



ivy

EDITION 99

THE TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY FOUR VOLUME FEATURES THE WORK OF:

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RIVERA / ROSE / RUNION / SHERIFF / SORCE / WELCH / WHITMIRE / WILLIAMS

AN ANNUAL STUDENT PUBLICATION FROM ANDERSON UNIVERSITY

Ivy Leaves' purpose is rooted in the stewardship of these stories. These pages hold the stories of our artists, writers, designers, and innovators, their individual creative identities unified in the Ivy Leaves Journal, giving voice to who we are.

THIS 99TH EDITION OF IVY LEAVES JOURNAL
IS DEDICATED TO PROFESSOR PETER KANIARIS.



Thank you for fostering our love for painting and
for seeing the artist in every one of your students.

EDITION 99

IL

foreword

99

WRITTEN BY CARSON CAWTHON

To be human is to be liminal. We make our dwelling in the in-betweens, cracks of space and time allotted to us on a rock perpetually hurling towards the sun. And yet, we tell stories. We dance and make meaning and add color where there once was only darkness. We set up our tables in transient spaces, clinking glasses and sending music into the void. We favor our little absurdities, and then we walk one another home.

College, too, is a liminal space: the gap between adolescence and adulthood. We remember where we have been: our childhood homes, sharing giggles with sisters under covers long after bedtime,

trading taunts with our crushes on the playground. And we look to the future: walking down an aisle, waiting for the call, wondering whose drunken diatribes will fashion us into myth. And in the meantime, we create something worth remembering on the other side.

In this 99th edition of *Ivy Leaves*, we stand on the brink of history, peering over the edge. We do not fear the already and the not-yet, that tension that is the human condition. Instead, we journey onward, knowing there are miles to go before we sleep.

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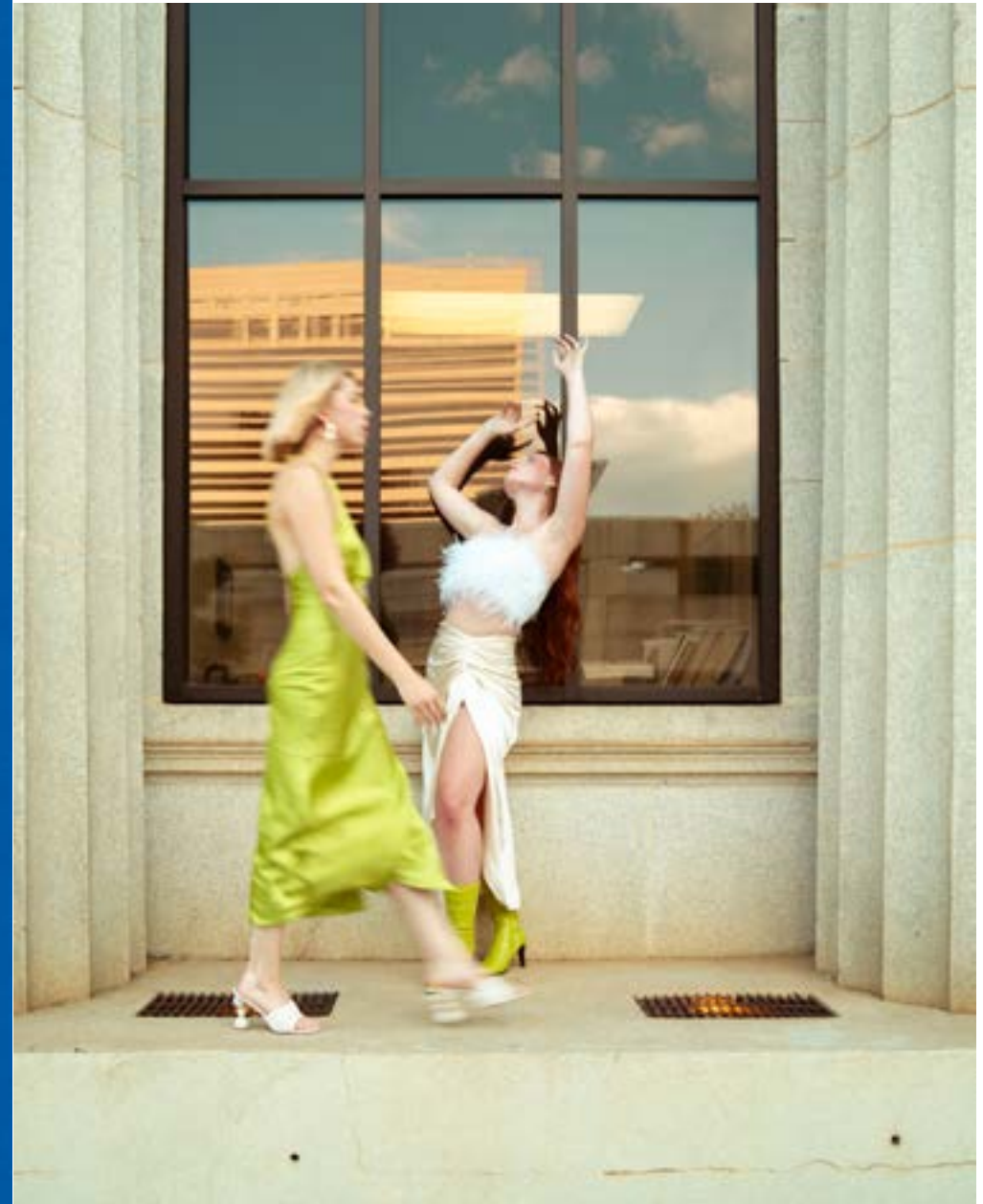
P-r-e-t-t-y

WRITTEN BY ANNA LEIGH AVANT

Pretty is the weapon used against you since childhood.
“She’s pretty like her sister” or
“not as pretty as your friend.”
Fittingly, pretty is a sharp word—
Like two twin blades,
The “T’s” mock me.
They tease—like girls in the bathroom
Who cut their eyes towards you in the mirror
And send you scampering away from their combs and
compacts
They are the pretty, they own the pretty.
The “P” in pretty pops
Like the gum bubble of my old babysitter
Who was beautiful, and normal,
And everything I was already convinced I should be
At seven years old. I prayed in bed that night:
“God, make me pretty when I grow up.”
And after the blown bubble of the “P,”
The sticky sweetness of the word
Is stretched out on one finger to “Y.”
And the “Y” makes me wonder
What other adjectives ending in that letter
I will spend the rest of my life chasing:
Lovely, happy, heavenly—
To the end of my days
Like the end of the alphabet.

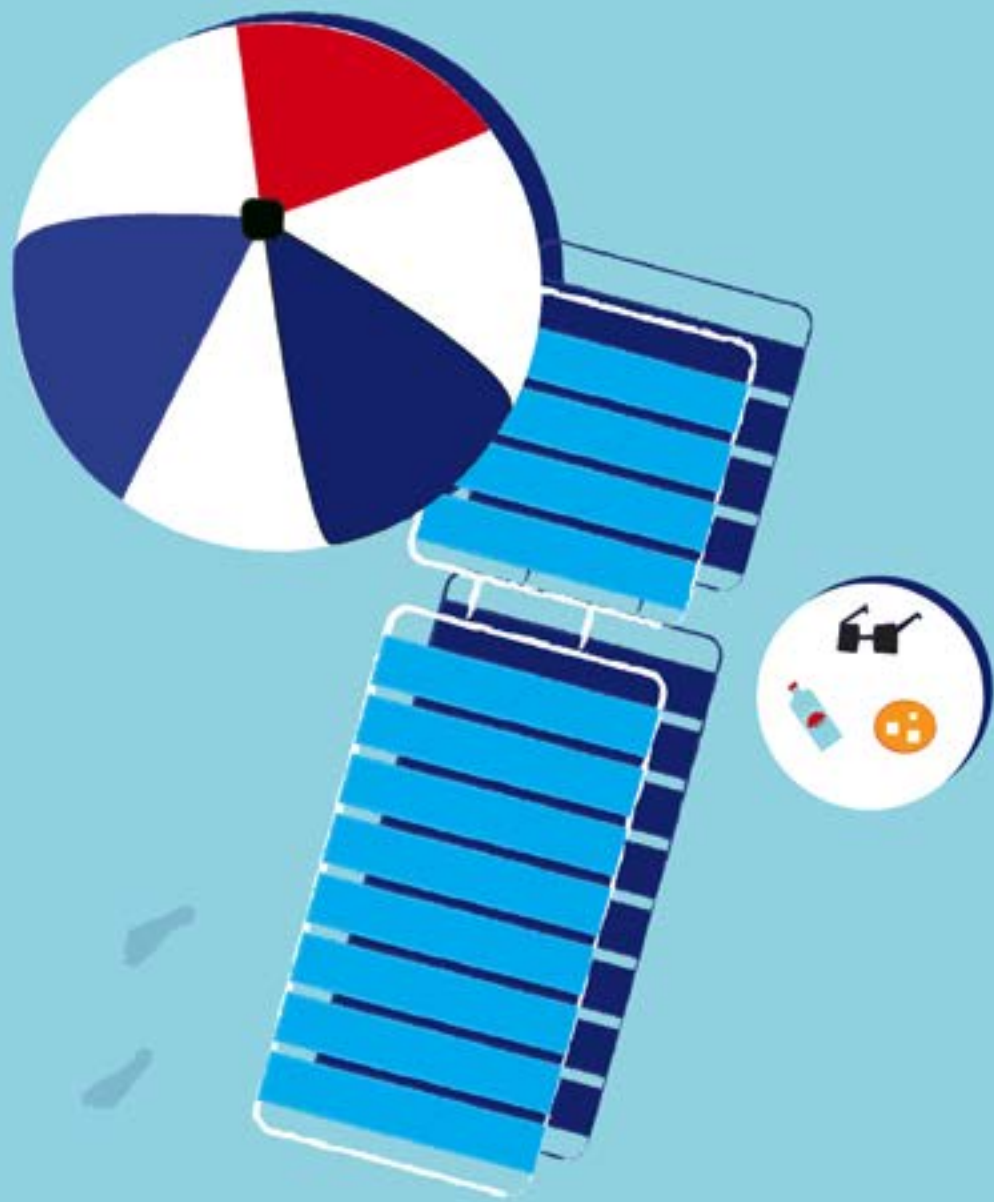
WHERE AM I?
JACOB ENZOR
PHOTOGRAPHY

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PASSING THROUGH
MATEO DE LOS COBOS
PHOTOGRAPHY

(ABOVE)



Spring

WRITTEN BY JOHNATHAN SORCE

Sand-clad strawberries—
mother scrubs behind their ears,
then tonsures their tops.



CONTROLLED CHAOS
JOCELIN FLORA
MIXED MEDIA



FOOTPRINTS IN THE FIRE
JOCELIN FLORA
MIXED MEDIA

Jelly Breakfast Day

WRITTEN BY

ZOE

DUBISKI-PITTS

Recipe 1: Chocolate Banana Puff Pastry

Made with enchanted chocolate coins. Eat for a day full of prosperity and incoming wealth.

Citron growled as Fleur carried him to the tub, the effort sending vibrations through his whole (albeit tiny) body.

“Foolish human master, stop this!” He started to claw his way out of her arms, but his talons had been capped with sparkly black gel covers. “I am a great and mighty dragon, fiercest of all beasts! I will slurp up your innards like they are noodles and then—” Fleur didn’t let him finish, plunking him gracelessly into the water, a wave crashing over his snout. He coughed and spluttered as she started rubbing his green scales with soap.

“If the great and mighty dragon didn’t insist on being such a messy eater, we wouldn’t have to do this, now would we?” she said, scrubbing harder at the jelly crusted into his chest plate. Really, this was his own fault. Citron hated picking food up in his claws, stating that it felt “icky,” but was perfectly fine launching most of his body into his grape jelly toast. It was an ongoing war, which, looking at the dragon’s bubbled-covered horns, Fleur was winning. Citron pouted, blowing bubbles in the water.

“There. All done,” Fleur said after a couple of minutes. “That wasn’t so bad.”

“I insist you dry me,” Citron grumbled.

“Of course I will.”

“With a warm towel.”

“I already had it in the dryer.”

Citron huffed his approval, but as soon as she wrapped him in his requested pre-warmed towel, she had a purring dragon in her arms. She burrito-ed him into the soft plush, then carried him downstairs to meet the delivery truck, using the corner of the towel to dry under his horns. She surveyed the shop once she descended the stairs. On jelly breakfast day, she always cleaned the night before, and everything still looked spotless. Every table was set and ready. The fruit inside the chilled glass cases held up well overnight, not a wilted piece in sight. She nodded to herself. The yeti-farmed ice insulation was proving to be a worthy investment, not so cold that it froze the pastries solid, but enchanted enough to provide perfect preservation. Now all she needed was for the Fae Farm truck to come in on time. She had nearly run out of her Couples’ Cookies on Tuesday, and emergency ordered a bulk round of their blessed strawberries.

Fleur closed the stairwell door, “Employees Only” sign clanking against the wood. Citron growled again when she tried to set him down, so she carried him in one arm as she went to open the blinds.

“Oh!” Citron popped his head up at her exclamation. “Look,” she whispered more quietly.

Boston was receiving its first snow of the season, a gentle flurry dusting the ground like powdered sugar. Fleur and Citron watched silently as the flakes twirled around. It settled gracefully onto the buildings and into the windowsills, blanketing the city in a layer of chilly wonder. Perfect for capturing.

“We should set the snow cream bucket outside. And make some chocolate-strawberry cocoa! I bet people will be lining up for that,” Fleur said. She looked at Citron. “You okay melting that much chocolate?” Her dragon nodded determinedly. He had been struggling lately with extended flame usage. She knew it was due to his age, but he didn’t like being a “baby flames,” as her dad called it. It probably didn’t help that her dad’s dragon, Chouquette, was as old as her father, which meant she was as big as a Saint Bernard and constantly poked fun at Citron. Fleur had tried telling Citron that they were both baby flames together, but he tended to be hard on himself.

Finally, the truck rolled in, honking. She set Citron down so he wouldn’t have to go in the cold and ducked out to meet the driver, who was twitching his wings to shake off the snow as she walked up.

“More strawberries? You’re going to clear out our entire field,” Zephyr joked, handing her the clipboard to sign, as well as a pink sugar flower. He must’ve magicked his hair because it was bright pink and glittered slightly instead of Saturday’s ocean blue. It matched the flower.

“Nice try,” Fleur replied, taking only the clipboard.

“Worth a shot,” Zephyr shrugged, popping the fae food in his mouth. She rolled her eyes and handed back the clipboard, turning away before he could see her smiling. No need to encourage his antics. He’d have plenty more people to trap along his route, and she was not going to be the sucker to fall for his insincere fairy nonsense. He helped her unload the crates of strawberries before waving goodbye and setting off.

Citron was waiting on the checkout counter, swishing his tail back and forth. “I don’t know if I like the sparkly bug-man.”

Fleur laughed. "He's an acquired taste, that's for sure." Citron made a face, but quickly returned to his task and hopped over to his melting station on the back counter. Fleur's dad had designed it years ago, a hovering rack with room underneath for the shop dragon, but due to Citron's age, had spruced it up with a booster seat so his flames could reach what was in the rack. Fleur found the fondue pot, set several bars of chocolate in it (as well as her secret sparkling magic dust, distilled from sunset clouds, courtesy of Zephyr) and slid it into its rack. Citron took a deep breath. His chest puffed and glowed slightly, and he unleashed his mightiest flame. Fleur scratched him on the back but left him to concentrate.

While the chocolate melted, she surveyed the pastry cases, choosing her breakfast. She looked at the snow outside. Snow could mean people come in to warm up. Or it could mean no one leaves the house unless they have to. Fleur picked out a chocolate banana puff pastry.

To a good day of customers, she thought to herself, biting into the dessert. The magic settled lightly into her blood like the snow outside.

"The magic settled lightly into her blood like the snow outside."

Recipe 2: Strawberry Jam Cookie

Made with fae-blessed strawberries. Break it in half and share with your date to have love around.

Fleur watched over the shop, lazily setting her chin on the top of the display case. The sign advertising hot cocoa had been a smashing success, even for just the few hours it had been out. 100% of customers that came in saw the sign! Or, something like that. She had really only tried to learn fractions, accounting... counting. Stuff that was useful for taking over the bakery. Everything else was never going to be used. Her mom had always tried to tell her dad that Fleur needed to try new things. Her dad always responded the same way: "She was born in baking flour, and she'll grow up the same way." Regardless of her math skills, most of the people that passed by were stopping for a quick cup of cocoa. She sighed, and her breath made the shiny gold top of the case fog a little. She absentmindedly drew a smiley face, then another, because she felt sad that the other one had no company. She looked over at Citron. He had curled up into his bed under the counter, sleeping quite soundly after melting so much chocolate. The initial melt of dragon's fire was enough to

THE INTRICACIES OF OUR CREATOR
HANNAH KOKE
PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT RIGHT)



imbue it with magic, so she had relieved him of his morning shift and put the chocolate into a warmer. No one to talk to now though.

She sighed again.

The bell in the entryway jingled, and she perked up, making it look like she was dusting off the top of the counter instead of snoozing. Her act wasn't needed, because when she looked up, the couple walking in were talking so close that one slip would fuse their atoms together. Her customer service smile faltered a little. They were a cute couple.

"The couple cheer-sed with the cookie, a little crumb clink, and happily tucked in."

"Hello!" the girl chirped. She was half fairy, half moth, which resulted in beautifully moon-patterned wings and fluffy white antenna bouncing along with her curly hair. Based on the curling horns on her boyfriend's head, he must be a satyr. One of the horns was missing a tip; Fleur stamped down the urge to ask what accident caused such an issue.

"Have you been here before?" Boyfriend said, leaning over to inspect the case.

"No, I saw it on Instagram," Girlfriend giggled. She started rattling to him about an influencer that Fleur had never heard of. She tried to make a habit of knowing of posts about her shop, but sometimes things slip under the radar.

"Can I interest you in something?" Fleur asked. They finally broke out of their dreamland, blinking at her as if they didn't know she was there. Girlfriend brightened, and Fleur knew what she was going to say even before she started to speak.

"Do you have—oh!" Girlfriend giggled even more as Fleur set one strawberry jam cookie on a pink heart plate. "How did you know?"

"Lucky guess," Fleur said with a smile. A lucky guess that happened every time a new couple came in. "Can I offer you a loyalty card?" Girlfriend eagerly nodded and took the card from Fleur's waiting hands. After all was paid, they snuggle-walked over to a window booth. Fleur watched sneakily under the pretense of organizing the display case.

Girlfriend took the obligatory set of photos, one of them, one of the cookie, one of them and the cookie. Then she leaned into her boyfriend, both reading the information napkin that Fleur tucked under the cookie. Girlfriend was bouncing up and down excitedly, and Boyfriend let her split the cookie, soft pink glitter puffing gently from the crack in the middle. It rose in the air, creating a shimmering heart right in front of their eyes. Fleur couldn't hear them, but she could see their mouths form an "oooooh." She smiled to herself.

The couple cheer-sed with the cookie, a little crumb clink, and happily tucked in. Within seconds, the same pink glitter dusted their cheeks, as if they were exaggeratedly blushing. They laughed, and Boyfriend lifted his hand to cup Girlfriend's face, gently trying to brush the glitter away. They giggled, and he kissed her.

Fleur looked away. She told herself she only watched so long because she needed to make sure the effect still worked. There was only so much proof when you taste-test alone.

Recipe 3: Blue-and-Blackberry Cobbler

Made with berries grown in misty valleys. Share with those who are grieving and need healing.

Fleur looked at the clock. It was 4:30 on a Wednesday, which meant it was time for Mr. and Mrs. Cherry Gelato to come in. They frequented the shop every week since Fleur could see over the counter. They missed last two Wednesdays, so Fleur had ended up eating two scoops of gelato each week. Sacrifices needed to be made to do this job well. This time, though, she would wait until they came in to scoop. This was always the time of year they went to see their grandkids, anyway. The doorbell jingled, and she turned excitedly.

Mr. Gelato walked through the door. Fleur peered her head around to see if Mrs. Gelato was following. She was not.

"Two gelatos?" she asked.

"Not today, Fleur. Just one." His voice cracked, and without another word, he turned and sat down. She watched him grab a handkerchief from his pocket, dabbing his eyes, and her heart sank. She ducked under the counter.

Mrs. Gelato... she had always made Fleur feel so big. She gave Fleur her first tip. She said big words in a soft voice and treated Fleur like she knew what she was doing. Fleur's eyes watered. Citron looked up from his bed, whining. He wiped her tears with his tail.

"I wish I had known," she whispered, tears falling faster. Her heart had a crack in the middle, like a cheesecake cooked incorrectly. "I would've given her the biggest scoop I could have." Citron nodded, reaching up to tap her nose with his claw. She smiled, but still the tears fell.

After a minute, she reached up a hand and felt around the top of the counter for the napkin dispenser. She tried pulling just a few, but the napkins were stubborn and she ended up pulling the whole thing down, barely catching it with her leg to stop the crash. Quickly, she wiped her tears, using the reflective bottom of the display case to clean up all the mascara.

She stood up to start scooping the gelato. But as she looked over at Mr. Gelato, sitting alone in a table for two by the window, the cheesecake crack in her heart widened. She reached for a plate.

"If it's okay, I think we should try something different today," Fleur said, setting the blue-and-blackberry cobbler down in front of Mr. Gelato. "This cobbler is made from blueberries and blackberries. My father always made it for me on my saddest days. Please, on the house."

"Thank you," Mr. Gelato replied. His eyes were red and puffy, cast down to the cobbler.

"Um, sir," Fleur fidgeted. He looked up. "Your wife... she was so kind to me. I'm going to miss her," her voice wobbled, "a lot."

Mr. Gelato watched as she sniffled and wiped her nose on her sleeve, then she realized the health hazard and pushed her sleeve up to her elbows. Still, her tears fell. He tried to smile the corners of his mouth were pushed downward by tears. He pushed the plate into the middle.

"Please, eat with me," he said. He dabbed his eyes with the handkerchief again.

"I couldn't intrude," Fleur said, backing up. It wouldn't be right of her. It was his grief, not hers. He didn't need her sniveling into some cobbler.

"I insist. Please. She would like it if I didn't eat here alone."

"Alright," Fleur said, still uncertain. She looked around the bakery. Only a few people,

already served. She walked over to the door and turned the sign to “closed.” It felt like that kind of day; snow, once fluffy, turning to gray sludge in the Boston streets, and her heart newly crumbled.

Fleur sat across from Mr. Gelato with an extra fork and plate. He lifted his plate and scraped half the cobbler onto hers. Then, they ate it together.

Her dad’s recipes were always different from hers. No special effects, more subtle feeling, but this one especially felt right. It warmed her from her head to her toes, giving her the feeling of being wrapped in a blanket, of loved ones sitting on the couch next to you, or the rain finally stopping to reveal a rainbow around the gloom. She sniffled again.

“I always thought it would be me to go first. Now I don’t know if this is better, knowing I didn’t cause her pain but living without her,” Mr. Gelato finally said.

“I’m sorry.” Because what else is there to say?

“I loved her more than anything,” Mr. Gelato continued. His voice broke; he wiped his tears with a napkin.

“I remember that one time she convinced you to try my strawberry cookies,” Fleur said, because all she knew about that kind of love was how to make cookies for it, but she imagined it was beautiful.

Mr. Gelato chuckled, his eyes softened and glistening. “She knew how much I liked my routine, but she loved fun, and she could never say no to your smiling face. Even if the cookies were burnt.”

“They were a test run,” Fleur said, but there was no real hurt. They were burnt, and Mr. Gelato was laughing.

“And oh, what a wild run it was.” His voice was more solid now, and although his eyes were still downcast, he had a wistful half-smile.

“She gave me my first tip, you know. Even though I spilled an entire jug of pixie punch on her,” Fleur said.

**“But I love you a lot.
Do I not count?”**

“She was soaked, but you cried and said you were sorry, and it didn’t matter to her. I always loved how kind she was,” Mr. Gelato paused, and Fleur listened. “It was what I first noticed about her. We went to the same college, you know. A girl tripped near the dining hall. Her backpack went everywhere, and I mean everywhere. Notes practically exploded out of that thing. And my beautiful wife was the first to run to help. No one else had even moved yet, but there she was, running wild after a page that was floating towards the fountain.”

“She sounds amazing.”

“Oh, she was.” Mr. Gelato finally smiled. “She was.”

Recipe 4: Mango Raspberry Galette

Make with mangoes plucked in pairs, and raspberries sung to by sirens.
Eat with friends to enhance friendship, contentment, and positive feelings.

Fleur laid across a booth, dark-red vinyl soft after a generation of ownership. She remembered the day her dad had ordered them. He had tried to get her to weigh in. “Fleur, you’ll own this place one day, what do you want it to look like?” But he had asked a six-year-old, and she said hot pink. She was glad he did not listen, although hot pink was still a very appealing color. He did, however, get a single order of pink napkins, just for her.

The streetlamps had come on as Mr. Gelato left, hugging her goodbye, and promising to come back next week. The sharp white light came in through her bakery’s tall windows, letting her shut the lights off and be in the dark and quiet. Citron sat near her head, dragging claws through her hair and playing with it.

“Sad day?” he asked. She tilted her head to look at him. He didn’t quite have eyebrows, but if he did, they would have been furrowed, and his tail swished anxiously back and forth. The lamplight was dispersing across his scales rather prettily and brought out the tiny gold flecks amongst the green like confetti sprinkles.

Was it? Probably. Fleur thought of the couple from the beginning of the day at the start of their budding relationship and Mr. Gelato at the falling leaves of his. What did it mean to love, to have such grief after? But the way he spoke of his wife, of the hours he filled with memories of her, filling the shop even after everyone else had left. To be loved like that... it was probably worth it.

“I don’t know,” she said, because she didn’t.

“I don’t understand,” Citron replied. “You cried. So it was a sad day.”

Dragons tended to be rather cut and dry about emotional matters.

“I did. But I also laughed. So maybe it was good and bad. And, oh, Citron, the way he loved his wife so much. I wish I had that,” she finally said. Citron seemed to ponder her answer.

“But I love you a lot. Do I not count?”

She sat up, swooping her beloved dragon into her arms. “Of course you count. But it is different.”

“How?”

“Well, you love being with them most every moment. And you want to be near them. No matter what, you’re always there for them, and at the end of the day, they’re who you want to come home to. They’ll make you smile when you’re sad, and they’ll make you laugh when you’re angry,” she said, stroking along his back spines.

“Do I not do those things?” Citron whispered. Fleur looked at him, her faithful friend for years, her partner in crime, the one who knew her best. He was the best birthday present ever, more important than an angry sixteen-year-old who didn’t want anything to do with family traditions would ever realize. Citron had sat with her every night when she cried and smelled of batter but didn’t have anyone to call. The cheesecake crack in her heart started to mend.

“Yeah, buddy, you do,” she said, snuggling him close. “I guess you do.”

They stayed close for a while, his tail curling around her arm. They sat with their chins on the back of the booth, staring out the window. It began to snow again, fluffy and white.

“Want a snack?” Fleur asked. Citron popped his head up immediately, accidentally scraping his horn on her cheek.

“Yes!”

She picked him up, walking over to the display case. He pressed his face to the glass as she picked out a galette with raspberries and mango, folded and rounded pastry crust leading to glimmering sliced fruit. She sliced it in half and put it onto one plate, then cut Citron’s half into smaller slices so he could pick it up. He gingerly lifted a piece, and they clinked it together.

“To us,” Fleur said. “I love you, great and mighty dragon.”

“I love you too, foolish human.”

They took a bite, laughing at the miniature fireworks that popped and fizzed from the broken crust.







Slather and Such

WRITTEN BY JOHNATHAN SORCE

There are many words which I like
And many which I do not.
Slather, loam, lilt, and pumpkin
All are good.
I wish there was a word – plumpkin –
That would be better.
Puberty, mature, shampoo
Are all uncomfortable words,
Like lather and potty.
It's not what the word means;
It's mainly the sound.
I could suckle on sounds all day
To grow strong like Remus
And his brother.
Goblin is a great word, as is gulp,
Thumb, wimple, rumble, and rump.
But there should be other words too:
Dinkle, yort, ratsome, thrumpled,
Omdom, and grud are all excellent.
Perfectly perfundulous syllabobules to use.
I'd like to slather them across
My conversations, like scraping a
Sardine across some bread.
It'd be messy, and perhaps have a smell,
But I'd like it just as well.
I fear for my children,
And what lumpy, fishlike names they'll have:
Grumdog, Nibbey, Lundini, Markendorf, Yimmy Junior...

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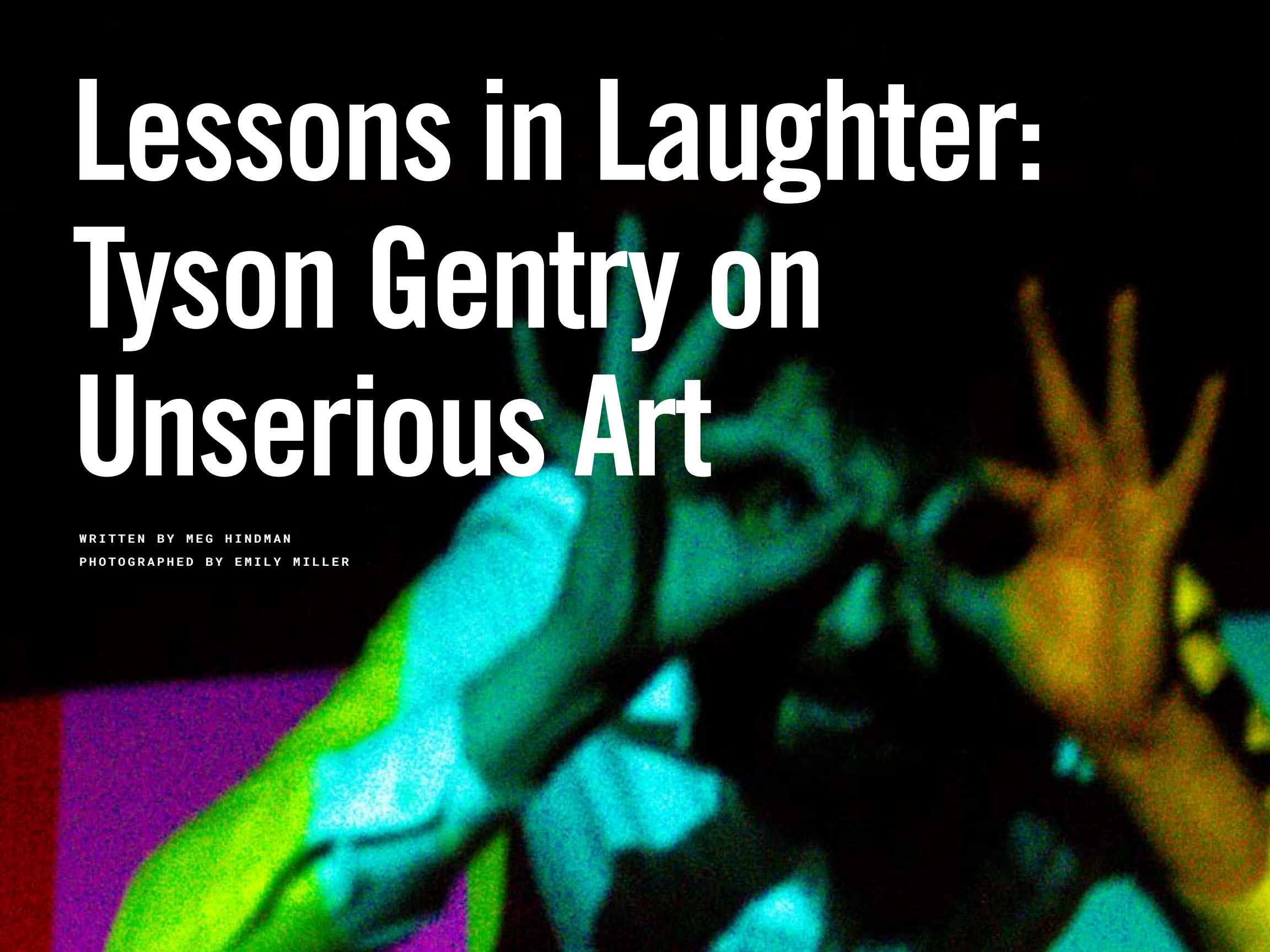
SMALL TEA POT
OLIVIA NIX
STONEWARE

(AT LEFT)

Lessons in Laughter: Tyson Gentry on Unserious Art

WRITTEN BY MEG HINDMAN

PHOTOGRAPHED BY EMILY MILLER





Art comes in many forms, and for Tyson Gentry, the best of it sparks laughter. As I sit across from Tyson in the home he shares with his friends, it is evident that laughter is a natural state for him. He smiles often and laughs loudly, especially as he speaks about his art projects. When I ask him what his art means, Tyson leans back and tells me, “It really just says what’s going on in my brain. There’s not any sort of ‘I wanna get this message to people!’ It’s something I enjoy... It says things about me, about what I like and what I experience.” Tyson’s work connects with people because it is honest. He creates in the same manner that he lives, with joy, fun, and a sense of humor.

In his time as an art education student, he has explored many different mediums and styles. Abstract and high art dominated much of his work while he improved his technique and skills. Now in his senior year of college, Tyson spends much of his creativity on new ideas and subjects, and is experimenting with bringing fun, lighthearted energy to his pieces.

Many artists take their craft seriously, but Tyson makes a point of being unserious in his creativity. While he does work hard to master new techniques or explore new ideas, he holds the process loosely and creates according to his passions. He shared that many artists “make art in order to get a sad reaction.” For him, though, “[Art] doesn’t always have to be sad. Art isn’t supposed to be sad.” He thinks the cultural mindset may be changing, however. “I think that’s actually a trend that’s kinda coming around... [New art is] more superficial but it makes me laugh.” His art is a reaction to his life, rather than intending to draw a reaction from others.

Outside of creating innovative and reactive art, Tyson spends his time teaching, enjoying movies and music, and building community with his church and friends. These aspects of his life inform his art and shape his creative process. His interests in media vary across a wide range of genres and forms. He listens to music any chance he gets, primarily sweeping, ambient instrumental pieces or high-energy rock and pop. Social media makes up a large portion of his sense of humor, particularly “brainrot, nonsensical style” content.

Lately, Tyson has been enjoying creating airbrush art and playing around with presenting serious figures and ideas in a humorous, lighthearted manner. His recent pieces include airbrush paintings of Donald Trump and Joe Biden in bright colors and bows. Others feature a self-portrait composed of meat, wires, and his own hair, or a vintage monitor playing nostalgic video clips overlaid with a painting of young Tyson. As he teaches, he desires to show his students that art is applicable to life. He encourages his students to share their stories through their art, similarly to how Tyson shares his experiences through his work. He connects with audiences through his art by showing his life honestly and presenting his story in simple, eye-catching ways. Endlessly pursuing his next new passion, Tyson will continue to explore art as a creator and a reactor. Passion lies at the heart of the creative experience, and Tyson embraces a wide range of emotions as a maker and innovator.

“He creates in the same manner that he lives, with joy, fun, and a sense of humor.”

A man with a beard and dark hair, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt, is holding a large, tangled mass of thin, dark wires. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a neutral expression. Behind him, a dark shadow of his head and shoulders is cast against a light-colored wall. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

**“Art isn’t
supposed
to be sad.”**



WORDS OF REGRET PASTEL, CHARCOAL, AND MARKER ON PAPER BY TYSON GENTRY



①

① OVERHEATING I

SPRAY PAINT, INK, PASTEL, CHARCOAL,
MARKER, AND GRAPHITE ON PAPER



②

② OVERHEATING II
③ OVERHEATING III

SPRAY PAINT, INK, PASTEL, CHARCOAL,
MARKER, THREAD, AND GRAPHITE ON PAPER



③



ROSY ACRYLIC ON CANVAS BY TYSON GENTRY



TRANSFERENCE I
[MEDIA] MARKER ON PAPER



TRANSFERENCE III
[MEDIA] MARKER ON PAPER



WARMTH: 2008, I CAN STILL SMELL GUM, FEEL THE HEAT OF THE METAL ON MY HANDS

[MEDIA] SPRAY PAINT, INK, OIL PASTEL, NU-PASTEL, COLORED PENCIL, MARKER, AND GUM ON PAPER



EROSION

[MEDIA] INK, MARKER, PASTEL, SPRAY PAINT, THREAD, AND TAPE ON PAPER
[ABOVE]

I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH

[MEDIA] ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
[PAGES 50-51]



I Loathe You

WRITTEN BY

EMMA

MILLER

In the second grade, I gained my first enemy: a kid named Zack. Our assigned wooden desks and plastic blue chairs stood a painfully mere three inches apart. Zack had gritty brown hair that flopped over his forehead and dark circles under his eyes. He was pale, and he always wore dark baggy jeans that crumpled above his playground-stained tennis shoes. I had never met anyone more insultingly blunt. Granted, I may have given him a reason to be.

As a kid, I thought I was pretty good at hiding the fact that I hadn't grown out of the habit of picking my nose. I'd smear my boogers wherever it served most convenient: on the sides of furniture, stairs, and often on the side of my desk, the side next to Zack. I was shocked when he noticed one day and called me out on it. I denied everything, the crusted up blobs of week-old mucus still hanging in the barrier between us. I changed my hiding spot to the underside of my desk to avoid being caught green-handed. However, Zack still teased me over things outside of my gross habit, over anything an eight-year-old boy would think to poke at an eight-year-old girl about. His sandy voice butted in unannounced and uninvited, dishing out unsolicited thoughts about my drawings, my conversations with classmates—and most importantly, about how annoying I was.

After a couple of months of Zack's criticism, I decided to give him one last offense before I asked Ms. Fogel to change my seat. He crossed the line the next morning. Unsurprised, I slid back my plastic chair and marched towards Ms. Fogel with all the gumption and self-righteousness a nine-year-old could muster. Zack called out to me, afraid. I didn't look back and made my way to the middle of the room. Ms. Fogel turned from her conversation with another student and looked down at me.

"Zack has been mean to me all year. Can I change seats?"

I watched Ms. Fogel's pretty, young face soften. Next month, she would surprise us all with a sparkly diamond ring on her finger. Next year, her stomach would grow to the size of a basketball. That day with me, her long brown hair swept down like a curtain as she leaned down to my ear. In our little shared shadowy space, I waited for her answer, a secret exchange of shared understanding.

"It's because he has a crush on you," she whispered.

I looked up at her, a girl standing at about four-feet and how-the-heck-does-that-make-any-sense inches waiting for Ms. Fogel to say more, to tell me where my new seat would be. She just smiled and walked away. I dragged my feet back to my desk next to Zack, his head buried in a worksheet.

I tolerated Zack for the rest of the year until we parted ways for separate third grade classes—which I couldn't stick boogers in between. Two years later in the school auditorium, when I had nearly forgotten all about him, I heard my name and turned around to a taller, older Zack. Still dressed in black, with longer hair and a more slender face, sandwiched between two snickering buddies, he asked me if I still picked my nose. I turned back around.

Growing up, I latched onto my older sister like a clothespin. I was born a hugger. She was not, but was always caught in my line of fire for physical touch. She would tolerate my embrace for a few seconds and then squirm out of my grasp. Sometimes I held on tighter until she yelled in frustration, wiggling more. We looked like two sisters caught in an aggressive tango.

There were the unpredictable moments, however, when my sister occasionally softened. In the middle of a conversation, she would tuck her chin and drive her head into my chest. I needed steady structures to grab onto to keep the hard-headed cannonball from knocking me over.

"What are you doing?" I would ask.

"LOVE ME!" she would say.

I would try and wrap my arms around her head and pat her blonde hair. It felt like a lousy hug, but it was the best I could do.

In the seventh grade, I gained an understanding of sarcasm, the binding thread of my youth group, both for friendship and for more. On a Wednesday night, standing by the stage during worship, I watched the back of Matthew's curly head nodding to the music under the floodlights. We performed skits together in children's service since the fifth grade, but all of a sudden, for reasons I could not explain, my heart now did somersaults at the sight of him. That next week, with our youth group's winter retreat approaching, I bubbled with the soft overflow of girlish admiration. How will I talk to him? Does he like me too?

The retreat finally arrived, a three-day weekend in the Tennessee mountains. Among our peers in the three-story cabin, we bantered back and forth with teasing insults and fake disdain, the underbelly of our awkward teenage desires guarded by the armor of cynicism. Joy and shock jolted through my body. Oh my gosh... he likes me too. We liked each other for a full month, texting with a generous amount of yellow emojis. Nothing else came of it, but with Matthew I learned the art of contempt, the effective practice of smitten scorn and romantic ridicule.

In the fifteenth grade, I gained an answer for why grown men glared at me. On a fall afternoon, I walked with my grandma to the door of a restaurant on a narrow sidewalk. We passed by a middle-aged man in a hoodie. As I made room for him to pass by, his narrow eyes shot at mine like bullets. His mouth curved down into a frown as he hurried past.

"He gave you the look," Grandma said.

"Yeah, I don't know what I did to make him so mad," I said.



“He was checking you out.”

“What?” I looked down at my baggy sweatshirt and leggings. “Really?”

My grandma, in all of her eighty-three years of wisdom, nodded without missing a step and walked through the door. As we slid into a booth and picked up our menus, I recalled the past five years of glares in the grocery store, the gas station, and the mall from grouchy men I figured I offended in some way, or perhaps were just having a lousy day. I wondered how Grandma would’ve read those looks if she were there with me. I used to smile back and give a slight nod, like the southern gentlemen and gentlewomen taught me as a child. I do not do that anymore.

My grandma was married to Pap Pap for fifty-seven years when he passed away my senior year of high school. She wears his wedding ring on a gold chain around her neck, and she still cries at the sound of worship music in church because it reminds her of him. She lost Pap Pap and her two cats all within four months of each other. Our family waited for the right time to encourage her to adopt a new pet to keep her company. Several months after she moved upstate, closer to us, we went to an animal shelter to, in Grandma’s words, “only look.”

After five minutes, she requested paperwork to adopt a brown tabby sitting in a bed by the observation window. I stepped in to entertain him with a clump of feathers on a string, and after a while Grandma knocked on the other side of the glass, motioning me to come outside. She led me over to her paperwork.

“He has the same birthday as Pap Pap!” Grandma said.

She took her time naming the cat. We suggested names connected to Pap Pap: his first name that he never went by and a few clever ideas that nodded to Frank Sinatra. She brushed them off quickly. The usual ways we talked about Pap Pap with Grandma were reminiscent stories about his silly habits: how slow he drove, how he never stopped working, and how predictable his order was at Italian restaurants. After a month of living with the new cat, she finally landed on a name without any strings attached to it: “Bubba.”

Bubba turned out to be a complete menace. He woke her up at 3 a.m. every morning, dragging his claws over her arms, demanding breakfast. She updated us about his antics each week, and she couldn’t stay out of the house for more than several hours because he’d “get lonely.” Concerned, one of our uncles asked my sister if we should send the cat back.

“I don’t know... should we?” I asked her.

“Emma,” she smiled, “Bubba is Grandma’s new Pap Pap.”

“What?”

“She finally has someone to fuss over again.”

THE QUESTION
EMMA MILLER
PHOTOGRAPHY

(ABOVE)

TO HERE KNOWS WHEN
JACOB ENZOR
PHOTOGRAPHY

(PAGES 56–57)





Dead Poets Society

WRITTEN BY CARSON CAWTHON

I told my dad I want to be a poet.

His reply: "Don't kill yourself."

Home

WRITTEN BY

RACHEL

RIDDLE

The kitchen floor remembers my brother cracking open his neon-yellow glow stick and staining the tile. The foyer by the door remembers me spinning in circles until I was so dizzy I fell over. The garage remembers when we caught a mouse and released it into the field a couple miles down the road. The kitchen remembers my family singing along to "Hold Me" as it played on the radio. The space by the sliding glass door remembers us looking out at the rainbow above the mountaintops. The den remembers my happy Christmases colored by the financial stress I was unaware of. The front door remembers my brother's tears when our dog had to be put down. The blue, checkered couch remembers my mother's grief as she told us we weren't getting a new baby after all. Our living room remembers my parents telling us that it was time to move on.



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ROT #12
GABRIEL WILLIAMS
ACCELERATED POLAROID DETERIORATION



CHILDLIKE FAITH
SYDNEY BROADWELL
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

(ABOVE)

SHOES
MIRIAM CABRERA
PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT RIGHT)





Hurry Up! Wait for Me!

WRITTEN BY JADYN HOLT

These days I walk a fine line between
seventeen and twenty-five—
somewhere in the midst of childhood and
“real life.”

The girl behind me says to hurry up,
while the woman beyond me tells me to wait.

I hear them arguing:
“Let’s go!”
“Take your time.”

I am somewhere between coloring outside the lines and
parking in them—
somewhere between climbing trees and
“the ladder.”

I haven’t grown much but I
cast a longer shadow;

I trade my backpack for a briefcase,
bedtime stories for true crime,
a diary for therapy sessions.

I trade costume jewelry for a wedding band,
sugar rushes for caffeine highs,
cannonballs for tan lines.

I used to play hopscotch but now I’m in limbo,
balancing between a photograph and the mirror.

Both sides attainable and yet just out of reach—
but I’ll sit criss-cross on the tightrope until
my knees begin to ache.

Fly Away

WRITTEN BY

MEG

HINDMAN

I dropped my sister off at the airport this week. The cars around us honked as she grabbed her bags and counted her carry-ons. I handed her sunglasses to my parents, who promised to make sure she got them at the gate. I leaned over from the driver's seat and touched her fingertips before the doors closed. She mouthed something at me through the window, but I couldn't tell what she said. Picture-perfect goodbyes were never our strong suit, and yet I had hoped we'd manage some kind of goodbye at all. Instead, she waved once and walked to the sliding doors, her luggage rolling along behind her. It will be six months before she is with me again.

We used to dream of flying. We sat at the windowsill long past bedtime and looked at the stars, telling each other Peter Pan or some other fae would come and take us away. I told her stories of the adventures we would have, and she would fall asleep under the window, moonlight on her brow. On the drive home, I kept watch overhead, trying to guess which airplane was hers.

I always knew she would fly away.

I just thought we would go together.

UNSEEN
CLAIRE NUNES
PHOTOGRAPHY

(PAGE 62)

MALAGA TRAIN STATION
JONATHAN PARKER
35MM FILM

(AT RIGHT)





Koi Fish

WRITTEN BY

MAEVE

FOOTE

The delicate bone comb glided through Jade's hair, the teeth sending tingles along her scalp. Her handmaiden pulled the silky black strands up and weaved them into a knot, securing them with a jade hair stick. Another servant dusted her face with powder and colored her lips hibiscus red. Jade watched her transformation in the mirror, seeing herself shift from a princess to a jewel that would attract any man.

Her door opened, and her sister entered, already prepared for the banquet. Pearl fluttered like a dove, her kimono ivory and trimmed with pale pink. Her hair was braided and strung with strands of pearls, and her face that still clung to childhood was as perfect as a doll's. Pearl rushed across the room to Jade, her speed threatening her hair's composure.

"Jade! I just found out something exciting." She chirped.

The handmaids held back smiles as they fixed the headdress onto Jade's head. Pearl's youth excused her energetic tactlessness, and many found her to be amusing. Jade waited until they had finished preparing her, then said, "You are both excused."

The servants dropped into bows and shuffled backwards from the room. Pearl could barely contain herself, bouncing on her heels and grinning. Jade turned on her stool. "What did you find out?"

Her sister leaned close and whispered in hushed excitement, "Father is keeping a strange boy in the palace."

Jade stared at her with mild surprise, having fully expected Pearl's news to be childish and irrelevant. "A boy?"

"He was found a few days ago! Father is keeping him in a nice room and only allowing a few servants inside. No one will tell me anything about him!"

Jade frowned and pulled a flower from her vase, turning it in her fingers. Why would the emperor be keeping a boy at the palace if he wasn't from a noble family?

"Can we see him?" Strands of pearls whirled and rattled softly against each other as Pearl twirled on a silk slipper. "Maybe we can sneak over and catch a glimpse!"

Jade rose and carefully straightened her pale green kimono. "We can do no such thing. We have a place in this palace."

Her sister crossed her arms and pouted. "I knew you would say that."

A knock came from the door, and a servant entered. "Your presence is required at the banquet, your highnesses."

Jade placed a hand on her sister's back and guided her from the room. The servant bowed as they passed and followed a distance behind. As they glided down the golden hallways lined with expansive paintings, a sour feeling in Jade's stomach grew, but her steps did not falter.

The emperor always entered the banquet hall after all of the guests had arrived. They would bend in half with clasped hands as he seated himself on a golden throne. Next, the crown prince and the empress would enter and sit on either side of him. Lastly, the four princesses would enter, gliding delicately and shining like jewels. Only once they had been seated were the guests permitted to rise and continue with the festivities.

Clothed with fine silk and adorned with heavy jewelry, the distinguished guests spoke in hushed tones. Each approached the emperor, scraping and bowing to congratulate him and his only son. Gold was only turning twelve, but the guests spoke of him bringing the Yue Empire to greatness.

Guests also passed the four princesses and extended their greetings, but they had approached for a different reason than cheap flattery. Men slowly passed by with thin smiles and gleaming eyes that soaked in the beauty before them. Each princess was a flower in a rose garden and a jewel in the emperor's crown, possessions to be admired and sought after.

The most desirable were the oldest princesses: Sapphire and Ruby. They were of marrying age, and every nobleman was hungry for the chance to be in the emperor's favor. If they could, they would have come closer and inspected the princesses like fine horses for auction: felt their skin, looked inside of their mouths, ran hands through their hair.

Jade and her sisters remained completely still as the men passed. Their hands were invisible within their long sleeves, their legs tucked away, and their posture straight. Each face was sculpted from porcelain, and the features painted in elegant, unchanging lines. All they could do was stare at the celebration before them.

The walls of the banquet hall were inlaid with gold and precious stones to create patterns, and the wood floor shone like polished platinum. Golden chalices the size of full-grown women overflowed with vibrant flowers that filled the room with their fragrance. Strings of jewels dripped from the ceiling, glowing from the light of a thousand candles. Musicians played lilting melodies as dancers floated and spun, their red costumes patterned like butterfly wings and gossamer-thin.

Yet the beautiful sounds echoed hollowly, and the grandeur was fleeting and insignificant, emptied of true beauty. Despite its brilliance, it was dull to Jade's eyes. Her chest was tight, her hands clenched beneath the multitude of silk. The room began to swim before her eyes, the gold and finery becoming muddled and the smell of flowers and perfume churning her stomach. All she could do was wait and pray for time to pass.

Suddenly, the mix of music and conversation lurched to a stop. Jade blinked, breaking from her trance. The emperor's voice turned her head. He had risen to his feet.

"Distinguished guests, this is a night of celebration for my son and the glory he will bring to our empire. For your entertainment tonight, I shall reveal my gift for my cherished heir."

The hall's massive doors swung open, and a stir rose from the gathered nobles. Four servants wheeled an ornate golden birdcage into the room, and the sea of silk parted for its progression. The birdcage was taller than a full-grown man, and a gauzy curtain concealed whatever was inside, but Jade could see something shifting behind it.

The servants halted at the base of the dais, and the emperor lifted his hands to quiet the hushed chatter. "My subjects, this is a creature that I have captured. The gods themselves delivered it to me because I am in their favor. I present to you...a moon spirit."

The servants pulled the curtain from the cage. The white shimmering gauze fell like water, and a tremor passed over the room. Jade did not have the breath to gasp.

"Yet the beautiful sounds echoed hollowly,
and the grandeur was fleeting and
insignificant, emptied of true beauty."

Inside the golden cage was a boy. His skin was white and iridescent, shimmering beneath the warm candlelight. When he turned, his milky hair shifted across his forehead and the back of his arched neck. His lips were the palest pink of a rose, and his feathery eyelashes dipped over his cloudy blue eyes like bird wings. The long, elegant kimono he wore was made from the finest silk, but it was dull against his beauty.

His reflection shone in the wide, glassy eyes that surrounded the cage. Silence even more hushed than when the emperor spoke penetrated the room. For once, the tongues of the gossipers were still, and the voices of groveling nobles stolen.

The one to break the silence was Gold. "He's mine?"

The emperor smiled his practiced, benevolent smile. "Of course, my son. He is yours."

Guests began whispering and murmuring. They pointed, leaning close to one another. Their eyes lost the pure glow of the boy before them, and a darker presence seeped into them.

Jade knew that expression. She had seen those eyes directed towards her ever since she was a child. She gripped fistfuls of silk beneath her concealing sleeves and stared at the boy in his golden cage.

The boy turned his head, and his eyes met hers. Jade's breath caught in her throat. His eyes—they were pure. A shiver passed through her. She felt that her gaze violated him, yet she could not tear her eyes away. He was so real. More real than any beautiful thing in this room or the palace.

The boy leaned forward, gripping a bar of his birdcage, and her reverence broke. His eyes—they were scared. Jade lowered her gaze and swallowed to moisten her dry throat. He was trapped too: another jewel in the emperor's collection.



"I want to see the boy." Jade held her breath as she watched her brother mess with a wooden horse and a matching warrior.

"You can have him if you want." Gold tossed his horse away petulantly. "He won't say anything to me or play with me. He's boring! Father needs to get me another friend."

The boy was only a door down. The emperor had placed him close to Gold. Smoothing her out-of-place hairs, Jade opened the door and stepped inside. After closing the door, she neatly clasped her hands together and turned. The room was fitting of a noble. The furniture was spotless, the floor polished, and the bed provided with a feather filled mattress. The walls had elegant paintings upon them, and the vases were full of flowers.

Like last night, none of it compared to the frail figure standing before her. A large basin was overturned at his feet, and water was splattered over the wood. Droplets clung to his milky strands of hair. His kimono's shoulders were darkened with water. He stared ahead for several moments before tilting his head to her, water flicking from the tips of his hair.

"I am Jade." Her voice sounded too harsh in the quiet room. "What is your name?" The boy padded closer, moving as smoothly as a fish through water. Pausing, he gazed at her. His eyes were a cloudy blue flecked with white—as though sand had been tossed into them.

He tapped his lips.

"Oh," she realized. "You can't speak."

A slight smile curled the corners of his mouth. He reached out his hand. When she did not move, he sought for her hand beneath the green silk. He traced the lines of her palms and brushed a thumb over the back of her hand, his skin cool and smooth.

"What should I call you then?"

He blinked serenely and tilted his head, almost as if to say: Do I need such a thing?

Jade thought for a moment. "I shall call you Akari because you resemble the moon."

He glanced sideways and pulled her over to a painting that extended across an entire wall. It depicted a twisting river and a roaring waterfall, the mist painted in swirled clouds. At the top of the waterfall, there was a golden koi fish leaping into the sky. As it did, the koi transformed into a soaring dragon that needed no wings.

Akari pointed at the painting and tugged her sleeve.

"This is a painting of an ancient legend," she explained. "In the story, the golden koi was one of many trying to swim up a river. The other koi eventually gave up, but he kept going. Even when he reached a waterfall, he refused to stop and began climbing. As the story goes, demons mocked the effort of the koi and made the waterfall even higher. The koi swam up the waterfall for a hundred years to reach the top, and the gods rewarded him by transforming the koi into a dragon."

Akari turned forward and brushed his fingers over the shining scales of the golden koi fish. He turned back to Jade, pointing at the fish then himself.

"What are you trying to say?"

Akari gazed at her for a long moment, his eyes pinching and un-pinching. Then he took hold of her hand once more and led her to the sliding doors at the back of the room. As he pushed them open, she realized that his room was connected to Gold's private garden.

Moss-covered stones lined a neat path, and maple trees shed their fiery red leaves into glassy pools. Jade followed Akari over the arching red bridge to the high wall surrounding the garden. He stopped and pointed over the wall.

Jade shook her head.

He tapped himself and pointed over the wall once more.

She bit her lip. "I can't."

He crossed his arms and regarded her critically.

"I am only the third princess! There is nothing I can do to help you."

She dropped her gaze, gripping her kimono. She expected the boy to scowl or glare, expected him to storm away or gesture furiously.

A hand touched her whitened knuckles. Her head shot up. Akari patted her hand and touched his heart, his beautiful eyes smiling at her: it is alright.

Relief and surprise washed through Jade for the forgiveness she did not deserve. Despite his unusual and breathtaking appearance, he was only a boy, not a magical spirit like the emperor claimed. She was denying him his freedom, his life.

Akari tapped her arm and passed her, stopping at the edge of the pool. As she neared, he continued forwards, wading into the water. Knee-deep, he looked back and beckoned to her.

When she hesitated, he beckoned again, and she relented. "I am not going in that deep," she said. Pulling off her slippers and holding up her skirt, she dipped her feet into the cool water. This was enough to please Akari. He smiled and eased back, floating in the water. White silk flowed around him, and his pale hair was a halo around his fair face. The clouds drifted across the surface of his eyes.

"He was trapped too: another jewel in the emperor's collection."

"You are peculiar," Jade murmured. A flash of color caught her eye. It was the red and black spotted koi that lived in this pond. Swimming close to Akari, they nibbled at his white kimono and let their fins brush his hair. When he rose, they retreated once more. His eyes fell on her, and a mischievous smile broke his serene expression. He drew back his arm, and Jade knew in an instant what he was going to do. Before she could react, Akari hit the pool's surface and splashed her.

She gaped at him as water dripped down her face, and he began to laugh. It was not the kind of laugh she had heard before. It was soft and inconsistent, coming out then vanishing even as his mouth was still open. Jade grinned and splashed him back, hitting him squarely on his face, which was the last dry part of him. Akari wiped water away from his eyes and opened them, a gleam flashing across them.

“No!” she shrieked as he lunged and grabbed hold of her, causing them both to fall back into the pool. Water drops flew into the air, and the koi scattered as waves swept after them. Jade and Akari sat chest deep in the pool, staring at each other only a moment before laughing.

The ripples in the pool had almost calmed by the time they stopped. When Jade stood, something brushed her leg, and she looked down to see a koi. The fish had returned. Their scales shimmered iridescently as they swirled around Akari’s body. She lifted her eyes to him. “Are you...really a spirit?”

He reached up and plucked a ruby-red maple leaf from her hair. Akari gazed at the veins that the sunlight turned to gold, water flicking from his white lashes when he blinked. Offering it to her, he smiled.

The headdress dripping with green jewels and inlaid with porcelain made Jade’s neck hurt. It perched like a beautiful yet ugly bird on top of her black hair. Gold’s birthday celebration was only a week-long, but it had felt unending. The nights full of extravagance, music, and nobles blurred together in her mind. Among the swirling and muddled colors, the pure glow of Akari always stood out in stark clarity. He would sit in the center of his golden cage just out of reach of the hands that came through the bars. Every noble would strain against the bars, wedging their shoulders through and stretching their fingers, but only a few could reach far enough to touch the edge of his kimono.

But tonight something was different. Akari was paler. Even though Jade was far from the cage, she was sure of it. He was smaller in the folds of his flowing kimono; his complexion was duller and his face thinner. In that moment she knew—freedom was life and right now he was dying without it.

It was late—the moon full in the pitch-black sky. The palace was shadowed and silent as Jade’s slippers made hushed whispers on the polished wood hall. When she slipped into his room, Akari was awake, his eyes round with surprise. He stood as she rushed over.

“You are leaving this place,” she told him.

Akari shook his head, his eyes round with concern—for her.

“You need to be free,” she whispered fiercely. “You need to live.”

He gazed at her then nodded.

Pulling him behind her, she opened the door to the garden and hurried along the narrow path to one of the stone walls. “These gardens aren’t actually private,” she explained, pushing aside branches to reveal a small door in the wall. “It is unacceptable for gardeners to enter the bedrooms, so they need to use secret doors like this one to go from one garden to another.”

Akari nodded, understanding her plan.

After they passed through, she closed the door carefully. Weaving around bushes full of white blossoms and over smooth stones, they traversed another private garden. Jade glanced worriedly at the screened doors, expecting someone to open them, but no one did. Another hidden door ushered them into the front garden.

Akari squeezed her hand, grounding her.

Taking a deep breath to calm herself, she led him through the swaying maple trees. Jade hoped the shadows would hide the glow he cast, but they were of little effect. Akari seemed to be a light source of his own. Up ahead, she saw the only way they could escape: a maple tree growing close to the wall. She had climbed it once, hoping to glimpse

what laid beyond the only walls she knew, but she had fallen and been punished for climbing it.

They reached the tree, and Jade realized with a twisting feeling in her stomach that the main gate was not far away. As soon as they cleared the wall, they were sure to be spotted. Akari was the first to take hold of the maple. When his silk slippers slipped on the bark, he shed them on the cool grass and started climbing. He was not practiced, but he was certainly better than her. Also removing her slippers, she let Akari help her up. The bark scraped her soft feet and hands.

When they reached the top of the wall, they paused. Jade stared out across the hills of silver-lined trees and the dark mountains in the distance—like the spines on the back of a lizard. In the cradle of the valley, she could see the tiny lights of a village.

“We will need to run to the forest,” she whispered, pointing to the guards.

Akari nodded and lifted himself onto the wall, white cloth trailing down the stone behind him like a fish tail. She followed and said, “Together.”

They took hold of the wall. As she swung her body over, Jade’s fingers slipped and she fell over the wall with a strangled cry. She landed on her back in the grass, shooting pain up and down her body.

“Over there!” a man shouted.

Akari landed beside her and pulled her to her feet. Gripping her hand, he tugged her across the grass and into the trees. She could hear the guards behind them, armor rattling as they ran. “Halt in the name of the emperor!” The cry rang through the darkness, filling Jade with fear. She could hear the crashing of footfalls behind them. The tree limbs grabbed at their kimonos, and the leaves were slick underfoot. The moon only penetrated the canopy in inconsistent patches, leaving the rest of the forest in complete darkness. As they ran, all she could do was keep her eyes on Akari.

Finally, they slowed and listened for the guards. In the distance, they could hear the faint sounds of crunching leaves and an occasional murmur of voices. Jade’s heart pounded as she caught her breath. Glancing at Akari, she found that he was staring into the shadowed brush. Suddenly, he lunged and took hold of her hand. He pulled her behind him as he swerved through the undergrowth.

“Where are you going?” she gasped, but scarcely after she had asked, he halted.

They stood on the bank of a pond, willow trees hanging their sorrowful branches over the crystalline surface that reflected the night sky. She could hear the sound of running water in the distance, which must have been a river feeding into the pool.

Akari turned to her and placed her hand over his heart. His mouth opened as though he was speaking words she could not hear. He smiled, and she knew he was thanking her.

White silk trailing behind him, he waded into the water. The lotus flowers on the surface shivered and parted before him. Moonlight flooded over him, and he paused, staring up at the full moon. Akari fell forward. He hit the water and vanished without even a ripple.

Jade gasped and surged forward, crashing into the pond and soaking the bottom of her kimono. She could not believe what she had seen—he hadn’t disappeared beneath the surface, he was gone, completely gone.

Then movement caught her eye. Something brilliantly white was streaking through the water towards her. The pure white koi circled her, its iridescent fins shimmering with



shades of pink and blue. Even below the dark water, its scales glowed like the moon in the star-flecked sky above. It leaped from the water spinning and fluttering his flowing fins like butterfly wings.

A smile broke her face. “Unbelievable,” she whispered.

Then Akari was rising from the water and taking her hand. He shone brighter than she had ever seen before; his milky skin shimmering pearly pink and silvery blue like the koi’s fins. He was free—she could see it in his eyes, feel it coming from the hand in hers.

Thank you. She heard his voice as though he was speaking, but no words left his mouth. His eyes stared deeply into hers. *What do you want?*

“He was free—she could see it in his eyes,
feel it coming from the hand in hers.”

“I want...to be free,” she whispered. “I want to be as free as you.”

Akari smiled and turned, vanishing into the water once again. She saw his shining white body shoot away through the starry pond. Jade waded deeper, the water tugging at her kimono. She felt a pull in her soul; she could hear the water whispering to her. Closing her eyes, she fell forward and then—then she was flying. Her kimono and jewels, their weight was gone. She was soaring through the dark water that danced with the night sky’s reflection. Then Akari was there, circling her once before swimming away once more.

The pale green koi fish, her fins patterned with dark green, followed him, spinning and leaping above the water. The koi joined each other, sailing from the pond and up the shining river.



A BUNNY IN PENCIL SHAVINGS MIXED MEDIA BY ZOÉ HOWELL





Sunday School

WRITTEN BY ALLISON JONES

It wasn't in Sunday school that I saw my need for Jesus,
but in a week of Mondays—
spilling my vanilla latte, getting stuck behind a bus on the
way to work—
caught in the gerbil-wheel rat-race.

It wasn't in Sunday school that I heard Jesus weeping,
but in texts from my mom on the last Tuesday of August:
No change.
Trying to keep him comfortable.

It wasn't in Sunday school that I knew Jesus loved me,
but on a Wednesday evening,
chasing the cosmic, no-water-necessary
rainbow, born from the union of sun submitting to moon.

It wasn't in Sunday school that I felt Jesus' arms holding
all things together,
but in the middle of a Thursday night, tossing and turning—
tangled in the grey flannel sheets of anxiety and insomnia—
wrapped in the griefs of today and the fears of tomorrow.

It wasn't in Sunday school that I believed Jesus cared,
but on a Friday morning's free coffee and hug—
my coworker's reply to
I'm okay.

It wasn't in Sunday school that I trusted Jesus,
but on a Saturday afternoon, missing my dad,
knowing what He gave up—what He grieved—
to wipe my tears on the last day.

ANOTHER WORLD
NOAH PRIVETTE
PHOTOGRAPHY

(PREVIOUS PAGE)

EXILE
ELIZABETH GRAMM
PHOTOGRAPHY

(ABOVE)

Relics

WRITTEN BY

COLSEN

KAY

I saw my two stuffed animals there in her arms, Chloe and Molly. The first time I had visited her in the nursing home, my mom had brought me, and I gave them to her so that she'd have friends when we couldn't be there. The two cats sat on her bed stand every night as she drifted off to sleep and accompanied her everywhere through her final days. I didn't know how much they meant to her until years later, when I burst into tears reading her obituary. "Her special kittens," a phrase that still brings me as much melancholy as almost any other set of words strung together in this world.

I still remember the last time I visited my great-grandma. She was 97 and I didn't realize it would be the last time I saw her. I remember that her memory was foggy and her abilities were a fraction of what they used to be. I definitely remember how she made me feel, even if she was on the verge of death. I remember that as my mom and I were leaving, she pulled me back for a brief moment to assure me of her love: "I may not remember who you are, but I remember that I love you."

Every now and then, I remember that she painted animals and that several of them are hung throughout my parents' house. Two paintings, carefully etched tigers, are located at the bounds of a certain hallway. My two relics of her, cats. Her special kittens.

LET ME ROLL
JACOB ENZOR
PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT RIGHT)





IMPRESSION CERAMIC BY LILY MCNAMARA



Caregiving

WRITTEN BY

TORY

CANDEA

I came to her bedside. She laid flat. Her eyes searched the ceiling. Her left hand contracted. Her right hand is lax. Her words deep inside her. I watched for a reaction to my presence. When there was none, I sat beside her. And that was enough.

91

GETTY NO.1
JONATHAN PARKER
35MM FILM
(AT LEFT)

Bones

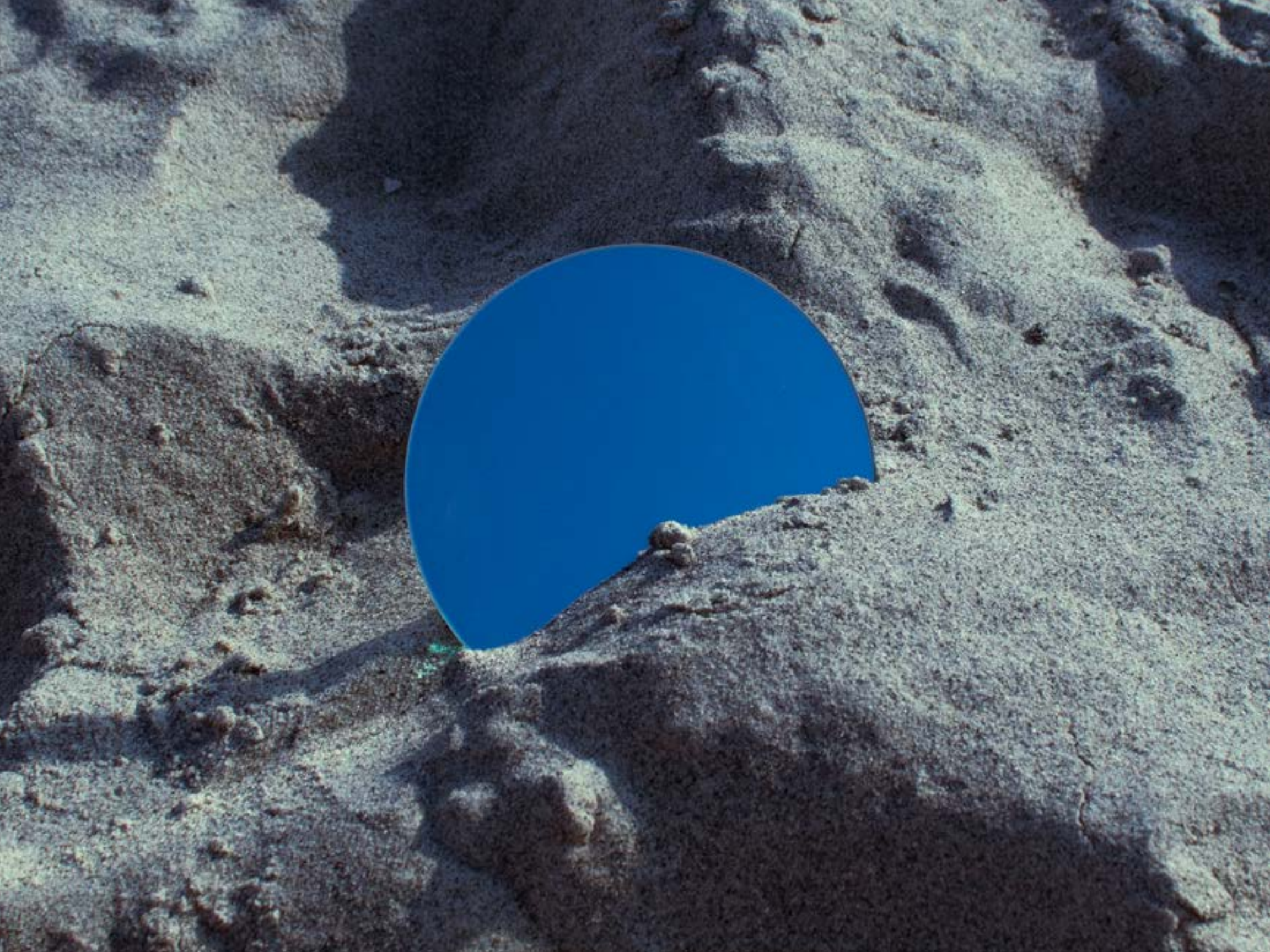
WRITTEN BY JOHNATHAN SORCE

We live in the bones of old worlds,
Which have long since died.
We stretch the sinews of our science over them,
Move our muscles to match their form,
And base our buildings on them: the bones
That have been left us.
There are shrines to bones – places to muse
And to pale over them.
We have all drunk the draughts of bone,
Broth boiled long into chicken soup
Or a cultural consciousness.
We live in the bones of old worlds,
Which have long since died.



KING
JULIA HEWITT
LINOCUT PRINT
(ABOVE)

MIRRORED
NOAH PRIVETTE
PHOTOGRAPHY
(PAGES 94-95)



The House Remembers

WRITTEN BY

JAYLEE

KOON

Sometimes, a ghost is just the house remembering. The tears of some long-gone soul drip out of our faucets. The floorboards that miss the weight of footsteps bend and creak on their own accord. The shape of a person far too small to be mine or my husband's haunts the mattress of the guest bedroom upstairs.

I lie awake—as I often do every night—and listen for the old creaks the house makes. They normally sound like the footsteps of children running up and down the hall. Sometimes there is laughter, often followed by a sharp shushing behind barely contained giggles. Sometimes I can hear people in the kitchen sharing a hushed conversation. I can never make out what words are being said. The house will silence the conversation if I get too close.

Tonight, however, it is quiet. There are no other sounds to accompany the soft snoring of my husband. I can't even hear the singing of the cicadas outside, nor the chirping of the crickets and the croaking of the frogs that I know are lurking in the garden. It is deathly silent.

It is the silence that forbids me from falling asleep. And it is the silence that allows me to hear the soft thudding coming from downstairs. It is so faint that I barely notice it, but the sound is as constant as a frantic heartbeat.

My husband begins to stir as I sit up in bed and pull myself towards the bedroom door. He groans. "What's wrong?"

"There's a noise," I tell him. It is a noise I've never heard before.

He rolls over so that his back is to me. "It's just the house remembering," he slurs, his voice stained with sleep.

Within seconds his soft snoring once again fills the room. I creak open the door and stalk into the hall. The floorboards echo my descent down the stairs, the panicked thudding growing louder and louder as I draw nearer to the source. I pass through the living room. A blanket is draped over the couch as if someone is sleeping there. The faucet in the kitchen is leaking.

I turn to face the dark hall that leads to the storage closet. Shadows dance around the door to conceal it in thick darkness. The thudding is nearly deafening. I haven't opened that closet in months, but the desperate pounding is enough to make the door pulse from its frame. I feel like I've forgotten how to breathe.

A shriek: "NO!"

The noise jumpstarts my heart and I rush to the door. The pounding mirrors the throb in my head. The handle does not turn. Silence pours into the house like a flood.

I try to turn the doorknob again but it is locked, refusing to turn all the way.

"Hello?" I call out to whomever is on the other side of the door. I am greeted with a hollow quiet that freezes my heart. My hands are shaking. My legs feel weak. I press a palm to the locked door, as if it will comfort the house. "What an awful memory," I murmur to it, turning to go back upstairs.

My husband sleeps soundly, still. He is blissfully unaware of the events that just unraveled downstairs. My pillow is cool. As my eyes finally grow heavy, there is a buzzing on my husband's nightstand. His phone lights up, casting the dark bedroom in a bluish hue. The dark returns. I close my eyes.

Bzzzt.

I grab his phone—only with the intention to turn it off—but the notification of a text catches my eye. Whoever is texting him past midnight is saved in his contacts as "E.S."

Michael, E.S wrote, I miss you.

My heart feels like it's being crushed. My throat is thick. I delete the message and put his phone back on the nightstand.

I can only imagine what his reaction would be if I were to confront him. My mind races back to the few times I've seen him lose his temper. Plates thrown against the wall and shattered in a jealous rage, tables flipped over on their sides when things don't go his way. I shudder at the thought.

Morning comes much too quickly. My husband sits with his legs crossed at the table, sipping his coffee as I wash the dishes from breakfast. He is reading an old newspaper, the pages yellow and weathered with time. The headline reads: *'Husband Still Awaiting Word on Missing Wife's Whereabouts.'*

I unplug the drain in the sink and begin to dry the dishes with an old towel. "Do you remember last night?" I ask him.

He offers a humorless chuckle. "You'll have to be more specific."

"When I woke you up because of the noise."

"Ah," he leans back in his chair and lowers the newspaper. "Did you find out what it was?"

The faucet begins to leak. Salty tears drip into the draining dish water.

"I think there was someone locked in the downstairs closet."

I don't turn around to face my husband, but I can imagine the perplexed expression on his face. I hear him take a sip of his coffee before responding, "What makes you think that?"

I explain the frantic thudding and how the house was so silent. I tell him about the voice that sounded so desperate and so afraid. How all the sounds stopped at once so that the house felt like an empty chasm.

I do not tell him about the text.

We fall into silence after that. He is unsure of what to say. I'm not certain whether I appreciate his lack of an answer or not. He works on the crossword puzzle in the back of the newspaper while I put the dishes back into the cabinets. "A five-letter word," my husband mutters. "A fool's first mistake."

I mull it over while sorting the forks, knives, and spoons into their respective spots in the drawer. “Trust.”

I hear the scratching of pencil on paper. A dry, forced laugh. “Kind of depressing, isn’t it?”

“Do you know where the key to the storage closet is?”

I turn around to face him. My backside is pressed against the counter as I chew at the inside of my cheek. Hands fiddle with the dirty dish towel as I wait for a response. My husband blinks at my change in topic but quickly puts his attention back to the crossword. “I don’t know,” he responds. “It shouldn’t be locked.”

“It was last night.”

“That’s just the house,” he assures me. “It’s probably not locked anymore.”

I find myself walking over to the closet. It’s more mundane in the daytime. The anxiety in the pit of my stomach is unwelcome, and as I reach for the handle, it only heightens.

The doorknob turns. The wooden door creaks open. The closet is dark. There’s a single lightbulb displayed loosely on the tall ceiling, and I pull the string that dangles high over my head. Light blinks into the small space, illuminating the various boxes that litter the shelves and floor. I hear my husband’s soft voice from the kitchen: “I told you so.”

The worries I felt dissipate and I close the door. I hear the latch click into place before I rejoin my husband in the kitchen. “Are you satisfied with what you found?” he asks.

I shrug. “I didn’t find anything.”

“I didn’t think you were going to.”

My lips press into a thin line. The creaking of the floorboards upstairs distracts me from making some kind of retort. My gaze drifts to the ceiling as the footsteps creak down the hallway. We hear a door open, then slam closed, and the house is quiet again. My husband takes a long sip of his coffee.

I climb the stairs and they squeak beneath my weight. The banister is weathered down from decades of hands running along the wooden surface, and my palm fits perfectly in the mold. The long, narrow rug that stretches down the length of the hallway is askew, as if someone has been running and they kicked up the rug. I step on the bumps to flatten them and straighten the rug with my foot as I make my way to our bedroom. The shower is already running. Hot steam pours from the cracks of the closed bathroom door. There is a woman’s voice singing words to a song that I cannot understand. I wonder if it is because the house does not remember the lyrics.

I open the door. The shower, the steam, the woman, and the song disappear as if they were never there. The water takes a moment to heat up, and I rub tiredly at the bags under my eyes as I wait. My reflection stares back at me, and we numbly look at one another until the steam fogs the mirror.

While I’m showering, I hear footsteps in the bedroom.

“Evelyn...” my husband’s voice calls, a playfulness in his tone that I haven’t heard since our honeymoon four years ago.

I freeze.

PRISM GIRL
SYDNEY WELCH
PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT RIGHT)





That isn't my name.

A giggle echoes through the bathroom, bouncing off the white walls: a woman's voice that I don't recognize. I stick my head out of the shower, holding the curtain close to my chest. The door opens, allowing the steam to escape into the bedroom. Cold air rushes in. No one enters the bathroom. No one that I can see, at least.

My husband's voice: "You sly fox..."

I don't notice how fast my heart is beating until I turn off the shower water and can hear it pounding in my ears.

A ghost is just the house remembering, I remind myself. There is a pit in my stomach. I throw on my clothes and rush downstairs.

My husband has already left for work. His coffee, now cold, is still on the kitchen table. The newspaper is still turned to the crossword, his pencil on the floor.

I put his mug in the sink to be washed.

Sleep is as lacking as it was the night before. I stare up at the ceiling, tracing the tiled pattern with my eyes as my husband snores soundly to my right. There are voices in the kitchen tonight, sharing the same conversation that they've shared for the past few months. The topic is still unknown to me, and I doubt that tonight will be any different.

My husband's phone still rests on the nightstand. His steady breath indicates he's asleep, and I can't help myself from reaching over and grabbing it. The passcode has always been our wedding anniversary—061209—but tonight, it does not work.

I do not know what compels me to try this next sequence of numbers. A hunch, a gut feeling, maybe. I pray with every fiber in my being that it's wrong. My breath is caught in my throat as I try the code 383596.

E-V-E-L-Y-N.

When his phone unlocks, I feel like I'm going to throw up. I throw myself out of bed, not bothering to be quiet about it, and I storm down the hall.

My palm presses into the mold of the banister. The stairs do not protest as I descend. The conversation in the kitchen becomes louder as I draw nearer. There is a single light on in the kitchen. The chairs at the table are pushed out as if two people are sitting in them. The conversation is not clear. It's almost as if they are speaking gibberish. There's a baritone lilt that seems so familiar, and I'm so worked up that I do not doubt it to be my husband. The house remembers a conversation that I was not present for. A few words break through the language barrier, but it's not enough for me to understand the context of what they're saying.

"...go upstairs..."

"...won't have to worry..."

"...I love..."

"...the best thing..."

The door to the storage closet slams closed: a cymbal crash that silences the house. The light in the kitchen goes out, the voices stop mid-conversation. That awful, desperate thudding resumes, just as frantic as it was last night. I try the door, eager to free whoever is trapped inside despite knowing that it's a memory, the past can't be changed, and all is fruitless. The door is locked.

DOOR
MIRIAM CABRERA
PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT LEFT)

I pound against the other side of the door, throwing both fists against the wood. “Hello?” I yell. “What can I do to help you!?”

“NO!” That shriek, tearful voice responds. “PLEASE, COME BACK!”

I dash to the kitchen, throwing open drawers and rummaging through the various trinkets in hopes of finding a key. The thudding continues as I search, crying and screaming, filling the house with a despair I’ve never felt before. It settles deep within my chest, as if my lungs are filled with water. How my husband does not wake, I do not know. Before I know it, tears are running down my cheeks as I slam open drawer after drawer.

“PLEASE!” the voice continues to wail. “OPEN THE DOOR!”

But I can’t.

I sob against the door. The cries of the anguished voice mix with mine as we release the fear and doubt and betrayal that has been building in our chests. It is finally when I feel like I have no tears left to cry that the floorboard next to me creaks. It is so soft that I barely hear it, but footsteps make their way to the kitchen and slam closed one of the drawers that I left open.

With the little hope I have left, I pull myself to my feet and open the drawer.

An antique key tarnished by rust rests undisturbed among the random items in the drawer. I grab it with shaky hands and throw it into the lock of the storage closet door. It slams open, and the house goes silent.

The light in the kitchen flicks back on.

“*Let’s go upstairs,*” the voice of my husband echoes, a giddiness that is so unfamiliar ever present in his words.

A woman’s voice, who I can only assume is Evelyn responds, “*And what will your wife say?*”

“*We won’t have to worry about her for much longer.*”

There’s a long pause of silence, followed by the creaking of the floorboards. “*I love you the most,*” my husband says. “*You’re the best thing that has happened to me in a long time.*”

I sleep on the couch that night. I awake the next morning to my husband in the kitchen. He is reading another old newspaper, his foot tapping impatiently on the floor. “Good morning,” he says as I pass by the room to head upstairs. “It’s about time you woke up.”

I do not speak.

“Can you make me some coffee?” he asks, not looking up from the paper. “You know I get cranky without it.”

I want to demand why he can’t make it himself, but I already know the excuse he will use: *it tastes better when you do it.*

“I’m going to shower,” I tell him instead, climbing the stairs.

His phone is still on the nightstand, and it buzzes with a message as I enter the room. E.S. *When are you going to do it?*

My husband’s voice sounds from the hallway. “What’s going on with you?”

He rounds the corner, and he freezes when he sees his phone in my hand.

“Who is E.S.?” I ask him.

Many emotions flash across his face—shock, guilt, worry—but it ends on anger and his voice turns into a growl. “Why are you going through my phone?”

I say nothing.

“It’s just a guy from work,” my husband tells me. “Just a stupid nickname. Whatever you’re thinking, you’re wrong.”

“Evelyn?” Her name feels wrong in my mouth.

My husband’s frown deepens. “Are you accusing me of something?” he demands. “Give me the phone, right now.”

“You’re cheating on me,” I say, hoping the vigor in my voice matches the anger and betrayal that I feel.

“Don’t be stupid,” my husband tells me with a scoff. “What makes you even think I would do that?”

He’s walking towards me now, a deep-rooted rage boiling just behind his eyes. I refuse to falter. He regards me as nothing more than an irritation, as if this conversation is but an annoyance.

“The house,” I evenly say. “The house remembers.”

I wonder if the house will ever make ghosts out of this moment.

Michael rushes at me. I scramble to the door and run down the hall. The long, narrow rug trips me up, and I kick it askew as I try to get to my feet. Michael is upon me in an instant, grabbing my ankles and yanking me backwards towards him. I kick him hard, my heel connecting with his nose. It cracks, his head thrown backwards at the impact.

By the time he recovers enough to get back on his feet, I’m halfway down the stairs. My hand runs along the mold of the railing, but in my haste, I stumble on the last step and trip. I hit the hard floor with a loud thud, giving Michael the opportunity he needs to catch up with me.

I race to the front door, but Michael grabs the back of my shirt and slings me away from my only exit. I turn, sprinting to the kitchen and grabbing a knife from the wooden holder.

Blindly, I swing, fearing nothing but my own safety. Michael wrestles it out of my hand in a matter of seconds, and before I know what is happening, I am shoved into the storage closet.

I hear the lock click into place, and darkness envelops me. “NO!” I scream, realizing what he has done. I pound against the door with everything I have.

“You didn’t stand a chance,” Michael huffs, “and you’ll stay in there until I decide to let you out.”

I hear his retreating footsteps. “PLEASE,” I wail. “COME BACK!”

I scream and kick and pound against the door, but I am met with silence. I hear him slam the key into the drawer in the kitchen and stomp upstairs. His footsteps creak down the hallway. A door crashes shut.



An Untarnished Miracle

WRITTEN BY CORA RUNION

I felt haunted by the absence of guilt
Something so foreign it had to be wrong
It was a pleasure so intense and spiritual
To taste it again would tarnish this miracle

105

NEXUS
LILY MCNAMARA
OIL ON CANVAS

(AT LEFT)

Aranea Postmortem

WRITTEN BY

MAEVE

FOOTE

You see my body on the floor—eight legs thin as string, curled and bent around myself. It's like a ribcage or a net held over my body—as though I could have protected myself. The carpet is my cemetery, the strands of white my grave. You killed me yesterday, fast and thoughtless. Two strikes of a notebook. I shriveled like a burning leaf, the last throes of life are twitches too small for you to see. You stare at my body on the floor, exactly where it had fallen because you didn't bother to pick me up. Reaching out, you flick my body with a pencil—further from you and out of sight. I am simple and I am dead—I do not understand. Am I worth so little?

FEEBLE
CAROLINE PAUL
INK PEN ON WHITE PAPER

(AT RIGHT)



Do Not Let the Sun

WRITTEN BY EMMA MILLER

The sun rose up
on my anger today.
At 8:30 a.m.,
it is already time
to put something to bed.

VENICE BEACH SKATEPARK
JONATHAN PARKER
35MM FILM

(AT RIGHT)



Risen

WRITTEN BY KARSEN BARNETT

Alone we enter and lonely we leave this God-forsaken rock
Where none dare venture one did cleave what sin did seek to block

When He hit the ground with nay a sound, all Hell began to cheer
But as He stood, He lift His hood and their clamor turned to fear

For on His face, none could erase the smirking of the King
And on He strode through horror untold no fear of anything

Demons bowed and spirits cowed when Christ did pass them by
None could stand His holy hand which signaled death was nigh

He did not speak but did He reek of Heaven's Holy light
The greatest demons couldn't see him while blinded by His light

On His approach, the guards did broach to free Him at His leave
But with a wave, their forms did cave, and Satan did perceive

Upon the seat of Hell's dark throne, his rule was at an end
As Christ walked through the gates askew, the palace came to bend

It spat out Satan right before the true King's Holy form
All Hell stopped and breathed in deep at the calm before the storm

And at a word, Death was undone and Hell began to roar
But the king just smiled and strolled away His keys accounted for

Now on we sing of a risen King who walked alone beneath
And through whose life we find no strife because He did bequeath

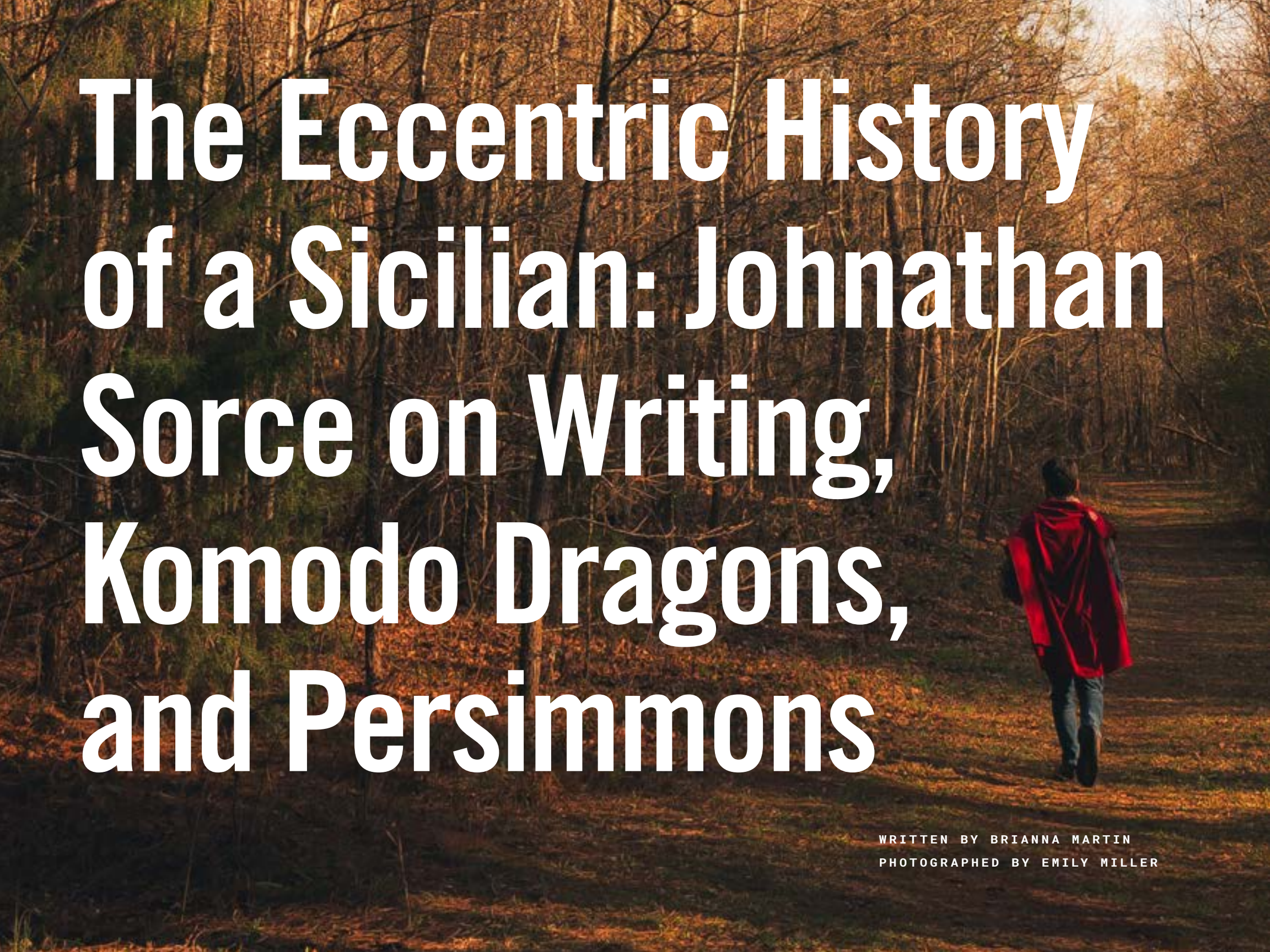
His purest nature on us below, we who do not deserve
But He careth not, for He came not to be served but to serve

Now as He stands in victory, Death has lost its sting
The heavens roar, in song they soar with praises to their King

For with His words, He undid death and left with all Hell's keys
And He will heal and create a land free from all disease

Where we draw near and all is clear for God will dwell within
A world of love that's good and pure, a world without an end

Alone we enter, together we leave this land of fear and Death
But one day soon, we will commune with God our every breath

A person wearing a red cape and dark clothing is walking away from the camera on a dirt path through a forest. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting autumn or winter, with some brown leaves on the ground. The lighting is warm and golden, likely from a low sun. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

The Eccentric History of a Sicilian: Johnathan Sorce on Writing, Komodo Dragons, and Persimmons

WRITTEN BY BRIANNA MARTIN
PHOTOGRAPHED BY EMILY MILLER



“The world is interesting when you stop to think about it and when you stop to appreciate it.”

There is no better word to describe Johnathan Sorce’s writing style than eclectic. As a Creative Writing and History double major, Johnathan enjoys using “the elements of story that you see through history” in his own writings. Johnathan utilizes historical events, places, and people as a base for inspiration and to shape and improve his own writing. He dabbles in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, and has explored concepts ranging from fantasy to his Sicilian heritage.

Johnathan began his writing journey at a young age when his homeschool curriculum introduced him to persuasive writing and he attended a creative writing class at a church. At age 11, he started working on a novel project that involved crafting his own world and language. The project has since been shelved, but Johnathan hopes that “part of it may see the light of day or may be inspiration for other things.”

J.R.R. Tolkien and Dr. Seuss have been some of Johnathan’s greatest inspirations, both as a young child and to this day. He does not limit himself to only drawing inspiration from authors, however. He enjoys watching movies and television shows like *Adventure Time* and *Over the Garden Wall* to appreciate and learn from their craft. Johnathan continues to search for inspiration as he consumes other types of media as well such as plays and history podcasts.

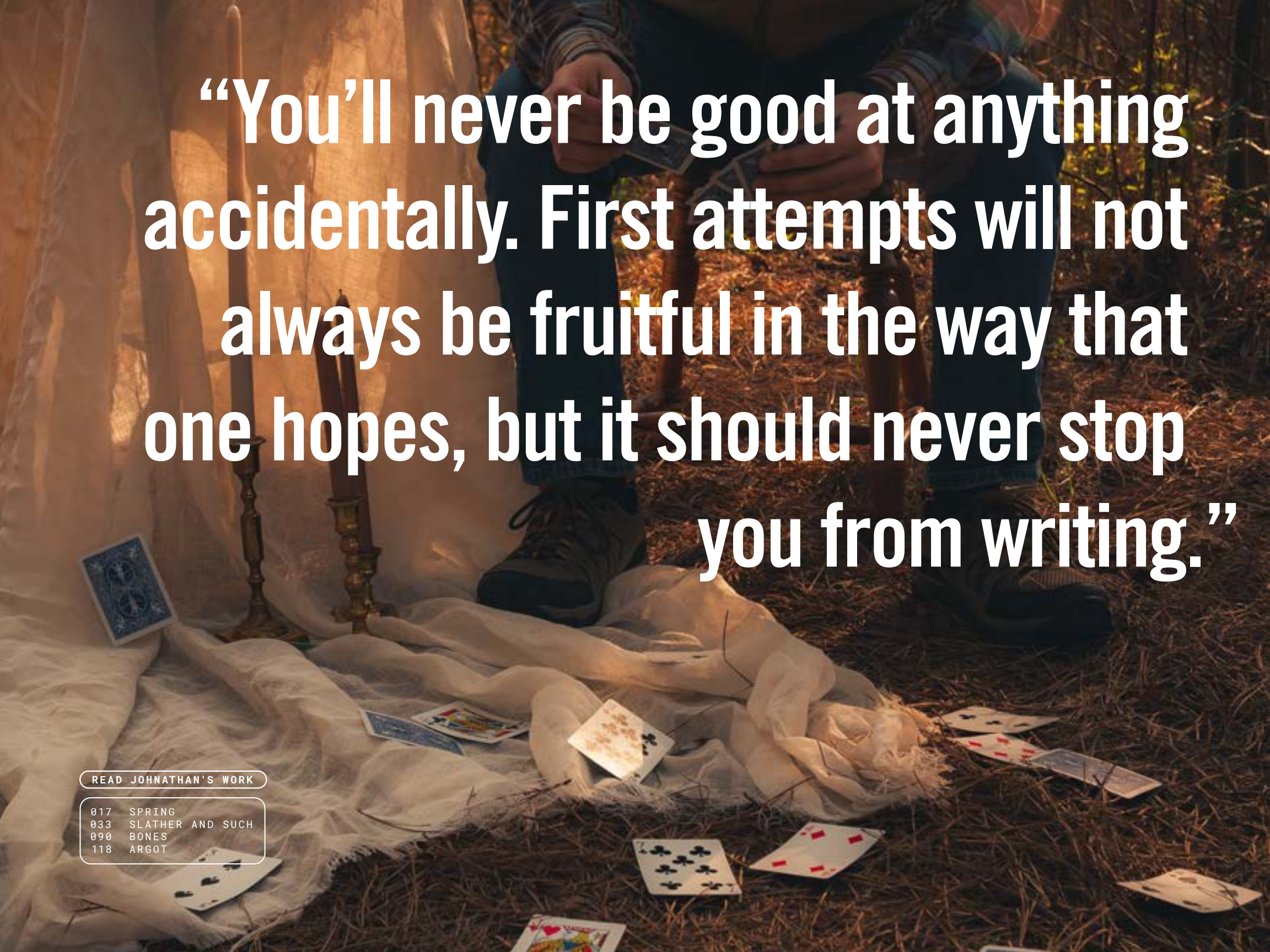
A more recent mentor figure for Johnathan is Sal Fontana, a recent Anderson University graduate. Fontana has been balancing his responsibilities as an adult, husband, worker, and friend while also finding time to write. Johnathan says that “Sal’s aspirations did not die from real world responsibilities” and wants to emulate that as he is faced with his own graduation. When Johnathan navigates the post graduate world, he aims to write and design tabletop games.

Johnathan hopes that his readers will find that the “world is interesting when you stop to think about it and when you stop to appreciate it.” He desires to entertain readers while giving them an appreciation for history and all it has to offer. Most of all, he does not want to lose sight of the formal yet silly tone he employs to write his stories.

Johnathan is constantly thinking of new ideas and storylines to use in his works. Even as he completes homework or hangs out with friends, Johnathan keeps a part of his mind focused on new concepts. When he has the time to concentrate solely on his works, he conducts research to ensure a proper representation of the time period he writes in. Johnathan also enjoys going on walks in order to flesh out ideas by talking to himself. Throughout the writing process, he has a chaotic compilation of documents where he works through numerous iterations before a final copy emerges.

Currently, Johnathan is working on a historical fantasy piece that follows two brothers who leave their homeland to find adventure. The two knights plan to make a name for themselves, but chaos in the land coupled with their flaws causes a falling out. As a whole, the piece will include some elements of magic. A unique component of this piece is that the plants and animals do not align with those on earth. Jonathan gave the example that instead of horses, “the characters ride on what is essentially a giant Komodo dragon.”

Throughout the journal, Johnathan’s works explore medieval babbling, star vomit, ancestors, spring time, and persimmons which demonstrate his whimsical writing style. Johnathan leaves this advice for other authors: “You’ll never be good at anything accidentally. First attempts will not always be fruitful in the way that one hopes, but it should never stop you from writing.”

A person is shown from the waist down, wearing a white sheet that covers their body like a ghost costume. They are holding a fan of playing cards in their hands. The scene is set in a forest with dry leaves on the ground. Several playing cards are scattered on the ground around the person. The lighting is warm and golden, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The overall mood is mysterious and slightly eerie.

“You’ll never be good at anything accidentally. First attempts will not always be fruitful in the way that one hopes, but it should never stop you from writing.”

READ JOHNATHAN'S WORK

017 SPRING
033 SLATHER AND SUCH
090 BONES
118 ARGOT

Argot

WRITTEN BY JOHNATHAN SORCE

Ever since a baby, my mother
Brought me out to bumble along
The barbican, wandering amid
Bludgeoners and their bardiches,
Blithely bumping into their benches
As they belched bitter beer and bit
Bone-hard biscuits, baked long before.

I grew older, and plodded among pavisiers,
Pinched in by their positions at the postern,
Plucking their pinkies, peeling persimmons,
Or packing quarrels in quivers, perchance.

I snuck through the scullery, slinking
Past the sergeants, speaking slowly
Of mordhau, and manacle, of man-catcher,
And mangonel.
Meandering, I moved to meet
The men who maintained moon-lit vigil
By the merlons.

Creeping to the crenelations, I looked through the
Loops, laughing at listless lamp-toting guards,
Gambeson-clad, godendags in hand. A gushing
Gardrobe nearby, I got out quick, guiding hand
To nose, to ward away withering stench, until
I came to the wicket.



The "Other Aidan"

WRITTEN BY

MAEVE

FOOTE

Crow crouched on the cracked asphalt, staring at the cigarette butts from yesterday. The smell filled his nose; it was the kind of smell that clung to everything. He pulled out the half-spent cigarette in his mouth and exhaled a cloud, blinding him for a minute and stinging his eyes. The taste in his mouth was as bad as the smell. Even now it almost made him want to throw up.

The worn athletic shoes next to him shifted, bits of gravel crunching under them, and the taller boy squatted. Jay squinted his eyes and said, "Ethan is late. You think he got distracted with some little punk?"

"Probably," answered Mason, the largest of the group. He flexed his broad shoulders and rolled them. "You know how stupid he is."

Crow flicked ashes to the ground. "More like chronically impulsive."

"Look at the rich boy using fancy-ass words!" Jay rammed his shoulder, almost knocking him over.

Crow kept his lips tightly together. He had learned not to protest.

"Here comes Ethan," Mason grunted, leaning against the brick building.

Ethan was indeed scuttling down the alley. He moved more like a crab than a human, and his beady eyes only added to the image.

"Yo—M! Toss me a smoke." Ethan's voice spiked into the screeching nasal area when he raised his voice. Crow almost winced.

Mason pulled out the box and tossed them to Ethan, who dropped them.

"Where ya been?"

"Some kid thought he could talk back to me." Ethan held out his cigarette for Crow to light. After he had stuck the smoking white stick in the corner of his mouth, he said, "It was that transfer kid."

Crow stiffened, his fingers loosening on his half-used cigarette.

"Gave him a few knocks to put 'em in his place."

Exasperated looks crossed both Mason's and Jay's face. Ethan had a history of beating kids up wherever they bothered him instead of waiting for a better time. There was a reason he had been suspended twice as much as the others.

Jay bounced on his heels. "That transfer kid...wasn't his name Aidan?" He let out a cackle. "Just like our resident rich boy."

Crow gritted his teeth. "Yeah, so what?"

"Well, *Aidan*, what's the chance of having another kid at the school with the same name?"

"That's not my name anymore," Crow snapped.

"Alright—don't get your feathers so f-ing ruffled. Get it—feathers?" Jay dropped his spent cigarette and rose. "You and the transfer are just freakily similar, that's all."

Crow clenched his jaw, scraping at his freshly pierced ear with a fingernail.

Mason shifted off the wall and took his cigarette box from Ethan before the boy could pocket a handful. "Let's eat something. The caf will be closin' soon."

Crow let his cigarette fall to the pavement and ground it under a shoe, smoke seeping up in faint tendrils. As they fell in behind Mason, Jay glanced at Crow and said, "your piercing is bleeding, man. Is that another new one?"

"Yeah." He wiped his ear, looking at his red fingers.

The four teens entered the wide doors of Oakfield High School and beelined to the cafeteria. The chatter of a hundred students greeted them as well as the smell of whatever was for lunch that day. It was usually hard to tell by smell alone. As they approached, Crow saw that it was chicken soup—or rather, a broth with vegetables and chunks they told you were chicken. As they carried their trays across the cafeteria, any students in their way scattered. When they selected a table, the couple of kids at the other end migrated elsewhere.

Mason, Jay, and Ethan smirked and chuckled at the apparent reactions. Crow smiled with them, but as they began eating, he stirred the soup, finding his appetite gone.

"Hey!" Ethan hissed, elbowing Crow. "Look who it is."

Crow glanced up the aisle between the tables and saw who made Ethan's eyes gleam. He gripped the edge of his chair, anger swelling inside of him. Yet he felt a twinge of dread at what he knew Ethan was planning.

Aiden was coming towards them, holding the second helping one of the lunch ladies always sneaked to him. His small size was always dwarfed by old and torn clothes too big for him, and his glasses had more tape than frame. Crow thought he looked like a puppy with his fluffy hair and large brown eyes. When Aiden reached them, Ethan stuck out his foot and tripped him. Aiden fell forward, his chin hitting the concrete and the plastic tray smacking the floor and flying from his hands. The soup splattered, chunks soaring like hockey pucks on ice. Wide eyes watched the bowl as it hit the floor and spun like a top until finally rattling to a stop.

The entire cafeteria had frozen, craning their necks and watching with bulging eyes. Maybe some other student would help him—someone besides themselves.

"Watch where you're going," Ethan hissed, glee leaking out through his teeth. Aiden rose to his knees. Crow could see the boy's chin was bleeding, drops of vivid red falling on his threadbare shirt. Gritting his teeth, Crow turned away. It was what Aiden deserved. Ethan moved out of the corner of Crow's eye, and the tray clattered across the floor once more.

"Oops, my bad. You wanted that." Ethan had clearly not had enough fun yet. "What a mess you made—maybe the rags you wear can clean it."

Across the table, Jay and Mason were smiling, clearly enjoying the show as they munched on their yeast rolls. Crow took his own and bit into it—the bread was dry, like sand in his mouth.

“This is your fault.”

Crow about choked on the roll and looked back.

Aiden was meeting Ethan’s beady eyes, his chin stuck out in defiance.

Ethan slid from his chair. “Want to say that again?”

“Yeah, I think I will.” Aiden stood, which did little to increase his diminutive size.

“You tripped me. This is your fault.”

Crow scowled. Why didn’t he just shut up?

A strange excitement was fizzling in the air. Students leaning and shifting to make sure they had a good view.

Ethan flexed his hands. “You know,” he smiled thinly, “it was my fault.” Quick as a whip, he punched Aiden in the stomach. The boy fell to his knees, clutching his middle and gasping.

The crowd shuffled, eyes skipping away to avoid seeing more.

“C’mon man, you’ll get suspended again,” Mason said, but he was smiling.

Crow felt his stomach twist, but he didn’t know why. He hated Aiden—hated him from the day they met. Just thinking about that day made his blood boil, his anger sweeping over his other emotions like a rushing tidal wave. You deserve this, he thought viciously, but couldn’t say it out loud. He watched Aiden tremble as he fought to return his breath to normal—but the boy didn’t cry. Crow had never seen him cry before.

A commotion rose from the other side of the cafeteria. Obviously, someone had notified an adult of the situation. One was pushing through the crowd now, commanding them to “break it up!” as though it was a boxing match with two consenting parties.

Crow looked back and found eyes staring at him—Aiden’s eyes, eyes that were deep and sad, eyes that were a brown so familiar that Crow hated those eyes more than anything. He expected the boy to say something to him, to accuse, to ask for help, anything, but Aiden only continued to stare.

Aiden had stared that day too. Those unusually large brown eyes seemed equipped for little else. Crow—when he had still been called Aiden himself—had seen the other Aiden for the first time at the funeral. But people didn’t call him the “other Aiden.” The title they whispered and hissed into each other’s ears was the “other son.”

While his relatives had watched the coffin being lowered into the earth, Crow had stared at the “other son,” and Aiden had stared back. His mother had not come to the service, and none of the relatives even knew how he had gotten to the cemetery. Crow knew; he would see the boy walking along the road afterwards.

No one would go near Aiden as though they were scared of this boy who wasn’t even a hundred pounds. No one could make themselves tell him he wasn’t welcome. It had been raining that day, and he didn’t have an umbrella or a suit. The water soaked his clothes, collecting in heavy droplets on his eyelashes and the ends of his hair. It ran in such heavy lines down his face, Crow wouldn’t have known if he was crying or not.

The scandal—that was all his relatives could talk about that day. Crow’s father, a pilot, had died due to an unexplained heart attack. His poor wife and son were left in this world without him... only they were not his only family. He had another wife and son—a son with the same name. When he had claimed to be away on flights and staying overnight in other states, he was really visiting his other family who lived only miles away from his real wife and child. *Real*. That’s what Crow kept telling himself. He was the real Aiden.

Crow’s mother had been the one to discover the truth: text messages, calls, repeated withdrawals of money, crayon-outlined airplanes that her son hadn’t drawn, an address saved on his phone. They were the skeletons in her husband’s closet, the sins hidden in his heart, things she had discovered after he was gone and when it was too late. Poor woman—that was all her relatives could say—the poor woman. How could she ever trust again?

His mother had not cried. She had watched her husband’s body lowered with steely eyes, one hand holding an umbrella and the other gripping Crow’s shoulder. Her black dress was velvet and her heels were poised on the wet grass. She did not acknowledge any of the whispers circling around her like vultures, but Crow had seen her newly ringless hand tightening around the umbrella’s curving stem.

After the coffin was in the grave and men were shoveling dirt into the hole, the small procession had drifted from the cemetery, not wanting to linger in the rain. His mother had remained for only a few moments longer before leaving also. But as Crow started to follow her, he halted. Aiden was still at the graveside. Still staring at him with those eyes. He hated those eyes—those eyes of the dead.

“He was the real Aiden.”

“This is your fault,” Crow had said. He advanced on the boy. “I hate you—you hear me?”

Aiden had blinked up at him and remained silent.

Crow shoved him back. “I never want to see you again!”

He had turned and run from the cemetery, unaware of what cruel twist of fate awaited him. His father had paid for Aiden to attend a private school, and Crow’s mother didn’t intend to give Aiden’s mother any money. She had not considered this meant Aiden would be attending public school with her own son. If she had, she would have paid money to put Crow in a private school instead.

When Aiden had suddenly arrived that first day of school, he looked no different than that day at the cemetery, but all Crow could think about was how similar they were.

Crow had come home with a plastic bag full of black hair dye. He had squatted in the bathtub and concealed every last bit of his brown hair, watching how the water turned gray and flowed down to the drain. Two months later, the stain was still there, a silver streak down the middle of the tub, a river with two white banks. His mother said nothing when he came downstairs for dinner that night, and they ate their takeout in silence, the smell of dye hanging over them. As he had collected the greasy boxes and plastic forks for the trash, his mother had paused at the bottom of the stairs and said, “You look like a crow.”

It was the first and last comment she would make on his appearance. When he came home in leather smelling like smoke, she didn’t seem to notice, and when the holes



HAND VERSUS CROW
CAROLINE PAUL
ACRYLIC PAINTING

in his ears that he had pierced himself started to bleed over that night's fast food, she only pursed her lips and gave him a napkin to dab away the blood. Some part of Crow still waited each night to see if she would say something and fuss over him as she used to. If she had ever asked about school, he would have told her about Aiden. If she had asked why he had gotten detention for the first time in his life, he would have told her it was his initiation to join Mason's gang. If she had asked him why he used makeup to cover up his scattering of freckles, he would have told her Aiden had freckles. But his mother never asked.

Ethan received suspension, to no one's surprise. To a first-time offender, the sentence might have been detention, but Ethan was a regular jailbird. Crow didn't see Aiden for the rest of the school day.

"He hated those eyes—
those eyes of the dead."

In class, Crow had a hard time concentrating. Brown eyes and cackling laughter spun in his head on loop. When the bell rang, he was the first out the door—the first to reach the parking lot. Over the mounds of shining vehicles, he picked out the stocky Subaru. His mother had given it to Crow, but it was his father's car, not his. Even months and a dozen air fresheners later, the car still smelled like his father's aftershave and favorite beer.

When he reached home, his mother wasn't back from work yet—as usual. She wouldn't be back until nearly eight or nine.

He trailed into the white and marble kitchen and pulled a bottle of juice from the fridge. Climbing the stairs, he went to his room. Throwing his backpack onto the bed, he flopped into his chair. He glanced over his barren room. Nails were all that remained of his aviation posters, strings hung without model planes on the ends, and the row of souvenirs his dad had brought back from other countries was no more. It was a graveyard of its own.

He needed to redecorate. It had been like this ever since he had collected everything his father had given him and burned it in the backyard. His mother had received a notice a few days later that the fire had violated neighborhood policies. Crow had stoked the flames to four feet high in his attempt to completely destroy everything and leave only ashes behind for the wind to snatch away. His mother had pursed her lips and torn the notice in half, depositing it in the trashcan.

Crow drank some juice and let the bottle hang, slowly swinging it back and forth. Even now he could still smell cigarette smoke. He imagined that it was hovering in his lungs like a noxious gray cloud, unable to escape. Crow wet his dry mouth, finding the fruit-flavored spit was tainted by smoke. Leaning back, he stared at his empty room and saw the fire from that night: the wings of planes curling and crumbling, turning as black as crow feathers.

From the moment Aiden had walked into the high school, Crow had resolved to stay far, far away from him. But however much he tried avoiding the boy, Aiden would just keep appearing before him as though the universe was laughing at his futile attempts. After the cafeteria event, however, Crow was the one going to Aiden, but not of his own volition. In Ethan's absence, Mason and Jay seemed particularly starved for entertainment, and nothing was more entertaining than a victim who would fight back. They hounded after Aiden for weeks because every punch they threw his way or deprecating comment they made about him was met with stubborn resistance. Aiden never reported them either. Even if he did, Crow knew what the school would say: Where's the proof? Who else saw this? The answer was usually no one.

So, when they hunted Aiden down every day to receive their sick entertainment, Crow was with them. He would stay out of their way, trying to ignore whatever they were doing to Aiden. Whenever he looked over, he found Aiden staring at him, a question in his brown eyes. Was he asking for help? Or was he wondering why Crow didn't join in?

Sometimes, Crow found himself staring back with a question of his own. Why didn't Aiden tell everyone about him? What was stopping him from spilling the secret to the whole school and letting Crow's reputation be ruined?

One day Crow was leaning against the wall of the boy's locker room as Mason and Jay bullied Aiden. For some reason, he couldn't look away today. Aiden had called Mason a surprisingly dirty word—maybe he had finally snapped after two weeks of this.

"You think you're something, do you?" Mason demanded, punching Aiden in his already bleeding nose. "You think you are worth something, you piece of shit?"

Crow flinched as Aiden's small, ragdoll-like body slammed into the metal lockers and fell to the floor. Mason drove his boot into the boy's body, kicking him over and over as he roared strings of profanities that were nearly unintelligible. Crow was shaking, his fingernails digging into his palms and a chill creeping up his spine. The metallic, hollow banging of the locker rang in his ears as a small body jerked against it—pounding, pounding like rain on a roof, like rain on a grave-studded hilltop. Aiden's eyes opened, tears running down his face.

"Stop it!" Crow slammed into Mason, knocking him to the ground.

"What are you doing?" the larger boy demanded, his face twisting with anger.

"That's enough," Crow said, a slight tremor edging at his voice. "You made your point."

Rising, Mason advanced and stopped with his face inches away. "You're trying to protect this little shit. Jay was right—there's something weird between you two."

Clenching his jaw, Crow reached down and yanked Aiden to his feet, finding the boy even lighter than he thought he would be. The boy's eyes were wide, blood dripping onto his bottom lip as his mouth hung open. Crow shoved him towards the door, hating how Aiden hesitated and looked back with concern. "Get out!" he snapped, and the boy slipped out of the room, the door swinging back and forth behind him.

"What are we going to do to him?" Jay asked, shifting off of the locker and flexing his hands. He was smiling, seeming to enjoy the prospect of new entertainment.

"We are going to have a little talk with him," Mason growled.

Crow knew they weren't talking about Aiden.

The asphalt was cold underneath Crow. He couldn't smell the cigarette smoke that hung over the alley because of his bleeding nose. He could feel the warm liquid seeping out and running down his face. His phone lay beside him, the screen shattered and dark. Even if it was working, he didn't feel like moving. He stared up at the sky between the two buildings, his head spinning. His thoughts were foggy, unable to grip what he should do. When the sky darkened, it wasn't nightfall. Rain fell in a steady shower, soaking his clothes and chilling him to the bone in minutes. The drops ran down his cheeks, no doubt washing away the cheap concealer he used to hide his freckles.

Then something round and blue blocked his view. A head appeared.

Recognition stirred Crow, and he croaked, "What are you doing here?"

Aiden looked down at him for a minute before setting the umbrella aside and bending. He slid an arm under Crow's and pulled him upright. Crow's heavier body nearly knocked him over, but the boy shook him. "You need to help me or else I won't be able to help you."

"I—don't need you..." Crow mumbled, his head slumping forward.

Sighing, Aiden shook him again until Crow took some of his own weight. Taking hold of his umbrella, Aiden helped him from the alley. Through his haze, Crow registered that they were rounding the school building to the parking lot. It was the end of the day, so almost no cars were left. Ahead, he could see a dark shape, and when Aiden rather unceremoniously dropped him beside the car—no doubt due to his weight—Crow realized it was his car.

"How do you know?" he grunted.

Aiden set Crow's shattered phone on his lap. "It's Dad's car." He dug into Crow's backpack. "Did they take your keys?"

"Big pouch—in my pencil case."

A clattering sound and a few pens hit the blacktop.

Rolling his head over and peering through the rain, Crow asked, "Why are you... helping me?"

"You need it." Aiden unlocked the car and swung the door open. "Besides, you helped me, didn't you?"

"I didn't," Crow croaked as Aiden pulled him up again and into the vehicle.

Rain clung to the boy's glasses, blurring his eyes. "Tell me the way to your house."

Crossing around to the driver's seat, Aiden tossed both of their sodden bags into the backseat. Crow watched him get in, situate the seat, adjust the mirror, and turn the air on. It was fluid, as though greeting an old friend.

"Dad taught you to drive with this."

Removing his glasses, Aiden wiped the water droplets away with his shirt. "It smells like him still."

Crow leaned against the window, expecting to feel familiar anger. He only felt a strange knot deep down. He breathed in so deep that the smell of aftershave and beer burned his nose.

It took three days for Crow's mother to let him back to school. He wouldn't tell her who beat him up, knowing full well that it would only make the boys come after him.

Even so she had rained furious phone calls down on the school, demanding they manage their students and demanding compensation. Crow would sit on the top of the stairs, listening to her fuss over him.

On the first day back, Crow had expected trouble from Mason and the other two, but they hadn't done much besides shove him upon passing and throw an insult or two. He suspected it might be because he wasn't the breed of their usual target, and there were other kids who they considered more fun to bully. After school, he had waited until he saw a head of fluffy brown hair weaving through the crowd and hurried after it.

Aiden jumped when he grabbed his arm, yanking away but stopping when he saw who it was. He peered at Crow's fading black eye and the bandage on his cheek. "You're back."

Crow shoved an envelope into his chest. "Here. Take it."

Aiden shoved the envelope back. "I don't want your pity."

"It's payment for helping me," Crow grunted, trying to give him the money again, but Aiden scurried away.

Crow marched after him. "Why won't you take it?"

"I don't want it!"

"Who doesn't want money?"

Aiden halted and turned back. "I'll only take it if you do something for me."

"Do what?" Crow asked suspiciously.

"Drive me home."

That's it? Crow fingered the thick envelope. He didn't want to spend more time with the boy than he needed to. He had expected to hand him the money and be done with the matter. But he didn't want to owe Aiden anything. "Fine," he snapped. "I'll drive you."

The way to Aiden's house was easy enough. Only a few turns and about ten minutes. The house was small and dilapidated, the kind you see on the side of the road and wonder if it's even inhabited. When they stopped, Crow turned to give Aiden the money, but the boy was already out the car and walking towards the house. Muttering a mild curse, Crow turned off the car.

He chased after Aiden as the boy climbed the sagging steps and entered the house. "You said I just needed to drive you home! I did, so I am leaving the money here." He glanced around the living room before tossing the envelope onto the coffee table. As he was turning to go, he heard Aiden. "Come here. I need your help."

Don't go to him! He commanded himself. *You paid him back! You owe him nothing anymore!* He turned, stopped, cursed, and kicked at an empty plastic bag then walked deeper into the house. He had barely arrived at the small bedroom, and he was handed a box.

Aiden marched away. Glancing into the room, Crow saw that it was even more barren than his own. He followed the boy into the backyard that was as equally un-mowed as the front and set it in the grass. Aiden was shoving together a pile of sticks and wedging lint and crumpled newspaper under them.

"What are you doing?" Crow asked.

"Making a fire." Aiden struck a match and poked it into the dry lint and paper.

"What does it look like?"

He was going to ask why, but another question tumbled out. "Why did you help me?"

"You helped me first."



SELF PORTRAIT
LILY MCNAMARA
CONTE CRAYON ON PAPER



“That wasn’t helping you. I wanted to make myself feel better.”

“I don’t think so. If you hate me as you claim, you would have joined in.”

“I never stopped them before—is there really a difference?”

Aiden’s brow pinched, and he bent to blow on the flames. “I think so.”

Crow should have left. He had done what he came to do. Instead, he asked the real question that had been burning inside of his mind. “Why don’t you hate me?”

Aiden poked the fire with a branch. “I don’t want to hate you because of something our father did.”

Crow stepped back. There it was—the truth he didn’t want to accept.

Aiden took hold of the box. Lifting it high, he dumped the contents into the fire. The fire swallowed the souvenirs, the drawings, and the model airplanes, flames licking over them like a hungry monster. It was a scene Crow knew.

Aiden watched the things burn, his glasses reflecting orange and yellow. “He really ruined our lives, didn’t he? My mother hasn’t gotten out of bed since, and I don’t know what to do.”

“It’s horrible to miss him, isn’t it?”

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Crow clenched his fists. “I—don’t know what to do either.”

Aiden glanced over. “It’s horrible to miss him, isn’t it?”

Crow stared back, finally not looking away from those brown eyes, their father’s eyes. “Yes,” he said quietly. “It is.”

Aidan and Aiden stood and watched the fire burn away what remained, the smoke curling up into the sky.

UNDER THE SKIN---STARLINGS
GABRIEL WILLIAMS
DIGITAL CHROMOGENIC PRINT

(PAGES 132-133)





To Rain

WRITTEN BY EMMA BRIGHTMAN

The midnight hour approaches swift and still.
My heavy soul as sodden as the earth
sets wand'ring down a path with aimless will—
so joyful, though somehow devoid of mirth.

A quiet mind says more than words convey.
I laugh amid the slow deluge of rain:
I'll find someone who loves me in the way
I love the wonder distant stars contain.

The way I love the puddled, rain-slicked street,
and dancing with the first debut of spring...
the way a severed heart still craves to beat
for hope that ev'ry lovely breath could bring.

Though fickle love is courted thus in vain,
the clouds will always drench the earth in rain.

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WOVEN
ASHLYNN WHITMIRE
PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT LEFT)



What the Sun Conceals

WRITTEN BY

VICTORIA

MARTIN

Mom introduced me to the tall woman standing at the door.

“This is my daughter,” she said. “Is it alright if she sits in the kitchen for tonight?” She had told me that kids weren’t usually allowed, but she hoped they would make an exception.

The woman looked me over, noting the ill-fitting backpack and the eyes that scanned the house warily. Her gaze gave the impression of sympathy, like she was nostalgic for her own children’s late elementary school years, no doubt with an undercurrent of pity for our circumstances. She warmly agreed and led us left from the entryway into the area of the small, single-story house that was originally designed to be a living room, even though no one lived there anymore. Metal folding chairs filled most of the open space. They stood in a layered half-moon shape around a makeshift podium, their seats dimly reflecting an old incandescent overhead. There were only about a dozen people in the room, most still standing. Some of them smiled at me; others tried their best to pretend that I wasn’t there. I appreciated both gestures. On the way through, we closely passed a man sitting on the outer ring, and I recognized the acidic husk of his breath that pervaded the air when he turned to look.

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It was clear that the space was decorated to be inviting. Kitschy wooden Bible verse signs, probably bought at the dollar store, hung slightly crooked on the wall, and thick, warm-toned curtains spanned the front window. Every person in the room looked worn from tragedy or exhaustion, I didn’t know, but my youth seemed to ignite wistfulness in the eyes of those who looked, like I was a beacon of future hope. I couldn’t help but feel out of place.

Mom beckoned me to follow her and the tall woman, who must have coordinated the meetings, into the kitchen, where the last light of the sun was much more visible through the screen door and the window above the sink. It seemed to lounge on every surface of the room. The white vinyl flooring swelled and shone under its bright sprawl. The olive green walls slept warmly by its careful hand. The undertones of Mom’s deep brown hair

NYC WOMAN B&W
MIRIAM CABRERA
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT LEFT)

glowed red as the light seeped through, a reminder of how she still regretted using the cheap chocolate-cherry dye the month before. Neither of us liked the ammonia smell that the five-dollar boxes left behind, but she didn't care enough to splurge on something as trivial as that either, especially when she spent her limited stores of cash on other things. She and the tall woman settled me at a large wooden dining table.

"You're free to eat any of the snacks that are in here, although I know it isn't much," the woman said. She gave me another smile before nodding and moving back toward the meeting, leaving Mom and I there together.

"Here, I'll give you my phone, that way you can watch a movie or something while you're waiting on me."

I turned around against the wooden slats of the chair and watched as she walked into the shaded living room. She established herself in a spot that had a direct eyeline to me. I wished I had sat on the other side of the table. It wasn't very fair that she could see me when I couldn't see her. I felt a certain obligation to be involved, even though there was nothing for me to say.

Out the screen door of the kitchen, three concrete steps leveled down to a gravel parking lot. It wrapped all the way around the building, although the surrounding grass was much more prevalent behind the house, where we parked, than it was in the front. Bugs latched onto the mesh screen, circulating warmth through their small bodies and communing intimately with the rays of the sun that lingered longer than before. They sang to each other in the last minutes of dusk.

The uneven finish of the dining table became less noticeable as the room grew darker, except for the area that was illuminated by the light of the phone braced against my black and pink backpack. I plugged in a pair of earbuds to prevent the sound from reaching the people in the other room, but I didn't use them myself either. The earpieces sat limp in my lap to hear into the room with the metal chairs and the wall decor and the music stand and Mom. Different voices spoke. I didn't hear hers. They said things about 'wrath' and 'alcohol' and 'serenity' and 'freedom' and 'coins.' Louder still was the sound of the bugs outside, sobered by the darkness and crying softly after their loss. I took more comfort in their words than the people's, even though they expressed the same grief.

—

Dad was home on time the week after, so I didn't have to sit in that kitchen. I was happy to be in ours. We had a late dinner—some kind of oven-baked chicken and canned vegetables—but Mom left, on her own, at the same time we did the week before, neglecting the rest of the food on her plate. When she went out the front door, I perched on the end of the couch, resting my chin on the front windowsill and watching her while she walked to the car. My cautious eyes were attuned to the typical abnormalities: glossy eyes, a slight limp, fumbling at handles and handbags. None were present. She pulled smoothly out of the driveway, turned into the roundabout, and left my vision entirely. Dad sat on the recliner, and I stayed at the window. We were both silent for a few minutes, waiting. I turned my attention to the insects fellowshipping on the porch swing. They hummed their hymn so loudly that it soothed me through the panes.

Happy, joyous, and free, they bathed in the last lights of their love, reaching upward to touch its outstretched fingers.

Dad called my name, already standing by the front door with his keys in his hand, still in his work polo. I hadn't noticed him getting up. I set off from the windowsill, and we left in our own car after her. We took the same path she did: out of the driveway, around the circle, and onto the main road. The ceiling of the sky grew dim, but the sun's outer bands still shone brightly, even when they were blocked by the tall pines that marched along the left side of the road. I liked seeing them filter through; I liked locking onto the flickering patches and unfocusing my eyes, leaving my mind empty to feel however the bugs must have felt. When the trees ended, and we took the first left, my eyes had no more protection like theirs did. The sun visor was a few inches too high to block the light from my view, so I twisted into the seatbelt that already pinched my neck and squinted into the passenger window.

"Lighter eyes are more sensitive to sunlight," he told me, his brown eyes shaded by the sunglasses he usually kept on his head. Sometimes, you could even see the dents left behind when he moved them, where his hair should have been. I squinted some more.

We followed the same route that she had driven every week. I was familiar with it, from my rides with each of them. There were only five turns from our house to the meeting house. It wasn't far. One missed turn, and we might have found her somewhere else. We followed a few minutes behind to be sure that wasn't the case.

Arriving at the small house, we pulled into the gravel lot and hooked around to the back of the house. Dad pulled into a spot under the pines that had a direct eye-line to her car but was hidden by another. There, we would be able to see her, but she couldn't see us. The engine idled while we sat, watching to make sure she didn't leave the house before the hour was over. From our hiding spot, I could see the screen door. I could see the spot on the gravel where the darkness crept. I could see the minutiae of the praising congregation, washing themselves clean in their lover's radiance, soon to be gone, but the rolled-up windows of the car silenced their song.



Gossip Magazines

WRITTEN BY

EMMA

MILLER

“REVEALED: CAROL'S SECRET STRETCH MARKS”

My best friend's mother's stomach displayed on a 5.5 by 8.5 inch cover: battle scars from three pregnancies that brought some of my favorite people into the world. Her aged and stretched skin priced \$18.95, the price of four cartons of eggs.

“BRANDON AND ALLISON EXCLUSIVE: IT'S OVER!”

The article says Brandon cheated. In reality, they realized they're better off as friends. They don't want anyone to choose sides. A gallon of milk drifts past a picture from an old Instagram post of them at the school dance, framed by a heart cut into jagged halves.

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“REYNA SPEAKS OUT ABOUT BOMBSHELL DIVORCE”

My friend's tears soaking onto my passenger seat. The unspoken tension when I went through old scrapbooks with her family. The agonizing waiting game. Only the surface of that story is told and sold here, above the packs of chewing gum and Tic Tacs.

“ANDERSON UNIVERSITY GIRLS WITHOUT MAKEUP”

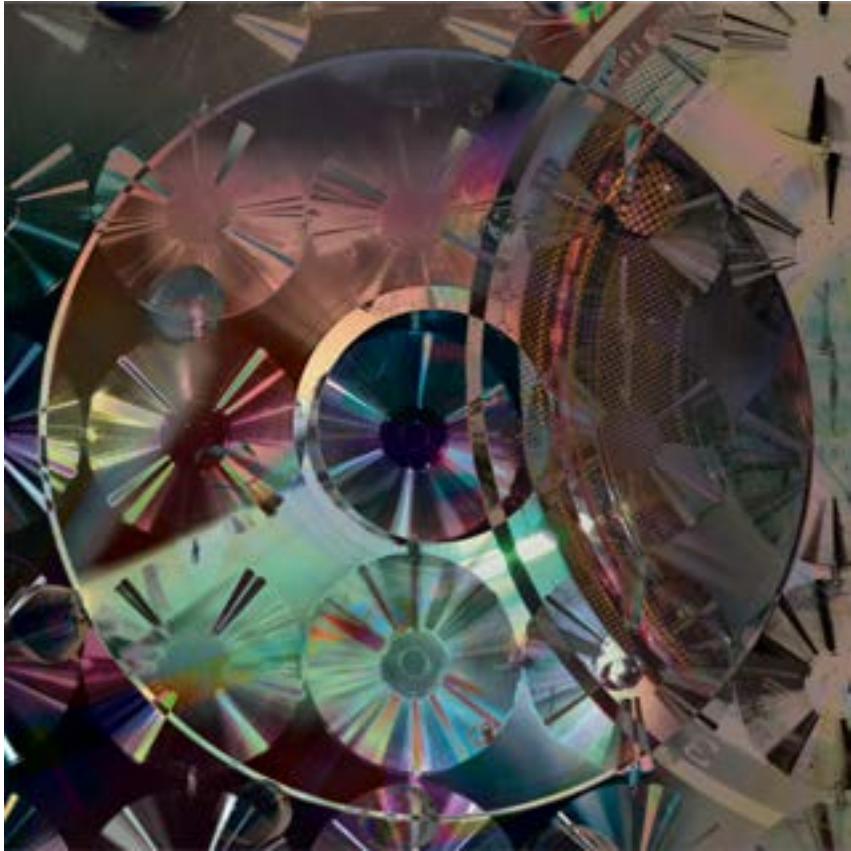
A collage of my classmates and I walking to our 8 a.m classes behind neon letter text. We're in pajamas and carrying cups of coffee. Our dark circles and puffy eyes stare off in the distance, unaware of the paparazzi. We're sold next to a copy of this year's "Sexiest Man Alive".

“MRS. DENNIS' WEIGHT GAIN DISASTER”

My second grade teacher's pregnant body next to a framed photo of her five years ago in a swimsuit. My pint of Ben and Jerry's Ice cream rolls past her, and the cashier asks if I'm paying with cash or card.

ELOQUENCE
LEAH DAVIS
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT LEFT)



I'M NOT LISTENING 04
ASHLEE KELLER
DIGITAL COLLAGE



RESISTANCE
ASHLEE KELLER
DIGITAL ART

Women's History

WRITTEN BY CARSON CAWTHON

Our mothers and their mothers spoke
through quilt stitches,
covering my bare shoulders still.

They served stories steeped and sweetened
after lining their puckered lips in
blood red.

Their history lies sleeping still
in family Bibles
and the slurred diatribes
stumbling from the lips of the men
who used to love them.



MEMORIAL (THE FEAR THAT EVERYTHING HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE)
SAMANTHA CHILDERS
PHOTOGRAPHY



HAND STUDY #3
LILY MCNAMARA
PASTEL PENCIL

Mother

WRITTEN BY ALEY OLIVER

I wish I were still seven years old,
Thinking my mother was the most
Beautiful person in the world,
With all of her soft edges and folds,
The gentle curve of her nose:
I saw all of her in me.

I wish I were fifteen years old,
With enough courage to say no
When my body became a market
And I became a vendor
Of what I thought was still lacking
Because my mother called her body so.

I wish I had the strength to look at my mother
And tell her she was beautiful,
Just like her daughter.
Does she not realize that
The curve of our noses
And our soft rolls, and thighs that dimple,
Are one and the same?



LAKE VIEW PLATE
MEI MEI EDGAR
CLAY



LINED PLATTER
MEI MEI EDGAR
CLAY

Issues Pertaining to the Lungs

WRITTEN BY

TORIE

JOHNSON

When my grandfather passed away, his attic had to be stripped of the evidence that he was once there. I knew he was a burdened man, but his attic told me a deeper story. I took on the grief that he lived with when I unpacked it from the boxes of his mother's old china. I acquainted myself with his shame when I found it seeping out of the cracks in the walls of an old dollhouse. I made friends with his demons when they escaped, having been trapped inside his forgotten bottles of Crown Royal, lingering around his dusty shot glasses. With every labored breath, I inhaled his affliction, his troubles, his guilt, and in response, my lungs demanded the release of everything I thought I understood him to be. My mother stood below me, reliving her childhood with everything I handed her. She shed many tears that day, having been acquainted with these parts of him much longer than she deserved.

I am still coughing.

LIGHTPOST
JONATHAN PARKER
35MM FILM

(AT RIGHT)





Respire

WRITTEN BY KAYLIE SHERIFF

I am laying in the forest
earth all around,
eyes closed; mind open;
I can feel the mossy ground

and sprouting from my lungs
are the flowers that rest;
inhale, exhale.
They breathe along with my chest.

These flowers are growing
from the wounds on my skin;
these marks can no longer
be considered a sin.

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SECRET HIDEAWAY
SYDNEY WELCH
PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT LEFT)



MIDDAY SUN ON THE MARSH
ANNABELLE ACORD
EMBROIDERY



PURPLE MARSHLAND
ANNABELLE ACORD
EMBROIDERY



Summer Showers

WRITTEN BY

MEG

HINDMAN

The coffee shop is quiet today. Rain beats against the glass door, pouring down in sheets so thick I can barely see the road. Street lamps glow somewhere in the torrent. Their dull warmth blurs and mingles with the raindrops. I sip my latte, already lukewarm, and stare at the puddles forming beneath the shop's overhang.

My siblings and I used to love days like this.

Summer rain seemed like such a treat back then. After months of unbroken heat, thunderclouds would build and rumble, rolling across the sky like a surging wave. The very air felt charged, electric, then *crrackkk BOOOM*...lightning struck, thunder crashed, and the heavens broke loose. Rain raced to the earth from a heaving sky, pelting soft, dry earth, filling the spaces between blades of browning grass.

We stood at the windows of our house and pressed our noses up against the glass to feel the vibrations of echoing thunder. "Please, Mom, *please?*" we begged. Our swimsuits sat in a cupboard tucked next to the laundry room, a mere three feet from the back door. "We won't track mud inside, we *promise!*"

She pulled back the curtains to look at the sky. "I suppose you can, for now. If you see any lightning touch down, though, you have to come straight inside."

"We will; we will!" we giggled. We were halfway down the hall before she had even finished speaking. In no time at all, we found ourselves crowded in the doorframe, swimsuits on and pool noodles wrapped around us. "Ready? Set?" Mama blocked the door with one hand as we pushed against it. "*Go!*" She dropped her arm.

We bounded out the door and skipped through the onslaught of rain. Our feet landed in muddied puddles, and my brother cannonballed into the pool. "You can't tell when you're in or out of the water!" he yelled. My sisters and I chased one another with SuperSoakers, all of us too soaked to notice the difference when we got hit.

Thunder shook the sky from time to time. Lightning arched between the clouds, but none of it touched down. Eventually, after our clothes grew soggy and our toes turned

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MIRIAM CABRERA
PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT LEFT)

to raisins, we trudged inside. Mama stood in the mudroom with towels she had warmed in the dryer. She wrapped each of us in fuzzy comfort and handed us sweet tea or hot chocolate, our pick.

Boom.

The coffee shop windows rattle under the force of rain and pealing thunder. I stare into my coffee, wishing I had just made hot chocolate. I don't even like coffee. I certainly don't need the caffeine. I think part of me just feels wrong sitting in a coffee shop without a latte or cappuccino. It's a lie, a pretense I put up to make people think I'm old enough to be here, mature enough to like coffee and graduate college and want to stay inside during storms. I said goodbye to my sister last week, and we hadn't even gone swimming together or danced around outside the night before.

The bell over the door jingles. Wind billows in. I put my hand on the stack of napkins to keep them in place.

"Hey, welcome in! What can I get for you?" I ask as I wipe up a spot of coffee on the counter.

"Uh, two hot chocolates please. With raspberry." The boy in front of the register can't be older than seventeen. He avoids eye contact and keeps his hands in his pockets. His shorts are the length most high school boys like these days: just a little too short for comfort, and only allowable because they grow too fast for their mothers to keep them in clothes that fit.

"Two? You must be thirsty."

"One's for my sister. She's in the car 'cause she wanted to watch the raindrops race down the windows." He hands me a ten dollar bill and leans against the counter to wait.

I make his hot chocolate. Three pumps of dark chocolate in each cup, six ounces of steamed milk, stir, top it off with the remaining six ounces and finish with a leaf design. I know the designs will be covered by lids, but I like knowing they're there, that I left some little artistic imprint on the world today. "Here you go." I hand the cups to the boy.

"Thank you," he mumbles. His eyes meet mine for a brief beat, then he turns and yanks his raincoat hood over his head. Hugging the drinks close to his chest, he dashes for the car outside. I can see his sister in the front seat, a few years younger, maybe, her hair frizzy from the rain. She grabs her cup with glee and clinks it against his.

The wind slams the door shut.

I look at the remaining latte foam in my mug and take it to the sink. One rinse, two, and all the residue is gone.

A shaky breath resonates in my chest, echoing the thunder outside.

My lip begins to tremble, and now I'm on the floor, coffee grounds sticking to my jeans. I lean against the refrigerator and sob, great gulps of sorrowful air filling my lungs.

The door blows open. Beyond it, the sun begins to shine, but the rain continues to fall.

STRANGERS
ABIGAIL ELLEDGE
PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT RIGHT)





SUPERIORITY COMPLEX
SUSANNA AUSTIN
VINYL AND SPRINKLES



It's the way it shone

WRITTEN BY PARKER ROSE

The disheveled sun
stuck
between stagnant day
and encroaching night,
its glory grazing our sides
from behind the needlepoint tree line.
The gravestones glistened
under the rugged robe of sunset,
stones warming before
freezing
under the pale eye of night.
We carry their unspoken stories,
dreams stirring in the dirt below,
and run with them
as far as our fragile feet will go.
The memories return,
at first a soft wave,
then an all-consuming
approach,
flooding the face and
bubbling out of the lonesome caves
of our bones,
where the stalactites of our childhood dwell.

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CHAOTIC GOOD
JULIA HEWITT
LINOCUT PRINT

(AT LEFT)



SMILE PHOTOGRAPHY BY LILY MCNAMARA

Pink and Golden Years

WRITTEN BY

EMMA

BRIGHTMAN

Time is fickle. It is one of the only matters of this world I cannot change. So I wake up before the sun, the skies pink and striped with wisps of cotton. I watch them as I drive. The traffic lights shine a red and green glare against the gold of a creeping glory across the top of the overpass. Excitement ruffles in my chest as I park next to his blue car. The same spot, every time. I cross the street and open the door, enraptured by the smell of coffee. He waits for me at his special table, sitting at the corner under the warm light. We disagree on many things, but these mornings are for setting aside the cares of yesterday. I tell him all about my life; he loves to hear what I haven't said over the phone. We make up for distance through the palpable presence of a still morning we begin with each other. On these quiet mornings, Time moves, no matter how much I will it to stay pink and golden. Too quickly, he's packing up his green bag, offering me his oversized fleece, and leaving me to my own thoughts. Someday, too soon, he will walk out of the morning and into the beautiful rays of a setting sun, leaving me with an oversized fleece and an empty chair. But for now, Time moves slowly. For now, its light morning rays warm my face as I watch my father walk towards his blue car. I may not be able to change Time, but I can sure as hell hold onto what I have, and love him—and these golden years—with all I can manage.

CARHENGÉ
NOAH PRIVETTE
PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT RIGHT)





Goodnight

WRITTEN BY

ZOE

DUBISKI-PITTS

My father's arms curl around me, lifting me, sleeping bag and all, from the bed. I've prepared for this moment, in case I was bleary-eyed and dreaming. I've tucked my stuffed animals into the bottom of my zipped-up Disney Princess sleeping bag, Cat and Boo Boo Bear and Blankie camped at my feet to ensure safe travel home. My father holds me close. My sleepy head lolls back and forth, catching glimpses of my father's glasses and my godmother's door decoration and my mother's car. I blink at him, maybe to ask for a cracker or five more minutes, and he tucks me into the car with the seat belt and says goodnight.

My father's arm curls into mine, leading me down a marbled aisle. I've prepared for this moment, in case I was nervous and shaking. I've put on my mother's blue earrings, penny tucked in the bottom sole, and Cat sits in her special chair. My father holds me close. I look down the rows, catching glimpses of my father's watering eyes behind his glasses, and my godmother's smiling face, and my mother in her beautiful green dress. I blink back tears, ask if I can go, and he tucks me into a hug and says goodbye.

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SARASOTA SUNSET
JADYN HOLT
PHOTOGRAPHY

(AT LEFT)

OPIA
MATEO DE LOS COBOS
PHOTOGRAPHY

(PAGE 170-171)





thank you

FROM THE IVY LEAVES TEAM

Ivy Leaves exists to steward stories and this mission would not be possible without the brave creators who are willing to share their hearts with us. To create is to be vulnerable, and we are continually amazed by the way Anderson University students share their stories so beautifully. To everyone who submitted art or writing: thank you.

Producing this publication is an endeavor that is only successful with the generous help of many, beyond just the Ivy Leaves student-led teams. We thank the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as the staff and faculty who offer their support and insight. Our literature team thanks Dr. Derek Updegraff for walking with us throughout the process and helping us tell our stories with nuance, honesty, and beauty. We hope, perchance, that because of you we will continue in our literary endeavors with more creativity and a greater understanding of dialogue grammar.

The Ivy Leaves Journal team recognizes the meaningful assistance the Student Government Association offers. We are grateful for the additional funding they provided to create this year's journal. With their help, our journal staff has the

opportunity to enhance the presentation of the journal and showcase more student work in our publication. In addition, their generosity has allowed these talented writers and artists to present their passion and craft to our student body and beyond.

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credits

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The Lawrence and Pansy Webb Excellence in Writing Award

Both Professor Emeritus Lawrence Webb and his wife Pansy spent decades encouraging students and others to strive for excellence in written communication. He taught journalism and some Bible classes at Anderson University 23 years in two separate tenures: 1963-1967 and 1981-2000. An ordained Baptist minister, he served churches in five states and wrote several books. He also wrote and edited for magazines, newspapers, and public relations. He earned a bachelor's degree from Hardin-Simmons University, a Master of Divinity from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Master of Mass Communication from the University of South Carolina. He also studied at the University of Maine, at the University of Georgia, Columbia University in New York.

Pansy Webb taught English in high school and as an adjunct instructor at Anderson University, and she wrote for magazines along with being homemaker and mother for their two sons. She earned her bachelor of arts from Catawba College, a Master of Religious Education from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Master of Education from Clemson University. She also studied at Emory University.

We are grateful for their support of our writers.

Poetry Prize

1st place: Allison Jones for "Sunday School"

2nd place: Carson Cawthon for "Women's History"

Fiction Prize

1st place: Maeve Foote for "The Other Aidan"

2nd place: Zoe Dubiski-Pitts for "Jelly Breakfast Day"

Nonfiction Prize

1st place: Emma Miller for "I Loathe You"

2nd place: Meg Hindman for "Summer Showers"

These awards were judged and chosen by Anderson University faculty from the English and Communication departments.

colophon

The Ivy Leaves Journal of Literature + Art is a peer-reviewed publication by students, for students. The Department of Art + Design at the South Carolina School of the Arts is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

All published pieces are selected through a blind process by the Senior Design staff and the Literature team in which the works are presented without the names of the artists or writers. The Senior Design staff selects artwork based on image resolution and orientation, availability of pages, and production needs.

Likewise, the Literature team selects works based on originality, thoughtfulness, intelligence, and emotional honesty. Together, these pieces work together in collaboration with others to form a cohesive body of work.

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ISSUE
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In this 99th edition of Ivy Leaves,
we stand on the brink of history,
peering over the edge.

We do not fear the already and the not-yet,
that tension that is the human condition.
Instead, we journey onward,
knowing there are miles to go before we sleep.

FROM THE 2024 FOREWORD