

TIMBER CREEK ART AND LITERATURE MAGAZINE 2016-2017



GALAXIES

Galaxies is the second edition of the revived Timber Creek Art and Literature Magazine. The theme of the Fall 2016 magazine is inspired by Timber Creek student artists and the shine their creations bring to not just the school, but to the entire universe.

We'd like to thank everyone who submitted their work and assisted in this endeavor, and we wish them the best in their artistic journies.

Shining brighter together,
The Art and Lit Mag Committee

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SPIRAL

*We swallow the night sky at
our unified core, where we find
our roots at the center of own
Athens. Our creations stands on
shoulders of friendly
constellations and shimmer as
they expand into the universe.*



IN A SPIRAL GALAXY, STARS
AND GASEOUS CLOUDS
CONCENTRATE AROUND A
CENTRAL FORCE AND SWIRL
OUT IN TENDRILS, OR
SPIRALS.

UNTITLED

No longer, do I see stars in your eyes, your eyes no longer meet mine.
I now am forced to gaze in a different location
To shield my heart from this new pain,
And crying only brings more pain
So I walk with my head held high and I smile,
Smile at those with sympathy in their eyes
Those who wonder - not how I seem - but how I really am
But not even I know who I am, or how I feel
Do I cry? Am I angry? The emotions escape me
Why can't I just let go?

-IZZY PARRA



UNTITLED BY EMILY GHIZZONI

BE YOURSELF

Society tells girls lies
Such as “you must be the right body size”
If you’re ever going to attract guys,
If you’ll ever be appealing in our eyes
But then they turn around and tell you to be yourself, a better version of you
Where your stomach doesn’t protrude from your frame
And your thighs are the same
As every other girl that is skinny and pretty and vain
And waits for the day when everyone knows their name.
Be yourself,
But be pretty and smart.
Be sexually appealing like a work of art.
Be flawless and dauntless but don’t stick your neck out too far
Because if you try to be who you really are
They will just tell you that who you are isn’t good enough to fit the mold
Of a skinny pretty girl, waist wrapped in gold.
Be yourself,
But don’t lead guys on,
Because when you’re drunk and hanging on his arm
Him quietly leading you to the bedroom where he’ll steal something you can’t get back,
You’ll be the one to blame.
You sexually saying his name telling him this isn’t a game
When you whispered in his ear “no I don’t want the fame”
That the news will one day place on you for not saying the same.
You shouldn’t have gotten drunk because then you couldn’t say no
But the guy that lead you there didn’t let you go,
So you were stuck in this drunk stupor with a man
Whose breath reeked of vodka
And whose bloodstained teeth were gnawing at your nose
And whose sweat dripped off with desperation that shows
That he’s just a sick man with a fetish for skinny pretty girls wearing too tight clothes because
that’s what they chose.
No.
You can’t wear clothes that make you feel good,
Because it tempts men to take advantage of a girl who shows off her body.
No.
You can’t get drunk at a party,
Because men will attack and make you feel weak as he rips at the clothes off your back.

No.

You can’t be yourself.
Because if you were to indulge in the things that make you feel good
You could alter the way a man thinks and that would be detrimental to society.
Being raped is not attractive and if society deems it wrong then it is a sin,
But this has gone on too long and I’m tired of making excuses
As to why I’m not good enough to fit this skinny pretty image of a girl who’s in just as much
pain as I am.
So don’t tell me to be myself
when you have this cookie cutter image of who ‘myself’ is supposed to be
Supposed to look like
And make me feel bad because I don’t look right.
And soon enough myself will be what society has always planned,
A skinny pretty girl in high demand
But that’s not who I am.
Because I am myself, despite what society has told me
And I’ll wear what I want because
That’s what makes me feel free.

- MARY MCCASLAND



UNTITLED BY ALLI ULERY

UNTITLED

I found a very old book
As I opened it
The pages of the fantasy that filled my once so innocent life surrounded me,
The butterflies that I once adored fill the air,
The smell of the baker's bread in the market over run my nose,
I had opened up a world I had forgotten for so long.
I tried to close the book but my heart would not let me,
I walk into the wonderland my child mind had created,
This was my escape from the pain reality has become.
My mind became wrapped up in the world of perfection,
I walked past the guarded gates of the tallest castle known in all the lands.
The towns people stared at my frail framed body,
I was not the little girl that once danced upon the streets.
As I reached the stone castle I was pulled back,
My name echoed in the wind.
With each syllable I was pulled further and further away from a dream,
I'm yet within reality once more.
I became a fragile broken thing.
The memory remained as a tiny spark,
The butterflies still danced around me,
I lived in a fairy tale somewhere too far to find ever again.

-DESTINY FITCH



STUDY OF FALCONS BY KAMERON GOPFFARTH

STRAWBERRY WINE

At seven years old, the girl is afraid of death.

You and I have watched her for some time now. Neither of us directly intervened in the progression of her life, no cold, hollow nights on my part, no elaborate gifts on yours. We kept our hands to ourselves. Tinkered with other lifelines. Gambled other parts of the world. We gave her good times and bad, but it all evened out to be a bland, vanilla ice cream life; her mind was too much of a mystery to risk dramatically altering her perspective.

We'd created her with in at wear without realizing what we'd done. For example, her grandfather passed of cancer when she was four; we'd written that into his timeline years ago. While all signs said her curious case was caused by the trauma of a loved one's passing, there was no erasing the question she posed when she learned of his sickness; "Can other people catch it from him?"

When the answer was no, she threw her spindly arms across his chest. The cold railing of the hospital bed jarred into her ribs, her bones not yet as jarring as they would later become.

You and I watch her on her seventh birthday. She sits on the back porch with a half eaten strawberry cupcake in her hands, glancing up from beneath long lashes as her friends play on the swing dangling from the aged tree. Her green eyes swing back and forth as she follows the tire at the end of the rope. Forward and up... towards the jagged branches and down and back

and up...barely missing the corner of the shed.

Her fingers release her tension, ripping the cupcake wrapper into tiny pieces, then tearing those into even smaller fragments. The two of us stared as if she was solving an algorithm.

You shoot me a glance through narrowed eyes. "Are you sure you didn't do anything? Something that slipped past me?"

I look up from the deck of cards I shuffle back and forth in my hands, but I don't lose the repetition of the motion. I snap the deck in half and retort, "Please. You could've done something just as well as I could've -- which I didn't."

You purse your withering lips. "Only asking because I know I didn't."

I roll my eyes. We fall quiet.

The girl places the cupcake gingerly at her side and stands, strong and straight despite her tiny frame. Neither her friends nor their parents take notice of her as she marches across the yard; she blends with the other girls who chatter like canaries, laughing as their friends giggle and shriek at the breaks of their arcs on the rope swing. The girl, the creation we focus on, bites the inside of her lip and grips her fists on the sides of the lavender dress her mother ironed just that morning.

It takes a moment for her friends to notice

her, but one soon tugs on her sleeve. She asks if something is wrong, but when she gets a smile, a laugh, and a small "Of course not, it's my birthday," she leaves it be. The girls go back bickering over whose turn it is to swing.

Our subject bites her tongue, but she doesn't last long. "We could play cards."

Eyes turn, and her cheeks flush. "You know," she adds, "so there wouldn't be any fighting."

The other girls stiffen. The one on the swing catches her heels in the dirt, and then they're all quiet. Watching their birthday girl playing uncomfortably with the ends of her lavender dress.

One towards the back, clearly out of sight, pips, "Someone else can have my turn. I'm supposed to be next, if someone wants it."

A girl with pigtails raises and hand and gives a sharp "Oh!" Someone else elbows her in the ribs.

A face pops up from the back, freckled and framed with red ringlets. She pushes her glasses straight and says to the birthday girl, "Why don't you go next?"

"She won't do it," you interject. "She was so anxious watching her friends. She'll be too afraid of risking her own safety and of endorsing the activity, therefore encouraging the others to continue with it."

I shake my head, bite the tip of my thumb. A beast inside me says you're wrong, but I

watch the girl sway back and forth on her feet, stare up the trunk of the tree to the knot that keeps the rope swing in place. I wait for something to click and void your hypothesis.

You press me for more -- "Well?" -- but I'm patient. One of the other girls, the one with the pigtails announces, "If she isn't going, I will."

Our key subject throws her hands out in front of her, panic aflame in her emerald eyes. She falters. Then she asks, "Is it fun?"

After the odd outburst, the other girls exchange wary glances. The redhead in the back says, "Very!"

Our birthday girl is quiet for a moment more, chewing the stunted end of her fingernail. Seeing her do so brings me to the realization that I'm still chewing mine; I yank my thumb away from my teeth and shake my hand out, investigating my nail to find a pitiful dent that ruins the perfect ruby polish I'd carefully painted on earlier that evening. I scowl at myself and snap, "Do we have any red wine around here? Merlot?"

You point me to the cabinet across our room. I sweep to my feet, slowing the mortal world to buy me a moment to grab glasses and a fresh bottle. They clink together like the click of my heels, and I set one glass at each of our seats, giving you the bottle to open and pour.

My hand is on my glass before you've even taken the grace to fill it. You laugh at me, a small chuckle, but I ignore it and wait. Soon, I've got a drink nearly the color of my nails.

I take a sip.

"She's going to do it," I tell you, "because it's a stalling tactic. She'll swing to avoid letting her friends do so. At least then, she'll be able to hang on and avoid going too high."

"Fair," you acknowledge, popping the cork back into the bottle, "but that won't keep them off the swing forever."

I wipe my lipstick stain off the edge of the glass. "Sure, but it'll give her time. When children grow bored -- as they would watching a peer perform a mundane endeavor -- they find new forms of entertainment. They move on."

You're quiet. The scene returns to speed just in time for our girl to say, "I'll do it."

Her voice went up a third, maybe a forth. She plops herself on the seat of the swing and grips the ropes so tight they shake up to the branches of the trees. She keeps her feet planted on the worn grass.

But with their friend on the throne, the girls are eager to push. They pull the swing back by the ropes, by the seat, by snatching the birthday girl around the waist. While they laugh, sing, she locks her teeth together to forgo emitting a shout, cry, or even a whim-

per of protest. Even I can sense her tension, although the flock of friends are oblivious.

They tug her up as high as their young bodies will allow, and then their holds start to slip. First to lose her grip is the girl manning the seat of the swing. The other strain, and the two lifting the left rope slips, jolting their birthday girl sideways with a collective gasp. Finally, they give a cheery laugh as they let go and their friend swings forward, her feet just missing the shins of a girl who jumped out of the way. If our subject hadn't yanked her feet up underneath her, there would've been tears.

The swing eases back to the crowd of girls. They shove the birthday girl's back with sticky cupcake hands, rough as if trying to get her to cough something up. A breath catches in her throat, and she gasps for air at the wrong moment; the swing sweeps forward once again, and a rush of wind hits the back of her throat.

She doesn't understand how the others for a handle of this. Her blonde waves smack her face, and her palms are too sweaty on the ropes. She wills her gravity to lessen on the pull of the branch overhead; it bends, groans, and she'd never wished to be smaller.

Then, as she reached her next crest, her eyes fall on the top of the shed. Never before had she seen the collection of dried leaves and water stains, spiders

and abandoned acorns, her backyard's history laid out before her. In that moment, her height is insurmountable, we see it in her widening eyes. She's frozen in that moment after that acceleration of the climb and before the gravity of the fall, what feels like an infinity before a collapse.

The swing falls...back, and she's forced once again into the crowd of girls, and tangles, and colored dresses, and she breaks out on the other side...hanging, and...falling once again to the hands and almost hitting her mother's yapping dog before again she's up, up, up and down, down, down, and up, down, and "Girls! It's getting chilly, come inside."

Her feet skid the ground and send shocks through her legs. The other girls are already running off with promises of lemonade spinning round their heads. They leave their birthday girl behind as she slows herself to a careful stop, her feet planted in grass, skirt in the seat, hands slowly untangling from the ropes.

You cross your legs and sit back "You were right. She did it."

Something in your voice is lackluster. I glance over and raise an eyebrow. "Disappointed that you're wrong?"

You keep your eyes on the girl. "I just don't understand," you say. "Why is she afraid of us?"

The question underlying this whole endeavor

or. I can't scoff at you for asking; I've already asked myself and failed to reach an answer. We created her, gifted her with a time in her beautiful and terrible universe. And her time will end, yes, as all things do. But we care for our creations after their time is up -- we aren't monsters.

Your gaze finds mine, and we search one another for an answer neither of us have. All we find is the darkness, the ambiguous, the unknown. We must admit that we do not know. That one of our creations holds a secret we cannot see.

I say it for the both of us. "I think it may be possible that our fear of her is as big as her fear of us."

Our eyes hold for a moment longer, and that's enough. Your gaze flickers to your glass.

The girl's mother calls for her again, swishing her strawberry wine. The birthday girl stands, brushes wrinkles out of her lavender skirt, and she eyes the drink through heavy lashes; she knows alcohol destroys the human body after enough drinks and enough years. She wishes her mother wouldn't drink it. Too bad she can't swallow all the strawberry wine in the world.

- SARAH ULERY

UNTITLED BY ALLI ULERY



UNTITLED BY BROOKLYN BAILEY

THE COLOURS I SEE

I push my large rimmed glasses up with the back of my hand. Engaging in a staring contest with the white canvas, I huff and lean back in my desk chair. My mind is as blank as this dang canvas. Everything had been done: a six coloured ocean, a three coloured forest, a sixteen coloured grainy desert, and a thirty coloured space. I continue to stare, hoping that an idea would throw itself at me.

The busy sounds of afternoon rush hour flood my ears. I groan; sound throws off my concentration. Rolling my chair forward, I lean my elbows on the edge of the desk and rest my chin on folded hands. I squint, looking for even a small spark of inspiration.

My phone dings and I sigh as I pick it up to check the notification. Only fifteen minutes have past since I first sat down. Scrolling through the numerous e-mails regarding requests, commissions, and custom orders, a shocking request from Berlin appears in my inbox. I flag the email and continue to think.

After searching for minutes that seemed like hours, an idea finally inched its way into my mind. A busy city with buildings that stretch so high they penetrate the sky. People packing in tight lines as they rush to their jobs. Ten, fifteen, and twenty coloured digital billboards adding colour to the dull grey buildings. Perfect.

I pull my long hair into a high ponytail and grab a pencil from the side of my desk. I begin to sketch the buildings stretching off the canvas, the individual people who are different yet somewhat similar, and the diversely coloured signs and billboards. With each line my pencil draws I see the picture form in front of me. I can look down from atop the tall buildings and see the people rushing to their jobs.

I connect the last line in my sketch and begin to number. Each and every spot on my canvas is numbered, even the smallest of small details. I feel like a child “painting by numbers”, but having an organized system like this eases my brain.

Next is outlining my sketch. The thin, smooth felt tipped marker glides along the canvas, leaving black trails of ink behind it. I yearn for the meeting of my paint brush and the canvas.

I walk over to my shelf of paints, numbers upon numbers of paints line the walls. Bottled in small glass jars, I take paints sixty-four, thirty-nine, eighty-seven, fifteen, and six from their numerically organized spots. I check the handwritten numbers on the bottom of the jars to make sure I have the exact colours I need. As I open the first jar, the refreshing smell of paint fills my room. I pick

up my brush and begin to give the canvas a personality of its own. Through my brush the colours within me flow through my veins, to the brush, past my fingertips, and onto the canvas.

After an hour of pacing back and forth between the shelves of paint and my canvas, I finally step back to admire my painting. I tilt my head left and right to see every angle and detail. How I see it, many would call a piece like mine “original” or “diverse,” however this is just a painting. A painting filled with a number of colours. In reality, a painting filled with numbered colours. These are the colours I see, or rather the ones that I can’t. I just see the world in a bland grayscale. My world is in black and white. That’s how it’s been and that’s how it always will be.

- BRIDGET TESCHENDORF



UNTITLED BY ALLI ULERY



OIL PAINTING OF A FOREST- VICTORIA XU

UNTITLED

The gentle giant slipped away to steal a moment to himself. His impressive physique crumpled into a chair by the fire pit and his leg began to furiously shake. Heat consumed his oblong face, not from the flames, but rather from the thoughts running rampant in his head. Cool droplets filled his amber eyes and threatened to roll down his blush cheeks. He tilted his head back in youthful refusal to give into this weakness.

The glittering night sky above him painted a picture in mind of wonder, passion and hope. When he looked at the stars, he saw endless possibilities. He slowly faded away from his hot-headed state and let the stars lead him into a brighter mind-set. A sweet smirk emerged on his face as he remembered how he used to call her his “little star in the sky.”

Closing his eyes, blues and yellows flooded his eyelids as if “Starry Night” itself had left its imprint there. He felt the humid air embrace him as if her slender frame was in his arms. His breath hitched at the thought of her blonde tousled hair resting on his chest.

A cricket melody pulsed throughout the backyard and it led the two sweethearts in a dance. Her beaming smile lit up the night as she twirled around him. They were being transported into the stars, each three count leading them up a stairway into the sky. He knew he couldn’t climb much higher, but clung to the idea of her as if she was his whole world. She soared higher and higher into the lush clouds, leaving him behind.

As the feeling of her disappeared, he opened his eyes to the clammy dark reality. Solitude instantly hit him like a crashing wave and he found himself desperately alone. Even the crickets, who had once sung a lover’s tune, had abandoned him.

-GABI GALLOWAY

UNTITLED

As the tears fell from her face, the little girl ripped her necklace off of her neck, on which a small Christian's cross hung, and threw it to the floor of the small hospital room. She flung herself to the ground and covered her face with her petite, childlike hands. She could not stop the tears, which continued to flow into a pool within her hands. Alone, scared, she wiped her tears with the sleeves of her old pink dress, hoping to also wipe away the pain. Her tears left spots on her dress, like blood from the wounds that will forever leave her scarred.

"Why didn't you answer my prayers?" she pleaded between the rushing air that filled and emptied her lungs. "All I ever wanted was for him to be happy again!" she yelled as she heard the quick steps of the nurses opposite the closed door.

She looked up at her lifeless grandfather as more tears fell from her youthful face, wetting her cheeks. Suddenly, there was a firm knock at the door, but the girl lacked the strength to answer. Then, another knock came as the little girl wiped her face, got up, and let out her anger.

"Go away!" she yelled as she turned to face the door. The shiny silver knob on the door turned as a nurse stepped into the room. She wore blue scrubs and a card that hung around her neck as proof that she was a nurse there. She closed the door quietly behind her.

"I can't let you stay much longer with him, honey. Your mother will be waiting for you soon," she said in a rather soothing voice.

"He's gone, so why does it matter anymore?" spat the little girl, staring at the nurse with a look of disgust.

The nurse sighed and repeated, "Your mother will be over here soon and she is going to take you home."

"I'm not going anywhere."

At that, the nurse gave the girl a worried look and walked out of the small hospital room, leaving a dead silence suspended in the air. The girl sat back down and looked at her grandfather, who lay still in the bed. He wore blue hospital clothing, which reminded her of all the times he would complain about them, and a cross on a chain, identical to hers, around his neck. He looked older than he did before the cancer invaded his body. The sweet memories of picnics at

the nearby park and the fishing trips on the lake played in her head, projecting the happiness of the days back then.

The door opened once more as her mother walked in. Her face was red, evidence that she had been grieving as well, and still a little wet with tears. She looked exhausted as she looked at the girl.

"It's time to leave sweetie," she whispered as a sympathetic smile spread across her face. Knowing that her mother didn't need any more pain to deal with, she followed her mother out of the hospital room.

Looking up at her mother, she saw tears begin to fall from her eyes and slip down her cheeks. The girl squeezed her mother's hand tightly, reassuring her that they would be all right. Looking back at the room, the nurses entered and shut the door slowly behind them.

- VICTORIA NELSON



UNTITLED BY LINDSERY GARDENER

UNTITLED

She lies breathless on the floor. Her walls crumble around her. Does he know he's ruined her like this? Her mind. Her body. Her soul. Crushed by the weight of his betrayal. He should know the sensitivity of her. She used to be his. He's loved her forever and still does. He might never stop. But she can't love him anymore. His bipolar destructive nature kills every part of her sanity. He lies and makes excuses for things he knows he shouldn't. He keeps leading her on and every time he does, she crumples under his fingertips. She's an angel sent from heaven and he's a demon sent from hell to possess a beautiful vessel. He ruined her heart and now she's breathless.

-ASHLET



UNTITLED BY SETH STOREY

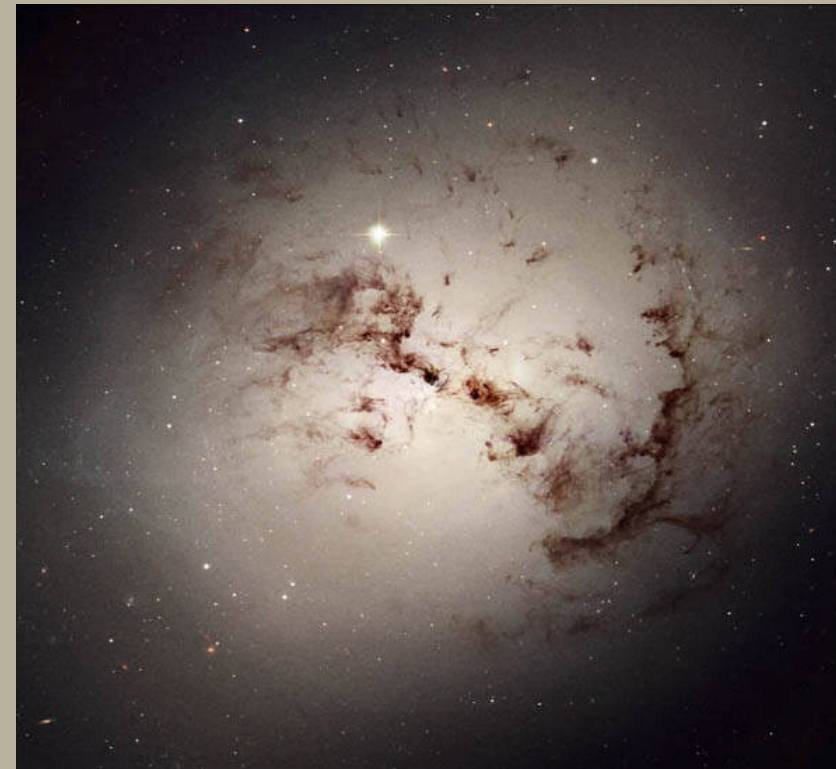
DIVIDED

It becomes easy to forget
That time never stops and waits
It's a difficult concept to appreciate.
People live and thrive, while others sleep and weep.
We live individually
But humans forget gradually
That our strength lies in numbers.
Where is the line between united and separated?
When did it blur and become so saturated?
As mankind looks to mars and beyond the stars.
Reach higher and higher with willpower and fire.
On the brightest days when mankind flies
And we look onward with cloudy eyes.
We will create falcon filled skies.
Fly towards a brighter future.
Soar united

-NATHANIEL GARCIA

ELLIPTICAL

*When the sun has abandoned our
side of the globe and the moon is
lost behind clouds, we are the
soft candlelight. Shadows flicker
against our flame, casting
reflections of images never to be
seen in the day.*



ELLIPTICAL GALAXIES FLOAT
MORE FREELY THAN SPIRAL. AS
STARS ROTATE IN LIBERATION,
THE OVERALL EGG-LIKE SHAPE
OF THE GALAXY EMITS A WARM,
CONSTANT GLOW AGAINST THE
NIGHT SKY.



BACK FAT BY EDIE MAHLE

THE ONLY ONE

The coat hanger was a tall old thing, it's spine a long pole. She had a basket on the bottom of her, for things like umbrellas to be placed in. On the top of her, about where a human's head would be, she had things like arms sticking out and then curving upward with a little knob on the end. On these arms people would hang items like coats, hats and purses. The coat hanger's name was Arms - for obvious reasons. Arms loved what she did. She was so pleased with the fact that she could provide a place for her beloved humans to put their things when they didn't need them. Even when clothing was carelessly thrown upon her, she was still happy to be of assistance. After all, she was born for this job and this job alone. She couldn't dream of doing anything else. She especially loved that she was able to spend so much time with Brolly, the umbrella that was always laying in her basket. Brolly was her best friend.

With a job like his, how could Brolly possibly enjoy his life? Every time it rained he was forced to endure the hard splatters of water for endless amounts of time, just to protect the stupid heads of his humans. Why did he have to be the one to get wet? Were the humans so pathetic that they couldn't stand a little water every now and then? Brolly hated what he was forced to do. He hated the outdoors, he hated the sun, and most of all he hated water. And his job description required him to withstand the pain of all those things.

The only thing Brolly ever looked forward to was being with Arms, the coat hanger whose basket he was always thrown into. Brolly and Arms could talk for hours on end. They simply enjoyed each other's company. After being pounded on by hard rain, Brolly, still dripping, would be rolled up and tossed into Arms' basket, where he would stay until he was needed again. Both Arms and Brolly's eyes would light up when they saw each other. He loved being with Arms.

The sound of rain hitting the windows played throughout the house. Brolly and Arms were enjoying a fun and exciting conversation together when they heard the keys rattle. Brolly immediately groaned, knowing that his time was coming. As he expected, a large arm grasped his handle tightly, pulling him away from Arms and unwrapping the piece of cloth that held him together.

Arms shouted a quick goodbye and cast a sympathetic smile his way as he was taken outside into the pouring rain. His human pushed the button on his handle and his canopy quickly shot upwards. As the human stepped off the porch, the relentless rain immediately began to

beat down on Brolly. He knew this was going to be an awful journey.

As the minutes ticked by and hours passed, Arms stood waiting for Brolly to return. She had hoped that it wouldn't be long before he got back, but that hope was quickly squashed as she watched the clock's hour hand spin around and around. Her day was long and boring without Brolly and she desperately wished for him to return, wanting nothing more than to finish their conversation that had been cut way too short.

Many hours later, as the sky was darkening, she heard the unlocking of the front door, the turn of the knob, and the squeaking of the door being opened. Her human walked inside and Arms looked all around for Brolly, but she couldn't find him anywhere. Finally, she caught sight of him as her human turned to lock the door. The sight that met her eyes caused a gasp to escape from her. Brolly was injured.

Her human sighed and gently tossed Brolly into Arms' basket. Looking down, tears beginning to form, Arms realized just how bad Brolly's injuries were. His canopy was torn in many places, almost non-existent, one of his stretchers was broken and could only extend so far, the bracelet that used to hang from his handle was no longer there. He was in terrible shape. Brolly was barely conscious and in much pain. Arms feared that she might lose him forever. Was the torturous storm enough to take the life of an innocent umbrella? Would Arms lose the only friend she ever really had? All these thoughts pervaded Arms' mind and she was panicking as she watched Brolly struggle to breathe. Would their friendship be torn apart after this one horrible adventure? Just the thought was enough to bring Arms into a state of gross sobbing. She wouldn't be able to go on if she lost him.

Brolly slowly looked up at Arms' face, his vision blurry and his head aching. Despite the utter pain, he managed a weak smile, wishing Arms wasn't so torn.

"It's okay," He breathed. "You'll get on just fine by yourself."

Those few words struck Arms in the heart, as an arrow would, and she could no longer contain herself.

"No! I can't go on without you Brolly. You're the only one I have!" Arms sobbed, barely able to look at Brolly in his terrible condition.

Struggling to comfort her, Brolly did all he could to tell Arms it would be okay and not to worry, trying to convince himself just as much as he was her. As breathing became more and more of a struggle, Brolly stopped talking and just looked at Arms. He studied her face, still

beautiful even when covered in tears. He realized that Arms truly was amazing. She was the most beautiful, kind, optimistic girl he had ever met, and he didn't want to leave her, especially in the state she was in. The thought of dying was now a frightening one.

"Arms –" Brolly tried to speak, but his words were interrupted as he coughed and hacked, tears sliding down his face as the overwhelming pain threatened to take over him once and for all. He fought it as hard as could. He had to say these words to Arms.

"I... I love you, Arms."

Arms' sobbing quickly subsided into silent tears and sniffles after she heard those few simple words. She smiled through the pain and whispered back to him, "I love you too, Brolly." With a smile on his face and those words forever etched into his heart, Brolly let out his last breath. His eyes gently closed and he sank ever so slightly deeper into Arms' basket, content with his final moments on this Earth.

-TABITHA TOMLINSON



A SKETCH BY EDIE MAHLE

A CRACKED EGG

a cracked egg,
is still an egg.
no matter how many
bruises,
or scars,
or cracks,
or fractures it has,
it is still the same
on the inside.
it may not be as pretty,
or impressive
as the others,
but a cracked egg,
is still an egg.

a cracked egg
has a golden,
beautiful center,
but you have to first look past
it's flaws
and appearances to get
to the wonders that are held inside.
don't get caught up
fussing over your eggs
in the aisle
of your local Winn Dixie
because what's on the inside
is what matters.
a cracked egg,
is still an egg.

some cracked eggs,
have a story.
some have endured a long journey,
some may have just
came out a bit
different,

and some
cracked eggs
are cracked
because of other things,
but no matter what
the egg looks like,
a cracked egg,
is still an egg.

but,
there are a few exceptions
to cracked eggs.
some cracked eggs,
can be rotten,
and those are the cracked eggs that you
must watch out for.
but, you never know
if it is rotten,
until you see
what is on the inside.
so if you see a cracked egg,
don't be so quick
to assume.
because you do not know
the story of that egg,
until you look inside.
a cracked egg,
is still an egg.

-ANONYMOUS

DRAW WITH ME.

The sun rises and it sets. The water rushes in and out of shore. The baker bakes the bread and a steel smith forges metal. Everyone has a purpose in life. Some base it around their jobs, or pride themselves on artwork they create. Some people do it for feeling of love.

The sensation of falling for another human is said to be pure bliss. Feeling the warmth of your partner is a sensation rivaled by nothing, but what happens when you fall in love with someone you can't touch? Some one that seems to be a million miles away in a far off land. All you can do is sit and wait for a chance to meet. Love ever growing as you sit still. Sweet talking each other to sleep from across the world. The two characters in this story have done just this. Fallen in love and have never even met.

Chapter 1

It's a bright day in spring. The sun beams down on the glistening meadows below. The morning dew still rests upon the blades of grass. A boy is lazily walking through the fields, smiling at the flowers and breathing in the fresh morning air.

As he is strolling, he notices something strange. His world seems to come to a complete stop. Just ahead of him there is nothing but a grey, flat endlessness where there were once beautiful fields. The boy walks to the end of his meadow and sticks

his hand out. To his surprise there was a wall of glass straight up and down, and as far as the eye could see in both directions.

"A new adventure!" he thinks as he holds his hand against the glass and works his way down the wall. "There are no faults or cracks upon the wall..." thought the boy. Just flat and seemingly untouched by nature's horrors.

He spent hours searching the wall for a way through, but to no avail. The boy came to the conclusion that he could simply not get any farther. "Is this the border of my world; reality even?" He speaks to himself in a hushed manner. He presses his back against the wall with a thud and slips to the ground, shoving his hands into his eyes to stop any tears that may fall.

The boy contemplates for a moment more. All he wants to do is leave the infernal wall and run back home. Just then, he hears a faint squeaking noise, like rubbing a wet cloth on a table directly behind him. He jumps up and scrambles forwards, turning his head to see what it was. There was a single word where his head was a moment ago. It read "Hello" in very plain handwriting. As he creeps forward towards the wall he hears the squeaking noise again. A small question mark was drawn next the greeting.

He arrives at the wall and questioningly knocks on the glass. The boy can see through the glass, but no one is on the other side. There was nothing in the other side, not a

building or a tree in sight. The question mark is seemingly wiped away and replaced with an exclamation point. "Hello!" says the boy.

Three dots appear next the the exclamation point. "Are you there?" the wall writes.

"Yes I am!" says the boy.

The wall replies with its black ink. "I can not hear you, but I have an idea."

A few seconds later a dry-erase marker appeared from the sky and landed next to him. The greeting was erased and replaced with an instruction. "Draw with me."

He carefully put the tip of the marker to the glass and wrote "Hi."

"You have to write backwards, dummy."

The boy quickly removed the word and wrote it backwards, blushing slightly at his careless mistake. He writes his greeting again and the wall writes back, "Hello, I am E."

He writes back "And I am K."

The words the wall had wrote were erased and replaced almost immediately.

"Why is it grey on your side?"

"My side?" writes the boy.

"Yes your side."

He takes a moment to consider what is happening. Either the wall was somehow writing to him, he had gone mad, or there is someone standing in that grey expanse. As he is thinking everything the wall has said is erased.

"Would you like to see who I am?" writes the wall.

"Indeed, I would like to see who you are."

The wall starts to draw a picture. With every line and every detail a person that is drawing the picture appears. A short girl, with blonde hair and a cute face. Lovely brown-green eyes that reminded him of a calming forest. She wore a grey hoodie and blue jeans. It appeared that she may be cold, but K couldn't be sure. Her beautiful form came into focus, drawing the picture of herself. The boy is dazed and knocks on the wall twice to get her attention to the thing he wrote.

"You're flat chested, this picture is wrong."

The image she drew seemed to have life breathed into it as it moved and flowed like the person behind it. E crossed her arms in anger.

"That doesn't change that you look beautiful," he writes, causing her to blush and look away.

When she finally gained the courage to turn

back around, she wrote back. “It’s just an art style!”

“It’s wrong though,” he replied with a grin.

She erased her picture and re-drew it with the proper proportions.

“Is that any better?”

K laughed and didn’t reply, just smiling like an idiot at his dumb joke. She crosses her arms and sits down; flustered. “What about you then?”

The boy starts to draw a picture of himself. A very tall and skinny kid. At least six feet. He had rectangle glasses that sat upon his narrow nose. He had red-dish-brown hair that fell to the side and eyes to match the color.

“You can’t be THAT tall,” E writes back.

He laughs and smiles at her through the glass. “At least I don’t lie”

She sighs once again and writes some more. “My proposition still stands.”

The boy searches the wall for the words she wrote before, but can not find what was written there. “What was that?” says K.

“Draw with me.”

K ponders this for a moment and and writes back “Sure.”

E smiles and starts to draw. Draw beautiful pictures of flowers and animals. Her eyes come to life as she draws kingdoms and palaces. K is simply dazed by her ability to breathe life into her art and make it seeming come to life.

“Is this how you do it?” asks K as he draws shakily.

“If there was a specific way to draw, I wouldn’t do it anyways,” replies E. The boy smiles and starts to draw with her. Combining his intricate patterns with her drawings. Making beautiful tapestries from black marker. They draw and create for hours upon hours until the sun started to set on K’s side.

“It’s getting dark”

“Yeah, same here.”

“I don’t wanna leave. This is too much fun!” replies K, frantically finding a way to stay for longer.

“Just come back tomorrow, in the same spot as today.”

K wipes away his words and writes back. “All right. Tomorrow for sure?”

“For sure.”

K stands up and brushes away the dirt from

his pants. He knocks a little jingle against the glass and is surprised when she knocks backs the same jingle. He smiles and happily walks away.

The next morning K leaps from the covers of bed. He quickly puts on the clothes he had put out the night before. He stuffs the marker into his pocket and heads back out into the world. Walking down the street and through the path he had followed the previous day. He picked up the pace when the wall was in sight and jogged the rest of the way there. Once he arrived he put his fist up against the glass and knocked the same little jingle he had done yesterday.

There was no response. K tried it again but to his dismay no one responded. He did not see E either.

“Maybe she forgot?” thought the boy sorrowfully. He sighed and started home again, the marker grasped gently in his smooth hand.

Just when he had given up hope he heard, just out of earshot, the jingle. Very quiet and faint in the distance. His smile grew and he ran over to the noise and saw the girl already drawing a beautiful scene.

“You came back!!” wrote K.

“Did you think I would forget you?”

The boy smiles happily and sits down in front of her, staring into her beautifully sad

brown-green eyes in wonder. She blushes slightly and looks away towards her newest creation.

“Do you like it?” she asks.

“Is that us?”

“Yeah, because we’re friends.” She smiled and held her pen lightly.

The drawing was of K and E joyously sitting together on a swing set beneath what looked like a sunset upon a sandy beach. Beautifully drawn with superb detail. She really did create life that almost brought tears to his eyes. He gently put his hand to the glass and bowed his head. He spoke aloud so she could not see what he had to say. He frowned as he talked. “Why are you so far away?”

“I can’t read lips...,” she wrote

K lifted his head up sorrowfully and put on a fake smile. His hand still attached to the glass. E slowly put her hand up to the glass along with him.

“You okay?” she wrote.

“Yeah.”

E slides her hand away and lifts the marker into the air carefully. Weighing it in her soft hand for a moment. She then places the tip to the glass once more and writes, “Draw with me.”

And so he did. They drew majestic creatures and scenes of wondrous proportions. They spent hours talking to each other and telling stupid jokes. E had a family of four with two adorable dogs. She drew K scenes of what had happened in her small house and made him chuckle. K had a family of five with three cats. He was the oldest child and so was E. He had a much larger house with glass windows almost everywhere.

Later in the day the sun began its descent.

“I didn’t sleep last night.” wrote E unexpectedly.

“What, why?”

“I was so excited to see you again! I drew so many things for you.”

K raised his eyebrows at this. “On the wall?”

“No dummy, on paper.”

With that, E took a step back and looked down at the ground. A moment passed by and K could see a small scrapbook slowly appear in E’s hand as she picked it up. “For you!”

She tossed the tightly bound book into the air. As it flew a small gem fitted on the book glittered brightly. K stared up at journal in awe. It passed above the glass

wall and landed next to his feet with a soft thud. He bent over to pick it up and studied it in his hands. It was wrapped in hard leather and had a thickly printed “E” on the front of it.

E put her marker to the wall and wrote. “There’s some poetry in there as well.”

“I love poetry. I write it myself,” replied K with a thoughtful look on his face.

“Show me sometime,” she smiled.

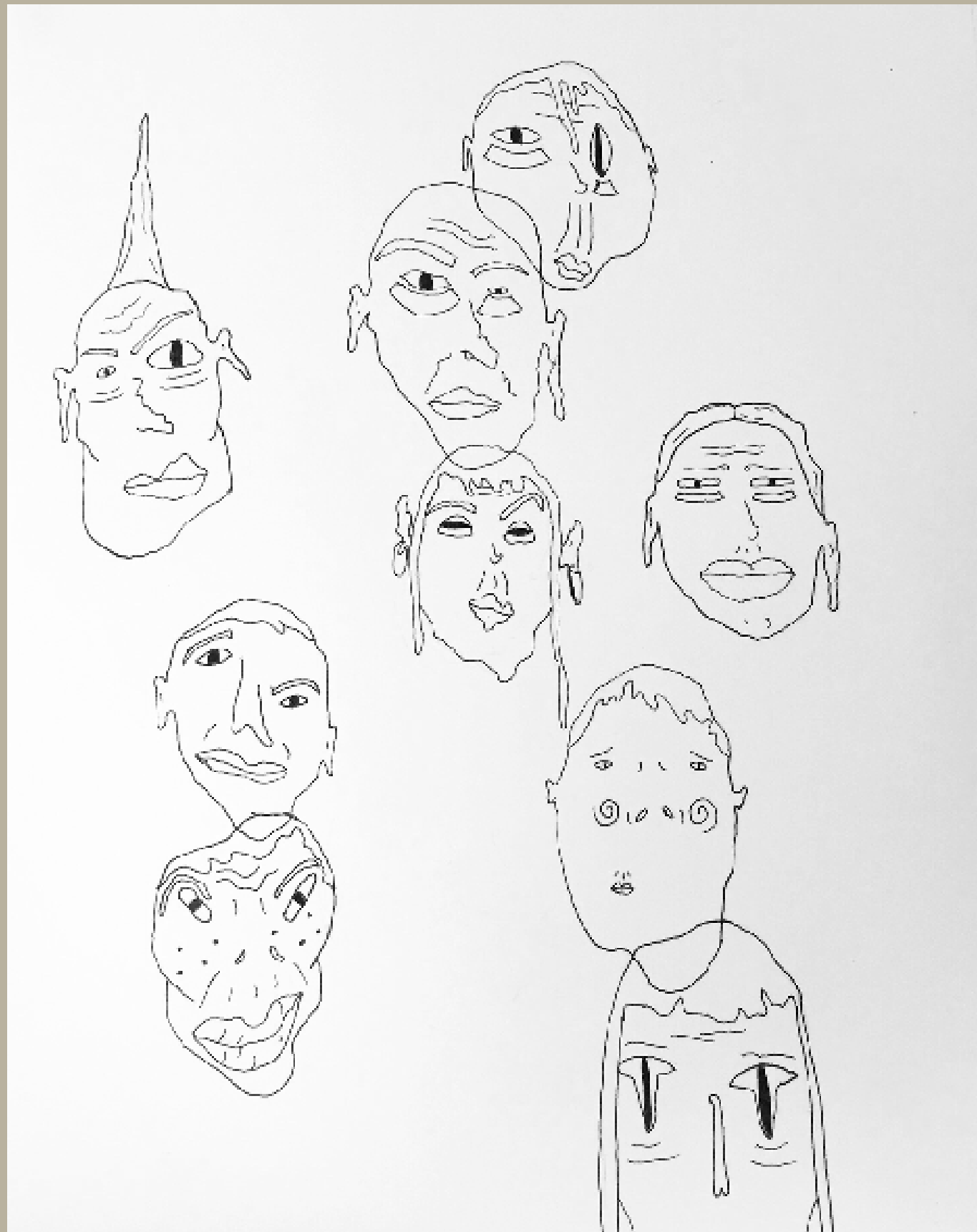
And with that K smiled and waved a sweet goodbye. He then receded into the greyness and disappeared from E’s sight. She smiled happily and was almost giddy with excitement. She had just spent two days with a complete stranger. No, she spent it with K. She spent her day with a handsome boy that had swept her off her own feet. E’s very own knight in shining armor, his pen mightier than any sword. Just like the fairy tales her father used to read to her.

Her chest fluttered with happiness as she lay there quietly. E stretched and pulled her backpack up so it rested beneath her head and slowly drifted off to sleep.

-JULIEN MAKOUTZ



UNTITLED BY EMILY GHIZZONI



UNTITLED BY BROOKLYN BAILEY

BREATHING ROOM

Inhale.

Concentrate on the way the muscles pull in your chest as the air floods your lungs

Hear your feet hit the pavement and time the space between footfalls with your heartbeat

Pay attention to the sensations; the smell of gasoline, the way the glare of the streetlights reflects in the puddles around your feet, the water soaking into the bottom of your pant legs

Feel the way your heart stutters when no more breath will fit in your chest.

Don't let go

Barricade the air in your lungs and hear the way your heart pounds out a rhythm for the rest of your body to sing to

Imagine the blood rushing like a tidal wave through your hands and your feet and your head; imagine synapses firing and electricity racing down your spine

Anticipate the way your muscles will surrender as the breath leaves your body, the way your shoulders will loosen and your chest will give

Understand that the feeling in your chest is like waves testing the floodgates and finding them inadequate; concede to the pressure building in your throat.

-ANNAH SOUTHGATE

UNTITLED

“Everybody is a Genius. But If You Judge a Fish by Its Ability to Climb a Tree, It Will Live Its Whole Life Believing that It is Stupid”-Anonymous

The fish flopped around, smacking against the tree, then the ground, in a manic succession for a short period until it finally stopped moving, puffed its sides up twice, and then stilled itself.

With the fish no longer moving, peace returned to the little glen. The river that once held the fish babbled, and the sun’s heat grew in intensity, as it centered itself in the sky ever so slowly. I, from my aerial view, tilted my head out of confusion to the scene that had played out in front of me; it was a natural habit of mine and one I’d never broken.

I continued staring at the fish, when it dawned on me: The fish had tried to climb the tree! I knew this because I’d had a conversation with the same fish on the exact subject of fish climbing trees just the day before. I suppose the fellow had taken it all a bit too seriously, though it looked like he didn’t make it too far, not to my own surprise.

As awful as it was, I couldn’t help but to find it rather funny how seriously he’d taken our conversation. It made me laugh to myself, and unbeknownst to me, my friend Teddy silently appeared at my side.

“I believe it’s dead. We should see if it’s any good before a buzzard or worse comes along,” Teddy said, not taking his eyes away from the fish.

Without waiting for my reply, we simultaneously lifted our wings, and glided down to the comatose creature. The fish shined like liquid silver, glinting in the rays of the warm sun that cooked anything that sat in its light for too long. The fish’s eyes had been left open and had a lifeless sheen about them. Staring into them they pulled at me, and made me feel ashamed that I’d found it humorous.

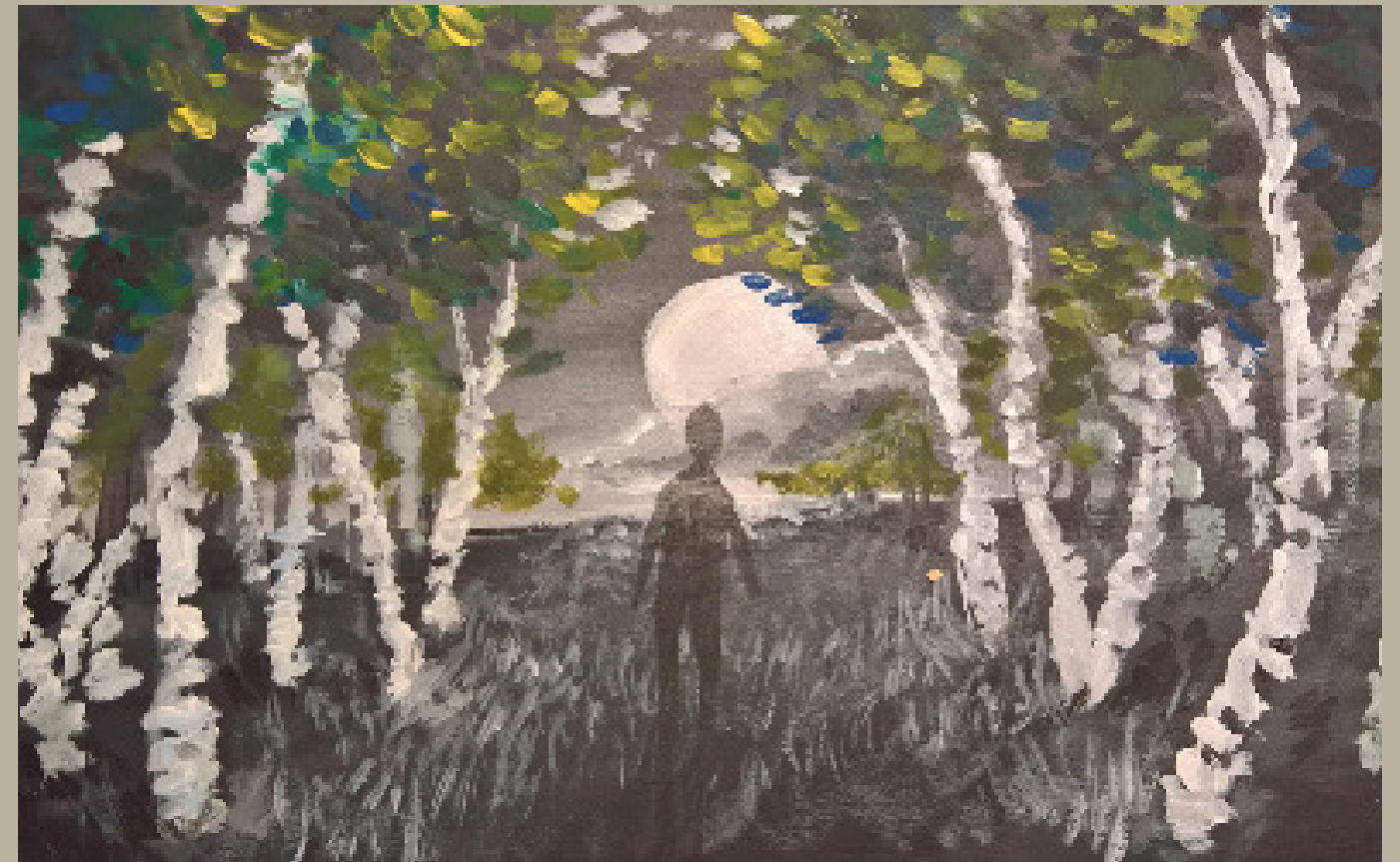
Teddy began inspecting the fish closely, I did the same, first eyeing it with one eye, and then the other, not quite sure what we were looking for. Then without warning, Teddy jabbed the dead thing with his mouth, pulling a long stripe of flesh from its body. I watched both in amazement and horror as the sliver of meat slid smoothly down his black shiny beak, and into his round pulsing belly. He kept his beak towards the sky as I watched him patiently, waiting for the results of his experiment.

He looked at me for a second then dropped his beak and looked back at the fish.

“Well?” I said. I was beginning to lose my patience.

“Oh, it’s, uh, not bad I suppose, definitely a unique taste,” he said, nudging at the corpse with his beak.

-KALEIGH BELLE SMITH



FIND ME BY HANNAH BOGGS



POPPOP BY KAMERON GOPFEARTH

UNTITLED

this painful love story has no ending but i stay hoping it will one
day be that i just don't wake up

the blood pulsing through my veins is a constant reminder to me
that i'm still alive despite all you've put me through, though i'm
not quite sure if this is a good or bad thing
my mother tells me this is all just making me stronger, but the truth
is every time you say a single word to me it fractures me even more
and now i am weaker than i've ever been before
honey, i have changed everything i can about myself because i hate
looking in the mirror and seeing the girl you once loved staring
back at me, no straight through me

that girl haunts me because she wasn't good enough even after
she tore apart her skin and her mind and her naïve heart to be ev-
erything for you, you took it all from me and left me nothing but
meaningless "i love you"'s and broken promises of "i swear i'll
never let you be lonely"

i hope you one day realize promises are easier said than done and i
hope you're better off without me, i can promise you i'm not

- KAYLEE JEANNE

THE HERO WITH THE YELLOW BALLOON

The heroes stand alone at the edge of the cliff overlooking the waves below. They mill around aimlessly, murmur under their breaths, but for the most part, their backs face the long downward slope. The city at the bottom is illuminated by either streetlights or wild flames; from the distance, one is unable to distinguish between the two. But ahead, as far as anyone can see, is an unbroken ocean.

The boy with the long scar down his bare back appears nearly starved. The girl next to him glances over, maybe amazed that he's still standing, or maybe the hollow look in her eyes hasn't left since she saw the light leave her brother's. Behind them, a younger child lays on his side in the grass, his life only known to others by the small white flower that billows when breath puffs out from between his chapped lips. At the front of the group, a girl holds her yellow balloon and herself too close to the edge of the drop.

When she turns around, tangled blonde hair whipping in the ocean breeze, a trio of boys note that she looks much too old to be clinging to the balloon. But her fist holds tightly to the string when she looks out to the bright city, across the heroes, and proclaims, "What now?"

Her voice breaks above the warm murmurs, calling attention to herself and even waking the sleeping boy. He blinks open blue eyes and frowns up at her. "What could you mean?" he asks. "Haven't we won?"

The girl nods once. "Yes," she tells him. "I suppose we have. So what now? There must be something you want to do next."

He stares at her. Blinks once again. All the while, the wind tugs at the yellow balloon, longing to yank it free.

When the girl at the end of the balloon gets no quick response, she presses on. "Your dreams. What are they?"

The awoken child sits up, legs crossed, and says, "Not to have to fight again. To be safe. To have won."

The rocks shift at the edge, dropping a few pebbles into the ocean, as the girl with the balloon shifts her weight back and forth. "That's not what I meant." She shook her head, trying and failing to tug her fingers through her tangled hair. "That isn't a dream; it's a fear. What do you want? What did you dream of before there was a threat?"

The boy's gaze flickers down, and he chews on his lip; no wonder they're chapped. He starts picking the petals off of the small white flower at his foot.

Seeing his uneasiness, the girl steps back from the ledge to meet him. She sits across from him and gently touches his hand, a request that he stop dismantling the blossom. His hands fall empty in his lap. Her's tangle around the string of the yellow balloon. She waits.

After a moment, he meets her eyes. "I'm sorry," he says, "but I don't know."

Some of the heroes whisper to one another; by now, they've neared close enough to overhear the conversation. "Will this anger the girl with the balloon?" they ask one another. "It's something so simple; how could he not know?"

Though so may crowd near her, the girl is unfazed. "Well," she starts. "You've made it this far. You're a hero, aren't you?"

The boy nods almost viciously; everyone on the cliff top fought for the title, and none, no matter how small, will allow it to be questioned. Firmly, he assures, "I am."

A small smile breaks through on the girl's face, perhaps the first smile to find a home on the clearing. "I thought so. And you're allowed to not know what your dream is."

The voices of the other heroes rise for a moment, and the girl, still twirling her balloon, struggles to contain her grin. "But you're brave," she continues to the boy. "And that means you'll find your dream."

A drizzle of rain starts, but the sun still winks through breaks in the clouds. Many heroes turn their faces skyward to catch a drop on their cheek; the boy is one of them. While his attention is turned, the girl slips the string of the yellow balloon into his hand. He looks back to her, but she's already standing, a finger pressed to her lips. And somehow, without any notice, she's gone by the time the rain stops.

- SARAH ULERY

UNTITLED

My mind couldn't wrap itself around the idea. I almost didn't believe it. Even though I had read it a million times, I still gripped the note once more.

Dearest Whitney,

I long to hold you in my arms again.

Meet me tonight at the Evergreen Park Bridge at midnight

-Brett

The whole thing was too good. Honestly, I'd never guess that Brett of all people would find interest. Well, I wouldn't have guessed any of this could happen. What would Mom and Dad do when they found out? I tried to think of ways to explain, but then I'd think of the note and become giddy again.

The Evergreen Park had as much beauty as the name suggested. Of course, it would be a perfect place. And the bridge? So many couples kissed on that bridge. Would there be a kiss tonight? Why else would there be a love note?

I crept down the brick paths in the park. The bridge was just around the corner. Sucking in a deep breath, I peeked at the bridge.

Two figures stood close together on the bridge. Brett's hands held her waist delicately; her hands combed through his hair. Their lips were sealed together.

For a moment, I had no idea what to do. Disbelief flooded through me. Finally, I yanked my phone from my pocket and snapped a picture. The moonlight shined bright enough for someone to recognize the kissers. Then I grinned. I was totally going to tell Mom.

When I had found the note on her bed, I had to know if it was for real. I watched them with a wicked grin.

My sister! The goody-two shoes, the mature one, the one my parents always told me to be more like, she had snuck out to meet a boy. To meet Brett.

"You are in so much trouble, Whitney," I told her though she couldn't hear me. Before the couple noticed me, I ran back home with my revelations.

- LIZZY SHUGERT



DO NOT
MISTREAT
ANIMALS

Brooklyn
Bailey
9.9.16

UNTITLED BY BROOKLYN BAILEY

UNTITLED

To be far out of my body and my mind looking in, as if it was a movie of my life. Every moment before leading me to this moment, the moment I lost myself. The color within my life has disappeared. My life has become only shades of grey and white that could only be achieved by pencil. I am but a sketch of this universe. As my life is outlined in front of my own eyes, I can't help but to feel a longing; a longing to erase all that has appeared. Erase all that I am. I cannot reach into the moment frozen in front of me, nor can I point out when it was. The image is unclear, much like my purpose for being here. The blackened edges, much like a movie screen, fill my vision. The artwork of my life fades away. I go to reach for my own pencil to scratch the surface of my own art work. Even if I scratch the canvas, the portrait will only appear more graceful and elegant than ever before. The strength to continue, the strength to forgive. Not to forgive anyone else, but to forgive myself. The most beautiful pieces of history have seen the darkest of days, one day I will become a wonder of the world, I will be my own Mona Lisa. I will be myself.

- DESTINY FITCH



UNTITLED BY ALLI ULERY

STAND BY

It's amazing how the smallest of actions can cause a ripple effect
When a man chose not to stand, he's an activist
With the small raise of fist suddenly a nation is changed
An idea opposed and a concept exposed
Black Lives Matter
Gone are the days of marching when one man chose not to stand suddenly there
were three, and 4 and so many more
But there are the oppressors, those that believe that nothing needs to be changed
That oppression doesn't exist, that all lives matter
But if all lives do matter, doesn't that include black lives?
But this nation is one that loves to stay divided the civil war mentality continues
It's black lives matter or it's back the blue what happened to supporting those that
are honest and true
because not every cop is a racist and not every African American killed needed to
die, in fact none of them did
So why can't I not stand for an anthem that doesn't ring true because America isn't
free and the system stays broken with the mentality to fix leaks then to fix the prob-
lem

- IZZY PARRA



UNTITLED BY SETH STOREY

30 DAYS....

I hold onto him for what feels like the last time. Everything around us disappears and it's just us, holding each other. Our silence says everything we can't. I close my eyes and try to remember this moment, our last moment. I open my eyes and look up at him to find him staring back down at me. We stay that way for a while, memorizing each other until we both know that it's time to let go. On his lips is our last "I love you", for thirty days.

On the first day I look for him, but he is nowhere to be found. I let myself think, "oh he's probably just sick today", I shrug it off and carry on. By day five, reality starts to sink in, and I realize, he's not coming back. On day nine, I slowly began to feel an empty ache in my chest.

The night of day ten, that's when the tears start. Day fourteen and my friends start to notice how I talk, smile, and most days eat a little less. Day seventeen and the distractions don't work anymore.

By day twenty, I began to wonder if he ever thinks of me anymore. If he still feels every hug, every kiss, every touch we shared. Every smile, every laugh, the sound of my voice, the way my eyes stared into his when we spoke our language of stares silence. Does he remember?

Day twenty-two and I'm still playing that one voicemail over and over and for those twelve seconds, he's here with me. Repeating my three favorite words to ever escape his lips. Day thirty and I start to wonder if I could take anymore.

Day thirty-one, I wake up with the same empty ache inside me. I wander the hall for hours on end and I almost gave up. Until behind me, I feel his long skinny fingers around me and pull me closer. I turn around to find his tall lanky frame against me.

But as I stare into those big brown eyes, I find we no longer speak the same language.

- AMANI AUGISTINE



THE RENEWED BY KATIE ORGUNOV

UNTITLED

self love,
it doesn't come easy
you may think
that in order to love yourself
you need to find someone to love you
but that isn't true
this is you
your one body
your one life
make it known
that you are your own person
and you're amazing

- Madison Leader



UNTITLED BY ALLI ULERY

IRREGULAR

*Regards of conventional
forces are for naught; we pound
our own beat and create our
own harmonies. We beat pioneer
trails where no new adventures
were imagined to be found, and we
become the renegades.*



UNLIKE SPIRAL AND ELLIPTICAL,
IRREGULAR GALAXIES ARE
LIBERATED FROM ANY DEFINING
DETAILS. EACH FORMATION IS
ENTIRELY UNIQUE, REFUSING TO
BE CATEGORIZED.



HANDS BY EDIE MAHLE

UNTITLED

You were the wind whipping my hair across my face and the lightning running through my spine, rain pounding on asphalt as we ran across empty parking lots and jumped through streams sweeping down the streets.

You were the thunder rumbling in time with my heartbeat and the electric pulse jumping in my wrist. I laughed so hard you couldn't tell if the water running down my face was rain or tears or both and your eyes shone as bright as the lightning flashing in the clouds above us.

I was the water overflowing gutters and filling reservoirs, making rivers rage and electricity arch across the sky. You never saw me coming and that was what swept you off your feet, but once the water calmed you saw that everything else had been swept away.

I caught raindrops on my tongue and danced as the wind thrashed through the tree branches overhead. You were treading water and trying not to lose yourself in the undercurrent.

We were young and you loved me desperately; like you were a man drowning and I was the strength you needed to swim.

We were crazy and I loved you relentlessly; like the wind and the rain and the raw power of hurricanes in summer.

We were forces of nature, together with our heads held high against the bite of the wind and the sting of the rain.

Fate and gravity carried us downstream but before long sinkholes opened up beneath our feet. At the time we were too high on adrenaline to care, but once your heart stopped pounding, the panic set in, the water rushed past, and you were gone.

-you were a thunderstorm but i was a flash flood

- ANNAH SOUTHGATE

HOW DO YOU KILL A MONSTER?

“Ben? What are you doing in there?”

I glanced up at the door briefly where my wife stood on the other side.

“I’ll just be another minute.” There was no point in answering her question. She knew what I was doing, I’m sure, she didn’t like it and she didn’t understand because she wanted me to move on.

My eyes slid back down to my phone where they stayed glued to the screen for another four minutes. I had scoured the internet for months looking for the rest of the trial but all I could find was this six minute segment that had been televised by A Current Affair. I’d seen the video so many times I knew every detail of every second but still I watched because I needed an answer.

The camera was currently focused on the jury. They were all leaning forward and concentrating on the testimony of the forensic expert. The camera then slid over to the witness stand where Dr. Felmore talked about the decomposition of Andrew’s body and the state it had been in when a dog-walker had discovered it the previous May.

Felmore then walked over to the overhead projector, tapped a stack of slides on the table to straighten them, and then peeled off the top one and placed it on the projector. A graphic photo of Andrew’s naked body arrived on the screen and the entire courtroom gasped. A Current Affair had blurred out the photos but I remembered what was on them. They were right to be horrified. Hearing an expert drone in a monotone manner about the graphic abuse of a five year old was much different than seeing its effects first hand.

The doctor explained the slides without emotion, pointing out the countless abrasions, bruises, and open fractures. He spoke about the ultimate manner of death – strangulation - and showed the court how the handprints on Andrew’s neck matched perfectly with the defendant’s. Then he turned the projector off and began to speak to about the presumed time of death.

The camera pulled back at this point to show my family, quietly crying.

And then, finally, it panned over to the defendant’s table. The boy sitting beside his lawyer looked downright...bored. He flipped a pencil back and forth between his fingers and sighed loudly, every few seconds. This – this was the monster I wanted to kill. He seemed to feel the camera was on him now because he suddenly turned, looked straight at the camera, and

smiled. It was smug, intelligent smile. As if he wasn’t afraid of the consequences. As if he believed it had all been worth it.

And in the end, he was right. The boy had been sentenced to be incarcerated until his majority and then another seven years after that. It was nothing. It was less than nothing. I looked over at the straight razor I had begged my wife to get me for my birthday. How do you kill a monster? This was the answer. It would be so easy. But could I bring myself to do it? My little brother deserved vengeance, even if it came 16 years later. Andrew had suffered horrors no human should endure. Days of it.

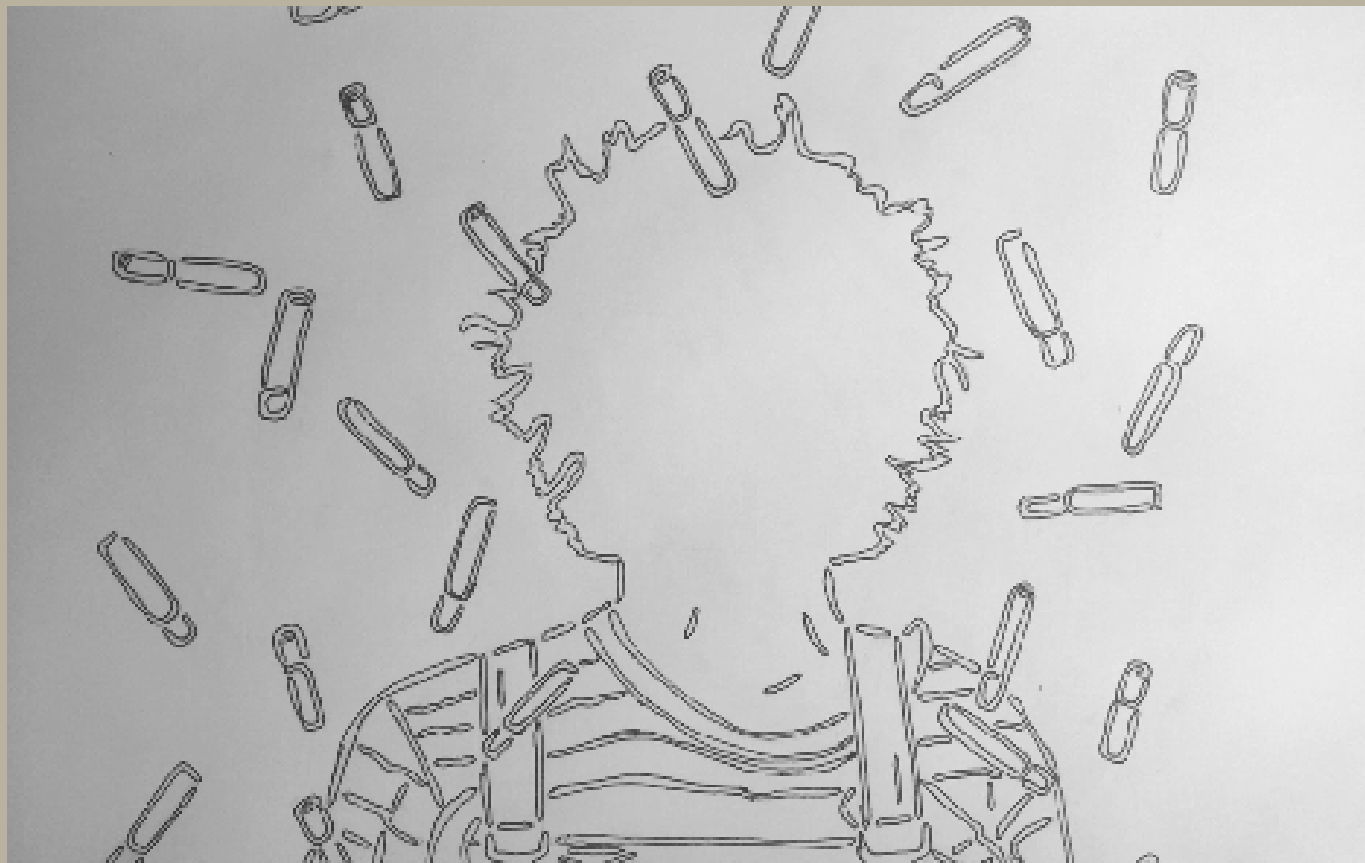
I looked back down at the tiny screen and watched the last few seconds of the video. The boy had suddenly sat up at rapt attention as some of the makeshift torture devices he’d created were brought out and placed upon a table near the jury. My family was escorted from the courtroom and A Current Affair cut the video off there. But it didn’t matter, I remembered what happened next.

The detective had held up each one of the devices for the jury to examine and I’d rocked back and forth in my seat, giddy with pride at my creations.

Valerie knocked again. “Ben, are you coming to bed?”

But I was contemplating a much more important question, the only one that mattered. In truth, I knew how to kill a monster. I glanced over at the sharp blade on the counter. That part was easy. But the problem was more complex than that. Because how do you kill a monster when it’s inside of you?

- LUCA PEREZ



UNTITLED BY BROOKLYN BAILEY

MEMOIR

The milk man, with skin the color of milk. He was probably six feet tall with a shiny bald head; he even wore brown round glasses. We sat there in silence as he pulled out an iPad, probably given to him from the company he worked for. I could tell by his slouch that he was a little too comfortable on that brown beat up couch that sank in the middle from too many sit-ins. He's done this before. It felt like one of those meetings where you lay on a bed and pay someone to decide your mental fate, wondering whether or not they will give you meds just so you can sleep.

That's exactly what he did. Pills never took away the fact that I was still asleep on the inside and eventually that bottle ended up in the cabinet where all the other drugs went to collect dust. I never picked it up again. I was so tired of being asked the same question over and over again "what do you think the root of this sadness is?" You would think if I knew the formula to severe depression I would apply it to my life with no hesitation.

Those meetings stopped and I returned home after a long day of school to find the brown beat up couch replaced by a big mahogany glossy desk and two office chairs to go with it. Things get replaced. I stopped seeing him because my parents thought it was better for me to get some female insight. It didn't matter to me because I was tired of making posters on 'How to Survive with Anger Issues' and being asked questions to determine the severity of my illness. I talked to this woman about how we moved from Irving to Keller because I was getting bullied, how some men really shouldn't be fathers if all they were

going to do was leave. Her and my mom both agreed that my father was indeed the root to my growing tree of sadness. I never argued because I've thought about that a lot, how other people can be a chain reaction of all the bad. Happiness is self-determined. People move away and they get up and leave. So I assumed it was normal when my father went MIA for years and called me in June to tell me about his new wife and her two daughters. I was replaced.

In December of 2012 he sends a Christmas card that reads "I love you very much!!" –Dad. My father was the one who planted my tree of sadness into my hollow heart. In December of 2013 he sends a card that reads "I love you very much!" –Dad.

I wonder why my little sister thinks he's superman considering he can't even call to see how she's been but I remember she's young and she doesn't understand. Superman was a protector and he saved people from the evil, he is not Superman. I am Superman and when my mom cursed words about him that shouldn't be said around little children, I whipped out my shield. I would never let someone take my father's cape away, steal his identity. My eleven-year-old sister would be devastated.

In all honesty I believe people change, so I waited for the day my father would plant a rose and admire its petals and not its thorns. In December of 2014 I get no card. June of 2016 my sister is thirteen and she knows more than she is supposed to so she expects nothing of a man who can't keep promises. Maybe this is why she takes

more of a liking to Batman.

My psychiatrist tells me I'm not making any progress and tells my mom she should think of out-patient care. My mom tells me if I keep up this 'act' she'll send me away, I couldn't explain to her that this wasn't a play I rehearsed over and over until I got it right. This was real life and I wasn't given a script. We read reviews on a center nearby that I refused to remember the name of. The reviews weren't great. I was terrified of being sent out of the walls I've built myself to keep safe.

I became the act. I pulled myself together so my parents would think I'm okay, so they wouldn't have to come home, stroke my hair to see what happened today. I memorized the lines of everyday life and said them over and over. Mental illnesses run in my family and I had to realize if dads wanted to call, they would call. I spent my days alone, growing only in anger and not in love because I was upset with the fact that someone else could make me feel like this. I was never the victim when I was hurt I spent my days trying to come up with reasons on how to fix myself. Trying to comprehend why I was this way and not another. I tried writing and confiding in journals instead of people, I piled up books and ran through ink. Still, I felt nothing.

Everything seemed better in my parent's eyes. I wasn't trying to deceive them, I was trying not to disappoint because every little move I made seemed like the wrong one. I wanted my parents to be proud of me, not live in sadness because I decided to cut my life short. Life should be lived to the fullest you

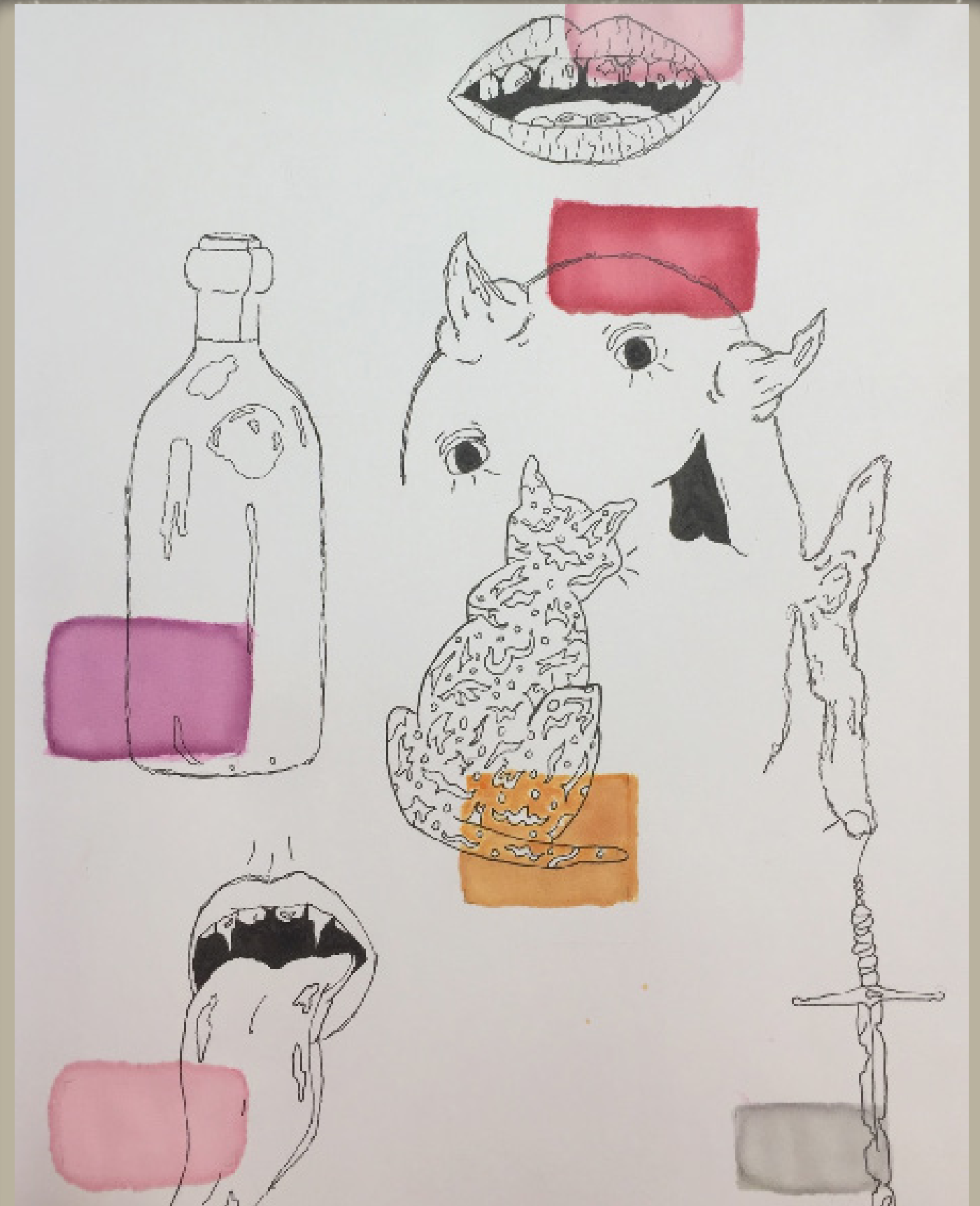
can't always do what people expect of you.

I stopped waiting for phone calls and tried to mend relationships myself. When I realized people only change for themselves. Forgive and Forget. I forgive my dad for all he's done but I'll never forget what he's done, Sadness is a scar on my heart that hasn't been mended. Scars are sores that haven't been healed completely. Mine may never heal. But I do know that sadness is not forever and scars remind me of what I've overcome, the things I've been through and the life I've lived. Mental illnesses are not remedied by tests and pills; sadness isn't curable, it's human.

Happiness. I consider it the lesser of two evils, it's dangerous. Once you have it you can take over the world you can spread all you've learned and teach others how to be happy. People may try to take it from you and that's the dangerous part. They'll do anything they can to strike you from under your feet and take everything you've worked for.

Don't wait around for phone calls don't rely on pills to make things better. That generates sadness. The reality is real. The brown couch got tossed out, the pills gathered dust, my journals became stories for others to read. I live with severe depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder, but I plant roses for myself. I admire their petals and all. I am happy.

- KG



UNTITLED BY BROOKLYN BAILEY



VALLEY OF DRY BONES BY KAMERON GOPFFARTH



WET FEATHERS BY KATIE ORGUNOV

RUBIES ON VELVET

There is a man who stands on the balcony of his family's mansion, alone. His tall frame is adorned with a wrinkled, black coat that smells of mothballs and dust. His once-hand-some face is now broken by sorrow, his once joy-filled eyes now looking towards the ground in grief. He hasn't left the house in weeks, except to go to his parents' funeral two long days ago.

He thinks back on what his parents' friends had said at the funeral. Some told of his father's great financial success and his mother's fabulous parties, while others told of his father's honest kindness and his mother's undying generosity towards the poor community. Many from that impoverished community came up to speak, eyes red and puffy in their mourning. "They were the kindest souls to ever walk the streets of our community," many said. "They are the reason I'm still alive," said others. The man saw with what conviction they spoke of his parents. He had never had time for the homeless and the destitute. He always seemed to have something better to do than hang out with "a bunch of hobos".

Now the man walks the empty, dusty hallways alone and cold, his frame drooping and his large, strong hands brushing his sides. His graying hair, unkempt and wavy, is falling in his face, but the man does not seem to care or notice. He remembers when the hallways were full of life and light and laughter and peace and security and everything else that was right and good in the world. What had happened to those perfect hallways? He hadn't moved a single thing, but everything seemed to have changed. The rubies on antique, velvet furniture that had once beamed with luxury now seemed faded and unwelcoming. The priceless paintings with famous names scribbled in the corner seemed worthless now that the one who had hung them there was no longer here; she was no longer anywhere her lonely son could reach.

He walks between the rooms in a sort of grieved, mindless trance. He doesn't understand why, but he no longer cares that the silverware he was eating with was made of real silver, or that the sheets he tossed and turned on were made of the finest silk. He no longer cares that he had just inherited millions to add to his thousands, because there was no longer anyone in his life to share his fortunes with. He was desperate, so desperate for someone to come and pull him out of the deep, dark pit he had just been thrown into.

He used to scoff at his parents when they handed a homeless person money and told them that "money would never buy them happiness". He and his parents had never worried about a thing, he used to think, because they were well off. That was what happiness was, he thought.

He knew better now, now that he was alone.

- RAEGAN WHITE



UNTITLED BY SETH STOREY

STRING

The ghastly man haunts the corner of Shaw and East Main. With his crooked teeth and worn tweed jacket swallowing his shoulders, he reminds many passerby's of a hawk, or a vulture, or a bat.

A young man finally dares to ask if he's in need of food, of shelter; the haunting man speaks no words, makes acknowledgement that he has been spoken to. Just shoves his long-fingered hands into his coat. Pulls out a red string about as long as he is tall. And as he glances up to finally reach eye contact, he snaps it. Both halves of the string coil to the ground like worms writhing in August heat, and the next morning's headline reports "Freak House Fire Kills Two."

- SARAH ULERY



UNTITLED BY EMILY GHIZZONI



UNTITLED BY SETH STOREY

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