



TO DR. EVANS P. WHITAKER

*In celebration in celebration of your 20 years serving as president
of Anderson University. Thank you for your generous investment
and care for this journal. Without your years of support,
Ivy Leaves would not exist today.*

Our *purpose* is rooted
in the *stewardship* of
stories.

in the *stewardship* of
stories. Our *purpose* is rooted

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Art

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Art



Foreward

WRITTEN BY LILY MCNAMARA

WE CHOOSE TO LOVE AND THEN WE TELL A STORY.

These pages hold what we storytellers cannot. We have no choice but to create what exists only in our minds, to make something *real* into something *true*. We have no choice because our narrow chests cannot contain all the glory we see. Because to be an artist is to do and fail, to confess truth is to face that we are not always good, to hope is to acknowledge what now bitterly aches but still love what might be. Through our craft, we demand sense from the senseless, or urge restrictive reality to unwind into sublime nonsense. We write to understand, to laugh, to forgive and feel and remember because that is how we love. By telling our stories we are choosing to love, trusting that the act of rendering our experiences will hold the same meaning to the rest of the world that it does in our artist hearts.

If we only observed what's easy to love, then art would be effortless. No, we love *despite* the unfeeling truth we face, and by

that choice, our written act of love is made truth too. So, we find meaning and grasp it tight. We choose to love and then we tell a story. A story of compassion granted to pesky waterfowl, to those who do not fear the flood, to fathers who were once children too. We write of love unconditional, or of love that isn't there at all. Stories of finding meaning in the making, even though we'll fail, or of rabbits long dead and lizards waiting to be found. And when what is real won't stop hurting, when the words won't come easy and the work is more labor than love, we keep on telling stories anyway.

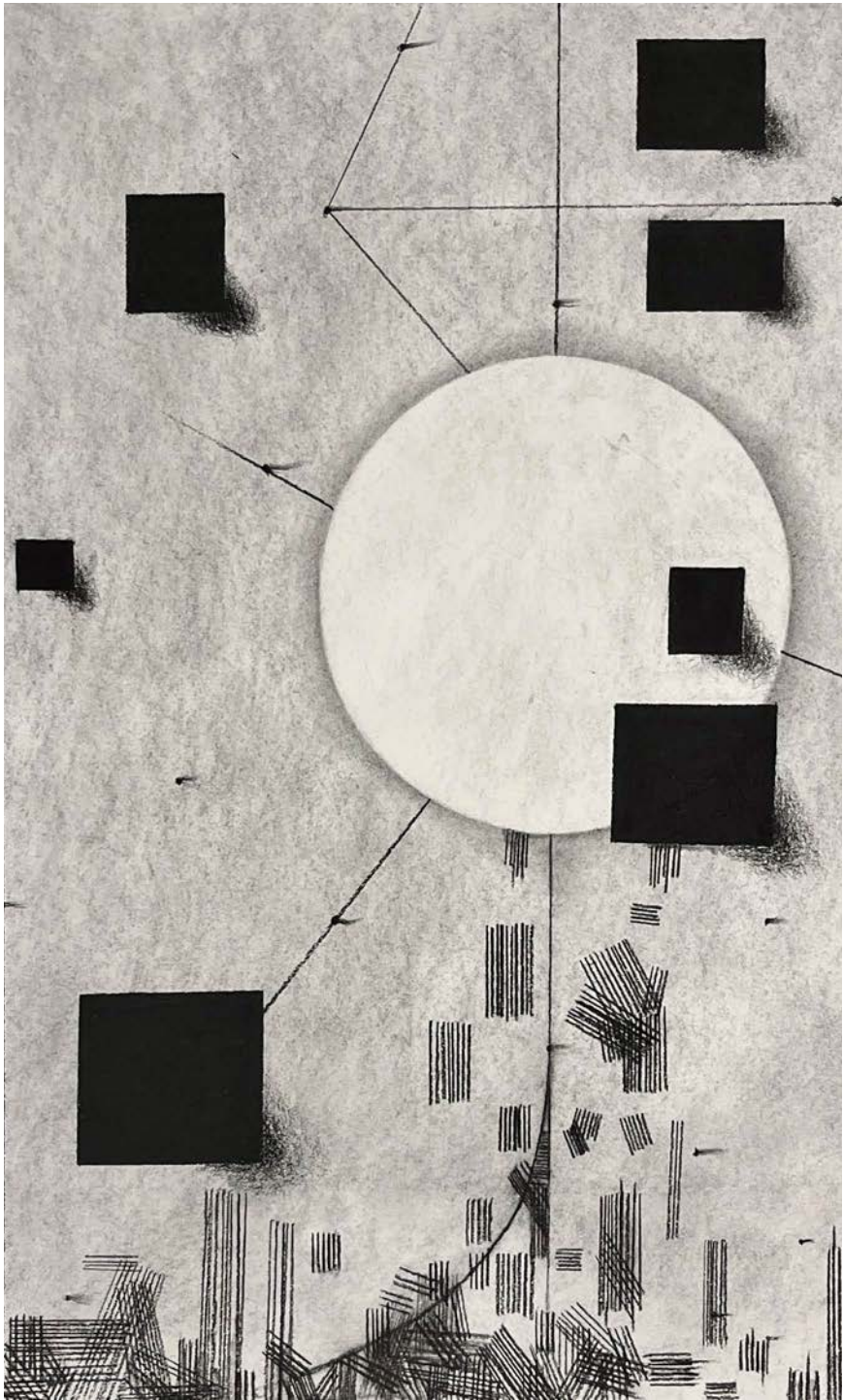
In this 98th edition of *Ivy Leaves*, we choose the art of loving life enough to render it in prose or painting, pencil or picture. Within each page, we turn our experiences into stories, crafting meaning with our own hands, finding the truth in that place just beyond what is real.

Artist's Poem

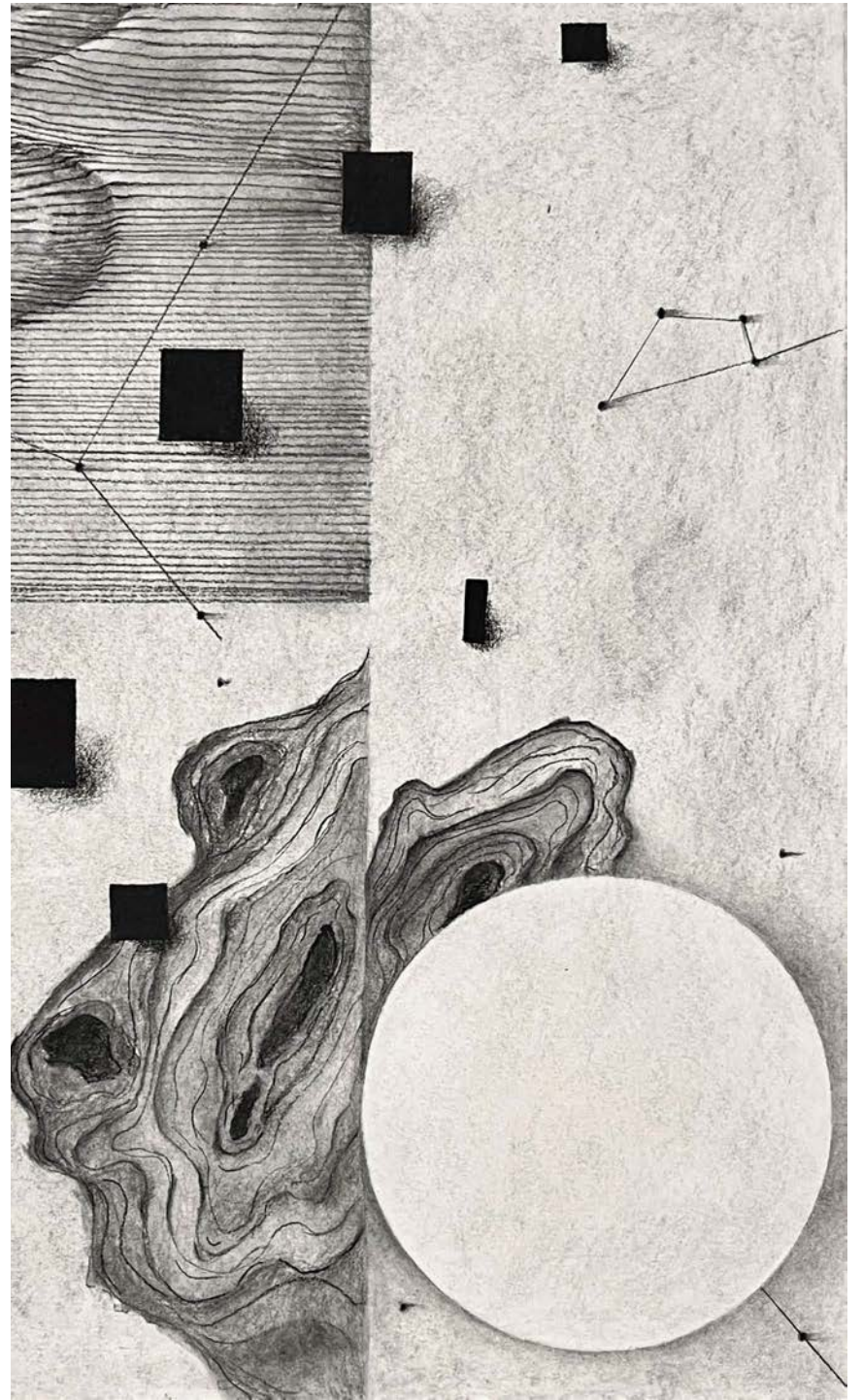
KARAH SNYDER

I play at being an artist—
Which is to say, I am a child in her Dad's too-big shoes,
Sneaking into his workshop,
Glimpsing the perfect curve of clay, the shine of new glaze, the richness of pigment paint,
Standing for a long time with hands clasped tight, then—
I am running out again, words falling over each other to tell of the glory I saw.





Artificial Charcoal Drawing by Sophia Presley



Natural Charcoal Drawing by Sophia Presley



Outside the Frame
Photography by Hannah Miller



Success Isn't Green

LILY MCNAMARA

I can't recall ever being more frustrated than the day I discovered the color green. A mild distaste for the hue has dogged me ever since, causing a particular limp in the color composition of my paintings. Green is either wholesale avoided, or, when the rippling grassy hill demands accurate depiction, I wield it with all the skilled delicacy of a paintballer with cataracts who's lost his gun and is, as a last resort, just lobbing the suckers. I don't hate the color (I can't imagine the miserable depths I'd have plunged if simply going outside and witnessing the natural world irked me), but when visualizing it alongside hues that rest far more comfortably on my brush, I find no harmony nor compelling story to tell in green. My canvas decidedly settles into scorching desert tones or murky purples and blues.

*"I must be a step or so above middling,
even a fraction less is failure."*

It wasn't as if I'd never seen the color before, the day I found that green and I don't speak the same language. It was just the first time it had intruded, uninvited and wholly unexpected, into my craft. I was five years old, or maybe four, and afternoon sunlight, the discomfort of its mid-southern heat only somewhat neutralized by air conditioning, illuminated my masterpiece. The sunbeams picked out flecks of dust in the air, lighting them up the same merry yellow as the shiny wax crayon lines that I'd just marked across my *Beauty and the Beast* coloring page. The yellow was, by my standards, both painstakingly lain and effectively contained. This standard was generally decided by two factors. One, that more of the pigment lay *inside* the intended lines than outside of them, and two, that I'd remained interested long enough to finish coloring it in the first place. My heavy hand left not only a visual mark but also indented scores in the paper, swaths of color interrupting the printer-ink outline of Beauty's decadently ruffled skirts.

I gripped a blue crayon with herculean might, indifferent to the ever-rising body count of crayons I'd snapped in half with my commanding grasp, and began filling in the Beast's coat: a series of frantic marks, blue scribbles alternating with no consistency between whirling circles and abrupt, repeated zigzags. The paper creased further still,

my rigid intensity leaving scars. Once more, at the insistence of my style, the feverish color was not constrained by the delineated end of the suit's wide sleeve. The hatchmarks of blue crossed over into yellow, and I was jolted from my aggressive artistry by the sudden, obnoxious manifestation of green on the page. I remember staring for a bit, my bloodhound focus wavering. I double-checked that the crayon in my hand was still indeed blue and hadn't decided to spontaneously swap colors right under my nose. It hadn't, and every explanation exhausted, I continued coloring, chalking the shock of green up to simply being one of the universe's great unsolvable mysteries. This worked for a bit, as I swapped blue for brown, scribbling the wiry ruff of the Beast's fur. But my respite from green didn't last long. I was filling in the rich blue of princely coattails, the edge of which was swirling behind Belle's yellow skirts. Green, that Frankensteinian abomination, one I assumed my own unnatural creation, once again encroached. Streaks of muddy green seeped along the edge of the dancing couple's clothes, staining perfect petticoats and spurning all attempts at correction. Trying to blot out the offending color with my yellow or blue crayon only spread the fiend further, till green was all I could see. The past hour's artistry mortally wounded, I gave it up for dead, leaving the ballroom floor uncolored. I abandoned my work, enmired in confusion, angered by my inability to do it *right*.

Explanations of color theory that I learned in childhood art classes eased my existential confusion at green's spontaneous creation. But it did little to dissolve my grudge against the color, even after the memory of our first quarrel became glaze-distant with years. The animosity became more a matter of principle and was only reinforced as my lack of experience with the color made me clumsy in its application. I'm still fearful upon every landscape assignment. I simply cannot apply it with confidence, dreading the poor artwork that comes with practicing something at which one has little experience. I know no greater shame than that of my work being witnessed as anything less than, not perfect, but perhaps "surprisingly deft for someone of my experience level." I even settle for "unpolished, but pleasing to witness and clear in its potential." I must be a step or so above middling, even a fraction less is failure. And yet green nips at my heels, each stinging bite only encouraging me to run faster, avoiding practice of that which I have no natural skill like the very act would admit defeat.





October Woods
Oil Painting by Joanna Lothers

Geese

JOHNATHAN SORCE

People always say that folks from Canada are really nice. That's the stereotype, and it's probably true. Leastways, my pastors are nice. They say *progress* funny, as well as *booger*, and wear poppy pins on Memorial Day, but they're definitely nice. Not the geese though. Canada geese. Or is it *Canadian* geese? I've never been sure—ought to look it up. For being called Canadian geese, we sure get a lot of them in South Carolina. They're also in California, out where my grandparents live. So I wonder who named them. They ought to have called them Meanness geese, or Rudity geese, or something like that. Not Canadian geese—they're far too troublesome for that.

I gave a goose Cheerios once. He ate some out of my hand, and then he looked at me with his tiny, dumb, black eyes—no pupil or anything, just solid black. He hissed at me, a cold, quiet, bare hiss. Maybe he had read the sign at the park: *don't feed the animals*. I pulled my hand back and looked at it. There was a little brown streak on it. It stank. Great. There wasn't any place to wash hands in the park. Better hold it awkwardly in front of my jacket for the next hour, until we go home. Can't stick it in my pocket. Tried to amuse myself watching Paga feed the peacocks. They have sharp, curving beaks, but there is no crap on them.

Canada geese act like they're kings of the world. Maybe they're French Canadian. Salty about having lost all those wars to everyone. They walk out in the middle of the road and just stand there, daring you to hit them. I bet road-killed goose tastes just as good as store-bought. But who wants to put a splatted pile of feathers and guts and tire-marked meat into the back of their used Honda Odyssey? Though there's already a stain back there from the garbage juice that leaked out of our trash bags on the way to the dump. Dad's driving the car, so it isn't my choice anyway. Teenagers shouldn't drive, but if they did, we'd have fewer geese.

It was a Sunday morning—early, and there was a teenager driving. Driving a big white pickup, with gigantic wheels and a big flag flying in the back. Can't remember if it was American, or Confederate—I hardly saw it. The big white truck drove up to our lake, where all the Canadian geese gaggled. The window rolled down, and a pair of thin, metallic tubes came sliding out. Hansel and Gretel, the two resident domestic geese, sat on the shore. It was foggy that morning. The boom was thunderous—echoing around the tight, moist air, and shattering it. Then there was another.

“Oh----! They shot the geese!” My dad was scrambling down the hallway, tripping over

his slippers, trying to cram shoes—his shoes, anyone's shoes—onto his bare feet. It was the only time I ever heard him swear.

The white truck flatulated proudly, a plume of exhaust mingling with the shot-rent fog as it revved and rolled away into the distance. A limp goose dangled, bloodless, from the tailgate.

The cops came, and the game warden. It was illegal to kill Canada geese (not to mention domestic ones that belonged to somebody). Maybe that's why they're so entitled—they've got diplomatic immunity from the government in Ontario, or whatever the capital of Canada is. By the time the authorities arrived, all the surviving geese had fled. On the shore lay the crumpled body of Hansel—the murderers hadn't even taken his body for the meat. Gretel hid in the bushes by the dam, weeping. In the water a goose was floating—alive, but without use of one of its wings.

“Gretel hid in the bushes by the dam, weeping.”

The warden took the injured goose to rehabilitation. The sheriff took the gun-wielding teenagers to community service. I do not know where they took Hansel.

I had never felt bad for a goose before, but I did for poor Gretel, mourning all alone on the Sunday shore of the misty lake where the feathers floated. But she was a domestic goose—much more polite and cultivated—unlike the obnoxious, nomadic Canadians, dropping poop and plumage everywhere. As for the wounded goose, he would be alright, I figured. The time sequestered in rehabilitation would probably do him good. And the dead geese? They had gone wherever goose heaven was, if such a place exists. I'd like to think it does. Then Hansel and Gretel will be together again someday, away from aggravated teenager hunters. I'm not sure how many Canada geese will be there with them, though—probably precious few.



Yes I Can, Not While Eating Though
Tyson Gentry

BOND

BY BLOOD

WRITTEN BY MARGARET HINDMAN

Bound by Blood

MARGARET HINDMAN

Behind CookOut c. 17, 18

Bright parking lot lampposts shed a blinding light onto the cracked pavement. Neon crackles in the drive-thru sign, brilliant red and yellow flickering against a starlit sky. Hot, thick summer heat hangs in the air like a damp blanket, and the cars driving by barely bring relief. The moon sits above the clouds in all her golden glory, climbing ever higher as the night passes on.

A grey Volvo is parked under the *CookOut* sign, trunk open and windows down. Two teenagers sit on the tailgate, styrofoam to-go boxes balanced precariously on their knees. The boy slurps from his Huge Tea. His sister makes a face and glances at his food. “Are you gonna eat the rest of those fries?”

“Nah, you can have ‘em.”

She grabs a single fry and dips it in her mocha milkshake. *Since when does he not like fries? Weirdo.*

“Can I eat your onion rings?” he asks.

Ah. Secret motivation. “Yeah, okay.”

Bunkroom c. 0-3, 1-4

A boy stands next to the crib, his pajamas scrunching up around his thin body. His knuckles turn white as he grips the edge of the crib. He is not even two years old yet. He may not quite understand the significance of the minuscule person in front of him. In fact, when his parents brought her home, he begged them to take her back.

Church/High School Parking Lot c. 16, 17

Stars shine behind drifting grey clouds, and the moon seems unusually bright. The white lines crisscrossing the parking lot are cracked and faded. Cheap cars owned by a handful of high school students are scattered across the spaces, very few of them within the lines and most of them crooked. A 2003 Volvo stands in the middle with all the lights on and the doors open, music playing loud enough for the teenagers standing around it to hear and sing along. Munching on greasy french fries, a couple of people sit on the blacktop,

while others are lying on the hoods of their cars, talking. A few stand in the middle of it all, twirling and spinning one another as they practice their swing dancing.

The girl leans against the Volvo’s windshield, staring at the crowd. Most of the teens around her had attended this school since elementary years, and over half graduated that night, along with her brother. Speaking of her brother—he dances in the middle of it all, teaching her best friend a rock step and lean dip.

*“When her parents brought her home,
he begged them to take her back.”*

She was late to this little get-together. Her invitation got lost in translation between her friends and her chauffeur. Apparently “tell your sister and bring her too” meant “don’t say a word and drive off without her” to the boy. *Who does he think he is? Is he dumb or something? What’s so terrible about bringing your little sister along anyway?* Once—it felt like ages ago now—she could hang out with these friends and her brother without anyone batting an eye, back when the boys spent their days hunting frogs at recess and the boy would trade her snacks in between class times.

She laughs at a joke her cousin makes and takes a photo with her instant camera. After all, these are the teenage summers she’s been hearing about her whole life. This is supposed to be the time of her life, so she might as well enjoy it. Or try to.

Her brother’s back has been turned to her all night. His dancing partner turns to the girl and calls out her name. “Hey, can you get a photo of us doing this dip? I want to see if it looks as cool as it does in my head.”

The sister jumps up to take the photo. *It definitely does not.* She hides her smile behind her camera, urging herself not to giggle as their arms tangle during the dip.

The boy winces. “Or she can stay over there, and we can keep practicing,” he mumbles, tugging at his curls and averting his eyes. He pulls his partner away, and she gives up talking to the sister in favor of dancing with the brother.

When the girl looks at her two best friends leaving her in a crowd of people who barely register her presence, she doesn't feel like she's living the teenage dream. All she feels is lost, cold, and alone.

Small Bedroom c. 7-8, 9-10

Carpet covers the entirety of the floor, perfect in the event of a wrestling match or late-night tumble from the top bunk. A bookshelf is pressed up against one wall, and a tiny closet takes up the opposite corner, but the main feature of this basement bedroom is the massive, castle-esque bunk bed complete with shelves, drawers, and a built-in desk. A twin mattress faces out on the floor, and another sits several feet above it to form a multi-level T shape. Blankets hang from every surface that isn't covered in trophies and books. A pair of knees is visible poking above the solid railing on the top bunk, and a short distance away, so is the edge of a book cover. The girl turns a page, cheap paper crinkling between her fingers as the broken spine creaks. Seconds later, she bolts upright, snaps the book shut, and drops it onto the mattress below before flipping upside-down to peer under the bed.

"Are you finished yet?" *'Cause you're taking AGES.*

Her brother stares up at her, annoyed at the curls that are hanging between him and the book in his hands. He brushes them off quickly. "I told you, it's gonna be a little while. It's my turn to read the next book first, and that means no complaining."

"But you read so slooooooow," complains the girl, dramatically leaning even further over the bed's edge and allowing her arms to flop around. "Come on, the last one ended on a cliffhanger. I have to know what happens."

"It's almost like I knew that already, considering I finished that one three days ago."

"You've been reading *The Siege of Macindaw* for three days?! Come ON, I could've finished it in half that time."

"Too bad I'm not you. Go find something else to do."

A fist pounds on the door, and the girl swings back up onto the top bunk and lies down, hiding behind the railing.

"Who is it?" the boy hollers.

"Are you two playing without us?" The voices are warped through the door, but immediately recognizable as their two younger sisters. The boy glances up at the top bunk and sees his sister hurriedly shaking her head.

"Nope!" he shouts back. "This is a boys-only room, remember?" A book smacks him in the back of the head. *Well, most of the time.* "I'll play with you later, okay?"

"Okay, bye!" whispers the youngest girl, and the boy hears her soft pat on the door as she turns to go.

"That was close." The girl sits up again, glad their sisters hadn't tried to open the door and seen her. "I never get any quiet time around them." She flips through her book for a second, then peeks back over the edge. "Did you finish it yet?"

Telephone Pole c. 17, 19

A telephone pole stands behind a row of dormitories, its metal core surrounded by a concrete base. Trees and branches brush up against it, their leaves reflected in its metallic surface. Spiky holly leaves cover the ground on either side, crunching underfoot. Puffy white clouds drift overhead through a clear blue sky.

The girl is crying. She is leaning against the pole, phone pressed to her ear, and sobs shaking her entire body. The trees obscure her slightly from the view of anyone in the parking lot, but she still worries that someone will find her out here. *For goodness' sake, why was there nowhere to be alone?*

She sighs and clears her throat. "Look, all I did was talk to them for a few minutes. I didn't even remember that they were your friends. How can I when I've only met them once?"

Her brother's voice fades in and out. "I don't care about that, okay, but now you know, so leave it alone! I swear this *cannot* be like last year. I got different friends for a reason. They know nothing about my life, and I will not let you mess that up for me."

"It's not my fault they know we're related! Anyone who looks at us can tell, you idiot!"

"Yeah, but that doesn't mean you can go around telling my whole life story! At this point, just don't talk to me. If I see you, you can wave, but you're not part of my life here, and you're not going to be." *Click.*

She wants to break his face for that stupid habit. He always hung up before she could finish the conversation. *Why does he always have to be such a jerk?* It's only been a week since she started college, and it's not like she wanted to go to the same school as her brother anyway. Technically, she picked the school first, so it's his fault he can't avoid her. It's his fault if she ends up talking to "his" friends because he didn't bother to show her which people he didn't want her around.

What's the point of having a brother if he wants to act like she doesn't exist?

*"What's the point of having a brother if
he wants to act like she doesn't exist?"*

Tower Room c. 15, 16

Dim grey light drifts in through two open windows, thin curtains swaying slightly in the breeze. Strands of ivy intertwined with fairy lights stretch across the ceiling, paintings and photographs clipped to the leaves. Music plays from a speaker set atop a bedpost, balanced precariously in an effort to make the power cord reach all the way from the wall.

Volumes are stacked on the bedside table, their spines aligned from tallest to smallest. The entire room seems to sway in the wind as a storm builds outside, due to its location at the top of the house.

The girl lies atop her bed, curled onto her side with tears drying on her cheeks, their tracks evident against her pale freckles. Her phone is balanced across her fingertips, unlocked and open to a text message.

Didn't he invite you? Where are you???

She navigates to a keypad and dials. The phone rings two, three times before someone picks up and a voice answers.

"Hello?"

"Where are you?"

"I'm with my friends and won't be back for a while. Just tell Mom I'll miss dinner."

"This isn't about Mom. Why didn't you tell me you were going? The girls texted me and said they told you to bring me with you."

"Oh my gosh, please shut up already about this. I can't bring my little sister to everything. It's not fun. We'll talk later, leave me alone." *Click.* She drops the phone, rolls over, and wraps her arms around herself as she scrunches up her entire body. Her eyebrows knit together and she squeezes her eyes shut, wishing away the hurt that is written across her mind. *Why doesn't he want me?*

Treehouse c. 8-9, 9-10

A bird alights on a platform set between three trees. Over ten feet off the ground, the platform sits squarely on a couple of branches and boasts a railing made of solid wooden posts with rope wrapped around and between them. Dappled light falls through the lazy summer air, past the layers and layers of bright green leaves, and comes to rest on the rough planks.

Dangling over the side of the fort is a bucket on a scrap of rope. The girl stands beside it, dropping sandwiches wrapped in tin foil and a few plastic baggies full of chips into the bucket before running around a tree and clambering up the worn ladder propped up nearby. Once she reaches the platform, she scrambles across the floor and tugs on the rope until her snacks are within reach. "Got 'em!" she yells below. "Do you need any help?"

A rustling sound fills her ears, and a hint of blue peaks out around the corner of a decaying barn. "I think I've got it!" comes the muffled reply. The rustling intensifies as a figure comes into view. Curly hair the color of wet sand can briefly be seen underneath a giant blue tarp, but it disappears quickly as the boy struggles to carry the tarp on his back without dragging too much of it across the damp forest floor. "I'm pretty sure there's a spider in here!" he shouts.

"Sucks to be you!" responds the girl, but she lowers the bucket back down and tramps

down the ladder to help her brother get the tarp up to the top of the treehouse. The two manage to get thoroughly entangled in its never-ending folds, but eventually boy, girl, and tarp all end up in a heap on the deck of the treehouse. They spend a few moments catching their breath, limbs splayed out in every direction. She smiles, happy she wasn't doing this alone.

"Okay, ready to hang it up?" asks the boy.

"Can we eat our sandwiches first?"

*"But eventually boy, girl, and tarp all end up
in a heap on the deck of the treehouse."*

University c. 18, 19

The dorm room is cold, its individual heater unable to keep out the chill that seeps in through every crack under the door and space around the window. Fluorescent lights hum and flicker until they are switched off in favor of tall golden lamps and nightlights. A rug is spread across the floor in an effort to bring some life to the frozen space, and photos hang from fairy lights twisted around the bunk beds. Plants spill across the windowsill, their leaves reaching for the light and overflowing onto the AC unit below.

The girl sits against a cinder block wall, one hand clutched to her abdomen, the other holding her phone as she scrolls through it and highlights photos to delete. An ache fills her chest, expanding until even her toes feel numb. Today has been a day of argument, of rising emotion and pain, and now she is left feeling hollow in its wake. Hollow, and alone.

I should have known these friends would leave me too. I should have known I cannot make them stay. I should have known no one can bear to be around me for this long.

Eventually, she falls asleep, only to wake up minutes later to the sound of her phone buzzing against the floor.

She opens it to a text from her brother.

U needs talk?

The ghost of a smile graces her lips, and she starts to type when his contact photo fills the screen and an annoying chime sounds. She swipes her thumb to accept the call and swallows.

"Hey."

"I heard you had a bad day. Do you want to go get coffee? Maybe grab some CookOut?"

She grins, standing shakily. "Yeah, I'd like that."



Ars Cuisinica

JOHNATHAN SORCE

I have no brush, no bic, no bassoon
For my boisterous creative babblings.
Instead, I bite.

There is no music to my making, no skill
In sculpting, symphony, or shutter.
Instead, with clacking crocks and clinking cups,
Teaspoons tipped and batter beaten,
I mix my mirthful muffins quick.

My medium is artfully arrayed across kitchen counter:
Fridge-burgled bulbs of onion, threatening tears—
Garlic that glowers as I grind ginger grimly—
Celery kept cenobitic with cauliflower and carrots—
Pickles, pumpkins, poultry—perhaps persimmons too.

Some love to gaze at fine framed scenes,
Loitering to look at languid forms,
Or listening to lively lute melodies.
But I'll not linger with these loons; let me have my own way.
Instead, I'll bite.



McLeod Chapel *Ink Drawing by Rebekah Dennis*



Kershaw-Cornwallis House *Ink Drawing by Rebekah Dennis*



Charlie
Photography by Stephany Rivera

Tomato Bisque

LILY MCNAMARA

Murder. That's what it was. A stomach-churning, bile-raising, news-worthy crime of devastating significance. The kind of atrocity that thirty-year-old women chat about over wine on a crime podcast.

"You're insane."

"What?" My fiancée looked up, face shockingly empty and guilt-free. Impassive, her brows quirked in confusion even as her hand hovered over the scene of the crime.

"You've ruined it." The intensity of my voice, cold and accusing, was rivaled only by the revulsion painted across my face.

"What do you mean?" She continued to sound confused, even as she gave the salt another shake. I darted a hand out, snatching the shaker from her sadistic grasp. "Hey!" She reached for it, but I held my hand back out of her reach.

"You're not supposed to salt the tomato bisque. I've already seasoned it." I felt a little childish, playing a game of keepaway with someone well over a decade out of grade school, but the personal offense outweighed my embarrassment.

"But it was—"

"Are you sure you wanna finish that sentence?" She swallowed, fidgeting with the hem of her shirt, but I saw a rare measure of obstinance in her eyes.

"It was bland. It needed . . ." *Don't you say it*, I thought, eyes narrowing as I stared her down. She swallowed again, but then turned to meet my eyes. "Salt. It needed salt." Another breath. "Because you underseasoned it." I slammed a hand down on the table. The silverware clattered, wine sloshing over the lip of my glass.

"That soup was damn perfect!" I near-shouted, my voice pitching up a bit. "What, you think I can't cook? You wanna starve? Or just eat . . ." I waved a hand vaguely, searching for an example. "I don't know, microwave dinners?"

"What the hell, Evan? Just because I added salt to your tomato bisque doesn't mean I think you're a terrible cook! I love you, and your cooking, see?" She shoveled a spoonful into her mouth as if to prove her point.

A brief, terrible pause.

She swallowed, grimaced, and reached for the pepper grinder. I saw red.



Desolate *Photography by Lindsay Blumenfeld*



Rainy New Orleans
Photography by Miriam Cabrera

Upward Spiral

CHRISTINE BRADY

Inspired by Weber's The Spirit of Capitalism

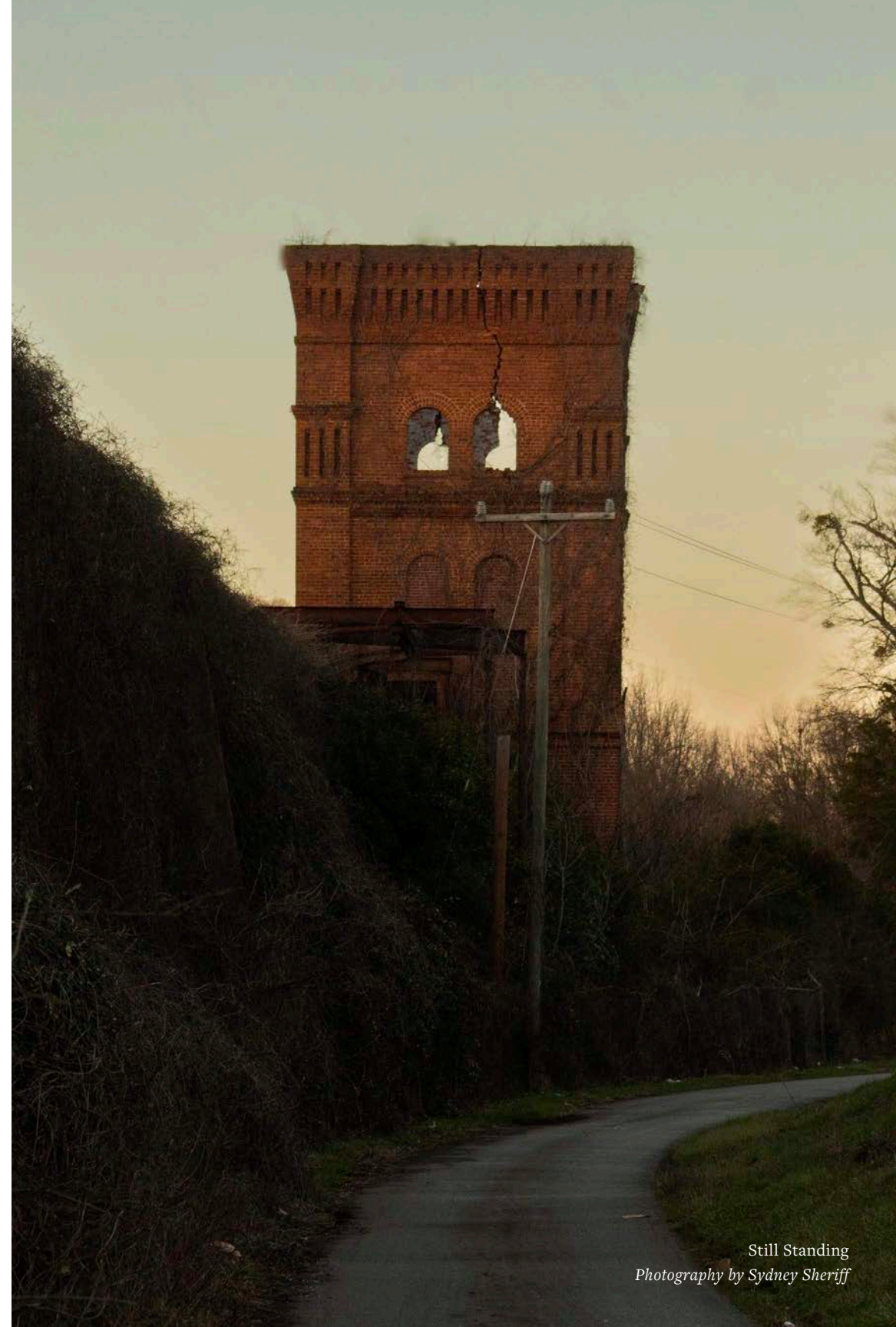
Welcome to your tower, sire!
Your goal is to climb higher.
You have your own pet spirit
That will help you not to tire.

Should you almost miss a step,
He'll whisper in your ear:
"Take comfort, for you work for God,
And He is ever near!"

Don't stop and look how far you've come;
You aren't close to done.
The sky is infinite, my lord,
Don't ever slow your run!

As you race up unending flights,
It helps to sing a bright hymn.
Know God will help you reach new heights—
Why else would you invite Him?

Don't slow! You're near a record score!
You must quicken your stride!
Don't ask what all this running's for.
Don't stop to—
Oh.
You died.





HOLY BIBLE

Nothingness
Oil Painting by Emily McKinney



Carolina Cup
Oil Painting by Rebekah Dennis

Dearest Creatures

ADAM JOBSON

goose

I love to fear you,
screaming menace of the lake,
worst of waterfowl.

faun

Who calls you a pest?
You needn't fear, baby deer—
I have no garden.

raccoon

Dirt-matted devil!
Grubby, gray garbage gourmet.
Never, ever change.

possum

You lie motionless.
Somberly, I hold my breath,
hoping you are too.

Roller Skating

SARAH WILSON

When I was a kid, it felt like every weekend someone turned eight, or ten, or twelve and spent a Saturday evening with fifteen or so of their friends floating in ovals on the smooth wood floor of the Union Skate Center, interrupted only when the Hokey Pokey started playing. There was always pizza, cake, and soda in small white styrofoam cups with the finely crushed fun-to-chomp ice. The owner didn't like it when I brought my RipStik out on the rink, even though it was the best place ever for the Ripping of the Stik. I remember the feeling of learning to skate backward—the awkward turning inward of the ankles that propelled my whole body in a different direction than it was used to going.

I taught my best friend to skate on her birthday, when she had planned a birthday party at the Union Skate Center with the intention of learning to skate that very night from her best friend, me. I remember the adventure of her *getting it, almost getting it, Oops! You okay?* While I skated backward, facing her. She was okay. And she got it that night, on her birthday.

I remember her dad and uncle lacing up their “speed skates,” black with white stripes and orange wheels, as I challenged them to a race, fully confident in my ability as a chicken-skinny nine-or-ten-year-old in greasy rental skates to school two grown men. They were *old*, and I was *fast*. They beat me, though they were the only ones on the rink who could.

My older sister liked to skate and was close enough in age to me to be invited to many of the same birthday parties, where we would slingshot each other across the rink. My oldest sister did not like roller skating, much like she didn't like roller coasters or fair rides or ice skating. I'm not sure if my biggest brother liked to skate—by the time I got big enough to enjoy it myself, he was too old for little kids' birthday parties.

One day I fell in a pile with two other kids, and the side of my thigh landed directly on the wheel of a little girl's skate. It was all I could do not to get teary on the rink. I hobbled and grunted to the bathroom, which was all hot pink tile and curtains instead of doors, sat down, cried, and investigated my leg. It was one of those bruises that was not-so-visible, which made my mom not take me seriously when I said I was having trouble walking. In her defense, I had once completely faked a wrist fracture and worn a brace for days, lying through my teeth when all of the old men and women at church asked me what happened.

I remember the one time my best friend and I (after I taught her to skate) went to “public skate” on a Saturday afternoon. We looked like fools out there, facing each other,

me skating backward and her skating forward as we “quacked” along with “Wop” by J. Dash and flapped our elbows like chickens, covering our ears any time a “bad song” played over the speakers, and ignoring all of the middle school kids who had their big siblings drive them to the skating rink to get away from their parents so they could cuss and smoke and kiss their boyfriends. I think I remember running into a couple of kids from her school, including her “school best friend,” a sweet black girl who took care of my best friend during those eight hours she went to public school every day.

Another time, I was at a birthday party and my parents weren't there. I was feeling very guilty, perhaps for thoughts I wished I was not having in my young-but-deep mind, and I had the urge which I often had to pray, right then and there, for forgiveness, asking over and over and over again and waiting for some sweeping feeling of being *okay*. There I sat, my head resting on my arms on the table, my feet kicking and rolling the wheels of my skates back and forth on the triangular, terracotta-colored tiles of the floor of the eating area while the rest of the kids laughed and yelled and drank their Mello Yello and Dr. Pepper and chomped their ice. The feeling didn't come, but my friend's mom did, who tapped my shoulder and asked if I was okay. I told her I was, and that I was praying, and proceeded to place my forehead right back down on my arms where it was before and keep asking again and again and again.

When I turned twelve, it was finally my turn to have my party at the Union Skate Center. My birthday cake (with the *good* icing from Kirby's Cake Shoppe) was zebra-striped with a giant “12” in the middle of it in bold purple. My best friend knew how to skate then; her dad and uncle laced up their speed skates and I raced them. My oldest sister sat and talked with the adults and my friends' older siblings. There was pizza; there was cake; there was soda with the chompable ice. I can see all of my friends now, all glasses and baby fat or skin-and-bones and awkward bangs and braces that everyone has when he or she is eleven and twelve years old. For the first time, the presents on the circular, carpet-covered table-bench were mine—I still have the Duck Dynasty pillow my best friend gave me.

I do not remember roller skating again at any point between my twelfth birthday and the spring semester of my freshman year of college. An old family friend had her wedding reception in the Union Skate Center once; it was a unique reception, and much to my disappointment, there was no skating.

Seven years later, an hour-and-a-half from the Union Skate Center, I flew around

Skateland USA, periodically trying to teach a college friend how to skate without dying. This time, my parents didn't drop me off. This time, there was no cake or pizza or soda in white styrofoam cups with the good, crunchable ice. This time, my best friend's dad and uncle weren't there to help my friends catch me in blob tag (not to brag, but they could really have used some help from some "speed skates," if you know what I mean). This time, a new friend and I skated in circles around the rink, telling each other about our friends from childhood and high school—and I told him about my best friend, and how, about nine years or so ago, I'd taught her to skate, and how we'd skated around the rink quacking at each other to the "Wop."

*"There was pizza; there was cake;
there was soda with chompable ice."*

Almost a year later, I'd skate around Skateland USA again, this time with this new friend's hand in mine—"interdigitated," as his dad calls it. Well, at least our hands were interdigitated when we weren't racing (I won every time, though he gives me a run for my money) or playing a giant game of tag with our group of at least twenty college friends. I don't daydream about skating rink birthday parties anymore, but I am just as much a sucker for skating at twenty as I was at twelve. Maybe I'll have my twenty-first birthday at the Union Skate Center for old time's sake, and invite my best friend, skating interdigitated with the man I'm going to marry, slingshotting my big sister across the rink while my oldest sister sits and talks to the adults. My brother would surely come this time, and he might even skate, especially if his fiancée did. I could invite all of the friends whose skating parties I went to growing up—Lord only knows where some of them ended up. I hope they're doing well wherever they skated off to.



Rock Climbing
Sculpture by Jocelin Flora



Solitude
Photography by Lindsay Blumenfeld



Rise *Photography by Lindsay Blumenfeld*

Cool Air

LILY MCNAMARA

flutters against my skin. No
illumination, but this subtle movement
defines my form, creates shape without light.
If the wind were only stronger,
this faint draft could

push between my skin and sinew,
pry the flesh from my skull, and let it feel
the motion. Let air pour over the curve
of the orbital bone, down through the dip
of my temple, like river water
flowing over time-weathered stones.





Golden Sand
Photography by Mateo De Los Cobos

WRITTEN BY MARGARET BARR

the BALLPIT

The Ball Pit

MARGARET BARR

There's something in the ball pit. Claire saw something move, the colored balls shaking and jumbling around. And then it stopped.

It stopped.

Claire's ninth birthday party has not been fun, so far. The playplace is far too big—a giant, terrifying maze of brightly colored tunnels, bone-breaking trampolines, and deep foam pits that keep swallowing the kids in her class like some monster. The amount of colors make Claire feel a little dizzy. And there's the ball pit, of course. But nobody is using the ball pit. It's back in the corner of the building, not as visible and not as large as the other attractions. Her entire class is running around, jumping on the trampolines and exploring the tunnels and nets and climbing walls. But the ball pit remains empty. Claire stares at it, all the way from the table where she sits with all of the parents. She can barely see it from this far, and none of the parents could see it unless they angled themselves and looked closely. But she saw something moving, she knows she did. And she saw it stop. She saw it grow still.

Claire looks up at the large digital clock on the wall, with bright red numbers. It's near the tables the parents are sitting at, probably since they have to pay per hour.

5 minutes. Since there was movement in the ball pit. And since it stopped.

She should say something. Soon.

Maybe. She waits.

Her mother was very excited to plan a party, since it was the first one they've had since Eva's. So excited, in fact, that she hadn't bothered to ask her what she wanted to do or where she wanted to go or who she wanted to invite or what she wanted to eat. But Claire didn't complain. Her mother tells her that she goes where she is taken and she does what she is told. Ever since Eva. So she does it, without a question, without a word. Without any words. Words did not save Eva.

"Honey, stop scowling," her mother says, as Claire stares off into the distance, towards the ball pit. Claire isn't scowling. She's just looking at the ball pit. The ball pit. She feels chills crawl up her arms and down her legs. It's so still, now. She keeps waiting for it to start moving again, but it doesn't.

7 minutes.

Her mother is leading the table in a conversation about Claire, right in front of her. She is technically whispering, but it's the kind of whisper that's just a formality, not to

actually hide anything. Claire finally turns from the direction of the ball pit and looks down at the cupcake in front of her. Vanilla with pink frosting. She prefers chocolate.

"Oh, yes, she's very quiet, but her grades are amazing," her mother says.

"Mine's the opposite," one of the dads says, laughing. "We all know Ezzy's a handful." The other parents, roughly seven of them, laugh as well.

"She is technically whispering, but it's the kind of whisper that's just a formality, not to actually hide anything."

Ezzy. Ezekiel. The boy with the weird name and a blue plastic car that he carries everywhere, even though he's in 4th grade and not a little kid anymore. A lot of the other kids make fun of him. Claire knows because she listens. Sometimes, she wishes she could defend him. But she can't talk anymore, so she doesn't. Not since Eva.

One time, the other kids took Ezzy's blue plastic car during lunch. He had put it down for just a moment to pick up his sandwich, and Ryan snatched it off the table. Claire doesn't like Ryan.

"Give Winston back! He needs to eat his lunch, too!" Ezzy had shouted across the lunchroom. Claire was sitting nearby and had to cover her ears because the shriek was so loud. Anna and Nia couldn't stop giggling.

"Dude, it's a car! It doesn't eat," Ryan said, holding it above Ezzy's head.

Ezzy only screamed louder and louder in response, chasing Ryan's hand and trying to grab the car again. Claire was worried that Ezzy would actually hurt Ryan trying to get it back, or he would start having an asthma attack, until a teacher came over and told him that it's unacceptable to scream in the lunchroom. And when Ryan apologized to the teacher, she just told him to stop messing around. Ezzy sat alone after that.

He plays alone, too. Just him and that car.

10 minutes.

Her mother is still chatting to the parents. Claire tries to tune everything out and eat her cupcake, but then she feels a poke on her arm. She turns and sees one of the dads—

Ezzy's, she thinks.

"So it's your party, right, birthday girl?" the dad says. He's bald and has yellow cupcake frosting in his beard, reminding Claire of mustard. It's gross.

Claire nods her head.

"I know your mom said you're really quiet," he continues. "But why don't you try playing?"

Claire shakes her head. Doesn't he know none of them like her? Well, he probably doesn't get class popularity reports from Ezzy, she guesses.

"Come on, I'm sure Ezzy would play with you," the dad says. "I'm his dad, by the way." 13 minutes, now.

Claire shakes her head again. The other kids don't like to play with someone who doesn't talk. Not even Ezzy.

Ezzy's dad looks at her sadly before turning back to the rest of the table and joining the conversation instead of pitying the lonely birthday girl any longer.

Claire figures she needs to at least walk around the playplace so that her mom doesn't get upset with her. *You should be more grateful, Claire. Eva would have loved this.* Then, she could walk towards the ball pit. The ball pit. Should she say something about it? 15 minutes.

She can't say anything anyway.

At 18 minutes, Claire rises from the table.

"Oh, are you going to go play?" her mother says, shifting all the attention of the group at the table to Claire. All of those eyes on her, expecting words. Claire nods stiffly. Her mother smiles, but it's not warm.

"Good!" she says. "You go play for a bit, and then we'll call everyone together and do presents." Claire nods and turns around, walking into the playplace. As soon as she turns her back, she hears whispers from all the parents. *Sorry about her scowling. We're working on that.* and *Poor girl, she doesn't talk at all?*

She could turn around and tell them she can hear them. She could tell her mother to stop talking about her like she's a ghost. She could tell everyone that it wasn't her fault. It wasn't.

But Claire says nothing.

21 minutes.

Instead, she walks across the startlingly bright rainbow checkered floor, underneath the colorful maze of tubes, climbing nets, and slides. Wherever she walks, her classmates are repelled, running off into their own groups and cliques. She tries not to care. She tries to tune it out, tune it out, tune it out.

Get to the ball pit. There's something in the ball pit.

Claire tries to focus her gaze on the ball pit as it grows closer and closer until—something rams into her side and she falls hard on the rainbow floor. It's cushioned, luckily, but it still hurts when she lands on her elbows and knees. She grunts, but she does not speak.

She looks up to see one of her classmates, who had come charging into her, Luca. He's constantly getting into trouble in class for running and being "reckless," as her teacher puts it, in the classroom. He almost always has his card flipped red.

"Oh my gosh," Luca says as he heaves himself up off the floor. "Sorry, I—"

When he meets Claire's eyes, he stops. And he stares. Why do people always stare?

"Oh, um. Hey."

Claire nods politely, as she gets up from the ground.

"Sorry, uh. Happy Birthday," Luca says. And he turns to run off as if nothing happened, but before he can and before Claire can stop herself, she grabs onto his arm.

"Huh, uh, what?"

"Get to the ball pit. There's something in the ball pit."

Claire needs to ask him about the ball pit. Does anyone else know it's been 26 minutes since something moved? But, the words. The words will not come. Even if they did, she would not let them pass her lips. Still, she needs to ask.

Claire points past the foam pits and tunnels to the ball pit, at the far corner of the playplace where no one ever goes.

Luca looks at her with something that looks a little too close to disgust for Claire's liking. "I don't want to play over there. Ball pits are for babies."

Claire shakes her head, and she points again, moving her hand back and forth more urgently.

"I told you. Ryan says that's where the babies go," Luca says, moving away from her, releasing her grasp on him. "I'm not going over there. Sorry." He runs off back in the direction of the trampolines.

Claire sighs.

She looks back to the clock, so large it can be seen from most areas in the playplace.

28 minutes. That's too long.

She begins walking again, now extra cautious of her running classmates. The ball pit is close now, within her grasp, but before she reaches it, she sees something else. Nearby in this corner where the ball pit hides, there's an opening to the tunnel, one of the places where the maze ends.

And there, on the bright cushioned ground in front of the tunnel, is a blue plastic car.

The car. Without Ezzy.

It's been 31 minutes since the ball pit, that sea of red and yellow and purple and green balls moved. And stopped moving.

When did Ezzy drop that car?

"Attention, members of Claire's birthday party." A voice over the loudspeaker sounds

throughout the playplace as Claire stares at the blue plastic car.

“Please report back to your party table. It’s time for the birthday girl to open presents and eat cake!”

A rush of kids start climbing down from the tunnel maze, bouncing off the trampolines, and climbing out of the foam pits. They all run to the table, eager to grab their gifts they picked out and a slice of cake.

Claire’s legs ache to move forward. The ball pit is right there. Should she take the car if he lost it? Maybe he got distracted running around the playplace? But Ezzy isn’t like the other kids. He would never leave that car. Willingly.

Claire’s body trembles and her head feels heavy, like she might fall over. All of her classmates will be at the table soon, except for her. And possibly, except for Ezzy. But she has to go. She goes where she is taken. She does what she is told. Even if she did bring the car up to the table and present it to Ezzy’s dad, with Ezzy nowhere to be seen, what would he think? If Claire can’t speak?

“Claire Elizabeth!” her mother shouts from across the playplace, her voice distant. “Your party is going on without you!”

Claire looks behind her to the direction of her mother’s voice, and back to the ball pit. She looks at that lonely blue plastic car.

34 minutes.

Claire turns around and runs back to the party table.

When she comes into sight of the party table, her mother glances up and looks relieved. “There you are. Glad you finally decided to enjoy your party.” Claire nods. She should smile, but her lips are frozen shut. She glances up to the clock.

36 minutes.

The parents are rejoining their kids and handing them their gifts for Claire. One mom is slicing the cake and placing them onto paper plates, while another starts filling cups with soda and passing them out. Claire scans the crowd of parents and kids, although she quickly wishes she had just kept her gaze on the rainbow floor. Because there he is, Ezzy’s dad. Looking lost as he scans the crowd himself for his son. Claire’s stomach twists.

But she says nothing.

“Oh boy, looks like Ezzy must have been up in the clouds again,” Ezzy’s dad says to Claire’s mom with a chuckle. “I’ll go grab him. He probably needs his inhaler anyway from running around.”

“That’s fine, Rick. I’m sure he’s around,” Claire’s mother says, preoccupied with setting up all of Claire’s gifts neatly on the party table.

Ezzy’s dad walks into the playplace, and Claire watches as he calls out Ezzy’s name.

“Ezzy! Ezzy! Come on, it’s time for cake.”

Eva! Eva! Where are you?

Claire’s body shivers and she needs to sit down, or else she might fall over.

“Claire, honey, stop it with that look on your face,” her mother says, tidying the tissue

paper on one of the gifts. “Here, come sit down.” She pulls a chair out in the middle of the table in front of all of the gifts. Claire slowly walks over with the tiniest of steps and sits in the chair.

40 minutes? She doesn’t know anymore. The red numbers are too bright to look at.

All of the other kids and parents start to find spots at the table, with their slices of cake and sodas in hand. They all chatter excitedly. Leia and Xander are the only ones to sit next to her, and they mumble awkward “Happy Birthday”s. Claire can’t even nod in thanks.

“Attention, please.” The loudspeaker again, echoing throughout the building. “Ezzy Randolph, please report to your party’s table. Again, Ezzy Randolph, your father is looking for you.”

Oh my God, Eva, sweetheart. She’s not breathing. How long was she in the pool for? Why doesn’t she have her floaties on? Someone. Please. Does anyone know CPR?

Claire says nothing.

“Uh oh,” her mother says after the announcement ends. “Was anyone playing with Ezzy?”

The table is filled with various mumbles of kids defending themselves.

“Not really,” Gina says.

“He doesn’t like to play with us,” Ryan says.

“Did someone see if he went to the bathroom, or something?” one of the moms says, which is only met with more mumbles.

Then, from the front desk, comes Ezzy’s dad back to the table. And in his hand, the blue plastic car. He looks calm, but his hand is gripping the toy much too tight.

“Is everything alright?” Claire’s mother asks.

“I looked all around. I can’t find him,” he says, plainly. He lifts the car up so the whole table can get a good look. Claire holds her own hand tightly.

“I did find Winston, though,” Ezzy’s dad says. His eyes scan the crowd of kids and parents, seriously. “Who saw him last? Was anyone playing with him?”

Who was watching her? Claire? Claire. Why didn’t you say anything? What is wrong with you? God, what’s happening? Is my baby going to die?

“I saw him in the tunnels, I think,” Leia says. Some of the other kids chime in.

“Yeah, but then Ryan told him no baby toys were allowed in the tunnels,” Xander says.

“I did not!” Ryan says, whining and looking up to his mother next to him. Ryan’s mother glares at him. Claire looks over to Ezzy’s dad, whose face has changed into an angry frown, which looks like a strange contortion on his normally jolly face.

“Ryan. What did you do?” Ryan’s mother says, sternly.

“Nothing!”

The party is silent for a moment, until Ezzy’s dad speaks again.

“I found Winston near one of the tunnels. Did anyone see where he went after that?”

Why didn’t you tell us, Claire? Why?

Her classmates look at each other, shrugging and mumbling “I don’t know.” And then, Claire can see Luca’s eyes widen from where he sits across from her.

“Claire!” His hand jolts up and points straight at her.

And now you're not even going to speak at all? Your sister is dead and you won't talk to me?

Claire's heart is racing and her stomach is twisting and twirling. She can feel her mother's hands on her shoulders. It should be comforting, but instead it feels like she's being restricted. Trapped.

“What?” Ezzy's dad says.

“Claire was pointing to the ball pit earlier,” Luca says. “Maybe she was playing with Ezzy.” The entire table turns and stares at Claire. They stare at the one little girl in the entire place that knows anything, who also happens to be the one little girl that cannot speak.

“They stare at the one little girl that knows anything, who also happens to be the one little girl who cannot speak.”

“Honey,” her mother says, and Claire can hear the strain and tightness in her voice. She doesn't like being called honey by her mother. “I know you don't like talking, but we really need to make sure Ezzy isn't lost somewhere.”

“Don't worry,” Ezzy's dad says, stepping closer to Claire's chair at the table, his voice much gentler than her mother's. “You're not in trouble. I'm just worried Ezzy might need his inhaler somewhere.”

Why didn't you say something? Why can't you talk to us? You need to say something, Claire. You need to speak.

But she did say something, on that day. At Eva's 5th birthday party, when everyone went inside for cake, but Claire told her little sister that they could spend a few more minutes in the pool. They were big girls, now, they could have some sister time while everyone got settled inside. Eva had grinned in that way only she could.

“Thank you, sissy!”

And it was safe, of course it was safe. Everyone could just look through the curtains behind the screen door to the backyard and see Eva, safe and sound.

But there was a present that Claire needed to give to Eva right away. Claire was going to wait until they did all the presents, but it was so perfect for their last few minutes of pool time—new unicorn pool floaties. She was going to love them. Claire made her sit on the steps of the pool, as she took off Eva's current floaties and told her to close her eyes.

“Okay, wait right there! I'm gonna give you an early present!” Claire said as she dashed into the house.

The last thing she heard was Eva's squeals of excitement.

“I love you, sissy!”

She bumped into her mother in the huge crowd of people in the house.

“Hey, where's Eva? It's about to be time for cake!” her mother asked.

Claire couldn't wait, so excited she couldn't get proper words out. She had always been soft spoken and nervous. Talking in general was difficult. As she ran past her mom, she was able to get out “Hold on! My present!”

“Alright, alright. Make it quick!” her mother yelled after her.

Claire scrambled to grab the present from under her bed and raced down the stairs and towards the door to the backyard again. She swung the door open and then slammed it closed.

“Here it is, Eva! Eva—”

She was in the pool, face down, not floating. Her floaties. Claire had taken off her floaties. God, her sister was in the pool.

Claire dropped the gift. She ran back into the house as fast as she could, bursting into the living room. She tried to scream, she really did, but nothing came out. There were so many people in the house—relatives, friends, neighbors, kids running around. All she had to do was reach out and grab one of the adults. But everything she tried to say came out as a whisper.

“Um, help. Help. My sister. Eva,” she said, to no one in particular, staring at the crowd all around the house. One of her mother's friends in the neighborhood noticed her.

“What, Claire? What's wrong?”

“Eva,” was all she could say.

“What?”

“Eva. Please. Help,” Claire whispered, tears beginning to stream. If only the woman had known that Eva was outside alone, she could have connected everything. If only Claire could have said the word, “pool,” maybe it would have been enough. But instead, the woman didn't understand. The woman took Claire's hand and looked for her mother, but by the time they found her and she asked Claire where on earth Eva was, it was too late.

And Claire never spoke again.

What good were her words if they couldn't save Eva?

The bright lights of the playplace burn Claire's eyes, as they glaze over and she remains silent. Her mother's hands feel like they weigh a thousand pounds.

“Claire. Did you see Ezzy go into the ball pit?” Claire's mother says, tightening her grip on Claire's shoulders. “Where did he go next?”

Everyone looks at her. Her mother, from behind Claire where she can feel her gaze piercing into her. Ezzy's dad, with worry and pity. The parents, with concern and confusion. And her classmates. They stare, they stare, they stare. Waiting for the words.

But they don't come.

Claire says nothing.

One hour.

Like Mother, Like Daughter

VICTORIA MARTIN

The threat of my becoming taunts my ear,
fiercely bubbling up in bitterness.
Resentment aches the cavity to hear,
sickly frailty and sore helplessness.

Slow decay is just another doom,
subjugated under passing time.
I morph into maternal martyrdom;
I feel the shock of the supposed sublime.

I am my Father's child, down to my bones,
the mechanics: the structure and the frame,
but how my gloom mimics my mother's own;
how my joy resounds her maiden name.

Within the fervent yearning after more,
and also in contentment over less,
her nature flows into the reservoir;
I strain and feel my ego acquiesce.

In the rawest wounds, where she resides,
contempt melts into comfort like a crutch.
Her timid fervor sleeps within my side;
my temper juts forth at the slightest touch.

Perhaps I'm stuck in distraught suspicion
of sheep's attire, of woman held captive.
I may repress my own intuition;
a slow decay is life that's longer lived.

I am my father's child, down to my bones,
the mechanics: the structure and the frame,
but I am my mother's daughter—
in the flesh that the bones give shape to.





Nomad
Charcoal and Oil Painting by Isabelle Rigsbee



Morning at the Marsh (Left) + Colors of the Afternoon (Right)
Gouache Painting by Annabelle Acord



I See You Better in the Dark

LILY MCNAMARA

I love you like I love my childhood bedroom in the dark, its forms and furniture faithful, familiar. Like I love the room so known to me that I can wander its narrow space with eyes closed, but still touch time-calloused fingers to its surfaces anyway. I don't see it much anymore. I don't often miss the feeling of a too-small twin bed, feet pressed flat against the footboard, of whispered siblings' voices keeping me from sleep. But I still remember every shape. The bedpost and the cushioned chair that I pass my hands across to navigate the shadowed space. I love you when I close my eyes in the dark and follow that footpath worn flat in the carpet, knowing those steps around the desk and over the laundry basket and past the overburdened bookshelf, careful to avoid the sleeping cat, will take me back to you.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: NOAH BARKER

Photographed by Caroline Reynolds

BEYOND EXPECTATIONS



Always searching to find something new in every work he observes or creates, Noah Barker seeks out and elevates unexpected narratives in any medium.



WRITTEN BY TAYLOR MERNER

The work of an artist is never truly done. The creative mind searches ceaselessly for inspiration and outlets to share our innermost thoughts. As I sit with Noah Barker in the ceramics studio on campus, I can see the dedication and mindset of an artist coming to life. Noah is an individual who admires artistic creativity in all forms, whether through sculpture, graphic design, fashion, or any other medium.

Noah was raised in a household that encouraged him to explore and express himself as an individual, to defy expectations, and become whatever it was that he decided for himself. “It was definitely my parents that really nurtured me to be who I want to be,” he says, “I know a lot of people get raised to be kind of similar to their parents, but I was different as they raised me to be

my own person, completely separate from them.” Noah was grateful to be raised in an environment with parents who supported his goals and artistic ambitions, with many mentors who helped him take advantage of opportunities for growth in his talents.

Noah truly discovered his love and aptitude for the arts in high school. He was able to attend advanced art classes and participate in his school’s fine arts center. Since attending Anderson University to study graphic design, he’s grown even more in both his creation of and appreciation for art. When I asked about classes or professors that stood out to him in his journey at Anderson he said, “Definitely Professor Tim Speaker. His History of Graphic Design class was really one of the most influential in my

academic career here, just because of the raw emotions that I felt during the class.” He went on to add, “A lot of design classes here have just helped me to really think about design and art in general before making it.” This is something that Noah speaks on very passionately as I sit with him in the studio, the importance of really looking to understand art beyond its first use or first thought. When talking about how he hopes people are able to view his own pieces, he says, “People need to think about art before interacting with it, because that will lead to people thinking about it way beyond being in

its presence. That’s how I want people to think.”

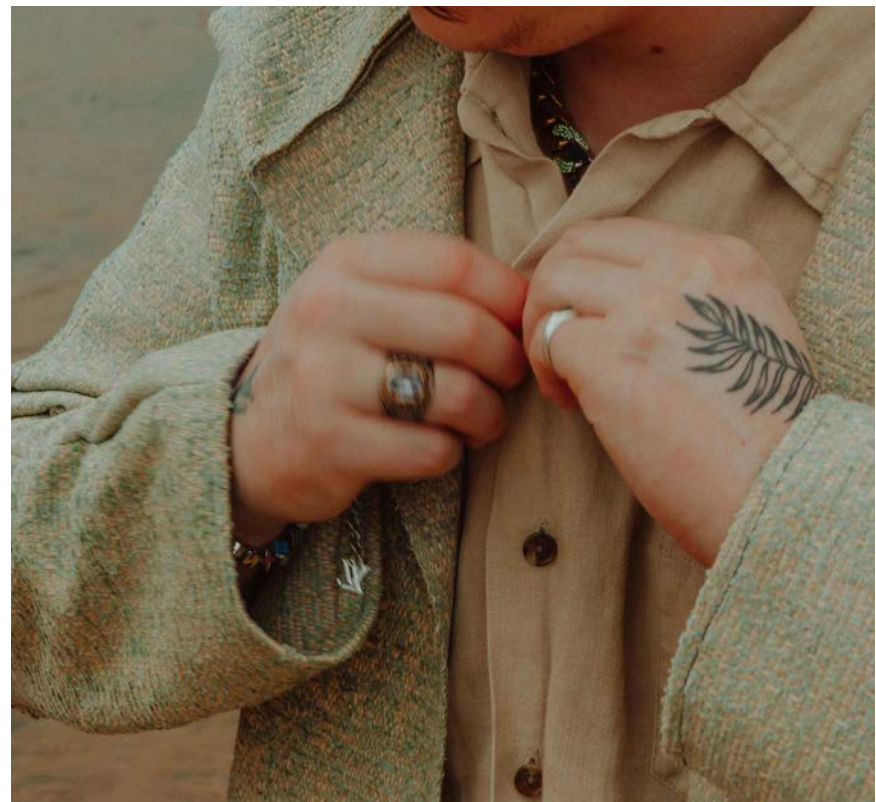
For Noah, inspiration can be found in anything, across all mediums of the arts. He pursues art because it has the ability to inspire people in a way nothing else can and in ways that can’t always be anticipated or predicted. Noah likes to find inspiration for his work outside of the medium that he is working with, such as using a piece he admires in ceramics to inspire his next graphic creation. Pushing the boundaries of what is expected of art is what drives him toward personal success in the field. One of the artists that Noah admires the

*“I did this, and I think that you can too.
No matter how old you are, or how much
experience you have.”*

most worked in the field of fashion, Virgil Abloh, who helped to inspire him to explore and create within this medium as well. “He never seemed to stop making, and he also was a huge supporter of young artists and culturally different artists. His main focus was, ‘I did this, and I think that you can too. No matter how old you are, or how much experience you have.’”

When he’s not spending countless hours in a studio of some sort working on his latest inspiration, one can often find Noah enjoying the fresh air with his friends in Greenville’s skateboarding community. Noah has the privilege of

serving in ministry with eighth and ninth-grade boys. “I’ve known most of them since kindergarten. They’re crazy, but I love them,” he says with a smile. The student ministry has inspired Noah in many ways, which is why he hopes to find a position doing design work for them following graduation. He hopes to spend time serving and using his talent to create in the ministry that has become such a big influence in his own life, before possibly looking to earn his master’s and work in the field of fashion. Noah hopes that with his work in the future, he will be able to push a different narrative than expected and introduce people to a new way of looking at art.



the work of an artist



is never truly done.

See Noah's Work

COFFEE BEAN BAG JACKET 90

Men's Clothing

CHERUB PLATE 91

Ceramic Stoneware

3 SET OF CUPS WITH BLACK SLIP 91

Ceramic Stoneware

ABSTRACT SAKE JAR 92

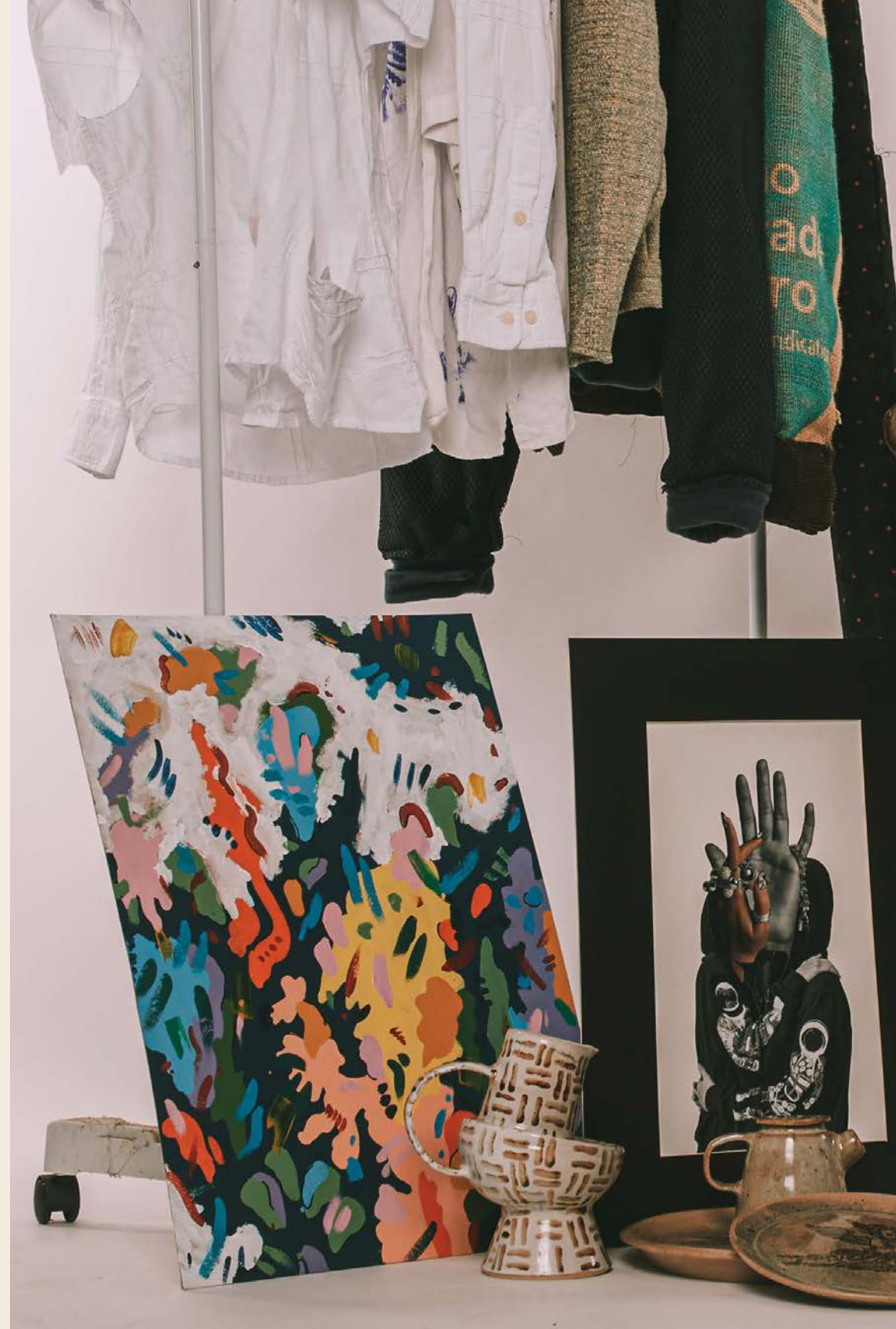
Ceramic Stoneware

AMONG OUR WORLD 92

Acrylic on Skateboard

ANGELIC PLATTER 93

Ceramic Stoneware









Digital Rainfall
Spray Paint, Pastel, and Acrylic Painting by Tyson Gentry

Skateboarding

MAGGIE BARR

Three days before Christmas, my dad knocks on my door.

I'm home from college for Christmas break, and we haven't talked yet, not really. What is there to talk about besides what we disagree on, now that I'm growing into myself, my own person, yet still his daughter? Now that I live away, and I keep accidentally calling my college dorm home? Now that I quit softball and told him I didn't have time to play catch or join Intramurals?

I'm my own person, I often find myself telling him. *I have my own beliefs, my own opinions*. At that part in the argument, my dad always sets his coffee cup down and walks away, shaking his head and sighing.

To him, me as my "own person" and me as his daughter cannot coexist.

But when he cracks open my childhood bedroom door and asks me to go skateboarding, I find myself saying yes, without a question. He bought me a skateboard one summer many months ago, and I took a slight interest in it, but it never amounted to anything much. Just a few times skating in the driveway. But on this day, even though it's strange, kind of awkward, and sudden, I don't hesitate to put my shoes on and head out the door.

*"But on this day, even though it's strange,
kind of awkward, and sudden, I don't hesitate
to put my shoes on and head out the door."*

We drive in his truck, not to school, not to softball practice, not to get ice cream after church. We drive to the biking trail near our house, and he pulls out two skateboards.

When I can't get my helmet on, he helps me, tightening the straps.

He shows me how to balance, how to push off and start going, and how to stop. I keep trying to speed up on the board and stop smoothly, but I can't get it right. Instead, I leap from my skateboard with no technique but a quick prayer I won't tumble to my death. My dad can't stop laughing.

When we start cruising together down the biking trail, so many people look at us strangely. At first, I'm confused why no one is smiling or waving as we pass by. And

then I remember that we are a large 50-year-old man and his 20-year-old daughter on skateboards on a biking trail. We try to wave at an old couple, but they glare at us, so we speed away giggling together like a couple of school kids who just got in trouble. One young boy walking with his grandparents looks at us with stars in his eyes, so I smile at him especially.

My dad keeps racing ahead of me, letting muscle memory guide him. Every time he gets too far, he turns back and waits for me to catch up. I can't hide my smile.

We don't talk most of the time we ride, but it's different than the usual no talking. The silence is welcomed, cherished, even.

When we get to the end of the trail, we walk to the nearby gas station and he buys me a Gatorade. I almost can't stand it. How long has it been since we drank Gatorade outside together?

We sit on the bench at the end of the trail, and it's quiet while we sip our Gatorades. We stare at the passing cars, and I keep looking up to the trees above us.

"Did I ever tell you about the time I broke my skateboard at a competition?" he says, suddenly, like he was trying to convince himself to say it.

"You did skateboarding competitions?" I say, putting my Gatorade down. A classic interaction—he drops some random seemingly-important story that you'd think he'd tell his kids years ago and then is shocked when we have no idea.

"Of course. I told you that," my dad says. He always says that.

"Nope. What happened?" I say.

"I was 16. My friends and I would always road trip places for competitions," he says. I interrupt him before he can continue.

"Did you ever win?"

My dad looks down at his board and then back up to me.

"Nope. Always choked," he says. "I could land everything at the skatepark, but never at competitions."

The words are simple, and he says them without question, but something in them shatters my heart. All I can say is, "Aw."

"At the one competition I'm thinking of, I completely broke my board trying to do a trick," he continues. "And afterwards this pro skateboarder, Mark Lake, took me aside and started just giving me all these boards he sold."

"Woah, really? That's actually really cool," I say.

"Yeah," he says. "Wish I still knew where they were."

After finishing our Gatorades, we start back down the biking trail to where we parked. This time, I'm convinced that I can somehow master an ollie with close to zero prior experience or practice. My dad tries to explain how to do it, but of course he can't, it came naturally to him.

"It's hard to explain. You jump, but take the board with you," he says, turning his board around to me.

"Wow, thanks."

"Well, I haven't actually done one in a while," he admits. As soon as he says it, he immediately attempts the trick. He fails a couple of times, and I take my turn to laugh at him this time. It looks a little ridiculous, seeing my tall, graying father on that tiny board.

But then, for just a moment, he does it. His board leaves the ground for just a second, and he flies up with it. When he lands, the board slams against the pavement with a wonderful, solid *thunk*. I gasp with excitement, and he looks up at me.

"Did you see that?" he says, his voice clear and excited, much different from his usual mumble. "That's probably the first time I've ollied in at least twenty years!"

His joy is infectious. It's not often I see him smile and laugh like, like—

Like my dad is not my dad anymore, like he's just a kid. 16 years old, standing in front of me on a skateboard. I can hear my grandma calling him in for dinner and

*"Like my dad is not my dad anymore, like he's just a kid.
16 years old, standing in front of me on a skateboard."*

bandaging his skinned knees. I can hear her scolding him for not wearing a helmet. I can see my mom rolling her eyes as he rolls up to the front of her house with flowers. I can hear my aunt arguing with him at the table, telling him to quit skateboarding and study more.

And I can see that little 16-year-old kid, shaking as he steps up to the ramp on the day of the competition. I can see his friends in the crowd, screaming, *Come on, Barr! You got it!* I can see him close his eyes, breathing in and out. I see him dive down into the ramp, and I hear that awful *crack* of the board. I can see the tears he's desperately trying to hide, until a man walks up and pulls him aside, just to give him a bunch of skateboards. I can see his awkward grin, as he carries a pile of skateboards in his arms, back to his friends, who cheer and laugh in awe.

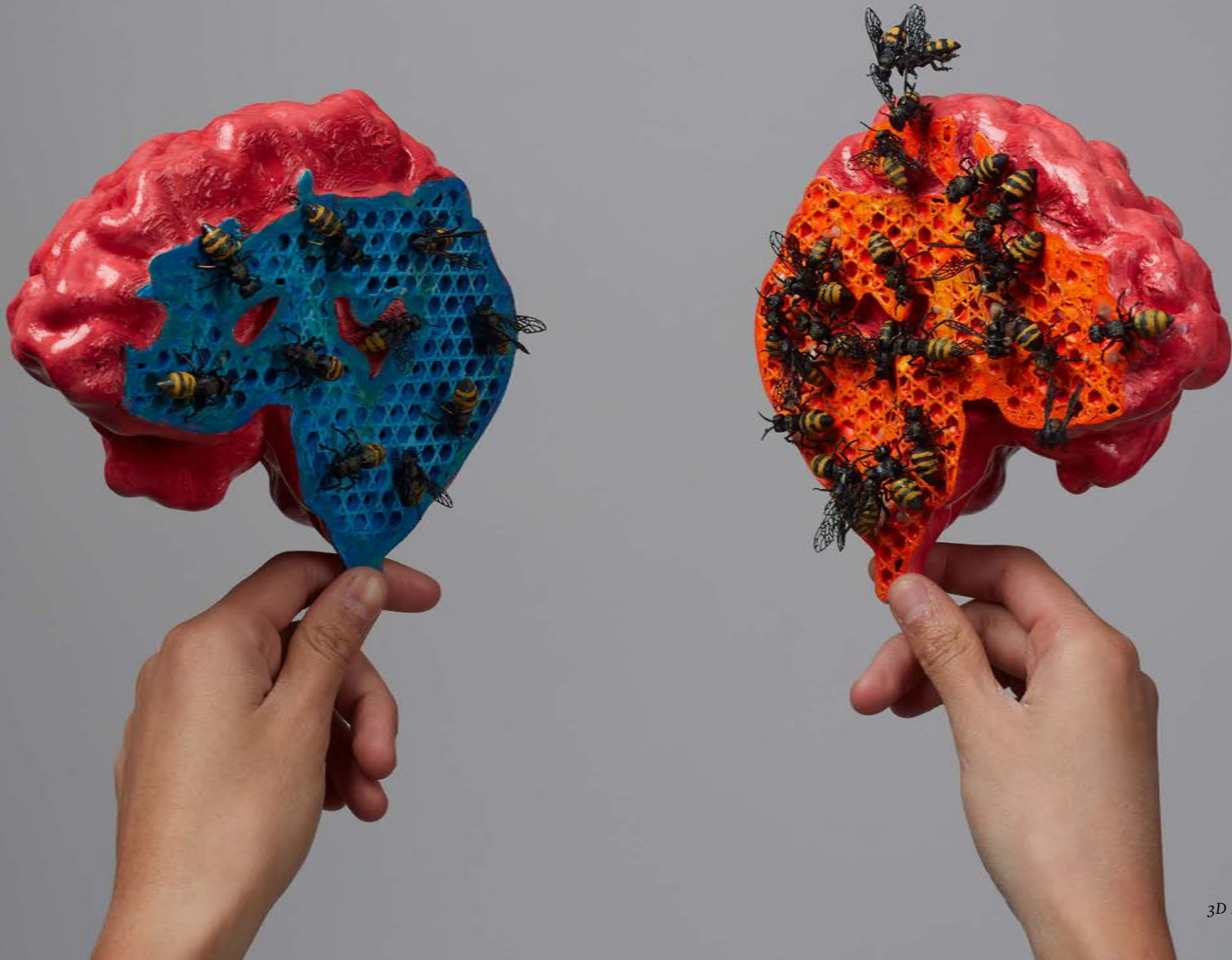
I see him. I hear him. A person.

His own person, yet still my father.

Suddenly, I want to cry. But instead, I laugh. And that's it. We ride back to the truck on our skateboards and head home.

Three days later, it's Christmas. There's a large gift under the tree that appeared very recently.

It's the last present I open, and of course, it's a skateboard.





Feminist

CARSON CAWTHON

“Who says girls can’t do it all?”

“Who says they have to?”



Dream
Sarah Garrick

Confessions of a Former Good Girl

MAGGIE FITCH

Once I lied about saying
A bad word when I was six.
My mom wouldn't let me go
Trick or treating but forced my
Brother, who cried the whole time.

I wrote an angry letter to the
Tooth fairy for taking my pink
Tooth box when I was eight.
I waited three long days before she
Returned the box under my pillow.

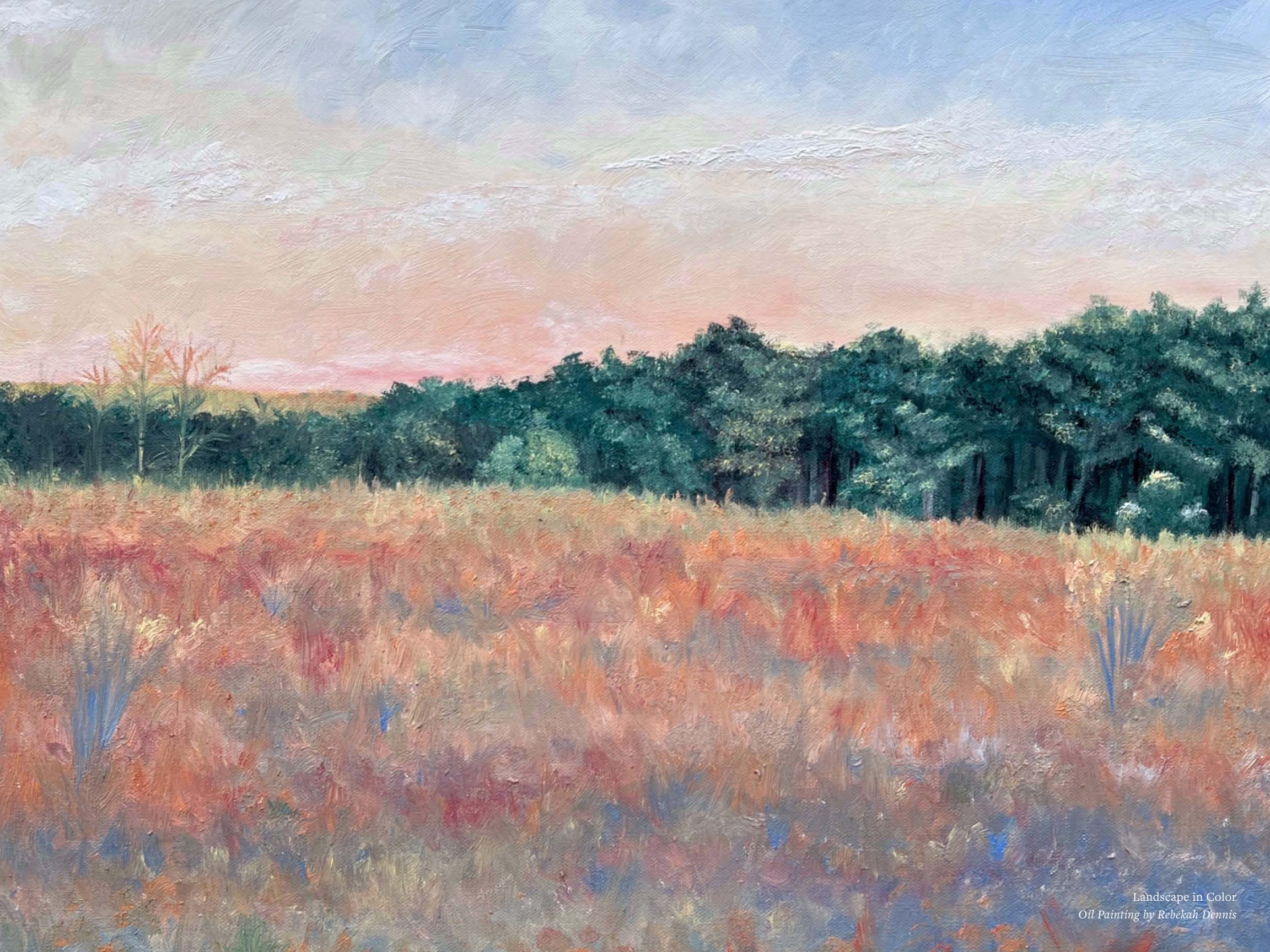
When I was ten I kicked
A guy where it hurts most
For no reason. He fell to his
Knees, his face scrunched together.
I didn't know any better.

At the age of seventeen my Jeep
Wouldn't start, and I had a huge meltdown
In front of the local Ingles. I called
My dad as I punched the steering wheel.
He said I was being dramatic.

I had my first kiss at twenty-one
With a boy who convinced me to
Lie to my parents more than once.
Then found out he was on Tinder,
With two other girls on the side.

All this could have been avoided
If I had not lied when I was six.





Landscape in Color
Oil Painting by Rebekah Dennis

PRE

CHOTIC

is the flow

WRITTEN BY ADAM JOBSON

Precious is the Flow

ADAM JOBSON

“Is God gonna flood the whole world again?” whispers my littlest brother, Jeremiah. Like many at Beacon Presbyterian Church tonight, he is having trouble falling asleep.

Mom brings him into a hug. “No, baby,” she replies, softly, “remember? God made a promise to Noah. I don’t know how big this storm is, but we know we can believe in God’s promises. Right?”

Jeremiah nods, seemingly not fully convinced. Normally the sound of rain is comforting, but this is angry rain, desperate to get into the building. “It just sounds like enough to flood the world, that’s all.”

“That’d take a lot more rain than this, dummy!” Isaiah snaps, earning a tired glare from Mom.

“You will not speak to your brother that way. It is hurtful, it is inappropriate, and I expect an apology. And Jeremiah is not dumb. There’s nothing wrong with asking questions.” She finishes her lecture by planting a kiss on Jeremiah’s head.

Isaiah grumbles an apology and goes back to picking at the carpet.

Mom turns to me with a stifled yawn. “Faith, could you go see if your dad is going to come to bed soon?”

My dad, the head pastor, is still tending to his flock, while Mom, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and I have been doing our best to get comfortable on the floor of a Sunday school classroom.

“Sure thing, Mom.” I tiptoe out of the room for the benefit of others sleeping here, but I needn’t have bothered. The pounding of the rain easily drowns out the sound of my footsteps.

—

The Sunday before the flood, Dad preached on Noah and the Ark. He said, “We live in an age when people want to tell you that the Bible is filled with nice fairy tales for children.” You could hear people in the pews murmuring their agreement as he continued. “Even as we claim all of scripture as profitable for teaching, for reproof, for training in righteousness, we find ourselves starting to become convinced of the notion that stories like this one aren’t really all that important. Brothers and sisters, if you remember nothing else from today’s message, remember this: Bible stories—even the ones you’ve heard since preschool—are a part of scripture.

They are *always* important. The world delegitimizes these stories because it weakens the Church. Stories like Noah’s Ark remind us what we, as the people of God, must always stand for, even in a world gone backwards. Do not let the world tear you away from what is true.”

I couldn’t help but think of my friend, Raven, who I’d spotted sitting just a few pews behind me and my brothers. She and I grew up going to Sunday school together, but nowadays she only sometimes showed up for Sunday morning services, when her mom managed to drag her along. I mostly saw her at school, and it was already a good month into summer vacation. The last time we’d spoken, she’d told me that she didn’t know if the Bible was all true.

“I know you probably didn’t wanna hear me say that,” she’d said, running one of her shiny black nails over the grooves in her lunch tray, “but, Faith, we’re officially high schoolers now. Don’t you think it’s time we started thinking for ourselves?”

I was terrified to silence, so I’d just nodded and gone back to eating my lukewarm mashed potatoes. Since then, I’d never mentioned it to anybody. Mom and Dad already thought Raven was a bad influence as it was, what with her getting that blue streak in her hair and watching so many horror movies. They didn’t really understand what kind of a person she was, though. She loved to laugh, but she never laughed at people, only jokes. She was uppity with adults, but gentle with kids. At school, I used to see her helping panicked sixth-graders find their way around, making them laugh so they could forget about the perils of middle school for a moment. Most adults didn’t know what she was like, but I knew that under all the rebellion and permanent-marker wrist tattoos, she was a good-hearted, loving person.

As Dad closed his sermon, I turned around to wave shyly to Raven. She waved back with a half-smile, then averted her eyes. Something was bothering her.

I followed her out of the sanctuary after the benediction.

“Hi, Raven. It’s good to see you again.” I tried to keep my greeting short and sweet, so as not to stress her out. It didn’t really work.

“Hey,” she said, “yeah, Mom really wants me to come to church more often. Anyway, I think we’re leaving soon, so . . . see you next week, maybe?”

She quickly turned away and marched through the dispersing crowd, leaving me dumbfounded. Obviously, she was upset by something, but normally I could at least get her to *talk* to me. At least, from the sound of it, her mom would drag her back here next

week, so I could follow up then.

That very same afternoon, the rain started, and nobody really thought anything of it. We just went about our usual Sunday business, eventually falling asleep to the sound of the downpour, beating its fists against the rooftops.

—

Eventually, we stop hearing the rain. Mom says it's possible the entire building has been submerged. The windows, of course, are boarded up, so we can't see for ourselves, but even so, it's a miracle that nothing has leaked through. Just as we were promised.

Raven and I have grown closer again over the past few days of isolation. At every meal, we sit together. Joseph Parish sits with us, too, but he's never been much of a talker, so Raven and I are forced to bond as we mutually carry the conversation. Whenever I'm sent to fetch food from our stockpile in the gymnasium, Raven comes with me as an extra pair of hands, mostly just to chat. It definitely slows down the task at hand, but it's so nice to be speaking to each other like humans again, laughing about the time in third grade she glued her hand to her head and complaining about Mr. Pratt, the grumpy history teacher we had to endure through seventh and eighth grade. Neither of us has brought up our lunch conversation from before—in this situation, the school cafeteria seems very far away, and Raven's dances with doubt a trifling matter from a century ago. And right now, she seems to finally be okay.

But two days after we sealed ourselves in, she pulls me into a stairwell with a serious look on her face. "I think I'm losing it, Faith," she says. "I don't think I was meant to be here."

"Where? Underwater?" I joke, hoping to God she'll laugh. "I mean, yeah, there's a reason we weren't made on day five with all of the fish."

Raven smiles half-heartedly, but her eyes glisten with a sadness I don't know how to interpret.

"I wanna tell you something, Faith," she says, after a pause. "But please, please don't freak out. I've never told anyone this before, and I'm scared, but . . . I just can't keep ignoring it."

I hesitate. Breathe. "You can tell me anything," I say, quietly.

—

The Monday before the flood, Dad flew out of bed and hurriedly roused Mom and me. I could barely make out most of what he was saying at the time, still very groggy and half-convinced I was dreaming. But even with my own eyes threatening to fall back shut at any moment, I could see the urgency in Dad's, and so I dutifully helped corral my little brothers.

"God sent me a dream last night," he said. "A flood is coming."

The rain had gotten wilder since the night before; I could barely see anything out of the front windshield, but somehow, perhaps purely by memory, Mom got us to the Publix parking lot. Dad sent out a mass email to the congregation from his phone while my little brothers and I helped Mom put food in the shopping cart to stock the church pantry.

I could tell the cashier was already eyeing our overstuffed cart even as we waited in line. Isaiah and Jeremiah, wrestling, bumped the precarious pile, causing four or five boxes of non-perishables to topple to the floor. With all five of us trained to respond to such emergencies, everything was back in the cart in a mere few seconds, but I could still sense Dad's mild annoyance that the cashier hadn't offered any help. He was already on thin ice, with an earring, a nose stud, and visible tattoos on his neck and arms, crawling out from beneath his too-big green polo shirt. His nametag read, "Dakota," a name fitting for a skinny twenty-something with dyed hair. His chest bore two round pins, one striped in blue, purple, and magenta, the other solid black with the words "he/him" across it. Insignia which, for our family, identified him among enemy forces.

"Did you find everything okay?" he teased, almost smiling. Dad did not laugh, and the cashier took the cue not to make eye contact any longer. Still, after we'd loaded everything back into the cart, Dad decided, with an air of valiance, to warn him of the approaching flood.

"We only have a week," he said. "It doesn't look like much now, but it'll come on fast. If the Lord is speaking to you right now, telling you to listen to me, then come to the church. You will be safe there."

Dakota the cashier laughed, just like the unbelievers who laughed at Noah, only his was a wide-eyed, nervous laugh; he looked like he thought my father might kill him. Dad could be kind of a scary man. He was tall, with broad shoulders, and when he got serious, he'd stand with his chest out and his brows furrowed and his face a little pink. I don't think he ever really tried to be menacing, but it certainly didn't always stop him. None of us knew what to do or say, so finally Dakota just said, "I'll keep it in mind," a little hoarsely. As we pushed the cart out the doors, I could see him sighing with his whole body behind us.

It's been over a day since the stairwell, and Raven is still somehow avoiding me.

Joseph Parish sits beside me in the fellowship hall, scribbling on a piece of paper. The Internet connection has been down since the first day, and Joseph, left without access to his favorite game, *Cookie Run*, has had to resort to drawing the characters and graphing out their abilities. He seems pretty absorbed in it though, only stopping occasionally to tap the eraser end of his pencil lightly against his temple, or using it to push up his short, dark hair.

"What did she say to you?" he asks nonchalantly, to my surprise. Joseph doesn't like being involved in other people's business. Usually when you hang out with him, he acts as if he only just happens to be in the same place as you, as if any moral support he happens to provide is a mere coincidence. I must have been acting *really* upset. I guess I am.

“I can’t tell you,” I finally say. “She told me in confidence.”

Joseph slides easily into the next question, not even looking up. “What did you say to her?”

“I didn’t say anything.” My head falls into my hands. “I just sat there, trying to find words, and I couldn’t bring anything to my brain, and I was so mad at myself that I just left. It must have really hurt her.”

Joseph tilts his head a little. “Hmm . . . yeah, probably. You should apologize.”

“I want to, I just haven’t been able to find her! Have you seen her since yesterday?”

“Passed her in the hall. She didn’t want to talk, and I didn’t really want to talk either, so we just nodded at each other.” He nods slightly, as if running through the memory in his head. “What are you going to say when you do find her?”

“I don’t know, but even if I did, I still couldn’t tell you, because it’s her business.”

“Ok.” He flips his paper to continue doodling, and I close my eyes, trying to rehearse my apology in my head.

I was taken aback, I might say, but I wanted to tell you it’s okay. I shouldn’t have left you like that, it was wrong of me. And I want you to know that I wasn’t upset at anyone but me.

“I hope you find her soon,” Joseph says quietly.

“Thank you.” I pause. “You’re a good friend.”

“Dakota the cashier laughed, just like the unbelievers who laughed at Noah, only his was a wide-eyed, nervous laugh; he looked like he thought my father might kill him.”

Dad figured the church might lose a lot of utilities in the storm, so on the Tuesday before the flood we stocked up on camping gear. At the sports supply store, we ran into the Parishes, Joseph desperately trying to maintain focus on his iPhone while his younger twin brothers, James and John, rocketed around him like freckle-faced meteors. Dad led the way over, extending a hand to Mr. Parish.

I waved hello to Joseph, but he was laser-focused on his phone. Instead of saying anything, I opted to ease to the side just far enough that I could see the screen. As I suspected, it was *Cookie Run: Kingdom*. Joseph finished a battle, then quickly looked up at me to raise a finger to his lips and point at his dad. *Don’t mention the game in front of him*. I understood—Glenn liked to be blissfully unaware of his son’s hobbies, and when he was made aware of them, he usually decided to try and restrict Joseph’s phone access again. So I just stood politely next to him, pretending not to take any interest.

You could say it was *Cookie Run* that brought me and Joseph closer together. We’d only kind of known each other in the way that kids in Sunday school usually do,

until Glenn Parish informed my dad, who informed me, that Joseph had been playing too many games on his phone during youth group and needed someone to engage him socially. Mr. Parish was not enthusiastic about *Cookie Run* in general; he seemed very concerned about how cute and cartoony the game was, not to mention how it always seemed to take priority over socializing with other boys his son’s age. So, about a year before the flood, Dad asked me to make friends with Joseph, and, naturally, I complied. He said it was hard for adopted kids, especially ones adopted from China, who looked different, to fit in.

I’d tried to get Joseph to join in on the youth group games at first, but he was much more interested in *Cookie Run*. So one day I asked him about that instead, and got the most thorough, in-depth explanation I’ve ever gotten since I asked Dad what “predestination” meant. Talking (or, more accurately, listening) to Joseph about his favorite game seemed to make him much happier than being dragged into another game of Four Corners. Raven had already mostly stopped coming to youth group by this point, but on the rare occasions when she was there, she’d sit with us too. She didn’t seem to think much of *Cookie Run*, but she enjoyed pointing out the characters she thought looked the coolest, a pastime which Joseph gracefully tolerated.

Dad didn’t like that I was encouraging Joseph to avoid the youth games, but I suggested that maybe as he got more comfortable with us, we could get him to participate more. After pondering this for a while, Dad had nodded his agreement. “I guess he is a special kid. I’ll explain to Glenn.”

Mom had hugged me from behind. “It’s sweet of you to make friends with that boy,” she’d said. “I’m proud of you, sweetie.” Afterwards, I mostly felt kind of gross.

—

I sweep the hallways, poking my head in every classroom, racking my brain for all the hiding spots Raven used to go for when we played hide and seek here as kids. No luck.

I grew up here. My dad is the head pastor. I should know every corner of this building, and yet somehow, Raven is nowhere to be found. We always considered Beacon Presbyterian to be a pretty small church, but now it feels impossibly big.

Maybe she’s just been moving around, I delude myself. Maybe if I just do another round I’ll run into her, and I can apologize, and I can promise to never run away from her again.

Throwing open a door without a thought, I finally look up and find myself in the very same stairwell where I left her to feel hopeless and unwanted and unloved. Dizzy, I barely avoid collapsing and instead lower myself into a sitting position. I am sobbing before I am down.

The Thursday before the flood, I sat in the fellowship hall working on a big signboard to post outside of the church. Mrs. Pelling, the organist, was holding an earnest conversation with my dad over in the corner.

“I’m very sorry, Diane, and I’m doing all I can to change her mind.”

"I don't know what I'll do if she won't come to the church. Have you told her her grandmother is worried sick about her?"

"Of course I have," he said, placing a hand on her shoulder, "and from what I hear, you've told her that a great many times yourself. Don't blame yourself, Diane."

"I blame that boy," Mrs. Pelling said, bitterly. "I just don't understand why she's refusing to come here."

I was surprised to hear that Mary Grace Pelling still lived nearby. Less than a year ago, she came to every church event we had. She sang in the choir, helped in the nursery, showed up to every church work day. Even Raven looked up to her. After she stopped coming to church and everybody stopped talking about her, I assumed she had moved away. The adults wouldn't tell me any details.

"We always considered Beacon Presbyterian to be a pretty small church, but now it feels impossibly big."

My dad glanced around the room, and I averted my gaze.

"She is pretty far along, you know, Mrs. Pelling. I believe she's afraid it might . . . happen."

"Well, of course it might, but I'm sure Ken Morris will be here, and he's delivered plenty of babies before. Besides, it's not like there's any other choice!"

"It's a sensitive situation, Diane. You know that," Dad said tenderly. I didn't dare turn back around, but I could imagine his reassuring face, the firmness of his hand returning to her shoulder. "And . . . I believe she's also afraid of what people will say."

When Mrs. Pelling spoke again, she had gotten herself a little more under control. "If you ask me," she said, softly, "it's something to be proud of. She can prove in front of everyone that she did the right thing. Don't you agree, Pastor?"

"I understand, Diane," Dad said. "I'm doing the best I can."

I cry in the stairwell for several minutes. The air feels staler every day we spend in here, and after running around in circles, I can hardly breathe. Through raspy breaths, I swim through the fog in my mind, trying to grasp some sort of next step. There's no way her mom knows she's missing yet, otherwise she'd be panicking too. If I get her mom involved, Raven will get yelled at so much she won't be able to hold back her tears, and she'll go all red and quiet, willing them to stop. And I'll feel horrible. But I'm out of options.

I take one, two, three deep breaths and slowly raise myself up against the handrail. Raven's mom is probably helping to prepare dinner in the fellowship hall by now.

Emerging into the hallway, I start to pick up speed again before bumping into Joseph, who comes to a full stop and stares at me. I double over, still out of breath.

"You've been crying . . . a lot," Joseph observes. "Why?"

"I can't . . . find her . . ." I wheeze. For perhaps the first time ever, I am unable to maintain eye contact with Joseph, as he looks straight at me with what must be concern.

"Raven?"

I nod.

"Not anywhere?"

I gesture helplessly at him. "I don't know where else to look!" The atmosphere in here is suffocating. It takes all the resolve I have not to burst into tears again. "I guess it makes sense I can't find her; I doubt she even wants me to."

"I don't think she's just hiding from you," Joseph says, softly.

I raise my head. "What do you mean by that?"

"Well . . ." He starts to fidget with his hoodie strings, trying to summon the words he's looking for. "When one person does something to hurt you, they did something wrong. But when everyone keeps hurting you in the same way, it means there must be something wrong with you. Like . . . like you feel unwanted, or like you don't belong."

I remember Raven's words from yesterday: "*I don't think I was meant to be here.*"

"In times like that," he goes on, furrowing his eyebrows more and more as he tries to get through each sentence, "the only thing you can do is find yourself someplace nobody else will go so you can just . . . exist without feeling that way."

I stiffen with realization. "Oh my god, Joseph. I know where she is."

"When one person does something to hurt you, they did something wrong. But when everyone keeps hurting you in the same way, it means there must be something wrong with you."

The day before the flood, a silver sedan I didn't recognize pulled into the church parking lot. The church was unrecognizable, too, boarded up like it was full to bursting with something dangerous. Dotting the lawn, underneath pop-up canopies, were signs, like the one I'd made, warning passersby of the disaster that was about to befall them. At the time, the rain was still only a light drizzle.

A woman stepped out of the car, already glaring at my dad, and instantly strode right to him. "What the hell do you think you're doing?" she demanded, pointing a finger at him. "Why did one of your buses come to pick up my mother today?" My father opened his

mouth to speak, but she wasn't finished. "You know how much this church means to her," the woman yelled, voice breaking now. "How *dare* you try to drag her out of her home, in her condition, all to play a part in your delusional little game?"

"Mrs. Gardner, please—" my father raised his arms defensively.

"Well, she's not coming, you hear me?"

"Betty should make the choice for herself—"

"She *did!*" screamed Ms. Gardner, throwing her hands in the air. "She saw how scared I was for her, how scared her *grandson* was for her. She realized we weren't coming, and she wants to be with us, even in spite of all the things *you* told her would happen."

For a split second, I thought I saw my dad get angry. But he inhaled slowly, deeply, and then, when he was sure Ms. Gardner was done talking, he spoke placatingly. "If that's the choice she has made, we can't force anyone. We will pray for her safety."

She laughed in his face—"Yeah, I bet you will!"—then turned smartly on her heel, walking back to her car. As she lowered herself onto the seat, she called out, "Eli is doing great, by the way, despite your best efforts. Thank you so much for asking!" The car door slammed shut, and Ms. Gardner sped off.

Dad pinched the bridge of his nose. I squirmed uncomfortably. I hadn't realized that Betty Gardner, one of the oldest members of our church, even had a daughter. I wondered why she didn't also come to Beacon Presbyterian. "Dad, why do *you* think God gave you the dream?"

"It's not our place to ask why," he sighed, "only to carry out his will."

"Yeah . . ." I lowered my head, thought of another question, and tentatively looked back up. "Why didn't God tell anybody else?"

"Because he wants *us* to tell them, Faith. All we can do to help is to tell them the truth. If they refuse to trust us, there's nothing more to be done."

—

"I've never been in the attic before," Joseph comments as I drag him up the narrow stairway.

"I have," I say, "once."

When we were kids, in fifth grade, Raven dragged me out of Sunday school on a supposed bathroom break only to take me up these stairs. A sign on the doorway read "off-limits," for reasons we weren't sure of. It intrigued Raven and scared the heck out of me, but she insistently pulled me inside before I could turn back. What we saw there was frightfully ordinary. Just some old props from Christmas pageants and other forgotten relics. Terrified as I was of transgressing authority, even I couldn't help but be curious why we had been barred from such a mundane place. Maybe sometimes people set things off limits purely because they felt too important to be freely accessible. Or maybe it was just nice to be a part of something exclusive. Turning, I came face to face with a cardboard nativity scene and, feeling convicted, dashed right out of the attic, back to safety. When Raven

caught up to me, exasperated, she made me promise not to tell anyone about the attic. I had no problem agreeing, seeing as I never wanted to think about it again.

As soon as we reach the top of the stairs, I fling the door open and scramble inside, only to come to an abrupt halt. Something is different this time. Joseph narrowly avoids crashing into me, then looks up. His jaw drops as soon as he sees it.

In front of us is a circulation vent. The grate's been removed, and something has been used to smash through the boards. In other words, there's a gaping hole in the wall, and sunlight streaming in.

Joseph is the first of us to recover, cautiously approaching the vent to peer outside. "It's just about dry out there."

Dead set on finding Raven, I push past him to climb out of the vent, nearly losing my footing as I gingerly rest my weight on a slanted roof. "Be *very* careful," I warn, sliding out of the way. The orange sun hangs low over the town, and as Joseph emerges, he points out a rainbow in the distance.

I am overwhelmed by the feeling of cool air on my face, but Joseph looks towards the town below us. "Someone's playing music."

Listening very carefully, I hear it too. A woman singing, and someone playing simple chords on a guitar. It's "Nothing But the Blood of Jesus," an old favorite of the choir.

A nearby tree grants us passage to the still slightly damp ground. None of the buildings around us look damaged, but there are no lights on anywhere. If not for the sounds of worship drifting toward us, it would feel like standing in a ghost town.

A few blocks down, we discover the source: a little white house with a propped door, and a small huddle of people inside. Raven sits among them, as a young man with neat brown hair inspects her leg. Ms. Gardner is there, too, cradling a baby in her arms. I recognize the man playing the guitar as Dakota, the cashier. And seated to his right on an old piano bench is Mary Grace Pelling, positively glowing, singing just like she used to in the choir:

*Oh, precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know;
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

Raven spots us and waves, beckoning us over. Before she can say a word, I am apologizing profusely. "I shouldn't have been so afraid," I exclaim. "I'm so sorry for leaving you alone like that."

"It's okay, Faith. I know you didn't mean it. I was feeling a little lonely, and I thought I could piece my feelings back together if I just spent some time in the attic." She rubs her bruised knee. "That's when I noticed that there was a gap in the boards over one of the vents, and, uh . . . I got curious. I'm glad you came looking for me. You too, Joseph,"

she adds, nodding at him over my shoulder.

“It’s good to see you all again,” Mary Grace says.

The man who has been sitting with Raven extends his hand for me to shake. “My name’s Eli. I was out for an afternoon walk with Dakota here, and we saw your friend take a nasty tumble out of . . . well, it looked like she fell out of a vent. We brought her back here to get her patched up.”

“Eli is about to start his last year of nursing school,” Ms. Gardner proudly explains.

“I am overwhelmed by the feeling of cool air on my face, but Joseph looks towards the town below us. Someone’s playing music.”

“The baby,” Joseph asks, looking between Mary Grace and the child in Ms. Gardner’s arms, “is it yours?”

“She is.” Mary Grace smiles a little. “Her name is Olivia. Isn’t Mrs. Betty’s home lovely? When she found out how close I lived, she positively insisted that I come stay with her family during the power outage. Everyone’s been so kind.”

“You’re welcome to stay with us as long as you like,” Ms. Gardner adds. “You as well, Dakota. Mom loves having all of you here.” Eli squeezes Dakota’s hand.

I suddenly realize how clean the air feels, and take in a deep breath. “So . . . there was never a flood, then.”

Dakota snorts. “A flood? No. The storm got pretty nasty for a couple days, but as far as I know the only real casualty has been the power.”

I stand up, very suddenly. I have to get to the church.

“Where are you going?” Raven asks.

“I’ll be back,” I promise her, “but somebody has to tell them.”





Diluted *Film Photography by Faith Hyman*



Detached *Film Photography by Faith Hyman*



Triune
Clay Sculpture by Kaitey Threath

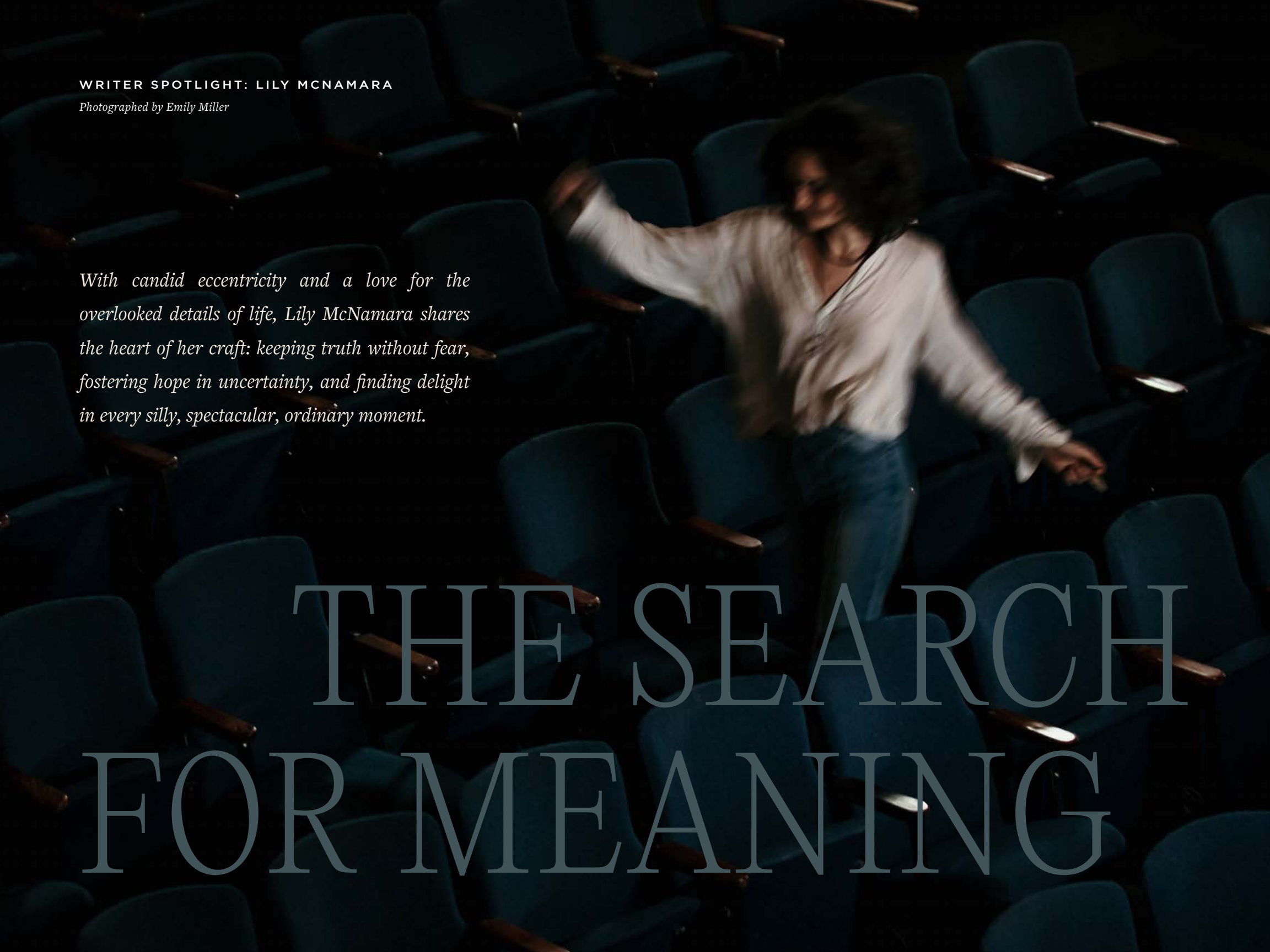


What the Rest Won't See
Charcoal Drawing by Joanna Lothers

Daughter

JADYN HOLT

I think I disappointed you
before I took my first breath

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, is captured in a candid, joyful moment as she dances in a dark theater. She is surrounded by rows of empty, blue upholstered seats. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting her movement against the dark background of the theater.

WRITER SPOTLIGHT: LILY MCNAMARA

Photographed by Emily Miller

With candid eccentricity and a love for the overlooked details of life, Lily McNamara shares the heart of her craft: keeping truth without fear, fostering hope in uncertainty, and finding delight in every silly, spectacular, ordinary moment.

THE SEARCH FOR MEANING

WRITTEN BY EMMA MILLER

The shaded basement door of Anderson's Springdale House swings open on a warm February evening. Lily stands in the doorway and greets me with a wide smile. As I follow her into the studio, she tells me about the countless late nights she's spent painting in this white brick-walled room. Excited, and a little frazzled, Lily tugs on the sleeve of her sweatshirt, which is emblazoned with the words "*Ivy Leaves 2021*," a memento from her very first year working on the Journal. We pass by a large, unfinished canvas, and Lily tells me about her most recent painting. It is a surreal and colorful mixed-media portrait of a woman surrounded by folded canvas cloth. As she speaks, Lily leads me to a small table in a corner of the room, the only surface free of stained paintbrushes and finished paintings.

Lily pursues two outlets of creativity, saying that visual art and writing both

"exercise the same muscle in my brain," as she explores the most recent thought or image that is turning over in her mind. While art was her focus growing up, Lily's journey as a writer began at Anderson. Her first writing class, Intro to Creative Writing, "snowballed" her passion for something that, in the past, was merely a distant ambition. Though she found great joy in the work, it was always a struggle. In her fiction classes, Lily was often challenged by her professor Dr. Teresa Jones, who would ask, "Why are you writing like someone is reading over your shoulder?" This fear of being truthful began to change when she took a creative nonfiction course. Lily fiddles with her dark, curled hair. "I have a terrible memory," she laughs, which makes it hard for her to write about the past. "I was freaking out for the course . . . and [I thought] nothing interesting happens





to me,” but “nonfiction rolled around in a crazy time of my life.” In the wake of her recent diagnosis of ADHD, writing challenged her to be vulnerable and share what she was processing. Lily explains that “looking inward didn’t hurt so much anymore.” As a “loud introvert,” and as someone who’s always struggled with her self-worth, she says it can be hard to show weaknesses, yet writing nonfiction has stretched her to explore personal or taboo ideas she was too afraid to express. “I was hunting for meaning in everything,” she says, “and I was trying to connect all those dots.” When she writes, Lily reflects on her memories until she feels a pinch in her chest, which means “that something’s good and complex . . . a feeling of certainty.” It is her tell-tale sign that her new-found idea needs to be written.

Since that challenge from her professor, Lily has striven to write her personal experiences candidly and unashamedly, sharing her honest thoughts, emotions, struggles, and experiences. Her staple is to find meaning in the details of seemingly insignificant moments. She realized, “I’m most happy when something strange and pointless and pleasant—or unpleasant—happens.” She gestures around the room as she speaks as if the mess and the half-eaten granola bar and the whir of air conditioning are all bearers of this joy. Lily finds connections between different snapshots of the past and pulls them together into a braided narrative, tracing a single meaning across seemingly unrelated topics. “If there are five or seven things that I’m thinking about right now, there must be a connection between

them,” she says. In her work, including pieces such as, “The Unexpected Spoon & Other Contentments,” “Rabbit Heart,” and “Cool Air,” to name a few, Lily invites her readers to walk alongside her through the unique moments of her life, zooming in to recognize the detail she wants to show them. They hear her thoughts, experiencing the sensations she articulates until they too understand the meaning she seeks to reveal.

Lily has been a part of the *Ivy Leaves* Literature Team since her freshman year. “I’ve been putting my heart and soul into [the Journal] for three years,” she says. As Submissions Editor for two years, and now Editor-in-Chief, Lily delves deeper, with greater honesty and passion, into the world of writing. The number of her pieces published in *Ivy Leaves* volumes has grown each year. Six of her writings are published this year, and we laugh over the pressure of securing seven for the next. Closing her junior year at school, she has taken every writing class available except for Senior Seminar. Though Dr. Jones retired her sophomore year, they still take walks together to talk about life, writing, and the Journal.

Lily’s encouragement to writers who fear they don’t have meaningful stories is this: “I would say don’t be afraid to write down anything. A little bit of craft and a love for all the moments in life can make any story meaningful. If none of it matters, then all of it matters.” Lily tears up a bit as she says this, wiping her sleeve across her face with a laugh. “In being observed and loved, it has meaning. You just have to write it down.”

the work of an artist



is never truly done.



*“I’m most happy when something
strange and pointless and pleasant
—or unpleasant—happens.”*

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WRITTEN BY LILY MCNAMARA

RABBIT
ТЯЖЕН

Rabbit Heart

LILY MCNAMARA

I want to tell you something. *The Curse of Frankenstein*, a film released in 1957, is not a faithful adaptation of Mary Shelley's science fiction novel, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. In the novel, Doctor Frankenstein torments his Creation with his absence, fleeing upon Its first breath, upon first meeting Its weary newborn eyes. He was too repulsed by Its form to provide anything but condemnation, leaving the intelligent, angry being to draw Its own conclusions. In the 1957 adaptation, Viktor afflicts The Creature with his presence. Sadistically obsessed, he subjects It to suffering It doesn't possess the faculties to comprehend. Always he was painfully there, asserting that The Creature is *his*. Frankenstein made It, owns It. To him, any misery inflicted upon a being that cannot possibly understand is wholly justifiable. The Creature can hurt and kill and hurt and die and be tortured back from the grave without moral quandary because the Promethean spark of life was struck by *him*.

I want to tell you something. Prometheus was a titan from Greek mythos. He saw humans scratching in the dirt, watching the sky, dying animal deaths, and he felt pity. Fire was a gift possessed only by the gods. It meant higher understanding, superiority, agency over chaos. Fire was advancement and learning and power and living while *knowing* that you live. Prometheus hid some fire in a stalk of fennel, offering it as a stolen gift to mankind. With the flame in their small, angry hands, humans could see past the next breath, the next meal. And they knew just what to do.

I want to tell you something. I killed my rabbit when I was fourteen.

I want to tell you something. God must be either callous or vicious. Did He usher me into the blistering awareness of life just to turn His back and leave me a blind-born infant with too much of reality sloshing about in my brain? I hope so. I hope God abandoned humanity, torturing our mirror souls with where the sublime should be. That's better than God taking an active hand. That's better than knowing the one who made me from infinite debris participates in His creation's carnage. What must I accept from my Father? Either God must despise us and abuse us and pen those loathsome words which rend me further still from Him, or He discarded us long ago, and we cry out to a parent who was never there.

I want to tell you something. *The Curse of Frankenstein* stars actor Peter Cushing, following God as the second Creator. After dragging a life, howling its bewildered anguish, from the *what-else-is*, Peter Cushing relocated to space. As Moff Tarkin in *Star Wars: A New Hope*, Peter Cushing stomps about the Death Star in shiny black boots for exactly nine

“I hope God abandoned humanity, torturing our mirror souls with where the Sublime should be.”

minutes of screentime, before exploding along with the rest of the ship. He was in no more movies, and then he died.

I want to tell you something. Zeus saw humanity multiplied far past the ragged numbers they'd possessed last time he glanced down at the dirt. They were more effective at surviving, more efficient at killing. And that doesn't even get started on how much they were *knowing*. He didn't like that. Zeus also noted that the nights were no more dragging long-stygian. No, the darkened earth was now embroidered with pinpricks of flame wielded by small human hands. He didn't like that either. People can strain their necks to watch light from the sky, but illumination is immoral if it flickers in their grasp.

I want to tell you something. I named my rabbit Sam. Sam was small, but his narrow-ribbed chest was jammed up with anger. He lived in a hutch outside, and he bit with aggressive inconsistency. Sam was never one for company, and he didn't really care for me. I cared for him, but only when I remembered to. The short walk across the lawn was just too far a trail to tread. My gossamer mind wandered a little further every day. All of Sam, his piteous, sopping-brown eyes, his furious thorn-claws, which scarred my thighs and wrists, became less real to me, blurred by the haze of weary eyes. And then he died.

I want to tell you something. God kept me alive when my mind and matter cared not at all for the unwinding of future days.

I need to tell you something. I don't know if that's true. How could I?

I want to tell you something. In December of 2016, *Lucasfilm*, under Disney's business management, released the two-hour and thirteen-minute movie *Rogue One*. The original version was longer, but much of its content was trimmed for being too dark to market. During the film's production, Peter Cushing was not alive, just as he's been for the past twenty-eight years. But profit rests not for the dead, and death is no match for Disney. The digitally constructed revenant they created looks, in every observable aspect, accurate to the dead man whose face it is puppeting about. Its skin slides sickeningly over perfectly recreated bone structure as it speaks, and the figure turns, and the sequence ends. Yet for viewers of the film, this scene landed like a slab of putrefying meat dropped on a pristine countertop. Death was not so eager to return this face. I've wondered ever since what necromantic thoughts must've crossed the effects artists' minds as they resurrected Doctor Frankenstein.

I want to tell you something. Prometheus's punishment for loving creations which weren't his own was both cruel and unusual. His eternity is spent chained to a mountain top, eagles scavenging his immortal organs, which regrow only to be devoured once more. I wonder if a being whose guts are tearing free from his stomach has the mental capacity for regret. I wonder if it's what he deserves for making an animal know it is alive.

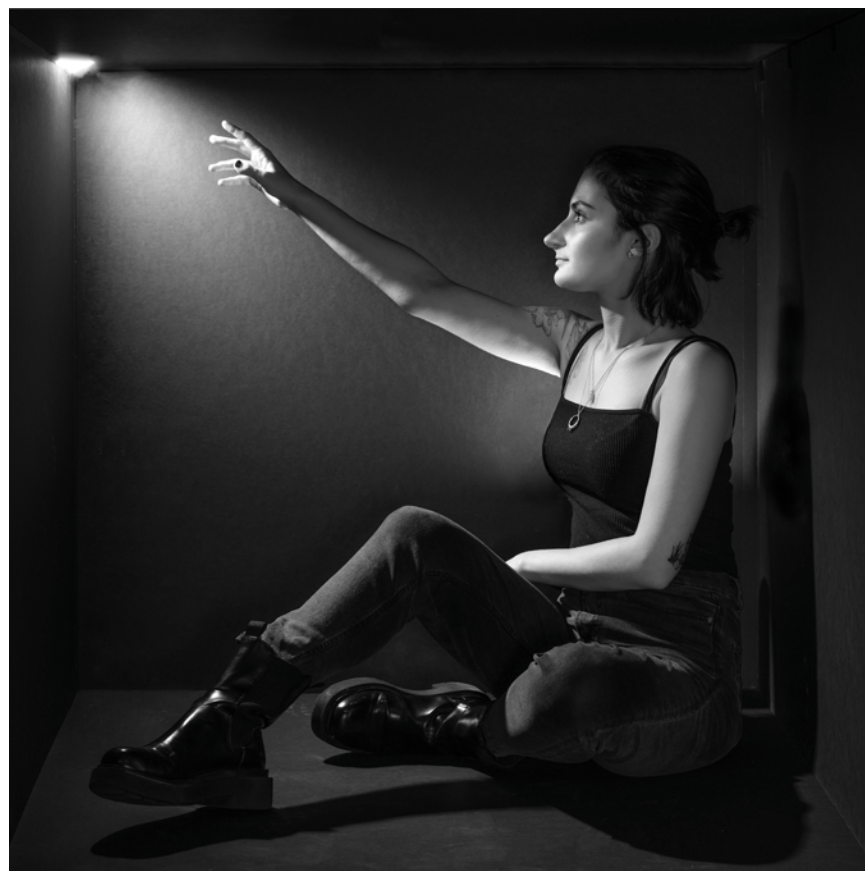
I want to tell you something. Rabbits only make three sounds. The first is a soft, piggish, snuffing grunt, the next a gentle purr of teeth chattering together. Sam didn't have a voice to call for me, not in a way I could hear. I forgot him. I, a creature of a species intellectually advanced beyond any other in creation, forgot about my wretched, shivering, lonely little responsibility who loved me with his teeth-chatter purrs and the scratches he left behind when napping on my soft lap. How do you think a being with a brain only five centimeters long and a chest so full of anger understood it, when the food stopped coming? I want to tell you something. The third voice God gave to rabbits was a scream. But Sam left the world quietly, on a bitter January night. Sam's chest held nothing at all as I rubbed frantic circles against his ribs and wrapped his tiny body in an electric blanket. But I am no third Creator, and guilt doesn't bring back the dead.

I want someone to tell me. Is a parent not responsible for their children? Or does my flesh render me something other than His offspring, absolving Him of guilt and responsibility. Then God should just make me into spirit, instead of ruthlessly revitalizing my desire for life. How irresponsible, that He should leave me alive to doubt. How irresponsible, that I accuse words authored by human hands for the life raging inside of me. How irresponsible, that I take a moment of contentment in my agitated mind as a sign of a Father's affection. How irresponsible, that my angry narrow chest still wants to hold a precious soul.





Middle Ground
Photography by Sydney Welch



Christina *Photography by Sarah Garrick*

Father and Son

MARGARET BARR

A dad walks over to the playground at the daycare where I work. After signing his son out, he looks around, scanning the playground.

“Uh, where is he?” he says, squinting his eyes.

“Over by the fence.” And I point to the far end of the playground, to the broken down fence swallowed by vines of ivy. All of the other kids are on the playground equipment, yet he stands all the way over there, alone. I’ve been keeping an eye on him, just in case. I’m worried his dad will say something like, *oh, he’s all alone?* But he doesn’t.

Instead, a wonderful fondness stretches across his face.

“Oh, he’s looking for lizards.”

He says it with such certainty, with a hint of a laugh and all of a smile.

And just like that, there are a thousand memories. A thousand days in the sun hunting for lizards. A thousand moments, there before me behind those eyes. I want to reach in, capture some of them as they scramble around, a thousand lizards in the bushes of ivy. But they walk away, father and son.





Peeking Through the Trees
Acrylic Painting by Annabelle Acord



Midbar

SARAH WILSON

How am I a single word to write—
An empty page, spiritless pen in hand—
Till round my unshod feet is sacred land,
And Heaven and Earth meet as man and wife?
I call on Him who wrote the song of life—
A burning bush with flame that never ends,
Whose roots grow deeply in the holy sand—
That in my words my God might take delight.



Sola Fide *Block Print by Sophia Presley*



Sola Gratia *Block Print by Sophia Presley*

Art, Like Remembering the Dead

ALEXANDRA OLIVER

I took a pill that numbed my mind.
I forgot how much I liked to write.
To sing the words that came to mind
As my fingers strummed the strings.

I opened my journals to read what I wrote.
I listened to my voice I recorded on my phone.
I forgot the words I used to know.
My mind was bare and bleak.

How could I write
If my hands were gone?
I've been without feeling for far too long.
But I carried my art with me,
Like the living carry the dead,
Saying, "They're not really gone,"
So I try to remember them.

I forgot to take my pill one day.
The realization washed over me like a wave.
As I came back to life
I felt like I was cheated out of
The things that made my soul like art,
Flowers blooming in the deepest parts of me.

I was submerged in the darkness.
Now light pours into the crevices of my soul,
Dripping onto the pages,
In the form of soul-filled words.

The dead will never die,
As long as your heart keeps them alive.
And so,
My words came back to life.



WRITTEN BY LILY MCNAMARA

THE UNEXPECTED
Spoon & Other
CONTENTMENTS

The Unexpected Spoon + Other Contentments

LILY MCNAMARA

The cereal dispenser in my college cafeteria had never defied me in the past. But as I pulled its handle, it resisted with a squeak of bending plastic. I applied more force. No faulty equipment was going to keep me from my Raisin Bran. My first pass at breakfast was only edible by technical definition. I'd eaten warmish eggs that left a thick, distinctly warmish-egg texture on my tongue. Now I craved Raisin Bran's cardboard flavor to mask the unpleasant taste. I pressed down harder, my jaw tightening to the point of pain as I clenched it with all the force of a woman who was not going to cry because she'd been deprived of cereal. With a pop, the lever shifted, mechanisms restored to function by my quick-witted application of extreme brute force. Instead of fibrous food-approximating flakes, something metal clattered down the narrow chute and into my bowl. I blinked. A spoon.

"Why is it a spoon?" I asked aloud in utter befuddlement, inspecting the cereal dispenser, which looked exactly the same as before: full of cereal. I looked back down at the spoon in my bowl, then over my shoulder, where a student wearing an athletic t-shirt watched me with a drowsy squint. He waited for his turn with the cereal receptacle, unknowing that it had apparently decided to exchange its function for spoon-dispensing on a whim. I held the bowl out for his witness.

"Why did it put a spoon in my bowl?"

"I—I don't know? Can I use it now?"

I returned to my seat, warmish eggs and sleep-deprived athlete forgotten as I examined the spoon in my hand, shoulders trembling with silenced laughter. I was far more amused by this than a twenty-year-old student halfway through her higher education should be. The spoon grew blurry, and my jaw ached. I hadn't eaten a proper meal for too long. My cheeks, clinging a bit too close to the sharp bones of my face, were damp, and stinging slightly. I scrubbed a sleeve across my eyes, setting an alarm on my phone for lunch; the potential for unexpected spoons demanded my return.

My mind is stingy with her chemical happiness. She makes me work for joy, and rarely does she reward it from the same source twice. She bores quickly. I must regularly hunt for a new point of supply, and my mind is unpredictably particular in her tastes. She drags

the search out to my near-starvation before finding satisfaction in some activity, effort, or relationship, and strip-mining every iota of pleasure from it. When the initial surge of dopamine fades, my mind demands a new wellspring, lest I wither away entirely. Contentment, not to be confused with its twin complacency, she offers only on occasion, and only when I do not expect it. With this complacency she is more generous, allowing me to drift in comfortable abjection if weariness outweighs the drive to find a fresh source of dopamine. I'm often surprised when she deigns to provide, though no less grateful every time, grasping joy tight, devouring every last moment of relief that comes as my cramped self unfurls in the sunlight of my mind's merciful content.

When I was eight years old, my family volunteered at a church-sponsored carnival. The event distributed balloons and biblical tracts, popcorn and southern-fried prayer. Our family was assigned to the cotton candy machine. Already terribly pleased with this, I became only more thrilled upon the discovery that my father was quite ineffective at taming the flossy-spun sugar to its narrow paper cones. His arms and eyebrows quickly turned fluffy-pink, the cotton candy flying from the machine and building in drifts on his shoulders. Wisps of pink sugar strands floated through the air, the breeze catching them, guiding the cotton candy into weightless sugar-flurries. I stood on a picnic table and snatched a handful, my mind crackling with ecstatic disbelief. I hopped from the tallest surfaces I could find, catching cotton candy in my mouth, in my sticky hands, chasing the sugar-sweet snowfall even as I grew beyond full, and the sting of chemicals burned my tongue. Whenever the flock of floating pink grew sparse, my sisters and I stood mournfully by my father's cotton candy stand until he made another "mistake." Skittering barefoot after drifting wisps of cotton candy, I felt with fantastic certainty that this was the point of it all. Joy fizzed bright between my ears, the sun faded with the same tremendous pink as the candy snow, and I thought there could be no greater contentment than plucking cotton candy from the sky. As I spent the night kneeling on linoleum, vomiting excessively, I thought, it's never come out of my nose before, and then, Worth it, worth it, worth it.

I try not to resent my dopamine receptors for being so picky. That would be fruitless. I cannot change my mind's indeterminate, intermittent rewards of pleasant emotion,

her fickle sense of value. To survive, I must think as she does, behave in a way that invites opportunity for her satisfaction, and resist the urge to hunt down and bleed dry those cotton candy wisps of happiness. They must simply happen. Finding them requires no expectations of sweeping emotional responses to life's major affairs. They can only be spotted when I value the joy that springs upon me from the peculiar moments that happen ceaselessly. They occur so frequently that if I could notice them all, I'd be the happiest woman alive. But these moments are tricky; they like to hide, wearing different hats every time, determined to pass unwitnessed. I don't know that there are words for the feeling that yanks me free of stupor, the moments in which my mind grants contentment in exchange for their experience, but I know it when I feel it, when it wakes me up and tells me I'm alive. So I cast my net wide, fortifying my aching bones against disappointment. The memory of self is enough to keep me going.

—

It got unexpectedly cold a few weeks ago. Though it doesn't seem fair to say unexpected, as anyone who bothers to check the weather would've been unsurprised. I was working late in a pair of sandals entirely unsuited for the drop in temperature. The art department for my school is situated at the far end of the campus, haunted by nocturnal artists and hated by college security guards, as it requires late hours spent security-guarding while the students work in its cramped studios. I'd trekked across the parking lot behind the building to get there, avoiding the more direct path that required walking past people, and spent the last hour deep-cleaning studio supplies. The process of scraping old paint off used pallets was an effective anesthetic, dulling the distant spike of anxiety that demanded I look to my unfinished and imminently due painting. I didn't want to. That fact was the only thought of significance. My brain buzzed in a numb sort of emptiness, and the only certain facet of my identity was that I didn't want to paint. There was no use arguing, no mind over matter. My mind and matter were in agreement. I would rather scrub old paint until the skin of my hands peeled away than even look at the canvas.

My sister called.

"Are you going to get the soup." It wasn't really a question.

"Yes! I already said yes." In a text message, over a week ago.

"I see you on the find-my-phone app. I know you're at the studio. Come over and get them now." Her house is within eyeshot of the art building's back door.

"Okay, stalker. Did you eat any of them?"

"What? I have my own soup. I don't need yours."

She'd picked up some cans of soup from the store and wanted me to take them home on my way back from work, which was walking distance from both the studio and her house. She was worried about me, I think. I didn't mind until I stepped outside and the

frigid wind stung my overwhelmingly uncovered skin. Sandals and shorts were, it would seem, an ineffective choice for late-autumn weather.

My sister's kitchen warmed my bare skin as I bit out conversation, the subtleties of the spoken word dodging my grasp. On the table I leaned against, there was a plastic tray of pumpkin muffins squeezed between a vase full of dead flowers and my sister's water bottle. Upon spotting it, I was struck by sudden, overwhelming thirst, unable to recall when I'd last drunk water that day. I pointed at the water bottle.

"Can I have a sip please?"

"What?"

"I'm really thirsty. Can I please have a sip?"

"You have your own water."

"Please I literally haven't had anything to drink in like hours I am so thirsty I can feel my throat sticking together—"

"Fine! Whatever, it's fine. You can have a sip."

I drained the water bottle completely, then placed it slightly behind the vase of flowers, which once again brought my attention to the pumpkin muffins. I looked at the tray, then at my sister, making the saddest eyes at her that I could muster.

The walk back through the frigid, empty parking lots that lay between my sister's house and my dorm was made less arduous by the pumpkin muffin. I'd run out of hands, balancing the muffin with great risk atop my wobbling armful of cans. Three bites in, and not even halfway through my trek home, the hubris of my balancing act arrived at its inevitable fate. The cans collapsed, clattering to the asphalt, two of them exploding, cold soup running in brownish rivulets beneath my feet. I stumbled after them, catching one as it rolled with gleeful speed for the underside of a parked car, peeling a second up from the squashed corpse of my pumpkin muffin. I sat heavily on the icy ground, cans piled in my lap, chicken-noodle mushed to the underside of my shoes, the flattened muffin smelling all the more appealing for its damage. This is very upsetting, I thought as I stared absentmindedly. It is late, and I am very cold, and very tired, and my muffin is gone. I looked down at the soup can in my hand, the one with half a muffin squashed into its grooves. Technically, the muffin wasn't gone. Maybe I should be crying right now. I am not happy. A soup can slipped from my lap and made a last-ditch attempt to roll away. I caught it with my foot, squinting at the pumpkin muffin. Only the paper side had touched the concrete. Peeling that away, I decided I was going to be happy. I shoveled back the muffin, stood up, and hounded after the remainder of my errant cans. I laughed, and I knew I was alive because I was chasing groceries in a freezing empty parking lot, and there was a particularly bright star hanging in the late-night sky, and it was orange, and that just doubled down on the hilarity, because it was orange like the pumpkin muffin that I ate off the ground because I knew it would taste good.

—

Between these brief reprieves, between the asphalt-flavored pumpkin muffin and cotton candy snow and the unexpected spoon, I forget I'm alive, sometimes for days at a time. Even as I define the feeling, I hesitate to write the words. It's not dissociation, in the clinical sense. I know I am me, the woman laboriously swallowing scrambled eggs and lukewarm water, or the one speaking in rapid, half-finished sentences as I try to explain my latest fumble. I know I'm the one who stinks of stale skin, the one riding bursts of frantic accomplishment as momentary urgency digs its spurs into my chest, sending my pulse into a sprint so forceful that I can see it jolting under my diaphragm's thin veil of weakened sinew and pale skin.

"I stumbled after the cans, catching one as it rolled with gleeful speed for the underside of a parked car, peeling a second up from the squashed corpse of my pumpkin muffin."

I know all of this to be me, but I forget. I forget that I have control. But no, I remember I'm in control as I shout it to myself in every moment of atrophy. It's more accurate to say that I forget I *want* control. My logic and soul out of sync, pistons firing at all the wrong moments. I stumble through hours, days, weeks at a time, a memory of fear fueling the engine. I wade through my life, a corpse yet to be buried, this revenant remaining on course only through my detached, faulty memory of identity, of desire. I flinch from pride, but can't help but think just how clever I must be, that my rational mind alone, with no sense of emotional reward, has kept me on the path forward, experiencing successes and maintaining the grade, the job, and sometimes, if I have flesh still on my bones to share, relationships, all in the hopes that one day soon I'll remember why.

The electric keyboard that I received for my tenth Christmas had several noisy functions which I spent the following months inflicting upon my household with indiscriminate ruthlessness. A standout favorite of mine in its roster of sound effects was the whistling shriek of fireworks. While I thought nothing could possibly captivate me more than cycling through sound effects and mashing them with increasing volume, this assumption was disproven by my discovery of the music button. A list of thirty-two public domain songs could be played, but none I held in greater reverence than the poor-quality recording of digital violins and piano playing "Scarborough Fair." It's a slightly cloying, melodramatic tune in D minor, with a medieval lilt that makes it sound like a melody heard in a childhood fairytale. The lyrics reinforce this tone:

*"O, where are you going?" "To Scarborough fair,"
Savory sage, rosemary, and thyme;
"Remember me to a lass who lives there,
For once she was a true love of mine."*

Something in the tune locked into place a nostalgic melancholy in my ten-year-old brain. This feeling lingers in every song I enjoy, long after I gave up on the idea of composing music like it, the first of many abandoned aspirations. I remember dragging the keyboard into the nearest available empty room, setting up the song, and lying flat on my back, staring at the ceiling, listening. Every time the two-minute track ended, I'd get up, restart it, and lay back down, returning to my contemplation. Often I'd cry, so delighted that something could cause such a strange stab of aching happiness in my chest.

My mind, capricious as she may be, has mercy yet. Inevitably, as I limp forward, something jolts me with a great violent recollection of identity. Blood and soul rush to my head, my eyes refocus, and I remember that I am alive. I want again, not just rational recollection of wants. No, I experience desire. My head feels near to cracking with sensation as my soul pours back in. I remember I am a person, I remember aspirations and pleasure and excitement and consequence, and I want it all, I want to be alive. I want *action* and *being* with such vivid appetite that I believe myself to be more alive, more human, than a single other soul in creation. Joy and relief and sadness and bitter-on-the-tongue hope set a living rhythm in me, and though my literal memory still yet lags, I remember who I am, I remember that I am more than a series of steps strung forward by unspooling time. I remember that, along with my brain's rational obligation to maintain who I was the last time I remembered I was alive, there is my soul's drive. There is emotion and fulfillment and there isn't just *nothing* inside me. I remember that I am not just alive, but that I am living.

The moment settles, and here comes logic again. Whatever caused the unlocking shift-and-click of desire's return confronts me, and I mourn the loss of time I should have spent alive. My mind settles, and I observe myself. I realize that the heaving, sizzling mass of feeling is not some great, violent sensation. I acclimate and remember that this used to be normal, this used to be what living was. Movement sparks under my skin, impulse and depth and want and reward are not so violent, but the constant humming engine of the soul. Exhaustion and comfort and a brittle ache pass under my skin as I pick up the pieces of who I was, set down the railroad track for me to follow when (if, God please let it be if this time) my soul once again withers and memory must take the reins.

I write down who I am on little scraps of paper shoved in my pockets. I stick them to my mirror, my drawers, my front door, reminding me what I want to do, to be. The tiny angry face scribbled in my locker with its note declaring, "*you like painting,*

so just do it!” The list on my bathroom sink outlines how to brush my teeth, what times to eat, and why I need to breathe fresh, wind-stirred air that has not yet touched my lungs. The open document on my computer which explains, “*in another time that isn’t this one, you’ll remember how to be alive.*” These desires, memories, and instructions are recorded in frantic scrawls, desperate as I am to immortalize the brief moment in which my body and mind cease their constant orbit and become a single entity. This moment when I feel my Self return with a brush of life across the lips and a silent apology.

I still don’t know what that feeling, the tender happy pain that a bad recording of a corny

*“I want action and being with such vivid appetite
that I believe myself to be more alive, more human,
than a single other soul in creation.”*

song summoned, was calling me towards. It certainly wasn’t music, as I had limited talent for it and even less patience. But I am reminded of it in those disparate moments that life shifts just a little to the left and that leaf smacks into my face and is just a lovely color, and the muffin from the ground tastes just right. I feel it when I’m twelve years old and too cold and tired to keep running up my grandmother’s sled hill, so I faceplant in the snow, and I’m alone outside and it is just so *quiet*, and as I watch the snow fall to my left, I realize that I can *hear* it falling, a hiss of crystal glass clinking a thousand times over. I feel it as I get in an argument with my sister because,

“You didn’t hear the snow falling. That’s actually impossible.”

“I’m not lying!”

“Well, you can’t be telling the truth. You just imagined it.”

“I heard it! I put my ear really close. It is totally possible because it happened.”

“It was the wind or something because you can’t *hear snow!*”

I’m alive because I *know* that I heard the snow falling. I feel it when I am fourteen and a woman with a handful of limes teaches me to juggle, and I can’t do it right, but she says that I can and as a grown adult I still toss two things between my hands and call it juggling. I’m alive when a strong wind blows the heat from my skin, stirring my mind awake and making it not so hard to believe in God, because wouldn’t it be nice if divinity put in me that which thrills at the feeling of the breeze. I’m alive when the passing of days feels like lead in my bones and each step takes greater effort than I believe I can summon, but then I find an unexpected spoon and for some reason my steps are made lighter for a little while, toil of the journey eased. I’m alive when I eat warmish eggs one morning, and they don’t make me sick, they taste just fine.



Self Portrait
Oil Painting by Rebekah Dennis



Rustic *Photography by Josiah Dumais*



Introspection
Photography by Miriam Cabrera



Leftovers
Photography by Knoxie le Roux

Thank you

FROM THE IVY LEAVES TEAM

Putting together a publication like *Ivy Leaves* is no trivial undertaking, but crafting this 98th edition was worth every moment of labor. It was a privilege to read and consider the work of Anderson University students. Every piece submitted is a gift given in trust, so we are grateful to the authors and artists who offered their work to the journal. We sincerely thank these creators: Without your courage and love of telling stories, *Ivy Leaves* would never come to be. Every year we are impressed by the submissions we receive, and this year's journal is no different. The presentation of these works is an accomplishment of which *Ivy Leaves*' art and literature teams are immensely proud.

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, helping us tell our stories with nuance, honesty, and beauty. Thank you for advising us throughout the process of selecting and revising pieces. Your guidance is invaluable as we hone our craft as both editors and writers.

Our design team would like to express their appreciation for Prof. Luke Anspach, Prof. Zac Benson, Prof. Nathan Cox, Prof. Peter Kanaris, Dr. David Larson, Dr. Candace Livingston, Prof. Michael Marks, Dr. Jo Carol Mitchell-Rogers, Prof. Jer Nelsen, Prof. Herb Peterson, Prof. Bethany Pipkin, Prof. Tim Speaker, Prof. Jan Walker, and Prof. Ashley Waller. We could not produce this publication without their encouragement and assistance.

The *Ivy Leaves* 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 journal's presentation 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.

We are proud of the work in this 98th edition and of the people who poured their love into creating it. *Ivy Leaves* is a home for the stories that embody who we are. It is an honor to share this experience with you.

Discover more *stories.*

DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Dive into the history of *Ivy Leaves* by visiting the digital archive of past editions on our website. You can explore journals from as early as 1916 in an immersive digital experience complete with high-quality, turnable pages.

ivy-leaves-journal.com

BEHIND THE VINE

Get a closer look at the inspiration and process of selected writers and artists.

Margaret Barr · Tyson Gentry · Faith Hyman
Sophia Presley · Jonathan Sorce · Sarah Wilson

THE PERISTYLE

Explore an exclusive gallery of student work.

Margaret Barr · Christine Brady · Miriam Cabrera
Carson Cawthon · Alessa Gibbons · Curtis Shirkey

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The *people* behind
the *journal*.

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, newspaper, 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, the University of Georgia, and New York's Columbia University.

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.

2023 AWARD WINNERS

Poetry Prize

1st place: Johnathan Sorce for "Ars Cuisinica"

2nd place: Maggie Fitch for "Confessions of a Former Good Girl"

Fiction Prize

1st place: Margaret Barr for "The Ball Pit"

2nd place: Adam Jobson for "Precious Is the Flow"

Nonfiction Prize

1st place: Lily McNamara for "The Unexpected Spoon & Other Contentments"

2nd place: Sarah Wilson for "Roller Skating"

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

Notes

ART + LITERATURE SELECTION PROCESS

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 their originality, thoughtfulness, intelligence, and emotional honesty. Together, these pieces work together in collaboration with others to form a cohesive body of work.

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

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 & Design.

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