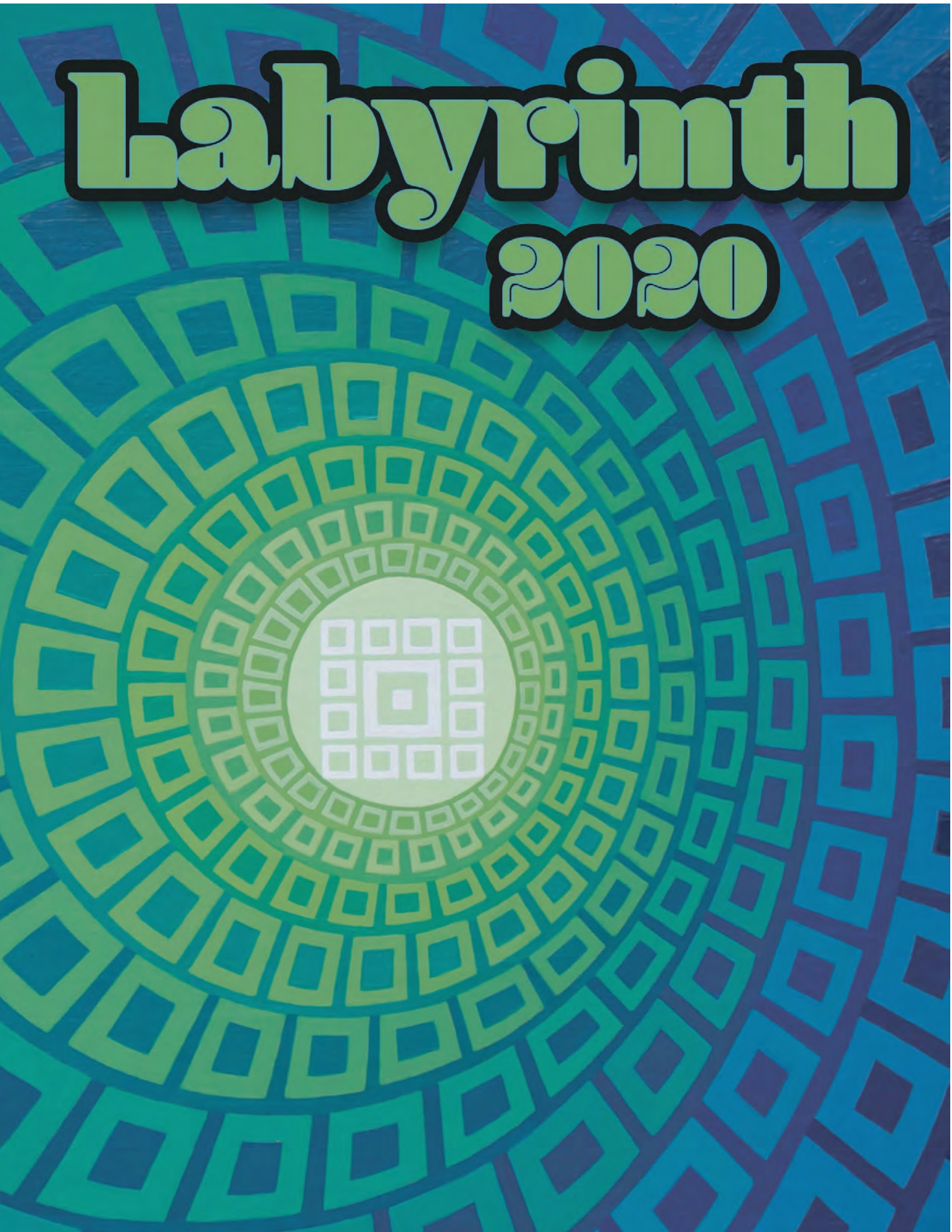


# Labyrinth

## 2020



# Labyrinth

## 2020

### **Editor**

Vicky Sanchez

### **Faculty**

Mary Crosby

### **Cover Art**

Doug Rizio

### **Acknowledgments**

We would like to thank  
Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Brock L. Fisher,  
Humanities Dean Adam Goodell,  
English Department Chair Lou Ethel Roliston,  
Professor Brian Cordell, Professor Seamus Gibbons,  
and Secretaries Maureen Mitchell and Azize Cornejo for their unflagging support.

*A very special thanks to  
Professor John Chichowski for judging this year's art competition,  
and Professor Pamela Hughes for judging the writing competition.*

## Table of Contents

<i>Into The Labyrinth</i> , Poetry, Layla A. Williams.....	5
<i>The Spectacular Light of Dawn</i> , Photograph, Elizabeth Shane.....	6
<i>Mid-Summer Moonrises</i> , Poetry, Layla A. Williams.....	7
<i>Juan Carlos</i> , Photograph, Ignacio Leon Manning.....	9
<i>Snowman</i> , Fiction, Patrick Keastead.....	10
<i>Taking Flight</i> , Painting, Anthony Fatuzzo .....	21
<i>How the Calendar Was Created</i> , Fiction, Erisa Molla.....	22
<i>Proposal</i> , Mixed Media , Jiyun Won.....	26
<i>'Twas Trouble at Twilight</i> , Play, Edward Lloyd.....	27
<i>Harmony Between East and West</i> , Painting, Jiyoung Choi.....	32
<i>The Descent</i> , Creative Non-Fiction, Charles Schwab.....	33
<i>Retrograde</i> , Digital Art, Matthew Contey .....	38
<i>The New Normal</i> , Poetry, Judgment Crow.....	39
<i>Unpacking the Luggage</i> , Creative Non-Fiction, Michelle Coneo.....	40
<i>Untitled</i> , Photograph, Victor Cervantes.....	42
<i>The Day I Felt Powerless</i> , Creative Non-Fiction, Paola Guevara.....	43
<i>Ice Cream Social</i> , Digital Art, Tatiana Vorontsova.....	45
<i>The Diner</i> , Poetry, Alexis Brandon .....	46
<i>Martin My Giraffe</i> , Painting, Sarah Hartwig .....	47
<i>Addison: A Memoir</i> , Creative Non-Fiction, Katherine Priegue.....	48
<i>Fool's Paradise</i> , Drawing, Ashley Zavala .....	53
<i>On All Fronts</i> , Poetry, Patrick Cao.....	54
<i>T 800 vs. Predator</i> , Painting, Anthony Fatuzzo.....	56
<i>Conflicted</i> , Poem, Michelle Coneo .....	57
<i>Jellyfish in Captivity</i> , Photograph, Fatima Green .....	59
<i>As Time Moves Too Fast</i> , Poetry, Christine Sawruk.....	60
<i>Wild Flower</i> , Painting, Stefanie Rekesius .....	61
<i>Valentine's Day</i> , Play, Antoinette Quinn .....	62
<i>Guitar Face</i> , Drawing, Jineer Contreras .....	68

<i>I Hate Musicians</i> , Poetry, Tatiana Vorontsova.....	69
<i>Bilateral Split</i> , Photograph, Michelle Coneo .....	70
<i>Riding through Roseway</i> , Fiction, Layla A. Williams .....	71
<i>Fall</i> , Photograph, Elizabeth Shane.....	74
<i>When Love Turns to Lust</i> , Poetry, Katherine Priegue.....	75
<i>Internalized Misogyny</i> , Poem, Sara Rothenberg.....	76
<i>A Journey</i> , Short Story, Evan Greenbaum.....	77
<i>What I Wanted</i> , Poem, Kaiden Cilento.....	80
<i>After Rainfall</i> , Photograph, Diana Seo.....	81
<i>When I Became a Nurse</i> , Creative Non-Fiction, Fatima Green.....	82
<i>Winter</i> , Poem, Bianca Alvarez.....	84
<i>At the Center of the Supreme Machine</i> , Painting, Doug Rizio.....	Cover

INTO THE LABYRINTH

Down we go  
Far, far below  
Deeper than Dante's Inferno  
To Hades, we wave hello  
Deeper than Inanna  
Further than Earth's core  
To the depths of the universe  
And then even more  
We turn here, shift there  
Until we have gone even passed the air  
Space and Time no longer exist  
For within the Labyrinth  
All we once knew, are no longer missed  
The galaxy we used to call home  
Has far been replaced with an eternal Aum  
We have no matter, no volume, no mass  
All we are is essence, not even gas  
For in the Labyrinth, all else is defined  
Not by Space's cosmological order  
But by the maze within the Mind



Elizabeth Shane

## THE SPECTACULAR LIGHT OF DAWN



Layla A. Williams

### MID-SUMMER MOONRISES

We spend our days chasing sunsets  
Catching hearts like minnows in old fishnets  
Footprints of earlier days fade under lilac skies  
Until crashing waves swallow them at moonrise  
When the sky's luminous freckles begin to shine  
Their dazzling, pupils open wide—and so do mine  
It's then the Atlantic beckons a soft, salty breeze  
We bike towards it 'til it aches our scabbed knees  
Ray-ban sunglasses rest on constellated faces  
Sand finds its way between untangled laces  
Converses pedal down the seaside streets  
Undulating waves wait for us to meet  
Clammy palms grip rusted bicycle handles  
The air smells of *Fresh Breeze* Yankee candles  
But our summer days are now wearing thin  
Sun rays no longer bronze our young skin  
Clear days of Oreo shakes and cream sodas  
Unfortunately nearing their codas  
Still we ride down to the boat docks  
Hearts without any keys or locks

Stretched arms spinning

Sparkly lips grinning

Not thinking

Just living

For we are now

And now is here

At moonrise.



Ignacio Leon Manning

JUAN CARLOS



## SNOWMAN

In all my years of living on this earth, I've never met anyone quite like Gary Gerrickson. He's a tall man, with black hair, looks a lot like Pat Monahan. He always has a crooked smile, and an unsettling laugh that only a crazy man would have. His teeth are out of shape, clothes always stained, and I'm pretty sure his wife is waiting for him to die. I never understood that. Why stay with someone you so much despise? I mean it didn't work with Emily and me. We were happily married until the day our daughter, Sammy was born. Man did she bail the day after. Didn't leave anything, not a note or phone message or nothing. She never came back, and I never looked back. I was a single father. The day I moved into town, my house was across the street from Gary's. Sammy was about one year old and Gary still looked the same as he did today- minus a few gray hairs. And for that moment, he seemed nice. Genuine, I might add. He greeted me with that typical "howdy neighbor" from every corny neighbor you could think of. He almost had a Mr. Brady vibe to him. Especially that stupid oversized smile. He introduced himself, and his wife Susan, and a week later I was having dinner at their house. They just had their first child as well. A son, named Ricky. The kid was only a couple months old and Gary was already bragging about how great he was gonna be. I knew from that moment on that the kid was going to be put on a pedestal for as long as Gary Gerrickson was alive.

And then of course, there was his snowman.

I've never known any other grown man who loves a snowman more than Gary. He called it his "baby," much to Susan's dislike. Gary claimed that the snowman was precious to him. It was quite a big snowman, with the same body shape as all the others. But what made him so unique- and this is what I find most peculiar- is how he was dressed. Most snowmen are made with coal eyes, carrot noses and a top hat. But not Gary's. No. See, Gary collects old buttons off of the sweaters that don't fit anymore and uses those for the smile. He would actually put a tie around his neck and have him dressed for a business meeting every hour of the day and night. He always uses a carrot nose- the only thing not peculiar about it. He had one of Susan's old scarves around his neck, and two huge hockey pucks for the eyes. Every other year he would be

finished off with a top hat. Needless to say, it was Gary's tradition and every year, the day that he built it was like a holiday. He took off of work, made sandwiches, bought beers, and stretched an event that shouldn't take more than a hour at the most to complete into a several hour ordeal. One year he even invited little Sammy to come help, much to my displeasure. She told him that the snowman should have a name, and to my surprise, Gary told her she could name it. I personally would've named it Showoff or Overachiever, but Sammy chose Carrot. And after everything that's happened, Gary still puts Carrot up no matter the weather. Somehow, he manages to stay up for a few weeks. I don't know how. But these days, things are a whole lot different.

My morning's always start the same way. I wake up from my nightmare, the recurring nightmare in which I relive the accident that ended with Sammy's death. The car tips over and the other one crashes into a pole. Me and Lilly are the only survivors. Then I grab my pistol and point it towards my head. I sweat for a good five minutes waiting for the courage to finally pull the trigger and end my miserable life. But then I panic, put the gun away and pass out again after downing a whole scotch straight from the bottle. I wake up an hour later and hate the world because I'm still alive and my little girl isn't it.

I look at the clock. 10:15. *Fuck me*. I think to myself. I can hear my phone buzzing underneath me. It's stuck in the mattress again. It's probably Lily again. Always checking up on me. Nice of her. I stick my hand down the side of the bed and pull out my phone, which now has a big ass crack on the front. Lily's face appears on the caller ID. *I was right*. But do I really want to talk to her right now? Nope, not really. Fuck it.

I let the call go to voicemail and head out. I hear the sounds of the children playing and snow blowers cleaning the streets, and somehow, I can hear that ear-splitting music. After all, there's nothing like Christmas to put a middle-aged man with no family left to love in the holiday spirit. As I'm locking my door, I can hear Gary and Susan going at each other's throats again.

"Susan, I told you last night I was going out with the guys! It's just your dumb ass that just can't accept I have friends because you stay at home and watch home renovation and sew sweaters for a son who doesn't even *like* them!"

I can hear Susan's gasp. "Oh, piss off you cock! Don't give me that bullshit. All you do is work, drink and roll some snow over to make your precious little fucking snowman. Fuck you!"

I turn my attention to them now and I see Gary kick some snow, flip his wife off and slam his car door before pulling out of the driveway like a total asshole. Oh, how that times have changed. Susan and Gary always had tension, even back when me and Sammy first moved here. But now they don't give a shit anymore. They wake up the whole neighborhood with their goddam arguing.

As I sit in my car and turn on the engine, my phone buzzes, and I see that Lily has left a voice message. *Let me guess*, I think to myself. *She can't make it this year.*

"Jack. It's me. Look, I've got some bad news." Says Lily over the phone, sounding quite upset and nervous. She always seemed to be on edge with me, and I don't blame her. "Jack, I'm so sorry but my flight's been delayed. I don't think I'm going to have time to come see you this Christmas." *Called it.* She continues "You know I can usually only stay over one day because you understand more than anyone how mom and dad can be with me during Christmas. They want to see their only daughter. Jack, I say this a lot, but mom and dad miss their son too. It's been 5 years and you haven't muttered a word to them. Please, Jack, please, please come home. I can meet you at the--"

Click. I can't listen to her anymore. It's my first Christmas alone in all my 49 years of living. Does she now realize that this one's gonna be tougher than most? As annoyed as I am at her right now, Lily is a saint. The way she put her life on hold to help me raise Sammy after Emily bailed. We raised her together. Lily was Sammy's true mother. And after the accident, I cursed Lily out, told her to leave me alone and I never thanked her for all she had done. But unlike the rest of my family, she never gave up on me. We made amends, and now she's all I have left. I got to stop being so hard on her. After all, she *is* my sister.

I pull out the driveway, look again at the snowman. His oversized top hat, carrot nose, eyes made of hockey pucks. And his smile, made of different checker pieces. Everything. I hate Gary but boy do I give him points for originality. I chuckled to myself and put my foot on the pedal.

I cry the entire time I'm driving.

\*\*\*\*\*

God I hate McSteamy's. I hate it because I should hate it, but still find myself back here. Their food isn't even that great, and quite honestly, why Sammy and I liked it so much to begin with is beyond me. There's a staleness here. An empty void of staleness that seems to blanket over everything. It's always there, creeping over you like a perverted shadow. You'll turn around to find nothing there. You'll realize how much of a dump it is. It's fucking disgusting. I start to ask myself why I still come here after all these years. And why the hell did I manage to turn it into my daughter's favorite place to go. Parenting at its finest, I guess.

I look around at pale colored windows and 60-year-old walls. God this place needs to burn to the ground. The booths are ripped apart, the table is sticky. I'm trying to clear my thoughts. But there's a menu in front of me and I can't be looking like I'm zoned out. Especially here.

"You're Jack...right?" says a shaky voice. It's a kid, looks about 14 or 15 years old. He's dressed in the yellow and red striped outfit that goes with the job at working for this joint. He looks familiar, but I'm terrible with names.

"Yea. That's me. Jack Larson." As I look at this kid long enough, I start to realize that I've definitely seen his face before. "Forgive me. I'm bad at remembering faces, but you do look quite familiar."

The kid shakes out his hand, looking at me hesitantly. "It's me...Ricky?"

Holy shit. Gary's boy. Working at this crapshow? No. It can't be. There's no way. I won't believe it. Nope.

"Holy crap! Ricky? That's you! My god you've gotten big." I say, shaking his hand back. "How.... how are you...you doing ok?"

Ricky nods, and then looks at the floor. "Yea. Yea I'm ok." I scan his body from head to toe and see the filthy stains on his uniform.

"So, you work here now?" I ask.

"Yea." he answers.

"I've never seen you here before." I add.

"I'm new on the job." He says annoyingly. He looks at the clock on the wall and sighs. "Look, I got to go, I'm on break and I could really use one."

I nod at him. "Yea. Absolutely." I answer.



I grab my cup of coffee, but as I'm taking a sip, I see Carrot the Snowman standing next to my car in the parking lot and in shock I drop the cup on the table, and it shatters. I'm too distracted by him looking at me to bother cleaning up the mess. Holy shit. Carrot the Snowman is staring at me. But it can't be. I'm blocks away from Gary's house. How the fuck is his *exact* same snowman looking at me from here? I continue to stare at him until suddenly, he smiles at me and giggles with the voice of a small child. *My child*. I'm freaking out. The snowman sounds like Sammy. But first off, snowmen don't talk and two, Sammy isn't here. What the hell is going on? I close my eyes for a few seconds, hoping it's just the whisky messing with my brain. But when I open my eyes, I'm back at the house. It's spring outside. And Sammy is playing on the floor in her bedroom. She giggles at me and says, "*I miss you Daddy*" and just like that I'm back at McSteamy's, coffee spilled over the table, and the snowman is nowhere to be found. What the fuck? I don't know how much time has passed, but I can see Ricky still on his way from leaving my table, so I guess not much. He looks back in my direction and sees the mess I've made but does nothing about it and continues to walk away.

\*\*\*\*\*

As I turn to go down my street, I notice red and blue lights down by where my house is. I immediately know it has something to do with Gary and Susan. Normally there's a noise complaint and one cop car shows up. He knocks on the door and she makes it sound like it's fine and dandy. Then he leaves. But something's different about today. There's about four cop cars there. I park my car in reverse, open the window and watch from the driver's seat. There's four cops on the lawn, one of them is standing right next to the snowman. I think two of the cops are making fun of it or laughing at it. One cop, with a large grey beard leaves the front house and asks if the paramedics are here. As if it to be any more perfect in the case of timing, a large ambulance pulls up next to the cops. They open the back door and signal the cops. Oh god. They're rolling out a body. Shit. I hope it's Gary's. I hope that the cops bring out Susan in handcuffs, sobbing her ass off 'cause she finally couldn't take anymore of her terrible marriage. I'd bail her out if she ever received it. Now the cops are talking.

"Do you have a suspect?"

"Yea. We put out an APB on the husband."

“He got away?”

“Yea, he was gone by the time we arrived.”

“What about the son? Has he been found and properly notified?”

“Yea we sent some guys to pick him up and take him to the station. We need to know his side of the story.”

Holy shit. Holy shit. Holy. Fucking. Shit. Susan’s dead. Oh my god. I didn’t think Gary was a violent man, let alone a goddam murderer. Sure, he was egotistical. Hypocritical. Bigot. Asshole. Prick. Cocky. Son of a bitch. Perfectionist. But murderer? Ok, now that I’ve listed all the things he is, I’m actually surprised I didn’t see this coming.

I stare at the snowman. He seems pleased. Happy. Content. But now he’s laughing like Sammy again, and here I am back with her again. But this time, she looks older. There’s a banner on the wall that says *Happy 10th Birthday, Sammy*. But Sammy never lived to be 10. So, what the fuck is this?

*“I can’t stay long. Take care of Ricky. He’s a nice boy. I know he doesn’t seem to like you right now, but please Daddy. Promise me you’ll protect him. Promise!”*

“I promise Sammy. I will keep him safe.” Tears flood my face as I realize that my dead daughter is asking me to protect some boy I don’t know much about, when I couldn’t even keep my own daughter safe.

Now I’m back in my car. God this is getting fucking nuts. I get out of my car to head inside. I lock the door, and pant heavily with my back against the wall. The room is mocking me. This whole house is mocking me. Why am I so pathetic? The sounds of the walls laughing at me. I truly have reached my breaking point.

“SHUT THE HELL UP!” I yell at them, before standing up firmly. I pace around the floor and fidget my fingers in an attempt to calm myself down. Then I go to the kitchen and grab the fresh, unopened bottle of whiskey and pour a glass. Whiskey and I became the best of friends after Sammy’s death. Whiskey, she loved me. I chose her over my family. Over Lily. I’ve locked her away for a while, but every now and then I crawl back into her life so she can fuck me up again. I drink her down in a matter of seconds, and then I pour myself another glass. And another. And another. Another. Another. Another. Nother. Other. Ther. Her. Er. R. Rehtona. Ehtona. Htona. Tona. Ona. Na. A. I need to lay down.

\*\*\*\*\*

I must've passed out. I feel really hungover. But then I again I did drink an entire bottle of whiskey in a matter of minutes. I wouldn't keep sleeping if there wasn't someone banging on my front door. I look at the clock. 5:02. Well I've been sleeping about an hour or so. My head really fucking hurts. And this banging won't stop. I crawl myself off the couch, unlock the front door, and a cop is standing in the doorway with Ricky Gerrickson.

"Jack Larson?" He asks. I wave at him.

"Yep that's me." The way he's looking at me I can tell he knows I'm not ok at the moment. The cop scratches his head.

"This is Ricky." he begins, as Ricky stares at me with beaten and swollen eyes. "We need someone to take care of him. We're afraid he isn't safe in his own home as his father is-

"On the run from you guys. Yea I saw you guys this afternoon. What does that have to do with me, I barely know this kid"

"Well," the cops say. "He must know you. He's listed you as his back-up emergency contact.

"Oh." I say. "Back up?"

"His mother was listed first."

"Oh shit." I say aloud. "Ok, yea come on in."

The officer and Ricky step into my house and the cop hands him his bag. "You ok son?" He asks, as Ricky nods. "Ok then. We're all set then." The cop shakes my hand. "I'm Officer Kyle Blake. If you have any questions, here's my card." He says to me, handing me a white paper with his personal number on it. He turns to Ricky and puts his hand on his shoulder. "We'll find your father, and we will make sure he is brought to justice. I promise." He turns and walks out, shutting the door behind him. Me and Ricky are left to nothing but silence. I cleared my throat.

"So...I guess I'll sleep on the couch tonight, and you can sleep in my room. I mean unless you prefer couches. I'm not really sure-

"It's fine Jack" He interrupts. "You can keep your bed. I'll sleep down here." Ricky glances at the clock and throws his bag down. "Shit. I gotta make us some dinner." He runs into the kitchen and sees what he has to work with, which isn't much. "What the hell, Jack? Do you need to eat anything besides McSteamy's? Shit."

“I do. But I’m not a big eater to begin with. My sister will feast her eyes out. Me? Not so much.” I pause and see Ricky mumble to himself as he searches for a specific pot. I would’ve never guessed his mother died. This is some extreme behavior. What are the steps of the grieving process again? “Ricky...forgive me for saying this but you seem to be handling this really well? Are you sure you're ok?”

Ricky stops what he’s doing, clenches his fists and slams onto the countertop, looking down, tears falling from his eyes. “I was.” He just stands, his head looking at the table, as he sniffs his nose and sighs. “I lost my mom today Jack.” he cries, his face now flooded with tears. “I lost my fucking mom! And it’s all Gary’s fault!” He slams his fist on the table in rage and walks into the living room where I’m sitting. He plops down next to me.

“How old are you, son?” I ask

“14...I am 14.”

I nod back. I stick my arm out, slowly, because I’ve never had to comfort anyone like this. But I do remember how I felt when Lily did the same thing to me. I touch his back and he looks at me.

“I am so sorry. Your mother was a great person. She didn’t deserve what happened to her.”

He nods. “Thanks Jack” He rubs his legs and stares at the floor. “Do you know how many times I’ve wanted to kill him, Jack?”

I’m blown away. A 14-year-old? Talking like this. I don’t know if I should feel bad or afraid. I don’t even know how to respond to this.

“No. No I did not.” I say. He looks at me, and I can see pain in his eyes. Like it hurts. Like it truly fuels his everyday life.

“The things he would do to me. The things he would say to me. He is a perfectionist. And I wasn’t perfect enough to be loved. And whenever I wasn’t perfect, I would pay for it. So many times, I give one wrong answer and I’m beaten until I’m black and blue. I hate him. I tried so many times to get enough money to get my mom out of here and away from him, but I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t save her Jack. And now she’s gone. And it’s all my fault” he cries, sobbing as I hold him like I would Sammy. I can’t even imagine what this poor kid has gone through.

“Hey...hey it’s ok.” I whisper, as I find myself deeply saddened. “Hey...why don’t we order a pizza, watch a movie and call it a night. Huh?” He snuffles his nose and nods.

“Yea, I’d like that, Jack.”

I stand up from the couch, and head into the kitchen, before Ricky sits himself up.

“Jack?” he asks, like a kid who’s coming into his parents’ room at 1 in the morning.

“Yea?”

“Can I stay with you?”

I pause what I’m doing and think about a response.

“Yea” I reply. “Yeah of course.”

\*\*\*\*\*

I just got off the phone with the police. It turns out this kid’s got nowhere to go. They said it’s an unusual case because it’s a rare instance where there is literally no family member alive or well enough to take care of him. They said that since I was written as his emergency contact- which for the record, I still don’t understand- he’s my responsibility now if I chose to accept it. Which I have.

“I need this.” I say to Lily, who is on the other end of the phone. “I can’t abandon him.”

She’s quiet and almost timid, but I can still sense her listening on the other side. “I’m proud of you.” She says, “Sammy. She would be proud of you too.”

I sigh as a tear falls from my eye. “I know.” I pause as I let a knife cut the silence in the air in half. “God, I miss her so much Lil.”

“I know you do. But think of Ricky. He’s got no one to turn to. This is your chance to be something great again.” She says as I hear my mother yelling from the distance. “You should come see us Jack. Take a plane and come down and see us. We miss you.” She says, “I got to go. I love you. I really hope to see you soon.”

“I love you too.”

I hang up the phone and look back at the dark living room, where Ricky sleeps with an open box of pizza on the table next to him. I crack a smile as it reminds me of Sammy, who also wouldn’t make it a half hour into a movie without falling asleep. I laugh to myself before I hear a gun get cocked from behind me.



“Good for you, Jack.” I can tell from the sleaziness in its tone that it’s Gary talking to me.

“Gary, what the fuck are you doing in my house? How did you even get in here?”

“I picked the lock from the back door.”

“Ok. That answers one question but let me repeat the first one for you low functioning brain. What? Are. You. Doing. In. My. Fucking. House?”

Gary sighs. “I want my son. You’re taking him away from me.”

“I’m not taking him Gary. You took him away by being the man that you are.”

“Shut up.” He says, pushing the gun right into my back. “Let’s take a walk.”

Gary leads me out of my house and down my driveway. He slowly looks down the whole street to make sure no cops are around before we cross the street onto his property. As we head into the house I quickly glance at Carrot, who I now see as the emblematic snowman. An emblem for Gary’s tyrannical reign on his own household. An emblem that lets the whole neighborhood know that he is king. An emblem of evil and abuse. An evil that I am now truly seeing for the first time.

“The police are watching this place like a hawk. They probably already know you’re here and are on their way, right now. Just give it up while you still have a -

I get interrupted by Gary punching me in the face. I fall to the floor as Gary points the gun at me.

“You know, Jack. I’ve realized something. You and I are not so different.” He now holds the gun with both hands and smirks. “We’ve both killed someone. I, my wife, and you, your daughter. A strike of rage I’ve never felt before now fills my body and I jump on top of Gary. I keep punching his face and he uses the last of his strength to push himself off, but I kick him in the face and run up the stairs and into his bedroom. I open some drawers and try to find some sort of weapon, but I find nothing. I hide in the closet and hear Gary stomping up the stairs.

Jack? Jack?! Come here. I’ll put the gun down. We can sort this out like men.” He comes into the bedroom, still pointing the gun around. I clench my fist and slowly open the closet quiet enough that Gary doesn’t hear me. I sneak up from behind him and tackle him, the gun flies across the room and Gary and I both hopple on each other trying to reach it. Gary bites my arm and I scream, and he gets away and stands just outside the window. I go for the gun, but he steps on my hand. As he goes to reach for the gun, I grab his hand with my other arm and bite him back, before I roll over quickly with the gun in my hand. Gary starts laughing at me.

“You....you’ve probably never even shot one before. And even if you did, well, you wouldn’t want to shoot me.” My hand is trembling as I hold it in my hands, just like all the other times I’ve tried to kill myself. I think of her and her bravery and I shoot, but it misses Gary and instead shatters the window. Gary laughs and dusts himself off. “You missed.” I quickly aim another shot and pull the trigger, but nothing happens. Out of fucking bullets. Just great. I put my hands out and charged at him. I grab a large piece of broken glass from the window and lodge it into his chest. “Good for you Jack,” he mutters, before he stumbles out of the window and falls outside, landing on top of the snowman. The snowman crumbles from his weight, signifying the end of its reign. Gary falls off the snowman and stays motionless on the ground next to what’s left of Carrot the Snowman.

I run back to my place and Ricky is still sleeping. I see his bag still packed and I run upstairs to pack one of my own. I stare out the window one last time. I see Carrot, or what’s left of him at least. His face now falling to pieces and his hat getting blown into the street by the wind. I see one last vision of Sammy, this time it’s her at Gary’s house, helping Gary and Ricky put Carrot together. She waves at me one last time before I realize what message she’s been sending me all along. It’s time to move on. It’s time to be free of my pain. She’s been trying to tell me all along that she’s happy and it’s time for me to be happy as well.

I wake Ricky up, grab our things and get into the car. “Where are we going, Jack?” He asks me with his sleepy eyes still tempted to go back to sleep.

“We can’t stay here anymore.” I say. I look at the picture of Me, Lily and Sammy, still hanging from my rearview and crack a smile. “Besides, I’ve got a family that’s dying to see me.” I put my hand on his shoulder and rub it. “We’re going to be ok. I’m going to take care of you. Ok?” Ricky nods before crawling back to sleep.

When we get on the plane, he’ll probably want to know what my family is like. He’ll probably wonder if I’m going to adopt him. But what I fear most, is that he’ll ask about his father. He’ll live in a bubble surrounded by the fear of Gary coming to find it. I’ll tell him the truth. That he won’t have to worry about his father ever again. But I won’t tell him what happened. Because I don’t want him to think any less of me. I might tell Lily; she’ll probably fight with me on it. She’ll probably say that me holding this information back from him is wrong. She will know, and I will know. Sammy probably knows. But for Ricky I’ve set it in stone. He will never know.

Anthony Fatuzzo

## TAKING FLIGHT



## HOW THE CALENDAR WAS CREATED

*This creation myth contains terms that are in Latin language.*

It was dawn. Yuli knew that he had to wrap up everything they owned, because it was Mater who alarmed him that there's going to be a flood over the village. And so, it happened. Strong winds blew and the waters grew rough that noisy morning right after the prayer in Alba Longa. The furious rain took everyone's houses and food and materials, leaving them desperate and morose while they watched their belongings being carried away.

But Yuli was different. There was no point for him to let the angry rain put him down. He grabbed Mater's hand and he danced and danced while their meals were swimming in the dirty water that aimed its way towards the deep canals. When the storm finally stopped, he managed a small bed for Mater, so she could sleep comfortably and so nothing, not even her own self, could hurt her. Everyone in the village considered Mater and Yuli the most bizarre mother and son that had ever lived there. To begin with, Mater held seven letters on the front part of her left hand. An L on top of the bone of her index *digitus*; the space between the index and the middle finger held an M; the middle finger another M, and so it continued with a T, a V, an S and ending with another S on top of her small pinky's bone. Seven is a magical number, Ammi used to say.

Ammi was Mater's grandmother and she passed away five years after Mater had Yuli. The beautiful Ammi whose life got robbed by the ugly *Plasmodium Falciparium*. The beautiful Ammi who would never like getting called *Aviam* or Nana by her grandchildren. Just Ammi. A tiny name for such tremendous secrets she held tight in every single part of her body.

When Mater was little the only best friend she ever had was Ammi. Long before she met Yuli's father, Mater would sit with her grandmother on top of an old castle's roof, looking at the stars and the shape they formed every night. Most of the time, the stars would gather to form an animal shape. Sometimes a scorpion, sometimes a taurus, sometimes a lion. Although,

there would also be constellations of two identical reflective human-like creatures stuck together, or at times just a man holding an arch. But just like Mater's life, the stars were also very monotonous. If they would combine to a scorpion's shape one night, then, very tediously, so it would continue happening for many and many nights in a row.

From what she remembered, the first shape she had spotted was a tall woman that had long deliberate hair. It looked like a loud wind was blowing through them and that was what made her image look even more beautiful. "Ammi, what if the stars are showing the future? What if I become as beautiful as the stars guide that image to be?". Her grandmother laughed loudly through the silent starry night. Besides her sweet and soft voice, the sound of her laughter was all that could be heard. "*Non, filiae*. No, baby. As time goes by, you will spot many other figures, and I will let you count them yourself. But remember this, *filiae*. Everyone may watch the sky every night. Everyone watches. Everyone can watch. But not everyone can look. Not everyone can look closely at the deep darkness of the night. No one wants to find out what's beyond all this beauty, no one is curious enough to suck all the secrets out of this huge dark background. But you...".

Yuli didn't know any secrets or any details of the stars his mother had loved so deeply. At first, yes, Mater had told him that the stars would combine to no more than 12 figures. She had told him that he was born right after the sign of the archer had appeared in the sky. It was amazing how Mater could actually talk to him before, how she would pass a lot of time with him and how she gave him the most wonderful days of his childhood. But, one ashen afternoon, Yuli remembered this better than he remembered anything in his life, his father had decided to abandon them, and all of a sudden, he had started screaming in front of all the villagers that his wife was crazy and that she should be hanged for all the madness that goes through her brain.

Everything had grown dark inside Mater's soul. She didn't believe anymore. She stopped talking to Yuli about the things she loved the most. She felt abandoned. First Ammi, and then the love of her life. Both had left her forever. Mater could no longer recover.

The flood meant that Yuli didn't have a place to spend his night. After making



sure Ammi was comfortable and asleep, he started walking around the village. He walked and walked, and he was merely hoping he wouldn't get lost. He walked and walked while the moonlight fell over the tall old trees. The moonlight and the silence. The moonlight stood, while the silence suddenly broke by a soft sound. It sounded like... a cry. No. It wasn't just a cry. It was like a... lament. A sonorous lament that formed a familiar melody. Ammi's old lullabies came to his mind. Was she calling him? Yuli followed the soft melody, which soon led him to an old castle.

The lament stopped. The door cracked while he opened it and making sure no one was inside; he entered the tiny castle. He wasn't really impressed by what he saw. It was a small room that had no beds or fire leftovers. The only things he spotted were some short stairs that had fallen on the ground and the small window of the roof. He looked to his side. Twelve quadratic boxes were carved on the wall. They each held a figure on their top center. But the place was dusty and Yuli couldn't assume what the figures represented.

He got curious about the roof, therefore he decided to put the stairs back so they could help him reach the window. While he was grabbing them, he noticed that there were names written on each of the splits. *Solis*, *Lunae*, *Martis*, *Mercoli*, *Lovis*, *Veneris*, and the last one said *Saturni*. Their initials reminded him of Mater's tattoo. He managed to stick the stairs to the wall and as soon as he put foot on the first one, the name shined brightly, flew high, and duo-decupled (multiplied by 12) itself on the wall. Now each of the boxes had a *Lunae* written on themselves. So, it happened with each of the names on the stairs. Now they had created rows of seven on each of the boxes underneath the figures that were still not clear to his eye.

Regardless, Yuli still decided to climb the stairs, and soon he found himself on top of the old castle's roof. He looked around. It was a beautiful starry night and he didn't ever want to leave. He spent 365 nights looking at the sky and saw that the figures that appeared were the same ones carved on the boxes and kept notes on the quadratic boxes every night. He discovered that the same shape appeared in the sky for 30 nights in a row. Sometimes 31. Sometimes even 28. He kept notes of everything. He counted every night like a prisoner counts his days when he's in jail. When there wasn't space on one box, he would pass to the other one

and so he would go on.

But Yuli missed his mother immensely. “Whenever you’re unsure about anything, just look at the stars. They will always guide you, *filius*. You will always find your way back if you believe in their magic.” Mater’s beloved words came to his mind. He walked down the stairs and headed out. It was time for him to go home. The sun was rising and when he arrived, Yuli found out by the villagers that Mater had never woken up after the night of the flood. Furious with himself, with hot tears covering his eyes, he ran back to the old castle with the purpose of destroying everything he had built. But when he got inside, the wall was empty. Caesar, a young fellow from the other village had stolen them and made sure everyone knew about the new day counter. About the new chronicle. About the *kalendarium*.

Jiyun Won

## PROPOSAL



Edward Lloyd

### **‘Twas Trouble at Twilight**

(It's the middle of the night. James is on the couch deciding to watch Netflix or go to sleep. Doorbell rings and James opens the door and finds Elizabeth on the doorstep almost in tears. The scene takes place in the living room of an apartment that James shares with his Friend George.)

**James:** Hey. What's wrong? Come in.

**Elizabeth:** Thanks, I just.... I just don't know who I could talk to and..... I'm sorry it's just that I trust you more than anyone. (sits on couch)

**James:** Come on. (sits next to Elizabeth) Tell me what's wrong or else I can't help you.

**Elizabeth:** (sniffles) Well you remember that guy I was dating?

**James:** Yeah, did he hit you? Do I need to kill someone?

**Elizabeth:** No, he... I ... we broke up.

**James:** (Hands person a tissue) oh. Well things will get better and you were too good for him anyway.

**Elizabeth:** (Wipes eyes) If I was too good for him then why did he leave me?

**James:** Because people toss things to the side not knowing it's worth.

**Elizabeth:** I'm not worth it.

**James:** Yes, you are.

**Elizabeth:** No, I'm trash.

**James:** If you're trash then I want to take you out sometime.

**Elizabeth:** (sad chuckle) Surely you jest?

**James:** I do not jest madam. For thine beauty is as radiant as a thousand suns and a moment's gaze sends me to the most heavenly places.

**Elizabeth:** (dabs under eyes and sniffles) Oh suitor I would be a burden as heavy as a thousand sins.

**James:** (hugs Elizabeth) No you wouldn't and even if you were, I'd take on those sins and more.

**Elizabeth:** (hugs back) hey I thought we were supposed to be from medieval times. (laughs)

**James:** (pulls back) I'm sorry it's just I hate to see you like this because an amazing girl like you deserves to be happy.

**Elizabeth:** Thanks. (smirks)

**James:** No problem. So, want to binge on some Ice cream or something. (Gets up and searches fridge in the next room)

**Elizabeth:** What do you have today chef?

**James:** (comes back) Ah, yes. Today I have prepared a minty cream of ice with chocolate pieces. Bone Apple Teeth.

**Elizabeth:** Ooh fancy. (chuckles)

**James:** (Sits back on couch) (bashfully) I mean not really.

**Elizabeth:** (laughs) Of course not, but thanks anyway.

**James:** (smirks) Yeah. So why did you break up?

**Elizabeth:** (sighs) He said I snored horribly.

**James:** (laughs) That's all?

**Elizabeth:** (shoves playfully) Don't laugh. He also says my laugh is annoying and that he can be doing so much better.

**James:** Oh please, you know you have the greatest laugh in the world, and he must be insane to think there's anyone who can beat you.

**Elizabeth:** (as a character) He must be a raving stark!

**James:** Indeed, madam he is. (mutters to self) because if I had you, I'd cherish you forever.

**Elizabeth:** What?

**James:** It's nothing. (smirks)

**Elizabeth:** Aw come on don't do that.

**James:** Do what?

**Elizabeth:** You always start whispering to yourself and it's always nothing.



**James:** (embarrassed chuckle) Well it doesn't matter, that's all.

**Elizabeth:** (concerned look) Well it matters to me.

**James:** (sigh) I'm telling you it's nothing.

**Elizabeth:** Just tell me.

**James:** Come off it. Please it's really nothing.

**Elizabeth:** I won't come off it because I care for you.

**James:** (Mutters to self) not as much I do for you.

**Elizabeth:** See there it is again. Every time I try to express my gratitude or care about you, you end up muttering and I worry.

**James:** Well you don't have to.

**Elizabeth:** No, I do because you're one of my closest friends.

**James:** I know, but it's really nothing.

**Elizabeth:** You're a terrible liar! Just tell me if it's really nothing!

**James:** (visibly upset) Fine You REALLY want to know what's wrong?

**Elizabeth:** Yes! Sheesh!

**James:**(In raised tone) This, this is wrong.

**Elizabeth:** (off guard) Wh...What do you mean?

**James:** We do this fucking dance every fucking time!

**Elizabeth:** Woah calm down I just wanted to know what's wrong.

**James:** No, I'm not going to calm down.

**Elizabeth:** Hey--

**James:** Don't talk. You wanted to know what's wrong right? So, I'm gonna tell you what's wrong.

**Elizabeth:** I didn't...

**James:** (cut Elizabeth off) This arrangement is what is wrong. Every time you meet some random douche in the club expecting him to be the one. Expecting him to love you forever. Well they won't okay. They don't care if your favorite ice cream is mint chocolate chips. They don't care that you have the possibly cutest laugh in existence. They don't care for the adorable sound you make when you sleep. They don't feel the same for you. Then once they reveal their true intentions or true feelings you come running to me. I have to constantly hear about you with other guys and I'm sick of it. Like do you ever stop to think about anyone else's feelings.

**Elizabeth:** What.. What do you...what do you mean?

**James:** Never mind alright. I'm so fucking done with all of this. I'm so done being hurt for your own good and end up feeling worse than I did before.

**Elizabeth:** What. What are you saying? (Friend walks into the living room)

**George:** (groggily rubbing eyes) Hey what's up with all the yelling?

**James:** (huffs) Nothing. (storms out of room)

**Elizabeth:** (tears in eyes) I think I... I.. I broke him.

**George:** (sits next to her) Don't worry he's always like this.

**Elizabeth:** but... but...

**George:** Look he's liked you from day one alright.

**Elizabeth:** he... liked me?

**George:** (laughs) I didn't think you were that oblivious. Guess I owe John a fiver.

**Elizabeth:** Wait who else knows?

**George:** Everyone in the group. I mean he follows you around like a lost puppy.

**Elizabeth:** oh...

**George:** Yeah, he's just acting fussy because, and don't tell him I told you this, but he really wants to be the only guy you're with for the rest of his life.

**Elizabeth:** God. I'm so fucking dumb. (puts head in hands)

**George:** No, you're not. How about this? I talk to him and get him to come out and you handle the rest.

**Elizabeth:** (looks up teary eyed) you'd do that for me?

**George:** (Getting up) It's more for me because I have to live with the guy.

**Elizabeth:** (jumps up hugs him) Thanks anyway.

**George:** Yeah, don't mention it. (removing her arms gently) Now let me take care of this mess.  
(George drags James out and forces him to sit)

**George:** Can you excuse us a sec?

**Elizabeth:** sure. (looking at person 1 who is looking at the floor)

**George:** Thanks so much.

**James:** Why is she still here? (Angrily mutters)

**George:** Oh, cut the crap.

**James:** I can't do this anymore.

**George:** Let me be honest with you real quick.

**James:** When aren't you?

**George:** Shut up because I'm tired of you. You walk around like a kicked puppy expecting for people to care just because you haven't got the guts to tell your "crush" you like her.

**James:** What does it matter? She'll never love me anyway.

**George:** (slaps him. No faking it. A real face color changing slap.)

**James:** Ow! Why'd you do that?

**George:** (grabs him by the collar) If I have to sit here and listen to you constantly complain I will find another room mate.

**James:** I thought we were friends.

**George:** We are but you need to man up and stop acting like a middle school kid. Now I'll bring her back in and you'll talk to her like a normal person would have. George leaves and brings Elizabeth back in and she sits next to James. Vibe should be soft tender and cautious)

**James:** I'm sorry for yelling at you.

**Elizabeth:** It's okay I needed that.

**James:** No, I was acting like a little kid, I'm sorry.

**Elizabeth:** It's my fault anyway.

**James:** (smirks) Yeah, it kind of is.

**Elizabeth:** (Laughs playfully nudging him with her arm) You were supposed to say no it wasn't or something like that.

**James:** (looks her eyes and sighs) look I have deep feelings for you and I really want to try to be the one to make you happy.

**Elizabeth:** You already have been making me happy.

**James:** (smirks) Really?

**Elizabeth:** Of course.

**James:** So, would you want to go out sometime?

**Elizabeth:** (kissing him on the lips) Nothing would make me happier.

**George:** And nothing would make me happier if y'all would let me go back to sleep.

HARMONY BETWEEN EAST AND WEST



## THE DESCENT

George Mallory and Sandy Irvine: 8<sup>th</sup> June 1924, ...28,200 feet?

The chill was relentless despite the layers and layers of cotton and wool, to the point that his skin almost seemed as though it were not there despite how doughy it felt, catching and rubbing against the cloth. It seemed as though it were reduced to freezer burnt, bare bones exposed to the subzero temperatures rather than insulating garments. Questions go through one's mind once one actually does something of the sort that he was undertaking that evening. At first, as the boy planned his great climb in warm, well-lit rooms over the course of months with mountaineering experts surrounding him, his certain, yet cautious gaze in Britain none had arisen. The heated air fled from his mind, the cold raging around him.

"George! GEORGE! Let's wait," he begged once more, despite the setting sun. His From the top of a gully within the First Step, George Mallory, his climb leader, looked down to face him. When he did, the boy almost couldn't believe his eyes. Mallory, the one who had said that they could do anything, did not appear confident anymore. His face was red, with black splotches in some places. He had removed his goggles, his savior from the blinding glare of the snow. At that hour, the glare was no more, replaced only by dusk.

"We shan't wait any longer, Sandy!" He yelled. "We must get back to camp before it gets any worse! Otherwise neither of us will see the rise of the sun ever again!" He yelled. As his voice echoed off the mountain, wisps of white began floating past their faces. Sandy at first thought it might be an avalanche. But when he saw the thickening, satanic clouds above them, he realized that a whiteout was looming.

"Please Mallory, just for one moment! I can't bear it any longer," he panted, his mitten gloved hands on his knees. But George wasn't having it. He tugged on Sandy's rope, making him rise to an upright position.

"No longer! We *must* reach at least Camp 6 before it gets any darker! Have you taken leave of your *senses*?! This is life or death, man! Now press forwards!" Sandy was yanked again by the rope that tethered the two together, and whether he liked it or not, he was stuck with his leader. He watched as the rope swayed, and with a heavy, airless sigh, he began to vocally guide Mallory down.

“Okay George, okay. I’ve set the rope up on that rock, there. I’ll belay you.” Sandy put the rope behind him and prepared to lower Mallory down with a hip-belay technique all-too familiar to him. Mallory let his legs slide off the side and prepared to descend.

Sandy was partially ignoring his friend’s complaints and, as time passed, this became like a game in his fatigued mind as time passed. He turned his gaze from what lay before him and looked instead off the cliff face and down at the ice boulders below. He knew this was where the valley must be, but now it was shrouded by an expanse of gray nothingness. He swallowed hard; he was hallucinating again. It was the opiate medication he had been taking for his dysentery.

The cliffs below him seemed to smile. The blackened rocks and pure white snow morphed into a smiley face. It winked at Sandy, and he smirked back. Still burnt badly from the first few days of climbing with an uncovered face, the gesture stung him with sudden pain. As he craned his head back towards his leader, he saw what looked like the trunk of a great oak tree finally losing its rooting: the rope was sliding off the anchor rock.

“SANDY! HEAVE ROUND!” Sandy shook his head slowly, feeling the rope gently loosen. He dropped his ice axe carelessly and, like a snowbank settling, sloughed left. Like a 40-pounder Muskie on a fishing line, the rope heaved hard. Sandy lurched forwards, looking ahead. The snow and the rocks seemed to reshape themselves, as the smiling face he had seen opened in fear at him. His outstretched hands were now ahead of that original expanse below. Farther below, a faint light twinkled. No doubt it was Odell, hunting, *scouring* the mountains for any traces of them.

“MALLORY!” he cried, his boots grinding down into the densely packed snow and rock beneath them. Confusion, cloudiness, and a lack of oxygen began to plague Sandy. He heaved heavily forwards, his lungs begging, *pleading* for air. Their life jackets, the oxygen backpacks they had started with, were far behind them and were empty. He feared then that he would fail, that he would be unable to save his friend.

“SANDY! Bring me up, at once!” George begged. Sandy trembled as he clutched the rope with both hands – he could feel the grip his boots had solidified onto with his leader’s initial plunge beginning to fail, each molecule of ice slipping over and under the thick steel cleats. He pressed his heels into what had slipped away; the past particles however did nothing to sustain him any longer.

“GEORGE, I’M LOSING YOU!” Sandy warned. The front of his boots reached into emptiness. The urge to dig in disappeared; Everest had slipped by. Icy winds whipped in between the soles and leather sides of his boots, wrapping around the stitching of Sandy’s wool socks, harshly stinging his already aching, frostbitten toes.

“I’ve a good hold on the side! Just *one* moment longer, Irvine!” George cried. Sandy’s head spun like a merry-go-round he had known back in England. He watched horses appear out of the clouds ahead, each one shaded with the mighty Union Jack, then suddenly disappear. Suddenly the clouds burst into nothingness like a popped piece of blown chewing gum. Sandy felt his waist get yanked by the rope. PANG! An excruciating pain filled his sides, his very core. The winds stopped, then surely resumed. Just as soon as the pain filled him, it was numbed by the slap of the sliced rope hitting Sandy’s face. It was like hitting the sea from a great height.

“OH...NO! GEORGE!” Sandy cried, realizing then that the rope had failed. His hands still gripped the rope as George fell, down towards what final end, Sandy did not know. But, as he heard George’s final cry from below as he disappeared into the blackness, Sandy was certain that it was, indeed, his end.

“George? GEORGE!” Sandy cried. The whistling of the High Himalayas filled his ears. He glanced down at the rope. It had been sliced by a rock. George must have lost his grip, hit the side of the cliff face, and cartwheeled down the north side. Helplessly, Sandy put his hands on his knees. His friend was gone.

*Okay...OK. I must get down, signal to Odell from Camp VI, and get Mallory help,* Sandy thought to himself. He took a step forwards, but tripped over his own feet. He stumbled, looking down the side of the cliff once more. Too close. He righted himself, and slowly inched along the rock.

New questions he hadn’t thought of before now flooded his mind. In three expeditions, ten people had died. Perhaps that number would increase by two. What if it had already increased by one? He stopped moving. It was impossible. He was no climber: he fixed oxygen tanks. Mallory had always been there to give a haughty laugh and a quick correction to a youngster’s silly mountain climbing error. Now Mallory was gone.

The snow began falling gently. If he didn’t find shelter soon, he would die. If he stopped moving, so too would the circulation in his body, and he would die. If he didn’t eat soon or drink soon, he would die. If he didn’t get help, his friend would die. These new realizations filled his

mind, and he fell to his bottom and turned to face the cliff. Why was it him that Mallory had chosen? Surely, he had been more than just an oxygen tank-fixing asset.

Then, he remembered. His emergency torch was still in his jacket pocket. He closed his eyes. The rushing winds fled. The sun rose in the sky again. He was at Camp 4 with George. He reached down in the tent and grabbed the electric light from the ground. Mallory looked in from the outside; his snow goggles and oxygen mouthpiece covered his face.

“What do we need that thing for? We’ll be in broad daylight all day, and down before sunset! Relax, Sandy,” he reassured. Sandy remembered giving a childish smile and resting it back down. But as soon as George turned away, Sandy shoved it into his chest pocket and buttoned it up.

“Ready to make history? I’ve the camera,” he called to George after slinging his oxygen backpack over his shoulders. George turned, and gave one single nod. Sandy patted his chest pocket, electric torch safely inside as George secured his belt around his waist. From the corner, Odell called to them.

“Smile, boys! We’ll summit this time!” And with that, Noel Odell took their photograph, and waved goodbye as they began their climb.

Irvine reopened his eyes. The sunlight was gone.

“I TOLD YOU!” he called, but there was no response. He fumbled to remove his mitten, and shakily reached for his pocket. He had stopped moving. He was beginning to freeze. He spasmed as he removed the torch from his pocket. As he did, the camera slipped out and bounded away.

“No...NO!” He cried. As it hit the cliff face, Sandy could hear the lens crack. Like Mallory, it cartwheeled down the side of the mountain. Sandy clenched his fists. He was so mad he pounded the rocks ahead of him.

“NO! AGH!” he screamed. He panted with rage, but soon reached back for his torch and quickly tried turning it on. It flickered like a small church candle, but it was on! He waved it down towards the light of Camp 4.

“HELP!” he yelled. “HELP! MALLORY...AND THE CAMERA!” But he was out of breath. He fell back down to his knees, and sighed. Then, he looked to his left, and saw an outcropping of rock. It was just his size and would probably be perfect for him to retreat into in order to await Odell and a search party. Only until morning, he decided.



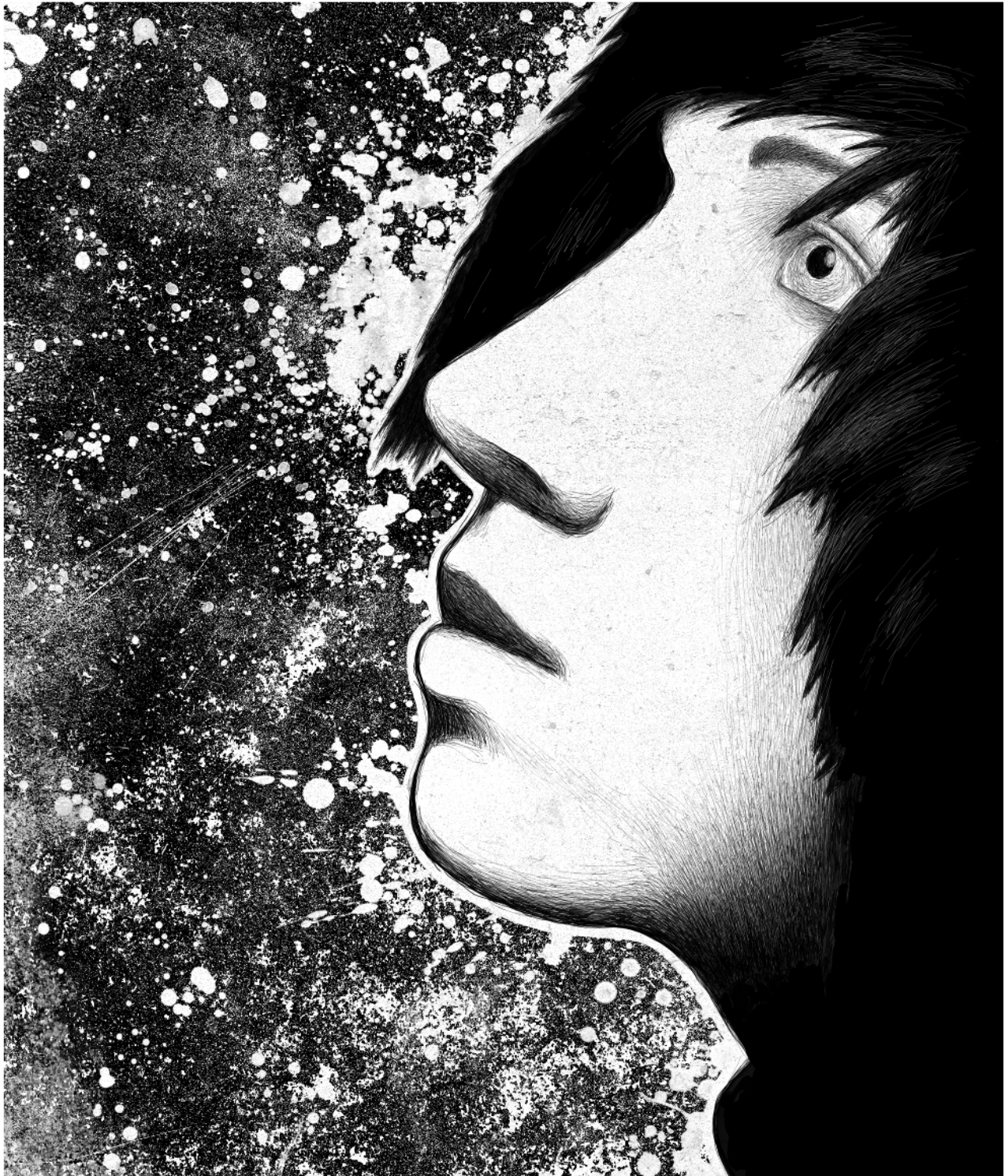
Clumsily, he fumbled over to it, and dug in for the night. All that night he could hear the six words he had been able to yell echoing in the air around him until the unbearable aura had faded, and the permanent slumber of Everest washed him down and away from that place forever.



George Mallory and Andrew “Sandy” Irvine as they prepared for their final attempt to summit Everest. This was the last photo ever taken of the two before they disappeared. Irvine was never found as of 10/9/2019. (Mount Everest, North Col, 1924)

Matthew Contey

## RETROGRADE



Judgment Crow

## THE NEW NORMAL

WikiNM.com opening message

The New Normal is the world we live in, can you accept that fact?

y/n

Next message

This isn't a joke, this isn't a fucking meme ok? We aren't LARPers. This is reality. It was always reality for some of us. Can you accept that?

y/n

Welcome to the new world, friend/foe!

Video add for magick antivirus software plays, click to buy or x out

User clicks yes

That will be 15-30 magecoin

User inputs 500 magecoin

And enters 666(@#) into the "User comments" bar

Encrypted Skype call- 2:00 hours

User downloads Enhanced Tor 3.0

End of scene 1

## UNPACKING THE LUGGAGE

It was a fresh afternoon in Barranquilla, Colombia. A house, hidden in the narrow and pocket-looking streets that identified the neighborhood in the southeast area of the city. I remember the weird-looking color of the walls, while the mirroring portrait of the 5 p.m. sunset would make them appear as dark rusty orange. A room on the second floor with very poor lighting. A king-sized bed in the middle of it, a small dresser right in front, a big mirror, and the two nightstands on each side. It was quite an empty room, physically, but it was ridiculously full. At least, I was.

I remember floating flat, excited, shaking, and a bit scared. I was in some kind of ecstasy. Not the drug but the kind of fear and overwhelming excitement one feels when securing the belt of a roller coaster seat. I did my best to keep my legs straight against the invisible surface of gravity. He was holding my hands while his feet were underneath my belly, tickling me –with what appeared huge to me but were just his adult-sized toes. He was bearing the weight of my tiny little self-hanging in the air, trusting it would last forever. I was probably five at the time, but I recall this as our first memory of just me and my dad.

The rest of those memories became just the compilation of the many ice cream dates with my sister at the parlor we loved. Full, fascinated –basically unbothered– we would sit and hear the uncountable times he told us stories of when he used to go there with my grandparents, and how different everything looked. Along with the family pictures of our weekends away. Everything else, well, it was just him sitting in the living room, looking up cars to buy online but that somehow would always end up being “too expensive” or just “too big” for him.

I remember almost vividly, how tired my hands would be after the long 30 minutes to an hour of me massaging his back at night, after having a “long day” at work. The rewarding hugs and kisses were the salary of my efforts. Until one day, I wasn’t good enough. Until having an opinion became sin and my thoughts were nothing but noise to his ears. I became annoying to his presence. That feeling has not gone anywhere. Young and colorful, the little version of myself, melted away with his unfinished promises, and our bitter arguments. Suddenly, I was no longer a fresh canvas. I was a boring one because, in me, there were no pretty pastels but the somber scale of blues that contained the darkest thoughts an 8-year-old could have: a distorted image of herself

sitting at the corner of her bed, the unmeasurable size of fog, calling her names and pushing her to believe she was useless.

It all went to hell. Our ice cream dates on Saturday afternoons, the weekends away, my desire to spend time with him... our relationship. It became unpleasant to acknowledge his existence. I guess I grew up. I started to truly listen to him, the yelling, the back and forth, and the war of words with my mom. The kind of yelling that would make me and older my sister hug each other, while the thought of him hurting my mom surfaced as a possibility; the ever-growing fear of hearing something that would hurt all of us.

One of the most unforgettable memories of him still haunts me to this day. It brought within a personal struggle –the overall feeling of danger and distrust towards alcoholic drinks that only domestic violence can transform into. I was subject to nightmares and insecurities that no one should encounter at such a young age, but he didn't know. I guess nobody knows, but he also didn't seem to care. It seemed as it only hurt me. We never talked about it. We never talked about anything.

It still gets to me. After sixteen years of being there for each other, he said goodbye as if we were strangers. Now, that I'm suddenly unloading this on all of you, I'm looking back at the ghosts of those photographs and what we stopped being... if we were those who we claimed to be. The stars that we planned to reach, and those tickets without return we once toasted with cups full of pride that shouted: "we own our destiny." But why am I so emotional anyway? Melancholy is for the weak, for those dramatic niños seeking attention from their parents.

Tonight, I force myself to remember more because I'm stuck battling with the dumb idea that he will call someday. There are tears running down the cheeks he kissed while I was becoming this young lady that now only means shame to him. I haven't heard from him in years but if I had the chance, I would tell him everything.

Victor Cervantes

UNTITLED



## THE DAY I FELT POWERLESS

In the hot summer of 2008, my mother came to visit me in the U.S for the first time. We were so excited, because we had not seen each other for four years. We were happy to hug and kiss each other again. She arrived in the morning at Cleveland Airport in Ohio, and then at my sister's best friend's house. My mother stayed there for three days. My husband and I had driven seven hours to Ohio to pick her up and bring her to our house in New Jersey. It was a long drive, and I could not wait any longer.

Soon after we arrived, my mother walked out the door with her arms wide open towards me and gave me the biggest hug and kiss. My mother has only two weeks to spend with me. I used to pray God every day and wish that the time would never end. Time flew by and I enjoyed every moment of it. During her visit, we prepared meals together, celebrate my birthday, talked about every topic; feeling like two best friends instead of a mother and her daughter. We traveled as much as we could. We visited Washington, New York, Maryland, and Connecticut. We had had so much fun, and on her last day at my house, we slept together, which was the most amazing and unforgettable moment on this trip.

On my mother's last day in the U.S, we drove back to Newark Airport for her departure to Ecuador. Before she finished her check out, she stood in front of my husband and I, and with her soft and beautiful hand, she blessed us both. She took my husband on the side and said, "I am going back home so peaceful and happy because my daughter is in good hands and with someone who deserve her love." After those special words, she gave me a goodbye kiss and a big hug while she was whispering in my ear "I love you so much! Don't forget that I am always with you." She sadly said goodbye with tears in her eyes and left. I could feel that was her last goodbye to me.

Two weeks later, in Ecuador, my mother got into a car accident and she lost her life immediately. The bus in which she was a passenger, could not stop since the driver lost control. This accident killed four people including my mother. The same day of the accident, before knowing the bad news. I felt a horrible chest pain all day. I had a feeling that something was wrong. I had a constant desire to call my mother to let her know about a package I was supposed

to send to Ecuador with some gifts for her friends. I want to ask her how she was doing? and told her how much I loved her. But most of all, I really wanted to hear her voice and get away from that feeling that was haunting me all day. I called and called all day; she never picked up the phone because she left it at home.

The day got darker, and there was no sign of my mother yet. My family in Ecuador started getting worried and called and asked 911; the police department, and every single bus company about any accident that may have occurred. A bus company informed us about a crash that occurred 30 minutes away from home. My older sister went to every hospital, police department, ambulance and other places to look for my mother. Suddenly, my sister found my mother in a hospital, dead.

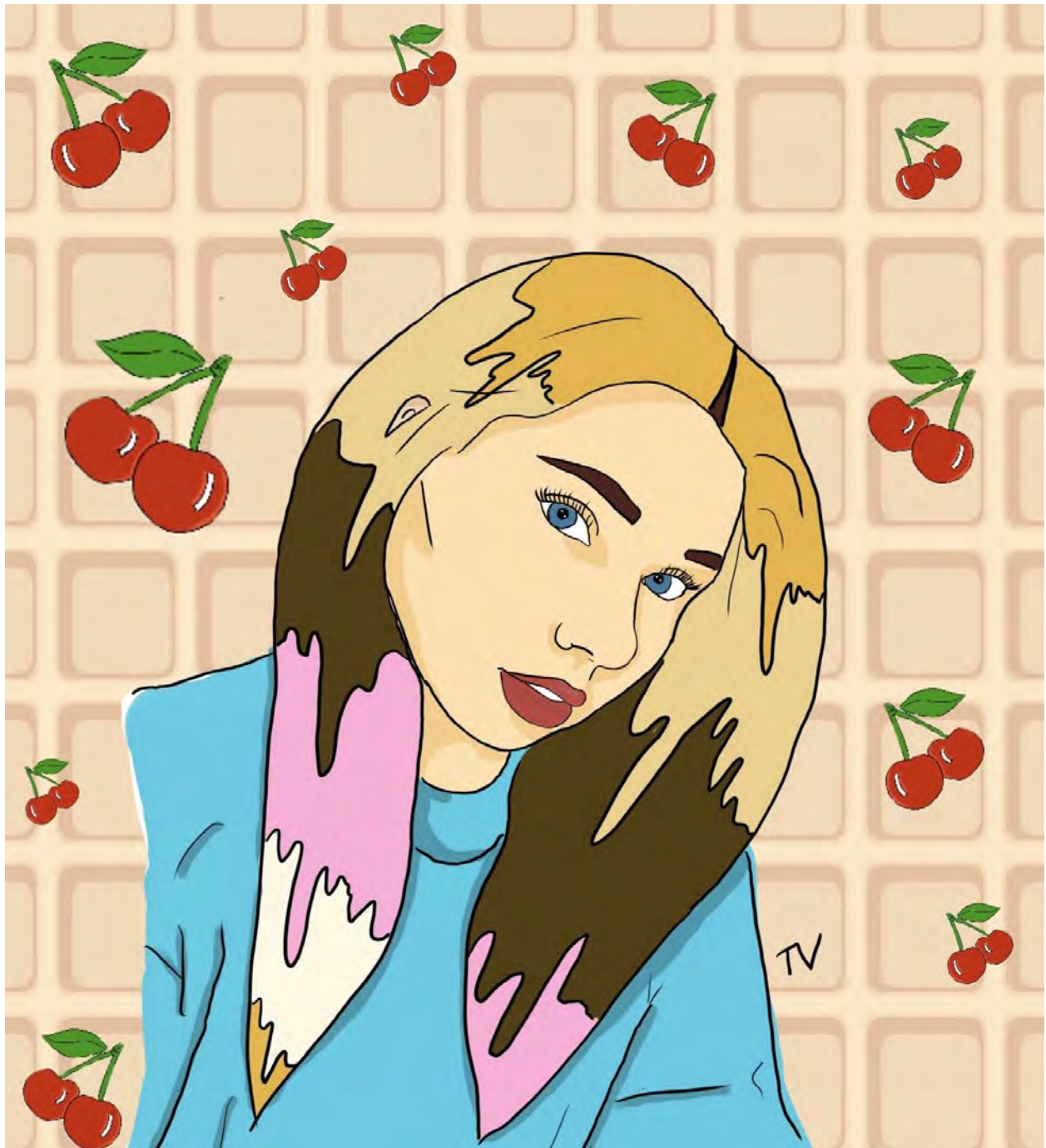
Eleven years have passed, and it is still sad to narrate this story. This is my first time writing about it. How sad is it when I remember my sister on the phone telling me, “Mother is no longer with us.” I only remember, dropping the phone to the floor at that moment screaming so loud. After that my mind went blank, and I only remember my husband next to me, supporting me.

Two days after the accident, my mother was buried, and I could not be there for the last goodbye, because of my immigration status.

In 2014, I went back home to visit my mother at the cemetery. Why my mom? Why do we have these issues in Ecuador with unprofessional drivers? Why me? However, this sad event in my life, taught me to appreciate my family and visit them more frequently. Nothing was the same ever since my mother left this world. I lost the love of my life, my best friend, and my support. I miss her very much. Every day, I close my eyes and I feel her arms around me with a soft kiss on my cheek. I feel her close to her now.



ICE CREAM SOCIAL



Alexis Brandon

## THE DINER

He sat alone  
With a glass of water  
and half a sandwich

Could he be a traveler  
like a bird in migration?  
Or could he be a lone wolf that thrives off isolation?  
Does he enjoy his own company  
like the sun in the sky?  
Or does he envy the tables nearby?

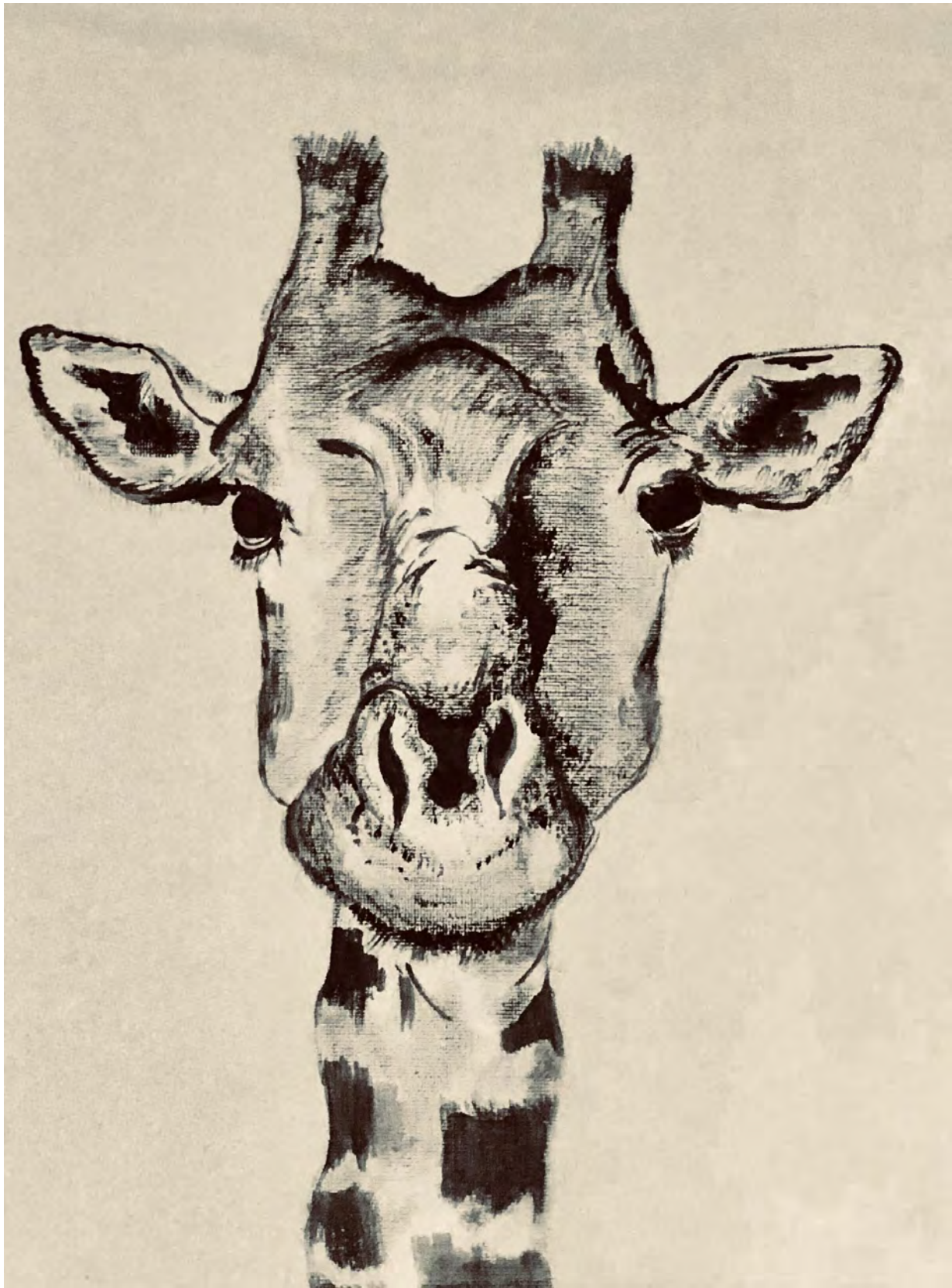
Maybe he forgot his wallet to pay.

Or maybe he's just a man

that has nothing to say.

Sarah Hartwig

MARTIN MY GIRAFFE



## ADDISON: A MEMOIR

I was never much of a socialite in my life. I was never the girl who would go to other children at the playground and intermingle with others. I was more of a wanderer throughout my years or to put it in sadder terms as most people do, I was a loner. Introverted. Isolated. A hermit. Because I knew even at my young, childish age at the time that friends always come and go, but few rarely stayed. Don't worry, I never felt lonely. I was still a happy, little child. Even with the lack of socialization, I still had a best friend.

Addison.

I was seven years old when we met. And he was my best friend for the longest time. Even now at my age, I can remember drawing all those drawings of him. He was taller than me, which people always were. He had light hair that swept to one side of his face with pale eyes. Very fair and very slim. He had the kindest smile and always made me laugh. I loved being with him all the time and I remember everything I did with him. From giggling at the playground at school to playing with dolls at home. My family never really understood our friendship. They would always ask me whenever I would play with him.

"Katie, who are you talking to?"

This is the part of the story where I should admit that Addison to many people was imaginary.

"I'm talking to Addison," I say.

My dad would always just brush aside anything I would say about him, but my mom was curious for she wanted to know what on earth was going on in my tiny mind.

"Who is Addison?" She would ask.

"He's my best friend"

"Do you mean she?" She asked, thinking my friend was a girl.

"No," I told her. "He's a boy."

"But Katie, Addison is a girl's name."

“No.” I defended myself. “Madison is a girl's name. Addison is a boy's name.”

“Well.” She asked. “What does he do?”

“We play together, and he likes to dance.”

“Are you sure he's not a girl?” She asked.

“Yes, I'm sure.”

Even with my parents and teachers at school still, a bit concerned I would still have an imaginary friend as I went through elementary school, I never did care about what they would say. During writing classes, I would just write stories about him. During art classes, I would draw pictures of him. Sure, I sound obsessed, but the truth is that I didn't know any better. I never saw Addison as imaginary, I saw him as my friend and if I am being honest with the world, a crush as well. Looking back at the past I can understand why I did have a crush on an imaginary friend.

Back when I was a little girl my parents would fight many times. My dad was always a yeller, raising his voice as loudly as he could for the littlest things and problems you could imagine. Whenever he would yell, my heart would stop and I would breathe heavily, hoping that he would stop soon. My mom was tamer, always the one trying to calm him down, but she would still let out every once in a while, her famous line to my father- “If you don't like it here then leave.”

After their fights, they would always inform my sister and me how they still loved each other, but we both knew better. If you truly loved someone, why would you yell and fight with them every day? My sister would always go to me crying and panicking asking if I thought mom and dad would stop loving each other. And every time she would ask me this, I always bit down on my cheeks to keep me from crying and always told her that everything would be okay until she calmed down. Then I would go into my room and cry because I had no one to comfort me the way I would comfort my sister. So, Addison would come and comfort me instead. And I would feel better. Because I believe that almost every little girl wanted a knight and shining armor to save them, so in my time of need, I simply created one. Or so I thought.

Years passed and I had finally outgrown my imaginary friend. Every drawing and writing I had of him was thrown away. Even all the memories I had were burning deep down into my mind where I had forgotten them for a long time. I was now seventeen years old and my parents were now officially separated which had me disconnect from the world once again but this time, in a not so happy way. But I was starting my senior year of high school and I was happy about it. I could finally escape all that was going on at home. Besides, I always wanted to be a playwright and now I was finally taking a theatre class, so I was for sure that this was going to be my best year in school. No math classes, no science classes, I could simply just take all the electives I wanted. So that's what I did, and I took a theatre class. And that's when I saw a boy.

A tall thin boy.

A boy with light hair swept to one side of his face and pale eyes.

He seemed familiar but I didn't remember meeting him.

He noticed me staring at him and made his way up to me.

"Hi," he said to me. "My name is Addison."

And then my mind was flooded with all my childhood memories of my imaginary friend. Only he was no longer imaginary, he was real, and he was standing right in front of my face. I didn't know what to say, I was so dumbfounded, so I asked him.

"Isn't Addison a girl's name?"

He looked at me annoyed and told me almost arrogantly.

"It isn't actually. It means son of man."

I stood in silence. I felt bad for him. He's probably been bullied so many times for people assuming he was named after a girl. He didn't need me to ask something a bit ignorant.

"I'm sorry." I said, "My name's Katie."

He smiled.

"I know. I used to see you walking around school for a while. I never got the chance to talk to you until today."



We ended up getting along well and became best friends for a long time. He was a professional dancer and I would see him perform at shows he starred in. We would talk about utter nonsense and he always put a smile on my face and made me laugh all the time. And every time he would see me, his eyes would just light up. I felt true happiness and it distracted me from all that was going on at home. Until one day, theatre class, we all had to present scenes. I came to school that day, not wanting to be bothered by anyone for my parents became officially divorced the night before. I came in and sat next to Addison trying to pull myself together and look like I was fine.

And then the presentations started.

And the classmates that went did a skit.

A skit about a child's divorce. And it hit too close to home

I bit my cheeks as hard as I could. Don't cry. Don't cry. Don't cry. My leg was thumping, my heart was pounding. He looks over to see me so anxious and gives me his hand to hold. My eyes started to water as I squeezed his hand trying to get through this skit. And then a tear flew down my face. I tried to hide my face for no one to see but I wasn't fast enough. Addison saw that silver tear rolled down my face and held me close to him, squeezing me tightly. I couldn't hold it inside anymore. I started to cry, feeling all the emotions that I've bottled up inside of me just shatter into a million pieces flooding my body with sadness and pain for everything I've watched and seen my parents do at home. And he just held me tightly and rubbed my back telling me that I was going to be okay and at that moment, for the first time in the longest time, I felt truly loved.

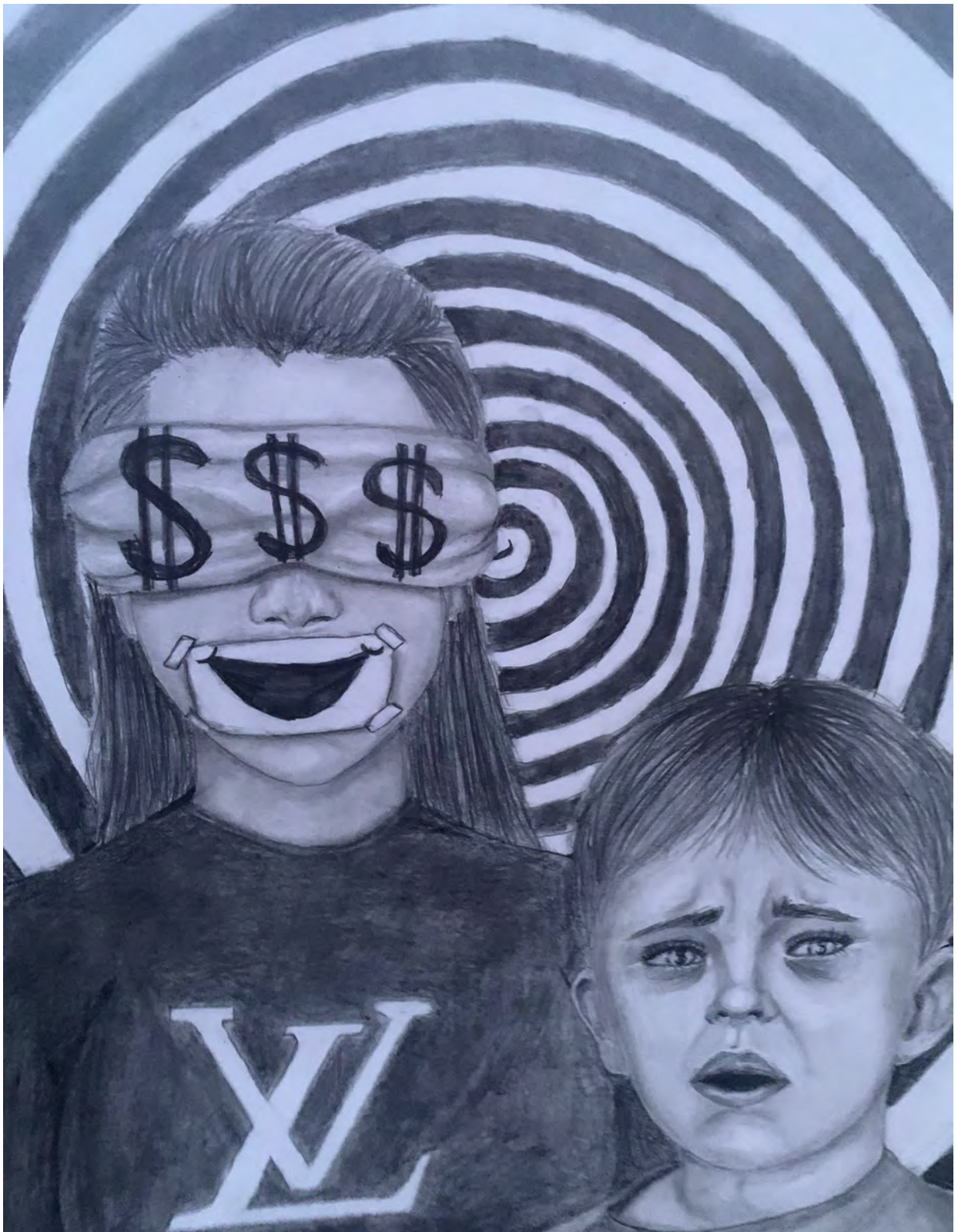
We stopped seeing each other after we both graduated. Even after all this time, I'm still not exactly sure why we ever grew apart. I've always thought that we would've been friends for many more years to come. I guess it was his turn to outgrow me. So, it seems that I've lost my best friend twice but even, so I am not too worried. I found him once so I'm sure I'll find him again soon we both just need to let each other go before we can come back. Yet I still cannot help but think how different my life may be if he were still here with me. What we would be doing now? Would I be watching him perform on stage or would he be helping me publish my

writing? But one thing is for sure, if he were here with me now, I probably wouldn't be writing about him sharing him with the world.



Ashley Zavala

FOOL'S PARADISE



Patrick Cao

## ON ALL FRONTS

Preachers are killing teachers

By unleashing creatures

Of mass destruction

And words of crass construction.

But dreamers will fall

For schemers who call

Out their fears

And claim it's a career.

Let the socialist

Believe in hocus-pocus.

Let the capitalist

Die the nationalist.

Let the Democrat

Act rat but play cat.

Let the Republican

Restrict publishing.

Let the young

Destroy lungs.

Let the old

Think they've been told.

Nothing will be done

If something is to be won.

Those that fight for freedom

Want their supporters to be dumb

And never have their questions released:

“Do those that speak the most, know the least?”

Anthony Fatuzzo

T 800 vs. PREDATOR



Michelle Coneo

## CONFLICTED

Walking back and forth,  
As her steps resemble a bass drum,  
As her thoughts pile up reaching the unexpected  
The uncertain,  
The risks,  
Her biggest fears.  
The in-between.

She is between the idea of letting go of the old  
Cherishable memories,  
The bitter taste of nicotine late at night,  
That her taste buds now seem to be annoyed by  
And the innocent charm behind the curtains  
A young, conservative lady  
whose child-like face portrays her child-like mind.  
That only counts with her calories,  
That only counts with her grieves,  
And with her right hand,  
The almost inexistent blissful moments.

She is between the nights out drinking  
When the sky, illuminated by the hot and bright disco lights,  
Get together,  
The heat emanating from the dancefloor,  
The sweaty dances, the vodka shots,  
And the Bible studies every Wednesday at sunset  
The beautiful, orange,

That one could even call pinkish, the landscape surrounding the sanctuary.

She's between the rules and ordinances

What should mold her character,

And between the sins that are purely human

What makes her the woman once she thought would never be.

Her bare face,

The dark circles under

Those drowning specks of dust

More than enough,

More than enough to understand

She is beyond grateful but could not stand

The people spying on her thoughts

The flaws,

Her claws...

She could not stand

The idea that we would all know

What she was about.

Fatima Green

## JELLYFISH IN CAPTIVITY



Christine Sawruk

AS TIME MOVES TOO FAST

I asked to pause while we kissed.  
Emotions rush faster than waterfalls,  
And I knew you were scared of drowning.  
I asked to pause while we held hands,  
Due to the numbness in my fingers.  
What would be the point  
If I cannot feel a thing?  
I asked for a pause while you left.  
The sidewalk melted my feet  
And I've been stuck here ever since.



Stefania Rekesius

## WILD FLOWER



Antoinette Quinn

## VALENTINE'S DAY

Day time in a grocery store floral department on Valentine's Day. There is a group of customers around the department being helped by other employees who are helping in the department. A twenty-year-old girl working in the floral department on this busy day is wearing her work uniform with her makeup and hair done in a simple way. A twenty-year-old guy enters, in nice casual attire: beige khakis, men's dress shirt buttoned a little more than halfway up leaving the top part open, black and white old school vans, expensive good smelling cologne, fresh haircut. (The twenty-year-old guy, Dawson, walks into the floral department, where the girl, Francesca, is currently working.)

**Francesca**

Hey, Dawson. How are you?

**Dawson**

Hey, Francesca. I am good. How are you?

**Francesca**

I am good as well, thank you. Can I help you with anything today?

**Dawson**

Yes, I need help picking out flowers for a very special friend of mine who I have known for a really long time, practically my whole life. I always have a hard time with this kind of thing. Do you have any advice or recommendations?

**Francesca**

Aww, that is so cute and sweet of you. Yes, of course, I can help you.

**Dawson**

Okay great!

**Francesca**

Hmm... now let me see. If I had a boyfriend and he was getting me flowers, I would want something picked out special so I would go with those beautiful twenty-four stem red roses with the white baby's breath because red roses represent romance. That is if you like this special friend as more than a friend or she just means a lot to you.

**Dawson**

Okay, that is perfect. Thank you very much for your help. I appreciate the advice, especially coming from you.

**Francesca**

You're welcome. Would you like me to wrap them up for you? I can wrap them up nicely for you when you give them to your friend!

**Dawson**

That would be terrific! Thank you!

**Francesca**

Okay!

(Francesca walks to back behind the counter to wrap the flowers)

**Francesca**

(wrapping the flowers)

Long time no see. So how have you been Dawson? What have you been up to? I have not seen you in a while.

**Dawson**

(Standing on the other side of the counter)

Yeah, it has been a while. I have been pretty good; I have just been going to school and working at my job the same old stuff every day. What about you?

**Francesca**

Oh! That is cool, where do you work? I am good as well, and I have just been going to school and working too.

**Dawson**

Nice, that is great how you are keeping yourself busy. I work at my family's business where I do construction and fix up things in people's houses or businesses who call us and need something fixed or renovated.

**Francesca**

Thank you and that is awesome that you are working with your family in the family business. You get to work whenever you want and wherever they need you. That's a great way to get out and go places instead of just staying in one place for however many hours you work.

**Dawson**

You're welcome, anytime. Yes, it is, and it does keep me busy, that is what I like about it the most. It gives me something to do rather than just sit home when I do not have any homework or anything to worry about or do.

**Francesca**

(Finishing up with wrapping the bouquet for Dawson)

Wow, this bouquet is beautiful. Your friend who you are giving these to is a lucky girl and must mean something really special to you. I hope she appreciates them, especially with them coming from you.

**Dawson**

(Standing in the main walkway of the floral department)

Yes, she does mean a lot and is very special to me especially since I have known her for a long time. Practically my whole life, you are definitely right about that. I am just nervous about how she is going to react. I do not know what to expect because when I give them to her, trust

me I can guarantee she won't see it coming and will not be expecting it.

**Francesca**

(Finished with the bouquet writing out the slip with the price on it for the flowers)

Aw, that is so adorable and sweet of you to do that for her. (handing the bouquet to Dawson) I am sure you have nothing to worry about and she will love them no matter what because they are beautiful and especially since they are coming from you.

**Dawson**

(Grabbing the bouquet from Francesca)

Wow! These flowers look absolutely amazing! You did an amazing job, I could not have picked out nicer flowers to go into a bouquet together if it was not for your help and advice. Thank you so much, this really means a lot, Francesca.

**Francesca**

Oh, it was nothing. Anytime Dawson, anything for you! I just hope your special friend appreciates as much as you do when you give them to her.

**Dawson**

Thank you, I hope so too. But that special friend these are for... is you. I picked them out and bought them for you, Francesca.

**Francesca**

(In shock and speechless not knowing what to say)

...What?... These flowers are for me?...

**Dawson**

Yes, Francesca. I had you help me pick out flowers for you because you mean so much to me and I fell in love with you ever since we first met and have always been in love with you since then. So, Francesca will you be my Valentine?

**Francesca**

(Speechless)

Dawson... I don't know what to say... I am speechless...

**Dawson**

(A little embarrassed)

Oh... I am sorry, I guess you do not feel the same way...

**Francesca**

(Still speechless)

No Dawson, that is not true... I do... I do feel the same way.

**Dawson**

(Not embarrassed anymore)

You do?...

**Francesca**

Yes, I do. I have always felt the same way. You mean so much to me too and I fell in love with you ever since we first met.

**Dawson**

(Speechless)

Wow. I had no.... I had no idea you felt the same way.

**Francesca**

Well yes, I do and now you know after so long of not telling you.

**Dawson**

Oh Francesca! I love you!

Francesca

Oh Dawson! I love you too!

(Francesca and Dawson kiss)

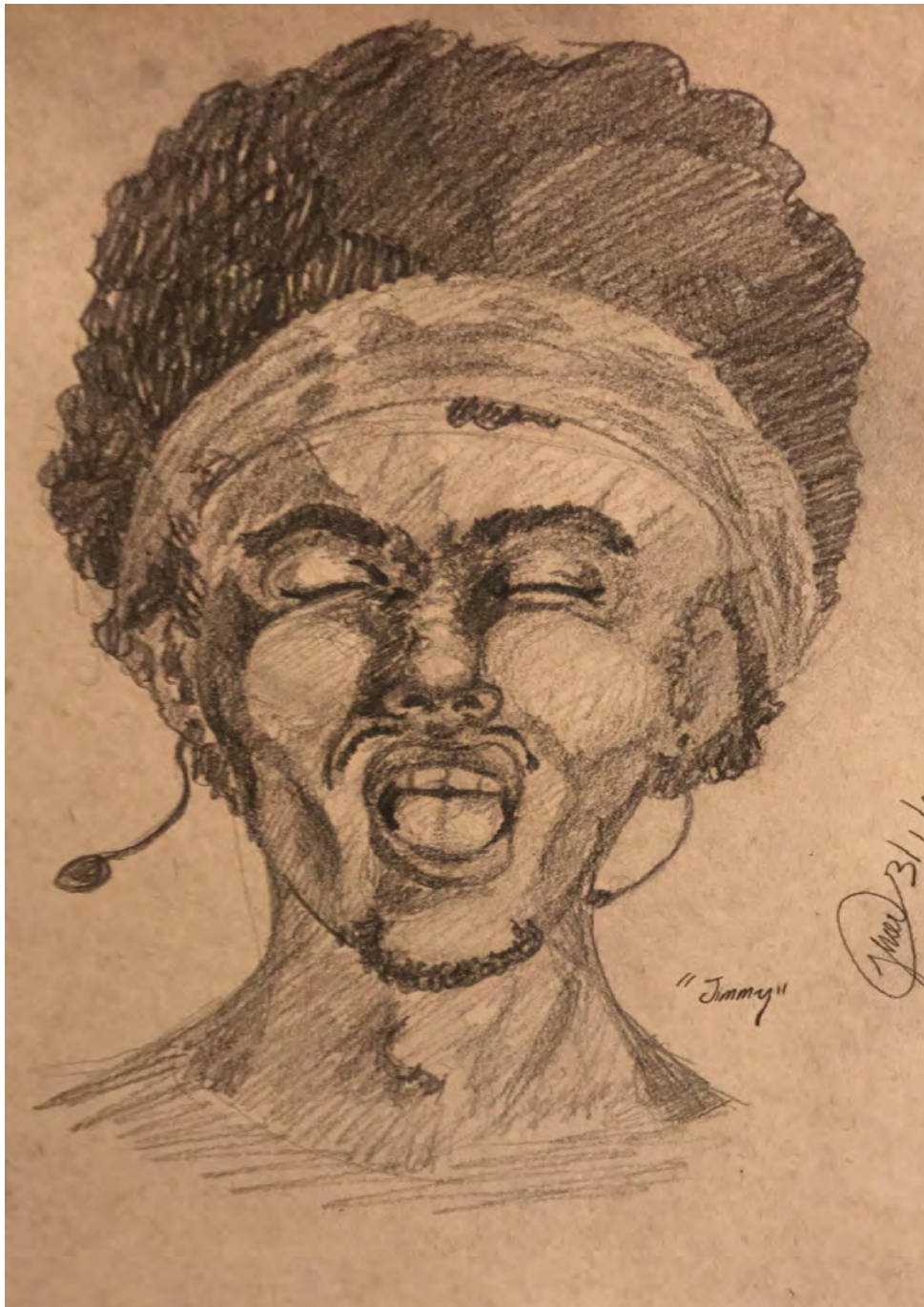
**Francesca**

Oh, by the way, yes, I will be your Valentine.



Jineer Contreras

## GUITAR FACE





## I HATE MUSICIANS

I love music but hate musicians  
Always speak but rarely listen  
Live like them I wish I could  
I bet it starts to feel good  
I picked up guitar late in life  
Is it 'cause of my musician strife?  
Or was I scared I just might suck  
“You always did depend on luck!”  
Once the words were shaken out  
I played a chord, it made me shout  
And sang and sung I did nonstop  
I'll play until my fingers rot  
I am the thing I loved to hate  
But oddly now, I feel great  
Oh, my ears that you were seeking?  
Please, my friend, I was just speaking.

Michelle Coneo

## BILATERAL SPLIT



## **RIDING THROUGH ROSEWAY: A JOURNEY IN OUR NOT SO DISTANT FUTURE**

Water pours from above, leaves shake below, and I am on my way home---my childhood home. It's been over 3 months since I've last been there, 103 days since I've last visited my mother and father. In most households, this wouldn't be such a deprecatory thing. But in the Jackson family, this is practically a sin.

Even though it's been a while since I've made the journey up here, my parents—way ahead of their generation—can't seem to go a mere 24 hours without holographic-calling me. I can only imagine the wholehearted countenance their aged faces will greet me with the moment that cobalt, wooden, door squeaks open. There's just something about that physicality, I guess.

“Oh, Naomi!” My mother would say, matching oven mitts covering her delicate hands, holding an almost crispy, oversized chicken---because turkey is so outdated of course (not to mention overrated). Beside her would be my father, his frizzy beard almost fully grey, with a wide smile that reveals his matured laugh lines, and dimples—I was lucky enough to inherit. I feel them form now, as I smile at the thought.

The dashboard reads 3:54 PM. I'm late--as usual. In this case, at least I can blame the weather. I forgot how smoggy it gets up here, especially this time of year. My hands begin to clam up and I'm starting to feel like one of the dewdrops collected on my windshield.

I already miss the unveiled sun and it hasn't even been an hour since I began my journey from Phoenix. I could've been here sooner of course, if it weren't for this ancient 2041 Mirai. But I wouldn't replace it for the world. Even if it is 15 years old. I can remember almost precisely the first time my dad took me out in it. It was about half a decade ago, right here on what is now called Terrestrial Lane. Back then it was known as NE Prescott St. but since the whole UFO conspiracy of Wellington Park (that occurred the following year) my hometown's been somewhat of a national landmark for space and conspiracy nerds alike. It's crazy to think how long ago that is compared to now, as we're already beginning to develop livable areas on Mars.

Before that, my hometown was barely at 12,000 people, now it's probably risen to 30,000---not including the annual tourist visits around the anniversary. I was just 18 then, barely an adult, now I'm in my 30s in that same car, on this same street, on my way to visit my parents for Thanksgiving. Man, time does fly.

3:55 PM.

The road is covered in slippery, fallen oak leaves the color of sunsets and warmth and nostalgia. The rain is starting to come down harder.

"Precipitashield," I utter clearly, and in seconds my vehicle is surrounded by a bubble-like veil. My mind, still in an evocative state, begins to wander. There's something so reminiscent about the rain, especially this time of year. The feel of this machine, grumbling softly, as it speeds 1444 mph, makes me wonder what life was like for my parents when they were my age; when my dad first bought this car. And what life was like before then, when their parents were around, and even before then.

Suddenly the machine swerves slightly downward to the right, snapping me back to reality. My clammy hands stay gripped in the same position, on the wheel but I'm no longer hovering 20 feet overhead, in the freeway. The pathway in my mind disconnects as I slightly lose focus. Luckily, I manually entered the address beforehand in my car's GPS. My mind shifts to a time where thought mapping destinations were only an idea---a time where most relied on such navigation systems to travel. I wonder where the next innovation would take us.

"Destination approaching," the car informs, echoing in my mind. The auto-mode shuts off and the machine slows down from 1444 mph to 35, as I make my way up Cully Blvd. It takes just a few moments for me to arrive. I step out the vehicle onto the platform of Structure 28-E.

"Arrived. Shutting off"

I'm home. Automatically, the key card from the back pocket of my joggers, scans. I realize I never changed out of my sweats, and before I reach the door, I pick out a preset clothing setting—a thin orange turtleneck sweater dress and thick mesh leggings. It takes 3 seconds for my clothing to change and 4 for me to reach the 40th floor--about 500 feet above my car, locked into the parking position below me. The platform comes to a stop. A transparent pathway materializes to the front door of my childhood home. I check the time on my smart glasses. 4 PM

on the dot. I shut off the smart settings on my clothes, take off my eyewear, and knock on the only wooden door left in the neighborhood.

“Naomi!”



Elizabeth Shane

## FALL



Katherine Priegue

## WHEN LOVE TURNS TO LUST

We once were linked like iron  
burned bright with fire  
but heated iron melts  
turns into something else  
as the iron goes cold  
it becomes something old  
The iron turns to rust

Sara Rothenberg

## **INTERNALIZED MISOGYNY**

“You’re prettier than her,” she said to me.

I smiled selfishly.

Until a female prettier than me crossed my path.



## **A JOURNEY**

As a youth, John (nickname Johnny) Smith competed in the sports of Track & Field and Cross Country as a long-distance runner. As a resident of Bergen County, New Jersey, he traveled with his family around the county to attend local competitions—since the location changed for each one. Prior to the start of any race in which he was registered, Johnny would fool around with the other kids from his town. His father would then pull him aside quickly and say “Johnny, pay attention now, get ready and be focused on the race.” Johnny would then follow the orders of his father and do some warm-up jogging and stretching prior to the race. Once the race would begin, the audience would find him at the front of the pack, where he sometimes would be far enough ahead of his competitors to lap them. His parents could be heard screaming at the top of their lungs, “Go Johnny, go Johnny go, go Johnny go! He always came in first at these local competitions.

Johnny was so successful that he annually qualified to advance to the next level of competition. This would take him to state-wide competition in New Jersey as well as to the regional level, which often including traveling to New York State or Pennsylvania. At these competitions, he usually placed 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> to subsequently qualify for the national level of competition. The national meets occurred anywhere from Florida, to Louisiana to California. Some years he even placed in the top three nationally.

When Johnny entered high school, he clearly had the talent to be competitive. As a freshman, his coaches knew that competing against other freshmen would pose no challenge to him. As a result, he competed at the varsity level competition, which typically consisted of juniors and seniors. Although it took him some time to adjust to the high school level, by the Spring of his Freshmen Year, he was one of the top one-mile and two-mile runners throughout Bergen County for Track and Field. For the two-mile race, he even finished in the top 10 at the Varsity NJ State Meet with a time of 10:00 minutes.

During his sophomore year of Cross Country, the following Fall Season, Johnny picked off right where he left off the prior spring. As a sophomore, he finished in the top five in Bergen County and top 20 in the entire state. His parents continued to attend the competitions and put pressure on him. He also competed at a Nike sponsored regional meet and finished in the top 10 among all sophomores.

By the next spring season of outdoor track, fellow competitors no longer saw Johnny at the competitions. According to his teammates, he attempted risky behaviors such as jumping on moving cars. An altercation with his head coach led to his removal from his team. He was also rumored to have begun the consumption of drugs.

During his junior and senior years of high school, other competitors expressed disappointment that Johnny no longer competed in the sports of Cross Country and Track & Field. People viewed him as a natural talent with athletic characteristics—including long legs and strides. He had previously set many records at the youth level of competition in which some remain to this day.

A couple years after he graduated high school, Johnny continued his downward spiral, where he engaged in bad decisions. For example, he stole electronic parts from inside cars and sold them on the internet to fund his drug addiction. Newspaper articles featured his mug shot and descriptions of these events. In addition to monetary damages of over \$100,000, he served several months in jail.

During Johnny's tenure in jail, he began to spend more time with a hobby of art. He always enjoyed drawing and painting pictures of people, but he had never taken it seriously. Social service employees at the jail subsequently counseled him about the possibility of becoming an artist if he were to "clean up" his drug addiction. Although he contemplated it, Johnny had never enjoyed attending school so he was not enthusiastic at first.

After he finished his jail sentence, Johnny realized that art could be his best option, so he enrolled at Bergen Community College to take an art class. Doing artwork and being featured at the school gallery motivated him to succeed in school. He then surprised himself and his friends by graduating with a perfect 4.0 grade point average and as the valedictorian of the year 2019.

Since Johnny's graduation from Bergen Community College, he transferred to New York University, where he continues to pursue his passion for art. The city of New York provides the opportunity to experience art culture with prominent museums. Both The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Museum of Modern Art recently featured a couple of his paintings. Although Johnny regrets harming people when he previously was consumed with a drug addiction, he credits his time in jail with helping him find his passion for art.

Kaiden Cilento

## **WHAT I WANTED**

i wanted you  
to be more  
than a name  
that burns the back of my throat  
when it comes up  
just as much as it did  
going down  
i wanted  
to be more than  
an afterthought  
more than a distant memory  
more than this

Diana Seo

## AFTER RAINFALL



## WHEN I BECOME A NURSE

“Do right. Do your best. Treat others as you want to be treated.” - Lou Holtz

I grew up inspired by my aunt, who is a nurse, and my mother, who is a dialysis technician. These two women have always taught me to do my best, and I have been impressed by their dedication to their jobs and connection to their patients. I have, as a result, been drawn to patient care, especially how the right rapport can help bring a smile to peoples' faces and relieve some of their pain.

When my youngest sister was born, the nurturing quality of mine was tested and became the moment I knew I had the potential to become an exceptional nurse. Caring for my three-year-old sister Madina has taught me the importance of limitless care. Taking care of her taught me that *I will go to any extent* to make sure that she feels loved and cared for - even if that means arguing with an inanimate object like the wall that caused the bump on her head, or giving her a bandage to “heal” an invisible bruise. Or if that means using my lunch period during school to take a walk in the bitter cold to buy her medicine. No matter how silly I may look, or how tired I might feel, the most important thing is that “my patient” feels cared for. This is the same type of limitless care that I plan to use with my future patients when I become a nurse.

Additionally, another quality that I possess that I believe will be beneficial in my career is patience. Although this is not always a quality that I have always possessed, I have been able to rapidly learn how to become more patient because of Madina. Just recently I was watching television and I looked over at Madina; it seemed like I had taken my eyes off her for only a minute, but boy was I wrong. When I look over at Madina I see what appears to be a milk

mustache on her lip, but when I took a closer look, I noticed it was yogurt. Not only did I see an empty container on the floor, I see a second half-empty container in her lap. My automatic response would have been to get upset but then I kept in mind that she is only three. So the patience sets in and I nicely told her that she cannot take things without asking and that too much yogurt will make her belly hurt. I laughed and began to see the yogurt mustache as cute and not frustrating, I recognized that she is only a toddler and I became *understanding*.

This same understanding and patience will also be an important factor when dealing with patients because I can only begin to imagine how agitated they must feel during a difficult or painful illness. Although there are a lot of challenges that I am bound to face, in addition to challenges that I am not even aware of yet, I am prepared and excited to learn about how to deal with them. Not only am I elated about becoming a nurse, but I am also excited about the journey that it will take to get there, and the additional traits that I can develop along the way. I am enthusiastic about becoming not only an exceptional nurse or college student, but a better human being, because that is what my life is centered around, being a better person tomorrow than I am today. For me, life is about doing right, doing my best, and treating people how I want to be treated. *I want to treat people how I have seen my aunt and mother treat their patients, with limitless care and infinite patience.*

Bianca Alvarez

## WINTER

Kiss me in the snow;  
Let the amalgamation of hexagons melt  
between our lips  
Let the chilled needles prick the pores within our skin.  
Press your body against mine,  
And let the sky fall on top of us.  
While stellar plates and needles start to make  
the world disappear,  
Kiss me in the snow;  
Tell me you love me,  
That's all I need to know.



## BIOGRAPHIES – Art & Writing Judges:

JOHN CICHOWSKI began teaching art and design at Bergen Community College in 2004. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the School of Visual Arts and a Master of Fine Arts at the New York Academy of Art. Additionally, he was given a post-graduate residency at Oxford University's Ruskin School of Art. If you would like to see his work, he has been posting a daily drawing on Instagram since January 1st, 2019. <https://www.instagram.com/johncichowskinow/>

PAMELA HUGHES teaches Composition and Basic Skills English at BCC's Meadowlands campus. She is the editor of Narrative Northeast, a literary and arts magazine that supports diverse voices and visions. Her poetry has appeared in *Canary*, *The Brooklyn Review*, *Ellipsis*, *Literary Mama*, *PANK*, *The Paterson Literary Review*, and other publications. Her eco collection of poetry, *Meadowland Take My Hand* was published in 2017. She earned an MFA in Creative Writing from Brooklyn College.

## Interested in submitting to next year's LABYRINTH?

*The Labyrinth* is published each year in the spring semester and seeks poetry, short fiction, one-act plays, creative essays and artwork. In addition to publication, accepted works will be automatically considered for the Annual Creative Writing and Visual Arts Contest, sponsored by *The Labyrinth* in association with Bergen's Creative Writing Program, *Bergenstages*, and the College's Art Department.

The deadline for submission is usually March 1st.

Submit work electronically to [thelabyrinth@bergen.edu](mailto:thelabyrinth@bergen.edu)

### Guidelines:

- Contest and publication in *The Labyrinth* are open to full- or part-time Bergen students enrolled in the 2019 or 2020 academic year.
- All work submitted must be original and previously unpublished in any form.
- Only electronic submissions will be accepted. Word length: fiction and essay, 5,000 words maximum; poetry, 25 lines maximum; play, 10 minutes performance time.
- Artwork in any two-dimensional medium will be considered.
- Maximum number of submissions per student: three in each prose category, five poems. Multiple submissions in fiction, poetry and essay are permitted. Artwork submissions, maximum three in each category.
- All text submissions must be typed. Prose must be double-spaced.

*For further information contact Professor Mary Crosby (at [mcrosby@bergen.edu](mailto:mcrosby@bergen.edu)) or BCC's English Department.*

*The Labyrinth* is waiting for you!

