

I had never given too much thought to the meltdown I had in eighth grade when I got 32/35 on a science quiz or questioned why I submit my best essays to workshops rather than the one that needs the most feedback before listening to people remark on how the essay I’d spent days pains-

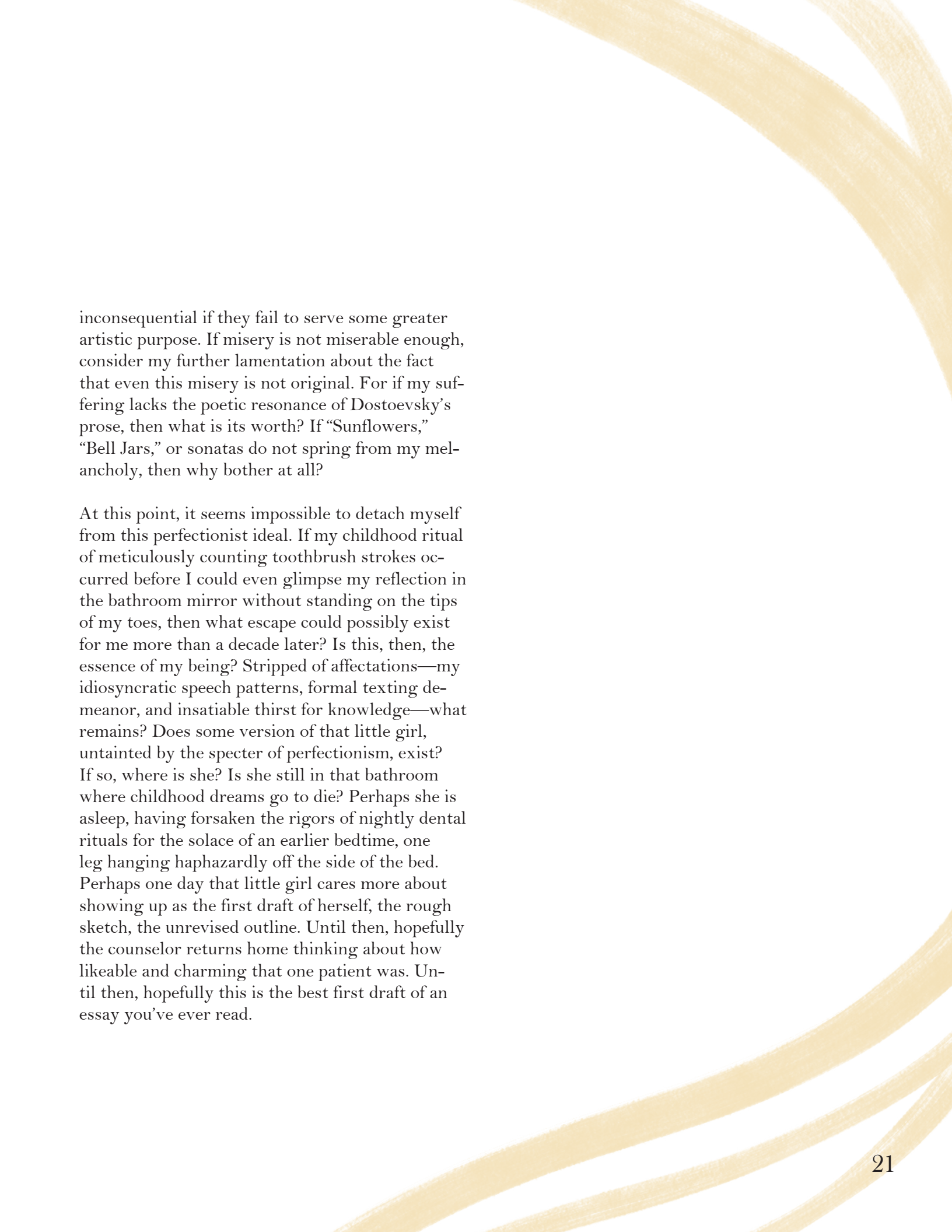
takingly revising is wonderful for a first draft. I’d never thought about why I’d always processed criticisms as if they were personal indictments on my character or why even when texting I maintain an unnecessary level of formality as if afraid of that dreaded jagged red underline. Surprisingly, I’d never seriously pondered why I appear to hover permanently in the nebulous space that is superlatives or why although I’m not religious, I live my life as if it is some weighty final exam. It was only when I sat in the inconspicuous counselor’s office that I stopped to wonder why I felt so strongly compelled to come across as likeable and rational.

This tendency towards perfectionism could be blamed on all manner of things. Maybe it is middle child syndrome or perhaps some undiagnosed chemical imbalance in my brain. In the first chapter of *The Secret History*, Donna Tartt asks, “Does

such a thing as ‘the fatal flaw,’ that showy dark crack running down the middle of a life, exist outside literature?” If such a flaw

does exist, then surely my pursuit of excellence in every facet of my existence—the best sibling, daughter, friend, student, even the best counseling patient—emanates from this hamartia.

While this propensity lends itself to introspective essays, it does have downsides. Consider the novel I’ve spent more time editing than writing. How I have reworked and redrafted and tweaked so much that the 200 pages’ worth of words seem so empty and clinical to me that I have no urge to return to them. Or reflect on the tumultuous relationship I share with my own emotions, viewing them as



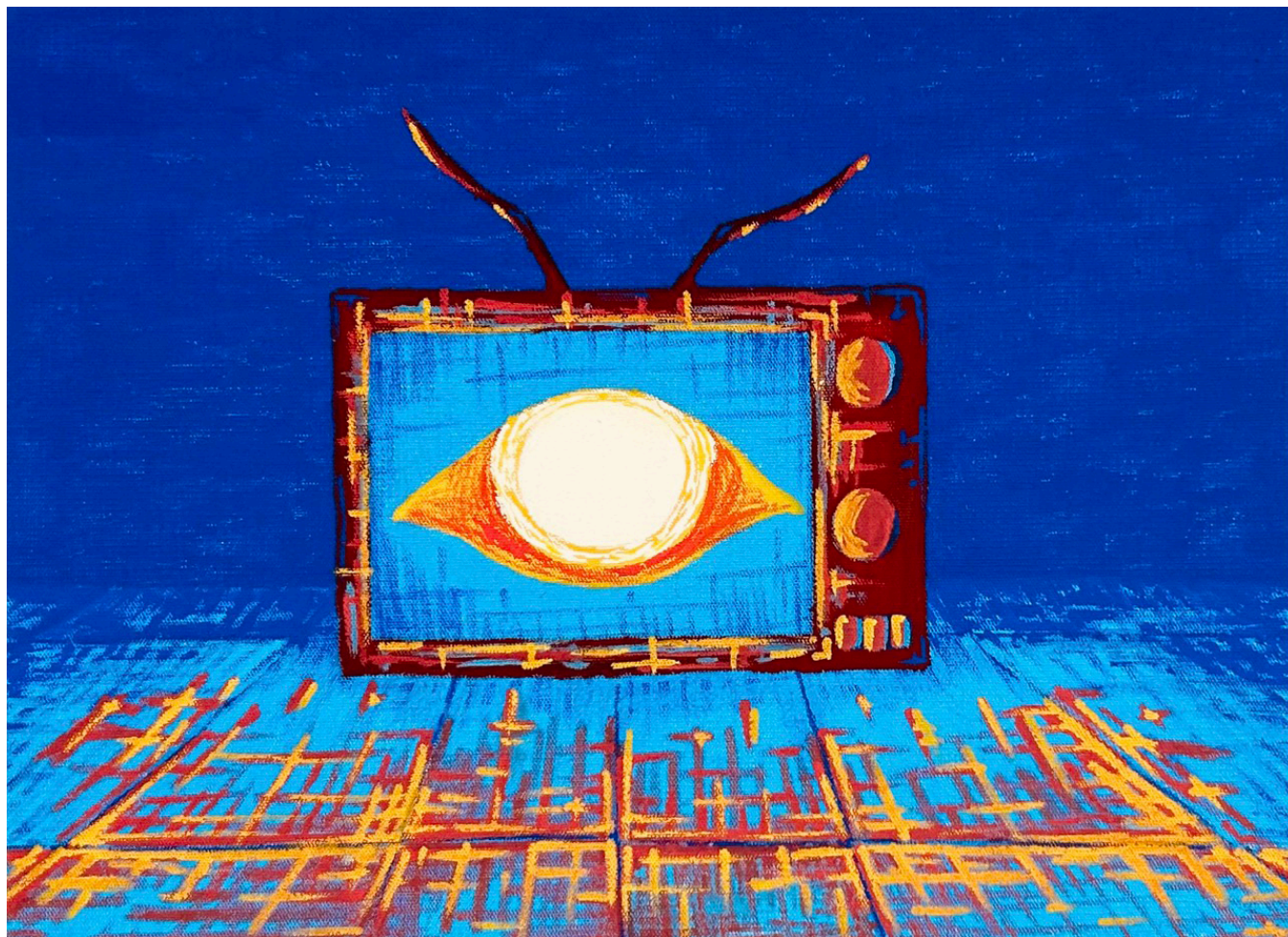
inconsequential if they fail to serve some greater artistic purpose. If misery is not miserable enough, consider my further lamentation about the fact that even this misery is not original. For if my suffering lacks the poetic resonance of Dostoevsky's prose, then what is its worth? If "Sunflowers," "Bell Jars," or sonatas do not spring from my melancholy, then why bother at all?

At this point, it seems impossible to detach myself from this perfectionist ideal. If my childhood ritual of meticulously counting toothbrush strokes occurred before I could even glimpse my reflection in the bathroom mirror without standing on the tips of my toes, then what escape could possibly exist for me more than a decade later? Is this, then, the essence of my being? Stripped of affectations—my idiosyncratic speech patterns, formal texting demeanor, and insatiable thirst for knowledge—what remains? Does some version of that little girl, untainted by the specter of perfectionism, exist? If so, where is she? Is she still in that bathroom where childhood dreams go to die? Perhaps she is asleep, having forsaken the rigors of nightly dental rituals for the solace of an earlier bedtime, one leg hanging haphazardly off the side of the bed. Perhaps one day that little girl cares more about showing up as the first draft of herself, the rough sketch, the unrevised outline. Until then, hopefully the counselor returns home thinking about how likeable and charming that one patient was. Until then, hopefully this is the best first draft of an essay you've ever read.

acrylic marker

Always Watching

Maya Willey



poetry

Peter Pan

Caleb Leugers

The last few years have worn us down, haven't they?
The weight of the world, the ache of the days,
But how do you manage to look so perfect?
You must have a portrait in the attic.
Timeless, untouched by the world's cruel embrace,
While the years continue to carve into me.

We stay young in the places we don't talk about.
The corners of our minds, where the world doesn't touch us.
We soar above the ticking clock.
Let's never grow up; let's never come down.
But we can't stay in the air forever,
The ground will always find us.

The world spins too fast, so we close our eyes.
We take the blue pill like it's a sweet escape.
Ignorance, the easiest kind of peace.
We don't ask questions; we don't seek answers.
It's easier this way. It's easier to keep believing
That the outside world is just a dream.

When we open our eyes again,
The years will have found us.
Quiet as dust settling on forgotten things.
But perhaps that's the secret, isn't it?
To fall asleep with open eyes,
And never let go of the sky.

Traces of You

Danielle Thompson

I woke up to the call I never thought I'd receive. "Angela hasn't been seen since Tuesday," her mom's shaky voice echoed through the phone. Tuesday. It's now Saturday. I knew Angela was having a rough week, but she mentioned that she wanted her space, so I stayed back. I called once, on Tuesday night, to update her on the new episode of "Dance Moms" that had just aired, but it went straight to voicemail. This wasn't unusual behavior for Angela, though. Every few months, she would blow up on her family over something little like their leaving shoes displayed in piles by the front door or leaving leftovers in the fridge untouched for two days, but this felt different. If she were to go anywhere, it would be my house. There was a point during freshman year of high school when Gel basically lived with me. "Can I crash at your place tonight? I can't stand my mom's new boyfriend," rolled off her tongue every two weeks. She stayed with my family for three months straight until her mom finally ended things with that guy. I understood it, though—her dad had passed away a short nine months before that, and her mom's new boyfriend was young enough to be Gel's brother.

We never really fought, and Laura always told me that I was the one person Gel never got tired of. That was until this past year. After college, I decided I needed a change in scenery and moved to Maine. It was the first time we spent apart since we were 13, and it ended in petty fights and jealousy. It was harder for her to adjust to the change than it was for me. I was always more spontaneous and excited about change than she was.

Gel and I met when we were 13. We had home-

room together, and although we had nothing in common, somehow our souls tied together. We would sit in Mrs. Peterson's class every morning doing what every 13-year-old girl does: drooling over boys, gossiping about our friends, and doodling stars in each other's notebooks. "You and I are like the dippers," she would always say. She was much taller than I was, so automatically I was the little to her big dipper. Stars were so fascinating to us. Every October 13 we would watch the sky sparkle until we could see the sunlight breaking through the darkness. She would repeat, "The stars are our map. No matter where we go, as long as we look up, we'll find our way back to each other."

I threw on a jacket and raced to my car, my heart pounding in my chest. I couldn't shake the feeling that if I didn't act now, I might never see Angela again. The world outside blurred into a mix of dark trees and occasional flashes of headlights. "Just follow the stars," I kept repeating over and over. My mind was buzzing with every memory shared with Gel—all of our laughs, our fights, our comforting moments of silence. Did I do something? Did I not do enough? My mind was racing, and I was thankful that the route to her house was engraved in my memory. As I approached the gray-colored home, I noticed her Jeep was still parked in the driveway, but there were no other signs of life.

I knocked on the door, calling her name. There was no answer. Desperation grew with every second that passed. I checked every corner of the house, but no trace of her was left. I sat on her back porch, looking up at the stars. She always told me the stars were our map. The constellations, which once felt like a playful promise, now

seemed to taunt me with their silence. My phone buzzed with messages from Angela's mom, each one more frantic than the last.

I decided to check the playhouse that her father built for the two of us many years ago. It doubled as a shed for his tools, but we both always found comfort behind the four pieces of purple-painted drywall. I opened the door and the motion light turned on. The house where we shared our deepest secrets and fondest memories now felt static and empty although it looked like a time capsule. Our dolls were still sitting in the same position we left them before deciding we were too old for Barbie. Our shared diary was still hidden underneath the dusty pile of old textbooks. I fumbled through the playhouse, soaking in the past. "Nostalgia is a thief of the present," Gel would always say to me. She hated mourning the loss of who we once were. As I was leaving, I noticed an almost purposefully placed crumpled piece of paper next to our diary.

My heart sank. I unfolded the paper and instantly regretted it. My eyes welled up as I scanned the note, hoping it wasn't what I thought it was.

"The stars are calling me home. You can find me there. I love you, Little Dipper."

I dropped the note, the weight of its finality settling heavily on my shoulders. I sank to the floor of our childhood playhouse, overwhelmed by the whirlpool of confusion, guilt, pain, and nostalgia. She was right: it was the thief of the present.

I stepped out of the house, leaving a different version of myself than I had been ten minutes ago. I didn't know what else to do other than to sit and stare at the stars. What had once symbolized our memories and dreams turned into my

worst nightmare. I scanned the darkness to try to find meaning in all of this. The big dipper seemed brighter tonight than it had before, and it hit me that Gel was truly home and shining down on me.

"I followed the stars in hopes of finding you, and now I will trace your face in the constellations," I whispered to the sky.

The Girl of Weikert High

Emma Eubanks

I walk through the halls of my school, halls I've wandered countless times before. But this time, it's different. It's summer break, and I'm here only because a week before school, detention kids come back to help clean up the place. My friends and I thought it'd be funny to sneak into the science learning lab and roast marshmallows over the Bunsen burners to make s'mores. Harmless fun, right? But they got carried away, mixing chemicals behind my back while I was focused on assembling the s'mores. By the time I caught a whiff of the bitter, acrid smell, it was too late. One thing led to another.

I was the only one who didn't get caught. The second I heard staff coming, I dropped everything and hid in the closet instead of running. It felt cowardly, and the guilt gnawed at me, dragging me back here today. I came to turn myself in, to face the consequences with my friends. At least, I hope friends. None of us have spoken since.

As I walk the silent and eerie halls, something feels wrong. Did I come on the wrong day? There's no one here—not a soul. The classrooms I pass by are strangely untouched, desks still neatly arranged as though the chaos of summer school had never begun. I wander through the library, my fingers graze against the spines of the books, dust collecting on the ends. They left all the cleaning for us. How generous.

Eventually, I make my way to the gym, where every school dance and activity is held. I figured we'd all meet here to start. As I look around, memories flood my mind: my friends and I huddling together without dates but laughing harder than anyone else. Hiding behind the bleachers to skip out on a boring lesson or hide from our assigned study groups. This stupid gym, always reeking of major BO, no matter how hard

you scrub, suddenly feels heavy with nostalgia. I tear up and my chest tightens, maybe because it's senior year, and I've stopped to think about how much I'll miss all of this.

I find myself sitting at a desk—not mine, but my old boyfriend's. We haven't spoken much this summer, either. Why aren't we on speaking terms again? I can't recall. Now I only think about him: the first time he sat next to me, our first conversation, the way I deliberately broke my pencil just to borrow his and took the opportunity to let our hands brush. I miss him. I miss the fall of his long brown hair and the curve of his pink lips.

I walk through the halls again, searching for my old locker. I never cleaned it out before break. The quiet around me thickens. The halls feel longer, emptier, and heavy with an unshakable sadness. I trace the numbers as I walk down the hall: 354, 355, 365... and then mine, 366. My hand falls to my side. Something's not right. My locker is...wrong. Instead of the familiar decorations and scraps of paper I left, there's a collage. It's neatly arranged, with pictures and heartfelt messages pinned carefully to the metal. A vase of red roses, my favorite, rests in front of it, petals wilting away.

My stomach twists as I step closer. The photos, there are pictures of me: smiling. Laughing. With my friends. My parents. My little sister...

My fingers tremble as I reach for the card placed at the bottom of the pictures. The handwriting scrawled across the note, painfully familiar, is dull. In black ink, the words hit me like a bulldozer: "Avery Meadow Summers. Missed and loved by family and friends."

My breath catches and panic claws at my throat, I stumble back, the hallway spinning around me. My heart hammers, each beat an accusation. This isn't right. That's not me. I'm here. I'm not gone. I'm standing right here. Panicking, I turn and run. My feet pound against the tiles as I push through the doors and burst into the open air onto the overgrown lawn. A discolored sign stands crooked in the grass: "SHUT DOWN DUE TO GAS LEAK."

Gas leak? That's not possible. My hands shake as I clutch my sides, trying to piece things together. None of it makes sense. I was just here. I was just in class a few months ago. My heart beats inside of my ears, matching the rhythm of my feet hitting the pavement. I keep running, harder and harder. My legs burn as I sprint to the end of the street, my mind racing faster than my feet.

The moment I step onto the curb, everything stops. A heavy force slams into me, and pain slams through my head as it comes back and hits something hard. When I open my eyes, I'm back in the science lab closet. The faint smell of chemicals lingers in the air, burning my nose hairs. My head throbs as I scramble to my feet, drenched in sweat.

I push the door open cautiously and step out into the hall. It still looks the same, lockers one by one lining the walls and the subtle hum of the lights. But something is different. The air feels heavier, like the building itself is holding its breath.

"Hey," I freeze. "Dude, over here." It's faint, just beyond a whisper. I whirl around frantically. At first, the hall seems empty. But then, shapes begin to step forward just out of the shadows.

"Who... Who is there? Who are you?" My voice trembles. One of them, a boy in a letterman jacket, steps forward. He looks almost solid except for the slight flicker in his form, like an image on a broken television screen.

"It's okay.... We're all like you," he says in the softest voice. "We all died here." I shake my head, backing away.

"No, no, I'm not like you. I'm not—"

"You are." A girl slightly taller than I am steps out, interrupting. Her tone is kind but firm. "I thought for once we'd skip this whole *I'm not dead, yes you are. Blah blah blah* argument." She clutches the straps of her bag, her eyes sad. "You just don't remember yet. Well, some of us never do."

A heavy force slams into me, and pain slams through my head as it comes back and hits something hard.

"I do remember!" I shout, my voice echoing down the hall. "I remember hiding in the closet. I remember running out of here, hitting my head, and waking up. I woke up!"

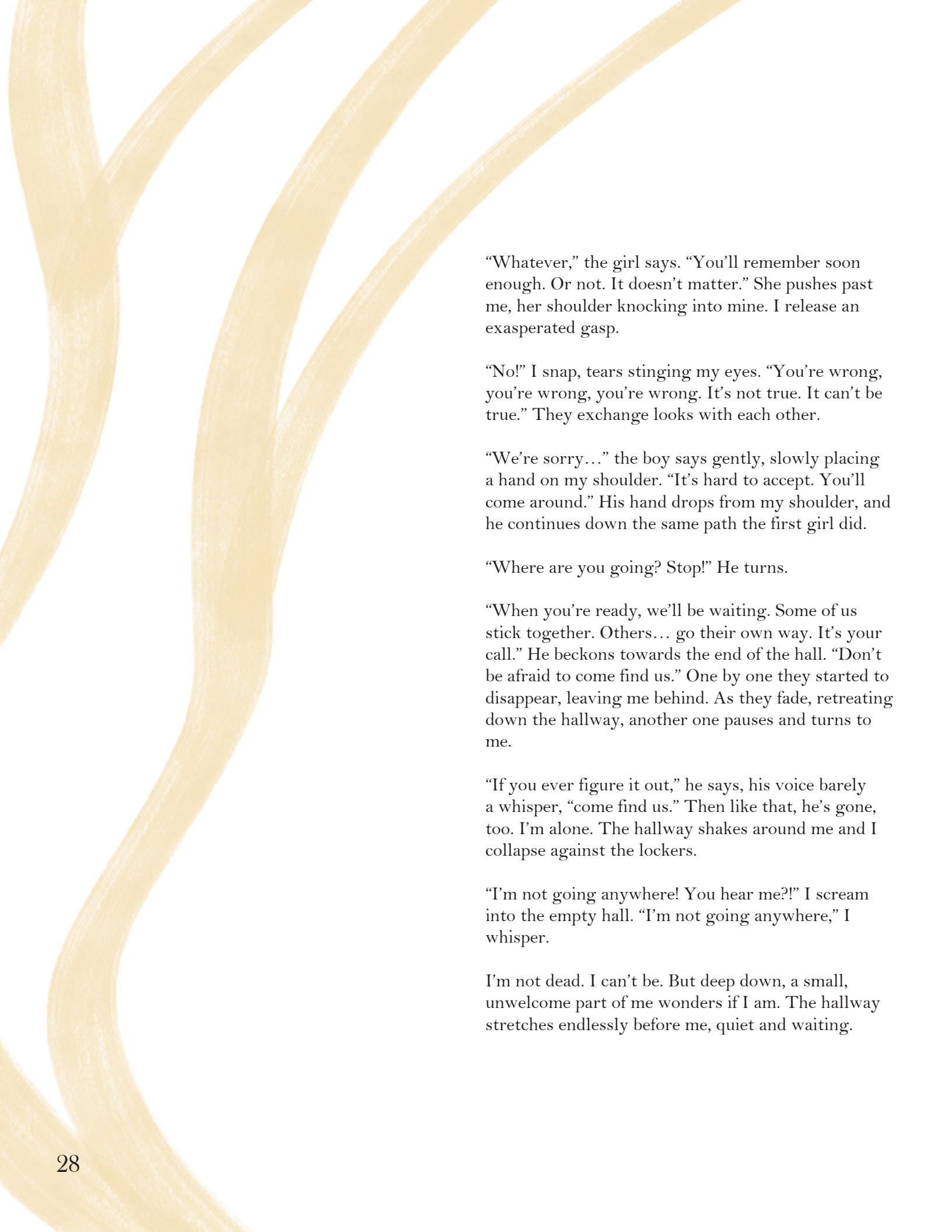
A scrawny boy with circle-shaped glasses sighs, stepping closer to me. "You guys stay back!" Pity fills his deep blue eyes.

"We've seen it before," he says. "It's part of the process. You're stuck, Avery. We all are. But you, you're different."

"Different? Different how?"

"You're the first one whose death shut down this place," another girl in a short skirt and pink jacket says with a scoff. Her words scratch at me.

"What are you talking about? I'm not dead, stop saying that!"



“Whatever,” the girl says. “You’ll remember soon enough. Or not. It doesn’t matter.” She pushes past me, her shoulder knocking into mine. I release an exasperated gasp.

“No!” I snap, tears stinging my eyes. “You’re wrong, you’re wrong, you’re wrong. It’s not true. It can’t be true.” They exchange looks with each other.

“We’re sorry…” the boy says gently, slowly placing a hand on my shoulder. “It’s hard to accept. You’ll come around.” His hand drops from my shoulder, and he continues down the same path the first girl did.

“Where are you going? Stop!” He turns.

“When you’re ready, we’ll be waiting. Some of us stick together. Others… go their own way. It’s your call.” He beckons towards the end of the hall. “Don’t be afraid to come find us.” One by one they started to disappear, leaving me behind. As they fade, retreating down the hallway, another one pauses and turns to me.

“If you ever figure it out,” he says, his voice barely a whisper, “come find us.” Then like that, he’s gone, too. I’m alone. The hallway shakes around me and I collapse against the lockers.

“I’m not going anywhere! You hear me?!” I scream into the empty hall. “I’m not going anywhere,” I whisper.

I’m not dead. I can’t be. But deep down, a small, unwelcome part of me wonders if I am. The hallway stretches endlessly before me, quiet and waiting.



Doom Days

Caleb Leungers

I think there's something in the Kool-Aid.
Too tired to question, too afraid to stop.
The fire burns brighter beneath the unstable sky.
Another promise fades, another soul dies.
The sun sets on the empire, once glorious as the morning star.
Now its shadows stretch long into the cold, endless night.

Somewhere, deep within, we know what we have done.
We've traded the stars for comfort, and now the sky is empty.
We've traded forests for factories, beauty for speed,
And now the Earth weeps, its voice drowned out.
The silence is deafening now, louder than any storm.
And yet, we wait, as if time still offers us a choice.

The clock ticks louder, the days slip away.
We hope that somehow, the clock will pause.
We shout to the sky, hoping for our cries to be heard.
Maybe He will fix it. Maybe we'll be saved.
But deep down, we know we are the ones
who must decide how it ends.

In the shadow of the doom days,
we still pretend that we can outrun it.
The signs are everywhere—
The smoke, the cracks in the walls, the silence after the storms.
But we don't know how to stop the fall; how to change the course.
Maybe we never could. Maybe this was always the ending.

Around My Fingertips

Jordan Kwarcinski



Statement of Arin ██████████

Spencer Kakacek

██████████, Ohio
November ██████████
3:35 AM

STATEMENT OF ARIN ██████████

Statement involves ██████████ for questioning on the subject's "loss" of their daughter.

ARIN: Do you believe in God? I don't know if I want to. Sorry, you don't need to put that down.

██████████: It's alright. Please continue.

A: Right, uh. We just moved to ██████████ a few months ago. Me and my partner. We always wanted to live in a small town; the city noises can be... a little much at times. Sorry. We have two kids....

S: ██████████

A: No! No... no.

A: Sorry....

A: We had been settling in for a while before looking for a local church. Taylor had never been a fan of them, but you can meet people there. Other than our kids making friends at school, there wasn't much else for us to do. Taylor was okay with being alone; they had a good job surrounded by people, and I think that was enough for them. Me, though? I've been doing remote work for a few businesses, so the online social situations I got were from text and the occasional video meetings. Sorry, I got distracted. But that was why I started looking for a church: I just needed something.

S: What church did you attend?

A: I can't remember its name; I know it was a ██████████ church. I think there are like three of them in the town total. It's probably the oldest one there, in the ██████████ area. It was like the buildings surrounded it, praised it, but I suppose that makes sense.

S: Why did you choose this church?

A: The space, I think. It felt a lot safer being in the center of town and all. I knew Taylor wouldn't like it if the church was small—more chance of someone protecting with more people. We weren't the type of family that most people would want, y'know?

S: Did you feel safe?

A: Yeah, always. I went on my own the first Sunday. It seemed like you would even struggle to get a pew, the front half of the church was so full. The priest was pleasant and quick with his sermons, knowing how to keep the attention of everyone in the room. The people were so kind to me as well. Some of the people I sat next to immediately started a conversation with me after mass. I met a few people and became quite close. Michael ██████████... I think he is responsible. He seemed nice, not very talkative, but he was quite sweet. He gave little about his own life but would always listen to others. Just to say he was never suspicious or too odd for anyone to worry. He was just reserved is all.

S: ██████████

A: Well, he... One night, the church was hosting their dinners they offered. Just one of the things they do to raise money. While the rest of my family didn't go to mass, Taylor was becoming friends with the people I'd met, and the kids knew some of their friends that went to church. So, they weren't upset to go, a nice way to not have anyone cook for the night. Everything was going well until Michael got my attention. We'd been finished eating for a while

and had just been talking with everyone at our table. Michael came up behind me and asked for me to follow. I didn't even realize he was there. He looked tired, like he hadn't slept for a few days. I asked if he was alright, but he just nodded and said he was fine. He told me that one of my kids was messing around in the church. I knew it was Charlie because Alex had always hated the dark.

I saw her up by the altar, trying to climb on top, the space barely lit only by the candles that still burned through their red glass. Michael's eyes stayed on Charlie even when I turned to face him, trying to make light of the situation. I faced back towards Charlie, seeing that Michael had made it over to her without a sound. I shouted for Charlie to stop while I made my way over, hoping Michael wouldn't do anything. He didn't seem the type, but.... When I shouted, my body shuddered as it echoed throughout the church. It was empty. Truly empty. Even with Charlie and Michael in the room, it seemed as though they didn't exist at all. My footsteps felt even louder once I noticed it. The stained glass windows seemed to glisten a golden hue. As if the sun was somehow shining through the windows. I....

A: The light sort of dimmed I guess; I don't know how to describe it. It was dark, yet light seemed to be everywhere. Like light shining through water, but the light going through it was not giving off the brightness you'd expect. I thought it would bring me comfort in the darkness but all it seemed to do was make my body feel more on edge. I don't know how I missed it, but something had changed. Charlie and Michael were gone. I guess not really gone, something was in their place.

S: Can you describe it?

A: It was a figure, human looking yet

made of pure light with a sort of golden hue. It wasn't blinding even though it looked as though it should have been. I know depictions of angels are different from the Bible's description, but this wasn't like that, either. I don't know why, but I was drawn toward it. I started moving forward even though my mind screamed for me to stop. I got a better look at it. It was cracking itself together—I can't describe it any other way. Its body was elongated, and as it moved ever so softly, you could hear it. Trying to make its body "right." It sounded hollow, even the body.

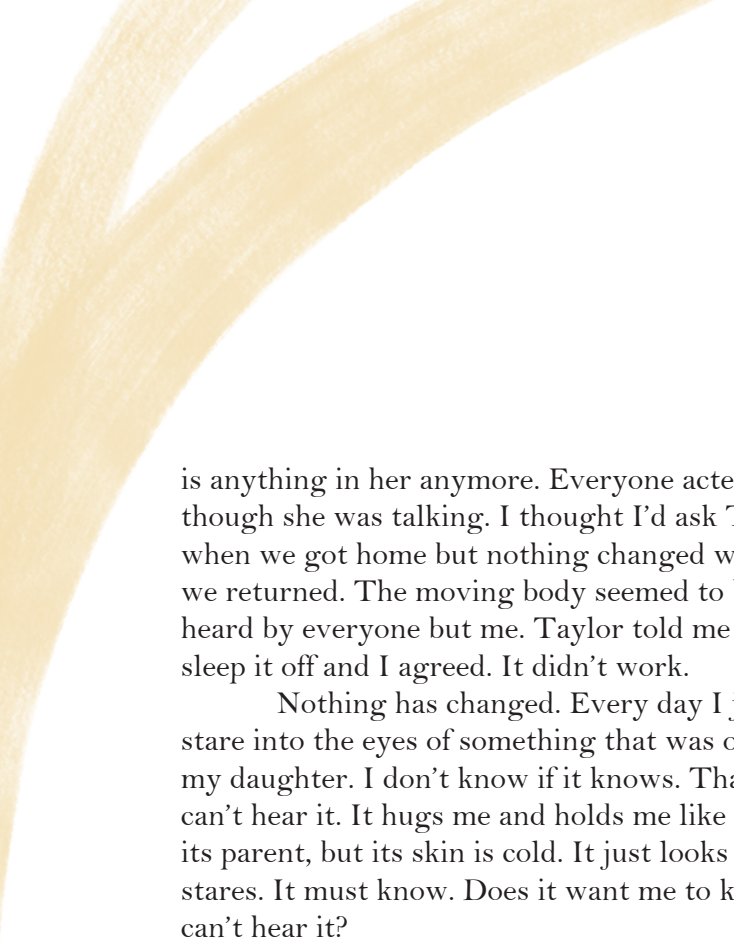
That's when I noticed Charlie, her body covered in little light, its face moving towards her. Its neck stretched forward from its body. I thought she would run away; she should have but... I don't want to describe it.

ARIN mumbles under his breath for a short period.

S: If you want us to believe you, I need you to tell me everything that happened.

A: I can't! I... her body was drained. After it finished, it turned to me. Its face was human in its appearance only. Like a statue. Its eyes were wide and unblinking, and what looked like blood dripped to its chin from its slightly parted lips. The legs of the thing were covered by a cloth. It looked like it was gliding towards me. But... that's all I could remember before I was sitting at the table with my family again.

I thought I just daydreamed, or I just had a lack of sleep... I saw her face. I hadn't noticed at first, I was just so happy to talk to everyone again. To think of what I just experienced was nothing. Yet there she was. Where it was. It just wore her corpse. Her body seemed so lifeless, yet no one noticed. Whatever it was still moved the body, but its face remained still. No blinking. The eyes didn't shift. The mouth was open partially, but nothing moved inside it. I can't tell if there



is anything in her anymore. Everyone acted as though she was talking. I thought I'd ask Taylor when we got home but nothing changed when we returned. The moving body seemed to be heard by everyone but me. Taylor told me to sleep it off and I agreed. It didn't work.

Nothing has changed. Every day I just stare into the eyes of something that was once my daughter. I don't know if it knows. That I can't hear it. It hugs me and holds me like I am its parent, but its skin is cold. It just looks up and stares. It must know. Does it want me to know I can't hear it?

S: 

A: I can try, but... I think it knows. It knows I came here.

india ink and watercolor

Picking Flowers

Shelby Kastner



Unsaid Prayers

Javonte Madsen

Men are expected to speak the truth.
They were god's chosen people
brought to life by the strength
of his divine breath.
They are pressed to perfection
like a softened clay
made in his image.
Yet they too were ripped apart,
to answer another unsaid prayer.
Women were enslaved to men
from the origin of their existence.
Who else would want to become broken for them?
It was the ultimate act of sacrifice.
Men are expected to open doors for ladies,
to ensure that it hits them on the way out
if they become too vocal about
the unrest they feel while sleeping on the
bed of rocks prepared for them.
No one would come to mourn their tomb.
Yet it is critical that they only give thanks to
those who provide.
Men know that they don't have to knock on doors.
Even before entering between a lady's legs.
The precedent has already been set,
that was their place to be.
You grabbed my waist
And this time I didn't even flinch.
Secretly I hoped that you were

proud of me.

I tried to be comfortable
and sink into your skin
because I knew how much you hated when I
squirmed.

I wondered if there was anything
I could do to make you hate me the way I hated
you.

You were my father in heaven but not on earth.

I dreamed of what life could be
if you had finally left me alone,
if you didn't break ribs
the same way you broke bread.

I wondered what it would be like
to be freed from the chains you bound me with,
putting me in bondage only for your pleasure.

The Perfect House Cat

Tori Bouska

The perfect house cat stays indoors.
She does not pass the mat.
But she watches.
She watches the husband leave
through the windows.
Seeing the fresh air surround him.

She cannot mourn for long,
for the moment the husband leaves
the house, the children are pulling at her tail.

She leads them to their breakfast.
While the children eat,
she makes sure all their bags are in line.
That way no teacher can ask
if some dog ate their homework.

Once the children are out the door,
the perfect house cat is alone.
However, her day is not done.
She is not free to lay.
She must clean out every room,
making sure they are free of mice.

In a house that feels all too big,
yet so suffocating.
Her bell rings as she goes back and forth
in the kitchen. Preparing
a wonderful mousey meal for her family.

For a moment she looks outside
to see the world she left behind.
She was free once.
She once had the whole world
in her paws.
Able to defend for herself
till she met the husband.

He promised her a worry-free life.
She believed him.
And now she is stuck inside.
Now she's forever
the perfect house cat.

The Meat Counter

Destinee Martin

What type of meat do you prefer? Do you prefer the breast, the thigh, or the ass? Or do you consider yourself different from the rest of the population by focusing on where the meat comes from? Does it come from Iowa or California? Do you focus on what the animal is fed? Whether it's an omnivore, carnivore, or herbivore? Do you look for meat that has already been seasoned? A little spice might be nice but not too much spice; otherwise, it's overpowering. Are you looking for the freshest meat you can find or meat that's a bit older and cheaper? Already been through the wringer but still deserves to be eaten just the same? Do you prefer meat that has additives in it or all-natural, organic meat?

No matter how you decide, you're essentially getting the same thing, right? You're still getting a piece of meat, and that couldn't make you any more happier. Yet you still decide to be picky with your choices. Even though no matter what you pick, the meat has the same destination: into your stomach and out your ass a day later. In your mind, the way you select a piece of meat says a lot about who you are when in reality, you're still just a person picking up a piece of meat at the meat counter. The easiest place to access meat. It surrounds you, making your options unlimited. However, even with all of these options, everyone can tell that you're the type of person who picks and prods at their meat. Never devour the whole animal, only the pieces you enjoy the best.

Because you're a player all the same. You can be picky about whether you're an ass man or a boob man. You can be picky about where your hookup for the night is located, whether it's a long or short drive. You can choose not to sleep with a vegan because they aren't truly human beings. You don't want someone who has already been used up and thrown to the side. You're allowed to be picky because it's your body and

your choice, right? Because that only works when you're in the body of a white man. Making women your prey, even in a place as public as the meat counter.

However, soon you will realize that I am not just a piece of meat. I am a woman who has her own identity and her own thoughts. I don't need you criticizing me for my lack of breasts, that it is a good thing I have an ass to make up for it. I don't need you to call me a hick because I am born and bred Iowan. I don't need you to point out the junk food I put into my body or comment on how

He didn't just take a piece of you, the ass, the breast, the thigh. He wanted to consume you whole. The gizzards, the tongue, the liver.

often I go to the gym. I don't need you patronizing me for my body count or the attitude I give to you for asking such a question. I've already heard it enough from other men in the same

position as you, so much that I started to question it myself. That's the game men like you enjoy participating in. Creating enough doubt to make your prey easier to hunt.

You claim to be picky about your selection, but the truth is, you would pick up any meat along the counter. Being what you call picky with your choice proves a point to everyone else. You're just another man, picking up a piece of meat, and that's all anyone truly needs to know.

A different man approaches the meat counter, but this one is different, you can tell. He doesn't ask questions about the meat at all. He doesn't take his time deciding which piece of meat to choose from. Instead, he knows what he wants. He's not looking for just any piece of meat. He's looking for a well-rounded, put-together meal. He settles on kabobs, and that's how you know they

aren't all the same. There is still some hope for you and your future. You're not just another piece of meat; you're a full-blown meal.

He treats you like an actual person at first but then shows his true colors. Just another player in the game of shopping for meat. He was at the meat counter, after all; you should've known better. This one hurt differently, though. He didn't take just a piece of you: the ass, the breast, the thigh. He wanted to consume you whole. The gizzards, the tongue, the liver. He wanted you all, and you appreciated that at the moment, but now there is nothing left of you. No more pieces to be given out to other men. You're nothing to men in this world. You're the leftover roast in the fridge, the meat that nobody wants.

poetry

Stolen Gifts

Javonte Madsen

I think white people are jealous
of the color of my skin.

I mean that's the only thing that makes sense.

My skin doesn't cook in the sun like theirs;
instead, it creates a darkened gold around the
clothes that cover me.

You brought ships of my sisters
because you couldn't get enough.

Life was unbearable on your own;
even you couldn't stand yourself.

While you cried for immunity
my brothers worked the field
because his shot came from God.

You had to villainize us because God made us
too good,

reaching standards you could only dream of.

Now you keep us locked away
in an effort to show the world your
version of strength.

You have tried to steal everything from us—

Our styles, our religion, our freedom.

But you couldn't steal our skin;

to you, that's the only thing you can't breed or beat out of us.

acrylic marker

Always Waiting

Maya Willey



pity is pinched eyebrows and
watery, soft gazes,
and pressed lips and warm touches,
and pity is
whispers and government programs
and pity is
haunting
and sickening.

and yet,
they wonder why
i don't tell.
not anymore.
i hate that look.

cupofsuoup — 12/20 at 1:22

My mom is sending me with flan specifically for you

sitting at church
every third saturday
was the most religious experience
i've ever had.
we got up at seven
and got our numbers, waiting to enter
and get as much free shit as we could.
we knew we'd never need it all.
we knew we'd never use it all.
and yet.
does the sin of greed apply
if you have nothing at all?
does it count if you won't end up
keeping any of it in the move?

leftovers. that is what makes
my grand collection:
someone else's trash—
and no,
it is still just my trash,
but unfortunately
it's all i've got.

my shoes, in sixth grade
were falling apart.
my toes stuck through
the seams.
a wonderful woman
who looked me once
up and down
led me down to the basement,
to the clothing closet.

her gaze did not waver
as we went hunting
for shoes
and she handed me
combat boots.
she told me to find her
if i needed anything else.
(i wouldn't need anything else
because i didn't *need* new shoes.)

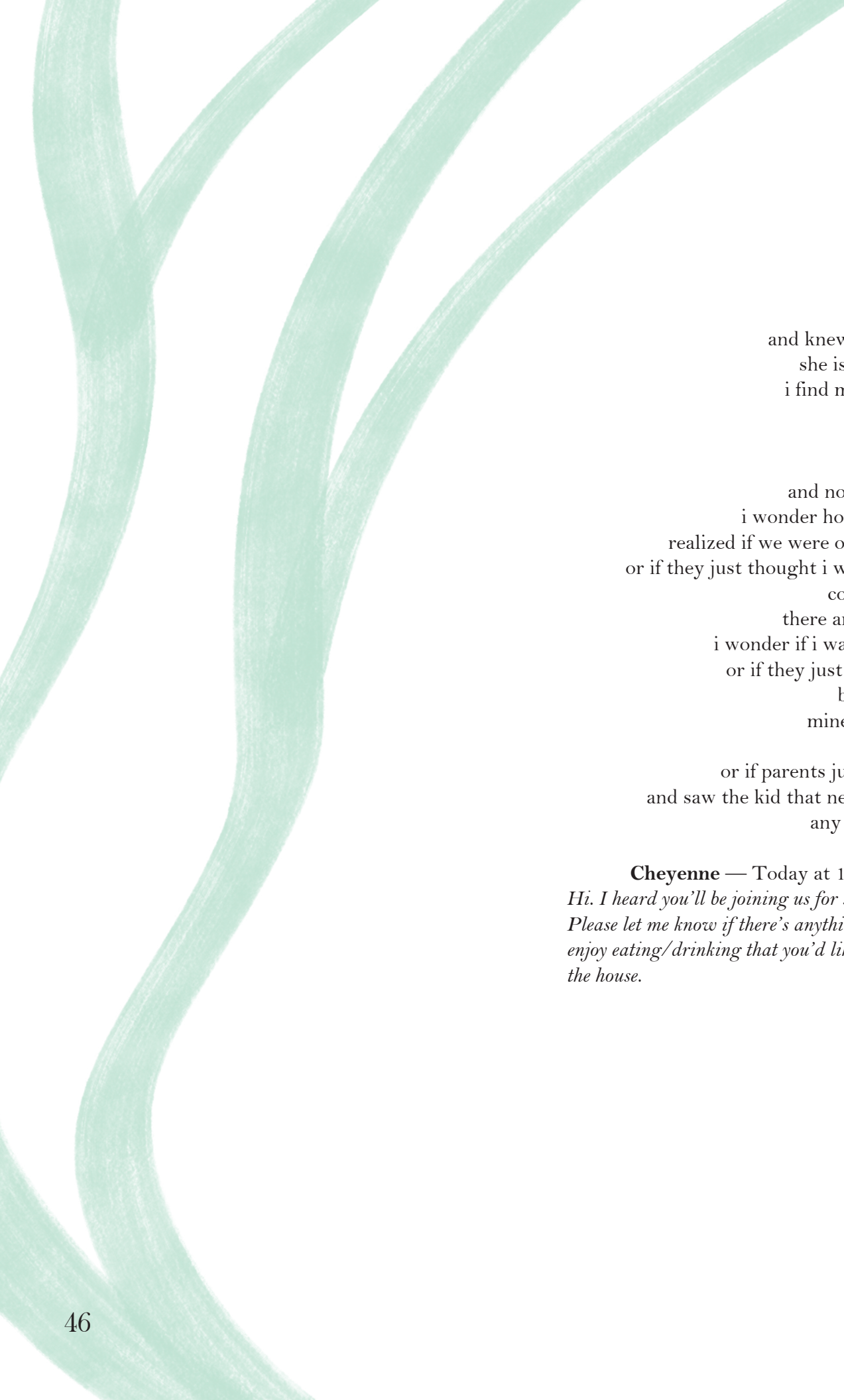
so
as flushed as i was
i returned to my ride home,
a friend, Mackenzie,
and silently took glee
in how cool i was
in my new boots.

and her mother picked us up
and took us home,
and she smiled at us
and asked us how our days were
and i think she was just happy to
see me smiling again.

simonsbass_0001 — 06/05

do you guys want a tv?

my first bras were hand me downs
because Mackenzie's mother



looked at me
and knew I needed them,
she is smart like that.
i find most parents are.

Most.

and now that i'm older
i wonder how many of them
realized if we were on the same page
or if they just thought i was a content kid
content to just be.
there are conversations
i wonder if i was never privy to
or if they just never happened
between parents,
mine and the others,
offers of help,
or if parents just looked at me.
and saw the kid that needed the scraps,
any they could give.

Cheyenne — Today at 14:05

*Hi. I heard you'll be joining us for spring break.
Please let me know if there's anything you really
enjoy eating/drinking that you'd like me to have at
the house.*

The Wrath On My Sister

Alexis Spier

First, I dumped out her water bottles
And replaced them with vinegar
The taste wouldn't leave her mouth for days
Still, she wouldn't return my shoes

Then, I filled her backpack with frogs
When she opened it at school
They leapt all over her
Still, she wouldn't return my shoes

I placed some cut-up strawberries and pineapples under her bed
She didn't find them
And her room was infested with fruit flies
Still, she refused to return my shoes

Next, I brewed some coffee for her
When I handed her a cup, I dropped it on her bare feet
The burns kept her in bed for days
Still, she wouldn't return my shoes

The following day, I led her into the basement
I turned off all the lights and locked her down there
I listened to her sob from the other side of the door
Still, she wouldn't return my shoes

In my final act, I was desperate
While she was sleeping I killed
Her cat and left his body in her room

The next morning, I went into her room to find her
Hovering over her cat's body and stroking his fur with tears
She couldn't look me in the eye
She pointed her trembling finger at her closet

I opened it up and found my shoes in her laundry basket
I couldn't help but smile powerfully as I left her room
A couple of weeks later I caught her
Walking from my room with a pair of shoes

The Haunting of George Sandwell

Kelsi Ryan

It was a very clear night. The air felt fresh and you could see every star in the sky. The moon was full and shining.

“It’s not what I expected,” said Claire.

“What did you expect?” said Jen.

“I don’t know. I guess I pictured it to be like in a scary movie. The gravestones would be covered in spider webs and there would be fog everywhere. At least for it to be a little darker. It’s much quieter than I thought, too. I don’t like how quiet it is.” Jen let out a sigh.

“Well in movies they always have that scary music playing in the background; that’s why it’s not so quiet.”

Earlier in the week, while leaving school, Claire and Jen decided that they would visit the old cemetery.

“We’re too old for pumpkin patches or trick or treating, and you’ve seen every horror movie,” said Jen. “I don’t want to just sit at home for Halloween. You know Marcus from my first period?”

“Yeah,” said Claire, “he’s dating Yasmine.”

“Yes,” said Jen. “Anyways, he told me that there is a really old cemetery outside of town. Near where that cattle farm is. Apparently, it’s super haunted. The graves are from the 1800s or whatever so they have very old ghosts. Marcus said he went there last year and saw an old woman wearing all white walking around. When he tried to go talk to her, she disappeared.”

“Really?” Clarie’s eyes got wide.

Jen laughed.

“Yeah, or Marcus was so high he imagined the whole thing.”

The girls slowly walked up a hill, heading toward the back of the cemetery. There had been one dim street light at the intersection of the dirt road leading to the old cemetery. As they walked

further in, the moonlight became their only light. Claire checked her phone. It was 11:56 pm. There were no texts or calls from her mom. That was good. She had told her mom she was spending the night at Jen’s house. This was the only way they’d be able to be out so late since Jen’s parents didn’t care about curfews or where they went at night.

“I’m getting tired of walking,” said Jen. She sat down on a bench at the back of the cemetery by the fence line. The fence was old and falling apart, reaching only up to the girls’ waists. It was more of a property marker than a fence. Behind it were thick trees and forest. Claire stood in front of her.

“Sit down,” said Jen. She brushed the dirt off the seat next to her.

“Your back is towards the woods.” Claire pointed. Jen looked behind her, then looked back at Claire.

“Fine, you can stand and keep watch of the woods. I’ll sit here.” Jen pulled out her phone and started texting. Claire inspected the woods. She couldn’t see that deep into the trees. She listened, and after not hearing anything coming from the darkness, she turned to look around the cemetery. To the left of the girls was a large rectangular headstone made from a light gray marble. It had two crosses on the top and a corner missing from its side. It was worn down and slanted slightly downhill. The face of the stone had vines carved on the outside and the outline of an open book.

The left page read:

“George F. Sandwell
October 25, 1896 - July 6, 1988
Husband, Father, & Friend”

The right page read:

“Helen E. Sandwell
February 15, 1901 -
Wife, Mother, Friend”

“Look at that,” said Claire. “Isn’t that cute? They are buried together.” She pointed towards the gravestone. “Well, going to be buried together. Helen hasn’t died yet.” Jen looked up from her phone.

“Hmm.” She looked at the gravestone, squinting her eyes.

“I don’t think Helen is still alive. Otherwise, she’d be like 122 years old.”

“Well, maybe she is.”

“I highly doubt that.” Jen laughed a little,

“Then where is she? Maybe they forgot to carve her death date into the gravestone.” Claire stepped closer and felt the engraved letters with her hand.

“I think old Helen didn’t want to be stuck with her husband for all eternity. Till death do us part and she wanted to be parted.”

“Oh, that’s sad. Why do you think that? Maybe something else happened.” She thought for a moment. “When I’m married I want to be buried by my husband. I want us to be together forever.”

Jen snickered.

“What?” Claire looked at Jen.

“Nothing.”

“No, what? Say it. What’s so funny?”

“I don’t want to be mean, Claire, but I don’t think you and Josh are going to be dating much longer. He graduates this year. I know he’s like, totally hot and nice and plays basketball,” Jen let out a quick sigh, “but I don’t think you’ll marry him.”

Claire’s face felt hot. She hated it when Jen brought up her boyfriend. She always suspected that Jen never liked him because she was jealous.

Jealous that Claire had a boyfriend and she didn’t.

“Oh my god, Jen.” Claire rolled her eyes.

“We’re going to try long distance when he goes to college, and if that doesn’t work, I don’t really care. Josh isn’t a guy I would marry. He is waaaaay too immature. I’m talking like a

“I think old Helen didn’t want to be stuck with her husband for all eternity. Till death do us part and she wanted to be parted.”

guy I meet when I’m in college. When I’m serious.”

“OK, I just wanted to make sure. I told you it wasn’t going to last when you started dating him,” said Jen.

“I told you I don’t care.” She crossed her arms. “I’m not married to him, just dating him. I don’t know why you even brought him up.”

“Well, maybe it’s because you’re always daydreaming about these boys. I just want to be more realistic. I just want to be sure you’re not talking about him and getting your hopes up,” said Jen. She went back to looking at her phone. Holding it up to her face and taking a selfie.

Claire was back to listening to silence. She looked down at the grass, noticing how long it was. A pill bug scurried past her foot. She looked back towards the woods. The stillness of the trees was like looking at a painting.

“My mom had a lot of boyfriends in high school and college. But she met my dad before graduation and they’re still married. I bet they would have graves buried together. That way when I go to visit them I could do it in one trip.” Claire let out a weak laugh. Jen stayed quiet. “Not to be totally morbid, I’m talking about when

they're super old, OK? Oh, what if your parents got buried near mine? Then we could go together. Wear long black dresses like they do in that one movie...." Claire broke her eyes away from the trees and looked at Jen. "You know the one with Meryl Streep and that other actress...."

Jen cut her off. "No, Claire."

"What do you mean, no? I know you like that movie, too."

"My parents aren't together."

Jen still looked down at her phone but was no longer typing on it. She was as still as the trees behind her. Claire felt uneasy and unsure how to proceed after her rambling. She leaned from one foot to another. Then walked forward, taking a seat next to Jen.

"What do you mean?"

Your parents took us both out for ice cream after our dance competition. What, like last month? They seemed fine," said Claire.

"That's the last time they've been fine," said Jen.

"So, what happened?"

"My dad got a job far away. My mom doesn't want to move, I guess? So he left. I don't know. She doesn't want to talk about it. Neither do I." Jen placed her phone and both her hands in the pockets of her jacket.

Claire scooted herself closer to Jen.

"He just left?"

"Yeah."

Claire looked up at the sky.

"Asshole."

"Yeah, I know, right? Whatever."

"Where's this big, new, awesome job, then?" Claire asked, rolling her eyes.

"California."

"Ugh, gross," said Claire, "I watched this girl on YouTube, her name is Kristy. She just

moved to LA and she says everyone out there is soooo fake. Your dad is going to regret it."

"Yeah, I hope so," said Jen. She started to kick the earth with her feet. Claire nudged her arm.

"How about this: you and I get buried together. I'm not going to California, and we're both going to go to college together, right, so why don't you and me get buried together? Problem solved."

Jen looked at Claire. "Really? What's with you needing to be buried with someone?"

"I don't know," Claire shrugged, "I don't like being alone, you know this. Will you do me this favor? Pleeeeease."

"Sure, since you're so needy." Jen let out a little laugh and nudged Claire. The two girls sat for a while. Claire shivered.

Jen looked at her and said, "I think Marcus lied. This place isn't haunted. Let's

go home and watch Netflix." Claire smiled. They started to stand up when they heard a loud crack: the sound of a stick being snapped, coming from behind them in the woods. The girls jumped, gripping each other's hands tightly. Without saying anything, they started running toward the entrance of the cemetery. Their speed quickly picked up as they ran downhill. Suddenly, Claire clipped her foot on the edge of a grave; she fell hard onto the ground, rolling a little, and let out a scream. Jen turned around,

"Claire! Oh my God." She ran over to Claire.

"George is trying to get me!" yelled Claire. Jen started laughing and reached out her hand.

"He wants to make you his wife!" She looked back at the gravestone, "Leave her alone! She has a boyfriend!" Jen got Claire back on her

The girls jumped, gripping each other's hands tightly. Without saying anything, they started running towards the entrance of the cemetery.

feet and they started running again. When they got to the entrance, Claire turned around and flipped the bird towards the woods.

“Yeah, I got a boyfriend!” The girls started laughing hysterically as they got into Jen’s car. They sat for a moment, laughing and replaying what had just occurred. Making the occasional joke about the ghost of George coming to get them. When they caught their breath, Jen put her car in reverse. They drove out onto the road.

Claire watched the cemetery disappear as they drove away.

digital illustration

A Night's Rest

Amber Waters



poetry

Leather

Justin Bay

I was new once, stiff-brimmed and proud,
shining under a young man's eyes,
the leather smooth and untamed.
He wore me with a grin,
pulled low against the sun as he rode,
dust kicking up around us like fireflies.
Through hot days and heavy rains,
I stayed atop that head—
the faithful crown of a cowboy
finding his place in the wide world.
Sun soaked into me,
creases grew deeper where he touched,
and his sweat settled into my bones.
Years passed in a steady hum of trail songs,
nights beneath stars that leaned close,
brims folded up to keep an eye on coyotes,
mornings when he'd brush me off,
tip me back, nodding to strangers,
and I'd feel as much a part of him as skin.
Once, a long scar from a bar fight
slit my side like a crooked smile,
but he wore me still, held together
with a little glue and an old friend's laugh.
We both grew weathered,
edges frayed,
but still he set me square on his head
like a promise kept.
Now his hair is white as prairie frost,
his step slower than the rivers we crossed,
but I'm still here, tilted low and loyal,
worn soft as an old song.
The weight of all our years sits with me,
and when he takes me off, just once in a while,
I feel the ghost of the boy he was
and know I'll go with him
to the end of the trail.

Miles to Go Before I

Jordan Kwarcinski

His fingers tapped at the worn wood of the bar's counter. Hunched over on his stool, he let the din of his surroundings—loud conversations, the creaking of chairs and the clinking of glasses—envelop him. The sounds of the world around him blended into an indistinct hum that wrapped him up like a hug as he idly raised his glass to his lips.

So deep he was in a daze that the tap on his shoulder nearly sent him toppling out of his seat. He whipped around in time to see the back of a dark red jacket disappear into the crowd behind him. His brow furrowed at the sight, and with a sigh he looked down at the bar counter. His face tightened further when he saw a small card left on the counter by his left hand. The card was blank, save for a messy signature. Clenching his jaw, he quickly slid the card into his pocket. He pulled out a few crumpled bills and set them down as he pushed himself up from the barstool. He left the bar behind, his full glass dripping condensation onto the counter.

The wind nipped at his skin as he stepped outside. He turned his collar up against it and made his way down the dark street. His breath came in measured, confident puffs, visible in the chill air, but his shoulders were tense. Squared, but held too tightly, like a man who's nervous and trying not to be. He turned onto a narrow boulevard. One of the streetlamps flickered. His fingers turned the card over and over in his pocket.

After an eternity of cold winds and sharp thoughts, the man approached the building. It gave off a warm glow that contrasted sharply

against the blue-tinted night. It might have looked welcoming. To the man, it just looked like a warning.

As he shouldered the door open, hot air prickled against his windbitten face. The lounge before him was thick with smoke and humid air and bodies crowded around card tables. A few of them shot him curious glances, but they turned desperate eyes back to their games before long.

The man scanned the room for a moment before his gaze settled on the bar tucked into the far corner. A bartender with a bored expression stood behind it, running a towel over the sides of a glass. The man made his way across the room, breathing shallowly against the smell of smoke. The bartender looked up at him as he approached.

“Can I help you?”

By way of response, he withdrew the card from his pocket and slid it across the bar. As the bartender's gaze landed on the card, they stiffened, then they quickly palmed it and slid it into their apron. The bartender leaned down, rummaging in some unseen compartment on the other side of the bar counter before they pulled out a bag. It was leather with a long shoulder strap. With a strange expression on their face, like relief curdling into pity, they passed the bag into the man's hands. It was heavy, and clinking sounds came from inside when he shifted it in his hands. He slung it over his shoulder, the weight falling across his chest, then stiffly turned and walked back to the door he'd entered through.

He stepped out, back onto the dark boulevard

again. The cold air was a welcome respite after the choking heat of the lounge. But the night was only getting colder. And the man was not done yet. He turned the opposite direction from where he'd come, heading for the heart of the city. The strap dug deep into his shoulder.

His path took him by the docks, long since abandoned for the night. Fog hung heavy over the water, a thick blanket of gray broken up only by the silhouettes of boats. The man didn't look at any of them, didn't imagine setting a boat free from its moorings, didn't picture the feeling of leather falling through his fingers before it hit the black surface of the deep ocean. Or if he did, he certainly didn't show it. He just walked on, advancing to his destination.

A small, ragged house on a desolate street. No lights were on inside. He walked up, taking short, halting steps, and settled himself against the porch stairs. Something in the bag fell over, clanking against itself. He pulled his coat tighter around himself and waited.



poetry

Cherry Fields

Kylee Dailey

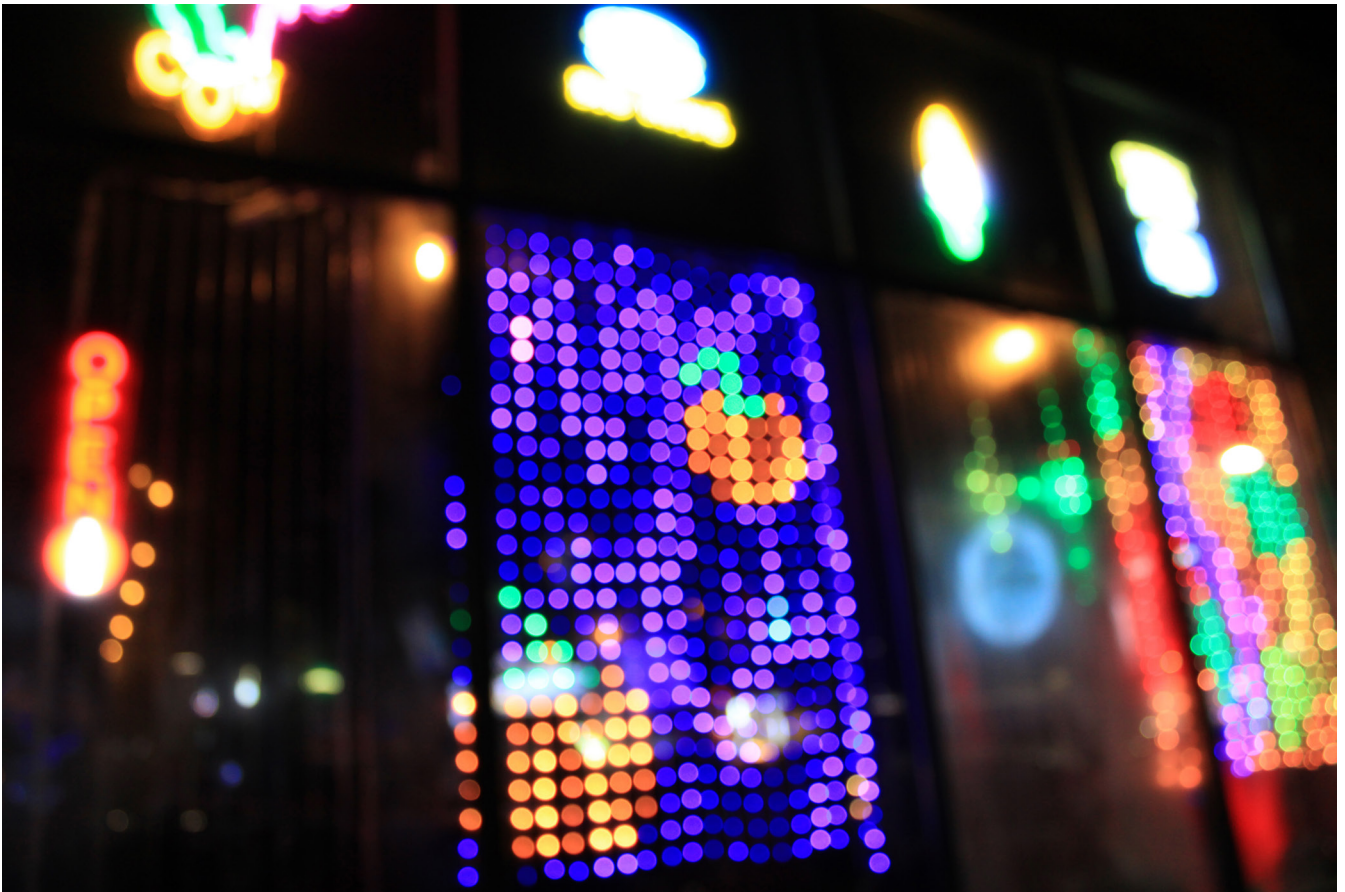
Cherry-flavored thoughts and sayings.
The sourness of our conversations
leaves a tint on my lips and tongue.

We tie the knot
of the stem.
Bunches of branches disperse.
The tree grows deeper in the ground.
The roots no longer see the sun.

photography

Downtown Lights

Liberty Nordstrom



Dahlia's Dilemma

Zizi Odigbo

Dahlia was at the hair salon when she received a text message from her boyfriend, whom she'd been considering breaking up with for some time now. She sighed, put her phone on do not disturb, and went back to staring at herself in the salon mirror, which was how she chose to occupy herself during her hair appointments.

Moments after putting her phone on do not disturb, she picked it up and slid on the home screen to read the preview of her boyfriend's message. It read: "Dahlia, can we talk?" She rolled her eyes to herself, though his repeated attempts to reach out made her reconsider breaking up with him, albeit only briefly. In many ways, Dahlia was the grown-up personification of pretending to drown in a pool to see who would try to save you, in that she went to ridiculous lengths to get reassurance without directly asking for it, which was why she had been ignoring Malakai's text messages for two days now. She was also ignoring him because she was hoping that drawing the relationship out this way would make it likelier that he saw the breakup coming, as she recognized that otherwise he might find himself quite perplexed by her seemingly sudden decision.

On the outside, they appeared quite the perfect fit. Their conversations were riveting, their dispositions similar, and witnessing their banter felt like being on the outskirts of one big inside joke. Dahlia herself wasn't quite sure why she was breaking up with him. Her older sister, Annabelle, with whom she had a tumultuous relationship, might have remarked that Malakai wasn't nearly as intimidating as Dahlia would have liked. That he was too "nice," which was arguably the worst reason to break up with someone. Annabelle was right in the sense that Malakai was ridiculously sweet, the type of saccharine that gets under your skin at first because you assume

someone can be that nice only performatively. That he must secretly get off on being referred to as "endearing," "sweet," and "kind" by old ladies at the grocery store. Or that he donates to charity monthly in order to soothe some sort of egotistical insecurity.

But the infuriating thing about Malakai was that once you got past the stage of believing his overly kind nature was performative, you discovered the more sinister truth, which is that he really does call his grandma every week, not because she is dying but because he enjoys doing so. And that sort of unadulterated righteousness would inevitably start to grate on someone like Dahlia. From his demeanor alone, you could tell that his parents liked each other; perhaps his family even had dinner together every evening. And that was deeply irksome. If Malakai were ever murdered, he would be described as genuinely being able to light up a room the way many victims are. However, Dahlia would be remembered more for her achievements, dependability, and wit before ever being described as "kind," not necessarily because she wasn't but because of the myriad other things she was.

"Can you cut the braids at the front a little bit shorter? I want the layers to be more pronounced," Dahlia told the hairstylist.

The hairstylist nodded, and Dahlia glanced back down at her phone screen. Though her hands were not occupied, she told the digital assistant on her phone to text Malakai, informing him that she would come to his apartment after her appointment and that they could speak then. She spent the rest of her appointment mulling over what she would say to Malakai, all the while holding her head perfectly straight so that her layers came out even.

The layers did come out impeccably even, and by the time the hairstylist was spraying hairspray on the curls, Dahlia had to actively suppress her growing smile. On the walk to Malakai's apartment, she listened to some sad music on her headphones to put her in a sufficiently somber mood, though the post-hair appointment pep in her step was undoubtedly still there.

She buzzed his apartment, 27, and noticed how his voice sounded slightly downcast over the intercom. She took the elevator up to his unit and knocked on his door, which she never usually did, considering the intercom system.

Malakai opened the door wearing the same variation of pajamas he cycled through on the days he worked from home. She took a seat at his kitchen island while Malakai poured her an iced lemon-

“No, of course not. I might be an uptight bitch, but I’m not a cheat.”

ade. Despite the fact he had a feeling he was about to be broken up with, he was the type of person to pour a drink for his soon-to-be ex and add ice from the icemaker he kept full only because of her specific preferences concerning drink temperatures.

Dahlia took a sip of the chilled drink. “Do you have any idea why I’m here to talk to you?”

“No,” Malakai replied, playing dumb. He wasn’t going to give her an easy out by suggesting what he knew to be true. He pulled out the bar stool opposite her on the kitchen island and eased himself onto it.

She looked at him pensively, unsure whether he was genuinely so ignorant or just playing dumb.

Either possibility annoyed her.

“Well, I thought I would come over to tell you in person because you deserve at least that much, but I feel like we should break up,” Dahlia said. She then proceeded to recite the breakup message she’d practiced repeatedly on the way to his apartment.

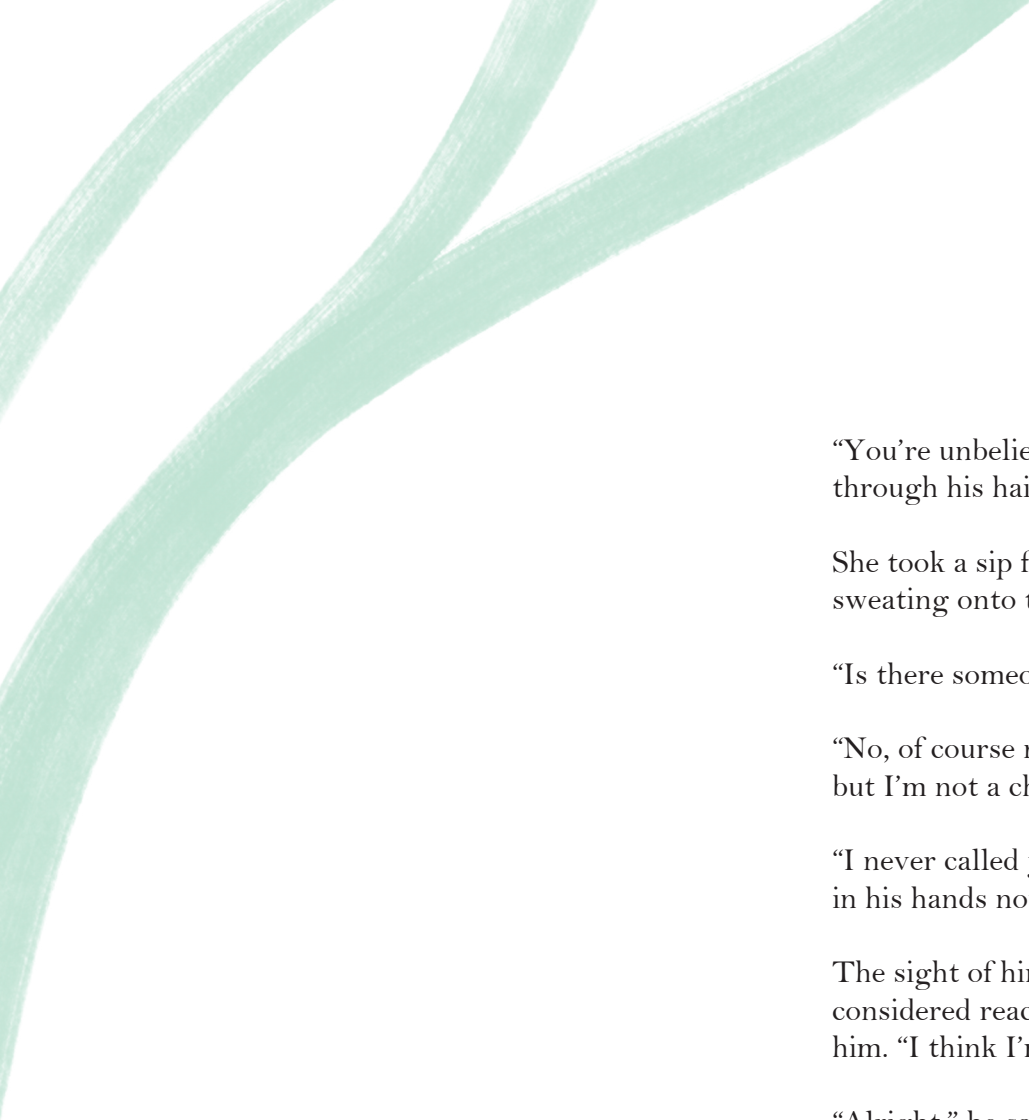
Malakai listened to her attentively until she finished. “Classic. Of course, you would break up with me using that same clinical voice you use for everything. I’m surprised you didn’t just send me an email saying, ‘Thank you for your time.’”

Dahlia, who had always had a slight insecurity about her intonation, which was deemed by many as overly formal, suddenly began to feel quite incensed. Her formal way of speech was a direct result of not having a lot of friends while growing up and not realizing that the language used in the books she read differed greatly from the usual conversational tone that regular people employed. Besides, she had spent her whole walk to his apartment carefully considering what words would be apt for this situation and believed she had struck a perfect balance between firm and consolatory.

“If you understand that I speak so clinically all the time, then what did you expect from me?”

“I was just hoping that the girl who I had been dating for five months would break up with me in a way that wasn’t so vague and full of shit that I would actually know why she was breaking up with me,” he said frustratedly, though his voice did not rise.

And though it did not help her argument in the slightest, Dahlia could not help but correct him. “Six months. We would have been dating for six months on Friday.”



“You’re unbelievable,” he said, running his hands through his hair.

She took a sip from her glass, which was now sweating onto the table. “I’m sorry.”

“Is there someone else?” he asked.

“No, of course not. I might be an uptight bitch, but I’m not a cheat.”

“I never called you an uptight bitch.” His face was in his hands now.

The sight of him upset distressed her, and she considered reaching over the table to comfort him. “I think I’m going to leave now.”

“Alright,” he said defeatedly.

Dahlia found herself miffed by how easily he was letting her leave him. Had these almost six months meant nothing to him? It didn’t help that his studio apartment, which Dahlia had always appreciated because of how manicured he kept it, was inexplicably starting to piss her off. She started to wonder if she’d ever seen a dirty dish in his sink all the times she’d been over, and the fact that she hadn’t made her even angrier.

“Wait,” Malakai said, looking up from his hands. “You should probably take the rest of the lemonade. You know I can’t stand it, and I probably won’t be able to keep looking at it every time I open the refrigerator.”

She nodded and retrieved the carton of lemonade, thinking to herself, “What the fuck is wrong with this man?”

Call Me Back

Danielle Thompson

Will you call me back?
When you have the time,
I think I lost
my t-shirt and self-esteem on your floor.
Will you check to see
what's left of me?
Will you call me friend?
When it is convenient for you,
I think my hair is still
woven into your bedsheets
from the night I called to ask for closure.
Will you look for me?
You can call me back when the silence settles,
and you've forgotten the weight of my voice.
I think my dignity is still scattered in your
kitchen,
pushed behind the lipstick-stained wine glasses.
Will you call me?
When it is easy again,
I think I lost
my heart on the sleeve of your sweatshirt.
Will you check if it's still beating?

photography

Paracas, Perú

Myrka Olivarez Gomez



Marriage

Alexis Spier

The marriage falls apart under the strain

to the 'carefully kept boxes and boxes of letters' they still retain.

from the vantage of a summer evening –
the small garden for a white cat to lie in,

'isn't it enough to see that a garden is beautiful without having to believe that there are fairies at the bottom of it too?'

~~the~~ (you can't get away from 'the gaze' ~~to a start~~)

~~the~~ ~~in~~ ~~love~~ ~~wife~~ its wind-eroded granite shorelines, pink sandy coves and velvety green waters. ~~He~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~same~~ ~~time~~

her name which they hardly ever spoke but was a white bird trapped inside ~~the~~ beating scared wings'.

For a woman to float to the ceiling, without wires or other stage trickery, is not strictly possible.

~~the~~ ~~best~~ ~~of~~ ~~both~~ ~~worlds~~ 'much better if we just faded away or turned into birds.' □

Trees

Leandra Klinker

You wander around trying to remember the way out. It's marked by a big tree with giant crisscrossed roots. Big branches that shouted, "Look at me! I am here! Don't you dare look away!" The rest of these trees are so quiet. They whisper things that you no longer can hear. You can remember being young in the backyard at your parents' place. All the trees would yell, but it was a happy scream. Some of your best memories live beside those trees. Years ago, your older sister and you would run around playing tag. You'd cry when she'd catch you, so she learned to let you win. You hated being "it," and she hated when you would cry. To this day, several years later, she still walks on her tiptoes around you.

Those trees fostered your first kiss. Her name was Melody, and she was your sister's age. It was so beautiful and easy in the beginning. The world knew the two of you as two peas in a pod or "Thing One" and "Thing Two." The trees knew the truth.

In the little forest back home, your dad put stakes in the ground with little arrows drawn on them. He did that only after you got so terribly lost that he had to call the sheriff's department. When you went off to college, he spent a good few weeks finding them all. You're pretty sure they live in the garage there now. Well, maybe not—the new person who moved in probably threw them away.

Melody and you made it work while she was in her first year of college. You did all the actual work. You'd remind her of important things that were going on: birthdays, anniversaries, holidays. You didn't mind the way she was throwing you to the side. You knew things wouldn't stay the same.

The way out is less important to you now. You're caught up in memory. You love the

particular smell of grass in wooded areas. That exact smell has been with you throughout your entire life. It claws at memories, unwilling to forgive.

You like the trees at the very beginning of fall the most. The leaves are trying to grab at all those beautiful colors, but they are still green. The effort and consistency are something to be appreciated, something that demands your attention.

You tried not to change. You told Melody that you'd always been the same person she fell in love with, but as she got distant, you got bitter. She held onto the worst of your words, and you clung to your memories.

In the end, when it got especially rough, you drove five hours to visit her at college for the first time. You arrived around nine p.m., and she was nowhere to be found. You must have called her thirty times.


She called you back in the morning and ended it. You could breathe again once you returned home—to your familiar spot.

Even though the breakup with Melody was decades ago, the heartbreak feels brand new every day. It was the kind of heartache that climbed to your head and down to your toes. That kept you from seeing anyone else even though your parents begged you for grandchildren.

The woods are narrowing. Out of the corner of your eye, in between the trees, you see a little bit of light. The few rays land on the ground ten, fifteen feet from you. You turn and start heading toward the direction they are coming from. The closer you get the farther they are. You could start running, but you're not sure if your knees could handle that.

Maybe coming back home was a bad idea, but you've been struggling with your memory for so long now. The doctor said that coming

But now you're alone.



back to this place might encourage something new to resurface, but sometimes doctors are wrong. The same doctor told you getting in contact with Melody might help, too.

You keep following the light. It's getting brighter and wider, but you're still not out yet. You've always had a terrible sense of direction, and you still do. Years ago, your sister would have been here beside you. She wouldn't have let you get lost. Forever ago, Melody would have been holding your hand, dragging you out of this place. When you were a child, your father would follow the path you took coming in and put the arrows down to make sure you could always make your way out. When you got out, your mother would have been the one bandaging you.

But now you're alone. You have no one outside of this forest who will come looking for you. No one will be standing by your side when you get out.



poetry

One Call Away

Emma Eubanks

The line hums softly, neither of us speaking.
Your voice still familiar, even as words grow fewer.
I grip the phone tightly, not wanting to be the first,
There's nothing more to say, yet we stay on the line.
A few moments later, we know it's time to let go.
"Goodbye." A word heavier than imagined,
Carried as bricks, yet spoken so lightly out of habit.
The click comes quietly, a sound so small,
Yet the room is swallowed whole once it leaves.
I sit there searching through the buzz.
The empty line still warm from where you used to be.

poetry

In the Mourning

Kylee Dailey

When Daddy died,
I made it rain rocks.
The gravel grew inside
and out of me; it was too much to handle.

On my own, I drowned
in the dirt, pebbles, and sky
in the same breath. It came shoveling out
all at once.

My world ended when Daddy died.
The rocks thrown at the windows,
haunting every step he took inside.
I wanted to dig a grave.

Dig a grave so deep
that I would be with my Daddy again.

ceramics

 **Nature's Flight**
Elijah Boyd Harris



poetry

When I Visit

Abigail Langseth

It's never planned.
I tell no one
I'm leaving
and just go.

On the drive
I think about
church bells
and Christmas
and how if I
went down every road
in town I could maybe
find the house you
lived in when
I was seven.

But memory instead leads
me to the base of a hill,
where I carefully step
until I find you,
where I hope
through space and time,
or just through a casket and dirt,
you can feel me near.

photography

Machu Picchu

Myrka Olivarez Gomez





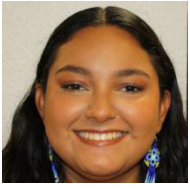
poetry

wound too tight

Katie Miller

the pillows are crooked,
sheets aren't pulled tight,
and the blanket is wrinkled.
it can never be just right.
thoughts spiraling aimlessly,
never settling,
awaiting the moment
I mistake them for the truth.
every step feels unsure—
did I turn off the stove?
am I dressed right?
the questions spiraling,
wanting answers
that I don't have.

Literature Contributors



Stephanie Meza is a Spanish, counseling, and developmental psychology major with a minor in religious studies. She is from Santa Ana, California and has come to Morningside University to explore career opportunities. She is involved in the Connie Wimer Women's Leadership program and Spanish club, she loves literature in Spanish and English, and she loves her work study job at the library.



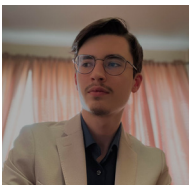
Danielle Thompson is a senior at Morningside, double-majoring in criminal justice and English with a minor in psychology. She is an officer in Sigma Tau Delta, a writing consultant, a peer mentor, and she is on the Morningside dance team.



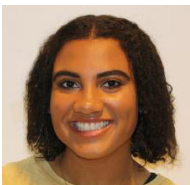
Lexi Carey is a sophomore criminal justice and counseling psychology major with a minor in creative writing. At Morningside, she is involved in Sigma Tau Delta, the Connie Wimer Women's Leadership Program. She is also on the women's swim team.



Josephine Biffar is a sophomore counseling psychology major from Blair, NE. At Morningside, she is involved in women's wrestling.



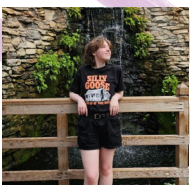
Caleb Leugers is a sophomore business administration major from Sioux City, IA. At Morningside, he is involved in the investment club.



Javonte Madsen is a junior secondary English education major.



Tori Bouska is a sophomore psychology major with a creative writing minor from Plainfield, IL. At Morningside, she is on the women's volleyball team. Her essay "Blue" appeared in last year's issue of *Kiosk*.



Saline Osborn is a junior English and theatre double major originally from Lincoln, NE. At Morningside, they are involved in Alpha Psi Omega and Sigma Tau Delta.



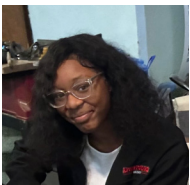
Alexis Spier is a 5th year senior multimedia communications major. At Morningside, she is a member of the women's basketball team.



Justin Bay is a freshman psychology major from Houston, Texas. At Morningside, he is on the swim team.



Kylee Dailey is a freshman public accounting major & criminal justice minor from Sioux City, IA. At Morningside, she is involved in the accounting club, financial aid office, & the telethon.



Emma Eubanks is a freshman counseling psychology major who has lived in both Utah and Des Moines, Iowa. At Morningside, she is involved in Campus Security. She loves school and wouldn't know what to do with herself without it.



Abigail Langseth is a senior nursing student from Omaha, NE. Throughout her life, she has had a love for poetry and literature. Abby is excited and grateful to say that her writings have again been published in *Kiosk*.



Katie Miller is a junior communications major from Kenosha, WI. At Morningside, she has enjoyed learning video and audio production skills. She has been told by others that she is most likely to be a crazy cat lady out of her friends.



Zizi Odigbo is a sophomore majoring in computer science and marketing. At Morningside, she is a resident assistant. She is very thrilled to be involved with *Kiosk* again.



Destinee Martin is a senior English Secondary Education major from Manson, IA. At Morningside, she has been involved in the Connie Wimer Women's Leadership Program. She is the current president of Sigma Tau Delta, the National English Honor Society. She has also been active with *Kiosk*, being a part of the reading boards for the past three years.



Spencer Kakacek is a senior graphic design major from Sioux City, IA. He has previously been a part of *Kiosk*; his art was used on the cover of Volume 86.



Kelsi Ryan is a junior at Morningside University and is majoring in radiology technology. She is from Sioux City, Iowa.



Leandra Klinker is a freshman biopsychology major with a professional writing minor from Meriden, IA.

Visual Art Contributors



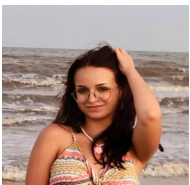
Elijah Boyd Harris, a sophomore from Rockwell City, IA, is pursuing an art education degree. Active in choir and the art department, he excels in drawing, painting, and ceramics. He also has a passion for painting.



Itzel Gonzalez is a sophomore graphic design major and photography minor. She is from South Sioux City, NE and enjoys creating art and taking pictures. She is excited to have her art be a part of this year's *Kiosk*.



Azaria Meals is a junior art education major from Sioux City, IA. She loves animals, and she loves to depict them into her work in a representational way relating to her own life.



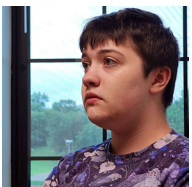
Kaylee Ptak is a freshman graphic design and computer science major from Nebraska. She enjoys creating portraits and figurative art.



Maya Willey is a freshman studio art and graphic design major from Shell Rock, IA. She enjoys creating art from the different media she consumes.



Sudem Ayar is a freshman graphic design art major from Turkiye-Bursa. She is an athlete in the volleyball team.



Jordan Kwarcinski is a senior English and graphic design major at Morningside University. They are involved in Sigma Tau Delta and presented their writing at the 2024 National Conference. They've enjoyed creating literary and visual art for much of their life, and they're excited to share their work on a wider scale.



Shelby Kastner is a graphic design and music major from Denison, IA. In her spare time, she loves reading and listening to music.



Amber Waters is a senior art major. They are an aspiring graphic novel/comic illustrator and writer in the supernatural and fantasy genre.



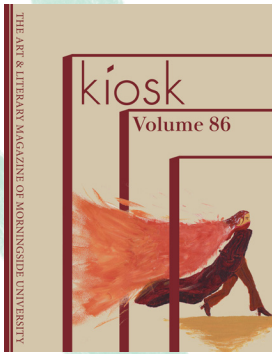
Liberty Nordstrom is a senior computer science major from Sioux City, IA. She does photography in her free time.



Myrka Olivarez Gomez is a 2024 alumna from Sioux City, IA. She received a minor in photography and continues to practice her hobby as she travels around the world!

About the Kiosk

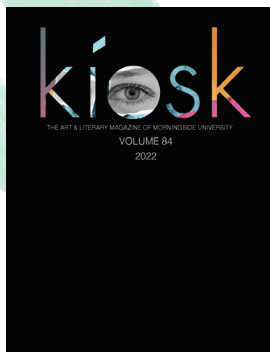
“Subject to editorial fallibility, the best will be printed.”



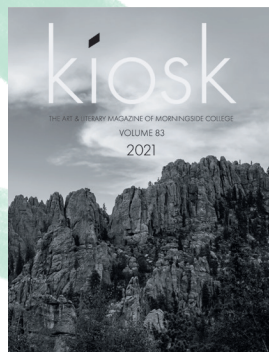
2024



2023



2022



2021



2020

This quotation first appeared in the foreword of the 1938 issue of *Manuscript*, the predecessor of *Kiosk*. In the early years of Morningside, student satire and short fiction were often published in the yearbook, but an idea for a student literary magazine began to grow in 1937 during a meeting of the Manuscript Club. In March 1938, students and faculty gathered to read aloud stories and poems. Only pieces of “sufficient literary merit” made it to readings, recalled Miriam Baker Nye, first editor. Student desire for a literary magazine was fueled by the visit of South Dakota poet laureate Badger Clark, and so on December 7, 1938, *Manuscript* was printed and distributed.

Students submitted their work, and sixteen editions of *Manuscript* were published before the magazine went dormant in 1952. Publication resumed under the name *Perspectives* in 1955, until students changed the name to *Kiosk* in 1971. Advisors over the years have included Donald Stefanson, Carole Van Wyngarden, Janice Eidus, Scott Simmer, Robert Conley, Jan Hodge, Jason Murray, Stephen Coyne, Leslie Werden, and now Brendan Todd.

Since 2006, *Kiosk* has won multiple awards from the Columbia Scholastic Press Association and Associated Collegiate Press, including a Silver Medalist Award, a Silver Crown Award, six Gold Medalist Awards, and three Magazine Pacemaker Finalist Awards.

Submissions are accepted in the spring semester of each academic year. Literature and artwork are reviewed by the editorial boards, recommendations are forwarded to the editor-in-chief, and selected pieces are then forwarded for judging. Winners are chosen anonymously by judges with no special considerations for any piece.

Kiosk is published annually by Morningside University and is distributed at no cost to Morningside students and alumni.



Kiosk was created with the help of Morningside University's Sigma Tau Delta chapter. To commemorate our students' commitment to art and literature outside of the magazine, we have indicated which students involved are Sigma Tau Delta members. The influence of Sigma Tau Delta members can be seen through those who submitted to the magazine and members of its staff team.

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Kiosk is published by and for adults. Some material may not be suitable for children.



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