

# ORPHEUS

volume 123





# ABOUT ORPHEUS

*Orpheus* and its predecessor, *The Exponent*, have been student generated for the last 122 years. Each term, a call for submissions is put forth for University of Dayton students to submit prose, poetry, fine art, photography, and design pieces for consideration. Selection of works is juried by faculty panels called together by the *Orpheus* staff. Coordination, editing, design, production, and printing direction are all conducted by the publication's student populated staff.

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Reincarnate is a chance, a chance to see new things, to feel new things, to become something new entirely.

This something new finds each of us everyday.

Sometimes the reincarnate feels like a burning question answered, other times it feels like new thoughts sinking slowly through the cracks in our spine. Other times those things reincarnate are the long-awaited fruition of years of work, as you will see in the forthcoming pages.

The artists and authors featured in this edition of *Orpheus* found a shining way to put those things down to be seen, to be read, and to be loved. As we seek our own reincarnation, we at *Orpheus* relish the opportunity to sit and stay for a moment in the sweet and bright reincarnate, and for you to join us in turning our eyes towards the future.



Aila Carr-Chellman  
Literary Editor

To create is to give a piece of oneself to their work. No matter the medium, no matter the subject, when we create we always incorporate some aspect of ourselves into the final product.

Volume 123 of *Orpheus*, **REINCARNATE**, culminates the truest representation of who our artists and authors are at their core. The following pieces are a reflection of individuality, identity, and creative expression. This piece symbolizes the refresh of *Orpheus* itself.

At our core, we uplift and celebrate each other's creativity and innovation. It has been an honor to work as your Lead Designer this year and to create another experience for you to be proud of your work.

As you read through this magazine, feel inspired by these artists and authors to find who you truly are and then celebrate it —

Just as we do.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Maeve Fleming". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Maeve Fleming  
Lead Designer/Design Editor

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The reincarnate is  
To be made brand new  
To be reborn

Reincarnate is the first breath of spring  
The dawn after the darkness  
A heartbeat made strong after a LETHAL CRACK

Asked again are the questions left unanswered  
Felt again are the feelings once forbidden  
Childish hopes return, forgotten years ago

These OLD things we'd never thought we'd reach  
These old things made NEW again

The tired, old, and depleted  
Becomes bright, clean, sweet and vivid once again

The thing reincarnate is living, once again.



# REINCARNATE

The thing reincarnate is living, once again.

# OH LOVE

Jaylee Sowders

Oh Love,  
When I am reborn,  
do not call me a woman.  
For it is both a community  
and terrible prison,  
of which I cannot identify.

My life,  
my existence,  
is boundless,  
expansive.

I am the stardust  
that knows no gender.  
I create planets,  
and galaxies,  
and worlds,  
on which you tread without thought.

So, I suppose  
I am confined to this label  
of a woman.  
Or rather,  
confined to its association  
that I am inevitable tolerated,  
but not appreciated,  
something beautiful to see and touch,  
but not worship.

Please Love,  
I pray for a life  
in which you gift me to the cosmos  
the way I see myself.  
Perhaps that requires  
a return to my origin  
as dust.  
But my insignificance as dust  
is miraculously more empowering  
than the confinement of a gender.

Oh Love,  
When I am reborn,  
let me be free.

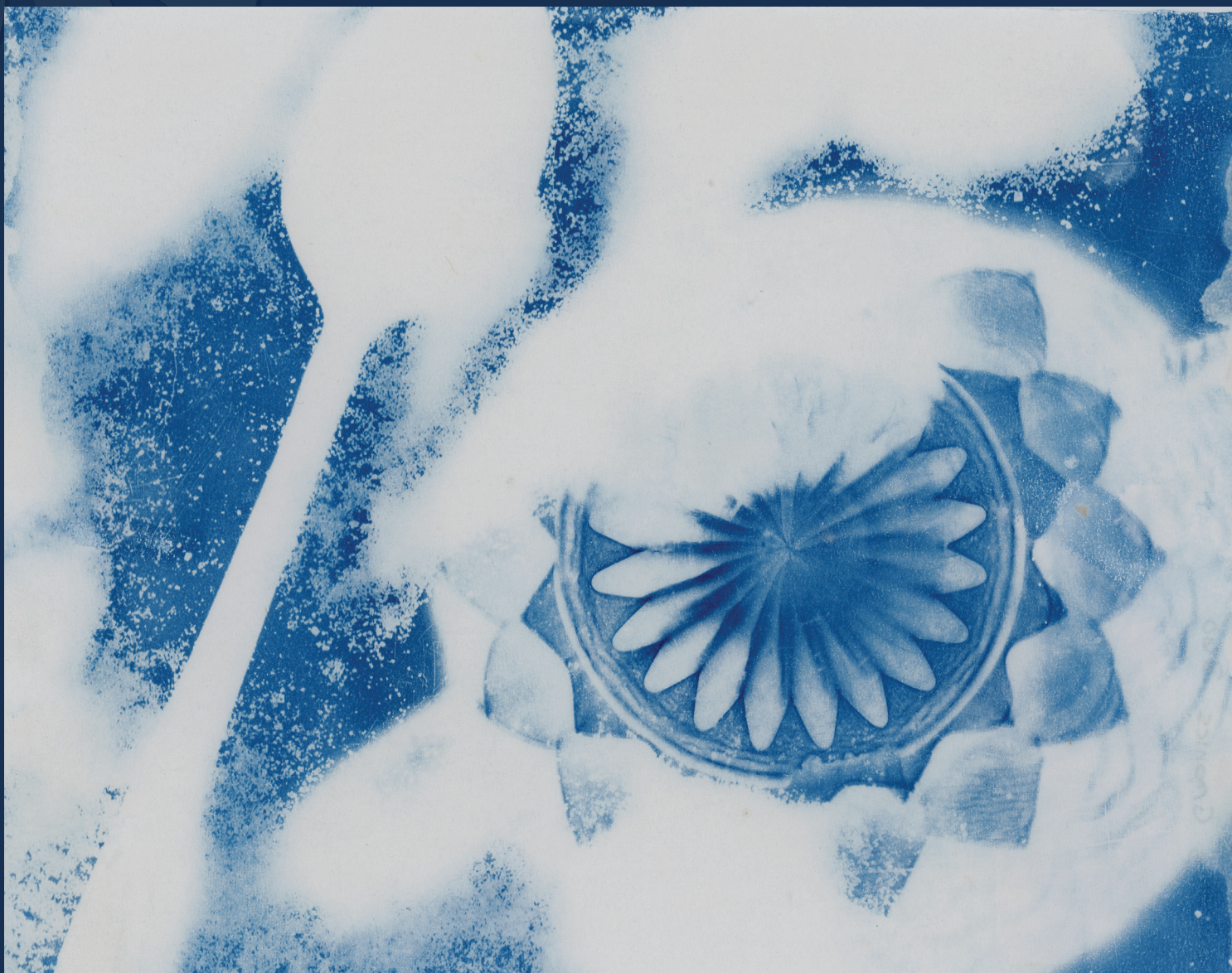


embrace

# EMBRACE

Staci Z-R





# MOM'S SUGAR BOWL

Katie Timko



A crumbling castle stands  
Upon a grassy hill,  
Its turrets worn and weathered,  
The earth beneath lies still.

One listens closely and may hear  
A song upon the wind  
Whose story sung from ages past,  
True love that rules rescind.

Few traces left from long ago,  
Two hearts that intertwined;  
A princess born to royalty,  
Her loyal knight refined.

Established law made resolute

No marriage by decree;  
Yet fools would claim because a crown  
A love could never be?

Years went past and time made old  
A princess and her knight.  
As life departs, flesh turns cold  
Yet souls entwined take flight.

Beneath a crumbling castle  
Sleep the silent dead.  
Trees cast shadows cool and green,  
The earth their tranquil bed.

Letters carved into a stone  
Obscured with ferns and moss.  
From ages past the words reveal  
A life of love and loss.

"Here lies a noble knight  
Who died beside his queen."  
Though bones and flesh must turn to dust,  
True love's forever green.

# the castle

Madeline Shelly

# awaken

# AWAKEN

Alexandra Amrhein

oh, how we love the birds.

these, the snow-doves of spring  
who soar with an ever-light air  
then, just the same, perch there  
on your fractured windowsill.

they've kissed the heavens, blessed green glades—  
sailed in sweet, summer winds—  
my, they've made it look so easy  
carefree bliss attained.

he's a friendly one, this bird  
who taps on your pane, so curious  
he tilts his head—hey, you in there!  
wanna come out and fly?

but can you admit you've forgotten how?

heavy heart,  
i know that you have seen too much for starry eyes to bear  
and i know that you have grown too much for simplicity's wide-eyed stare  
and it's true, ignorance is not the answer, and you have felt that weight  
but—i swear, it's true, you've lost nothing.

dear heart,  
imagine, you could start again, and awake your tired eyes  
to see a little bird, and grasses of hope, and redemption sweeping skies  
no, maturity and innocence don't have to be star-crossed  
and when their hands slip from yours, you will feel the wisdom, not the loss

it's the brightest sound you've ever heard, and your chest nearly implodes  
dark and light and pain and love and all of it, so wonderful  
a heart in the clouds, despite chaos down here, it knows how to stay still  
the beauty of perspective, the thrill of a life—you hear it—you always will

maybe it's the children, shrieking joy-dazed at the swings.  
or it's your Russian nesting dolls, younger versions safely preserved.  
or maybe it's the way it feels to gaze at shimmying meadows,  
knowing, deeply, the meaning of it all.

cautiously, you edge forward.  
you open the window  
and you fly.

oh, my heart, we are the birds.





always with you  
**ALWAYS WITH YOU**

Collette Roth



# there's no planet b

Lauren Carr





he will wipe every tear from thine eye  
graves dug and shovels stuck in thick mud  
cross freshly nailed and smelling like childhood treehouses  
water overflowing from a pink-tinged bathtub  
all of these things are gone forever

i fear no evil for you are with me  
pomegranate rotten underneath the ground  
seeds sowing a tree in a place of darkness  
baby's laughter echoing in dreams  
birthday candles blown out like a surprise

be not afraid  
guardian angels out for a smoke  
because i didn't cause it  
i can't cure it  
and i can't control it

the greatest love you can have is to give your life for them  
love like the dagger loves the flesh  
like the opiate loves the masses  
like the fence loves the outsiders  
like the fire loves the kindling

i was a stranger and you welcomed me  
skin fresh and unmarred, milky white  
breathing breath into still lungs  
cherry juice dripping down my mouth  
life again where there once was not

shall not perish but have eternal life  
and above the green wild earth  
below the blue wide sky  
my brother lives  
and so will i

# genesis

Molly Campbell

Tears streamed down my face as I drove down the highway. The lights on the road, from cars to street lights to the light of my own phone with the navigation taking me home—they all blurred in my vision as I sobbed.

These weren't quiet tears, these were loud body shaking sobs. I had to grip the steering wheel with both hands so tightly my knuckles were white to keep from shaking, to keep from fully shutting down.

The only thing that kept me from pulling over on the shoulder of the highway between Houston and College Station was the hour-long drive ahead of me, the clock reading nearly 1 am. I had to get home. I couldn't bear the thought of him ruining me so completely that I couldn't even drive myself back, when I had made a point of driving all the way out to see him, to talk to him in person. The fact that I had taken time out of the few short days I was home during the summer to see him. The fact that he had pushed back the meeting to the last minute, that I had still insisted on making the hour drive to tell him I didn't love him anymore.

That's not true. I still loved him. I still love him. I love him so much my heart felt like it was ripped out when I told him. We had talked and caught up for almost an hour before I said it. We both knew it was coming, both wanted to hold onto that little bit of normalcy we still had. Wanted to remind ourselves of what we loved about each other.

"I don't think I can do this anymore," I had said and he had just given me a sad smile.

"I love you so much," I continued "And a part of me will never stop loving you, but we are on two different life paths and this relationship isn't conducive to that. We both deserve better."

He nodded, and I watched his throat bob as he tried to formulate words without mirroring the tears that were welling in my eyes.

"You are the most wonderful person I have ever had the pleasure of knowing, and you deserve the world," he finally said.

I had fully sobbed then, I had felt like the villain in his story for weeks, months even. Even more so in this moment, when I ripped his heart out and broke it into a million pieces and yet he still found words of kindness, of love. It reminded me why I had fallen in love with him in high school, and again four years later in college. Why I had tried so hard to convince myself that we were right for each other, that we could be good together. But it wasn't written in the stars.

As I drove down the highway, the road slightly slick with the rain that had come through earlier, I willed myself to stop crying. To focus on the good, the positives. I could move on with my life. I could explore things I never had before, I could be who I wanted to be.

Tears started spilling again, but this was a different sort of grief, not for the loss of a partner but for the loss of a piece of myself. I had changed so much between high school and college, and in many ways didn't identify with high school me. High school me, 'Cat' was naive and innocent and broken. 'Cat' needed a knight in shining armor to protect her and be gentle with her. She needed someone who would call her princess and treat her the way she had never been treated before—because she grew up too fast when her mom died.

Now, the me that was driving down that road, barely paying attention as cars whizzed by too fast on the wet roads, only focused on the stretch of road ahead, their hands on the steering wheel, so tight the knuckles were turning white. The ring on their finger that he had given them when he had visited for his birthday.

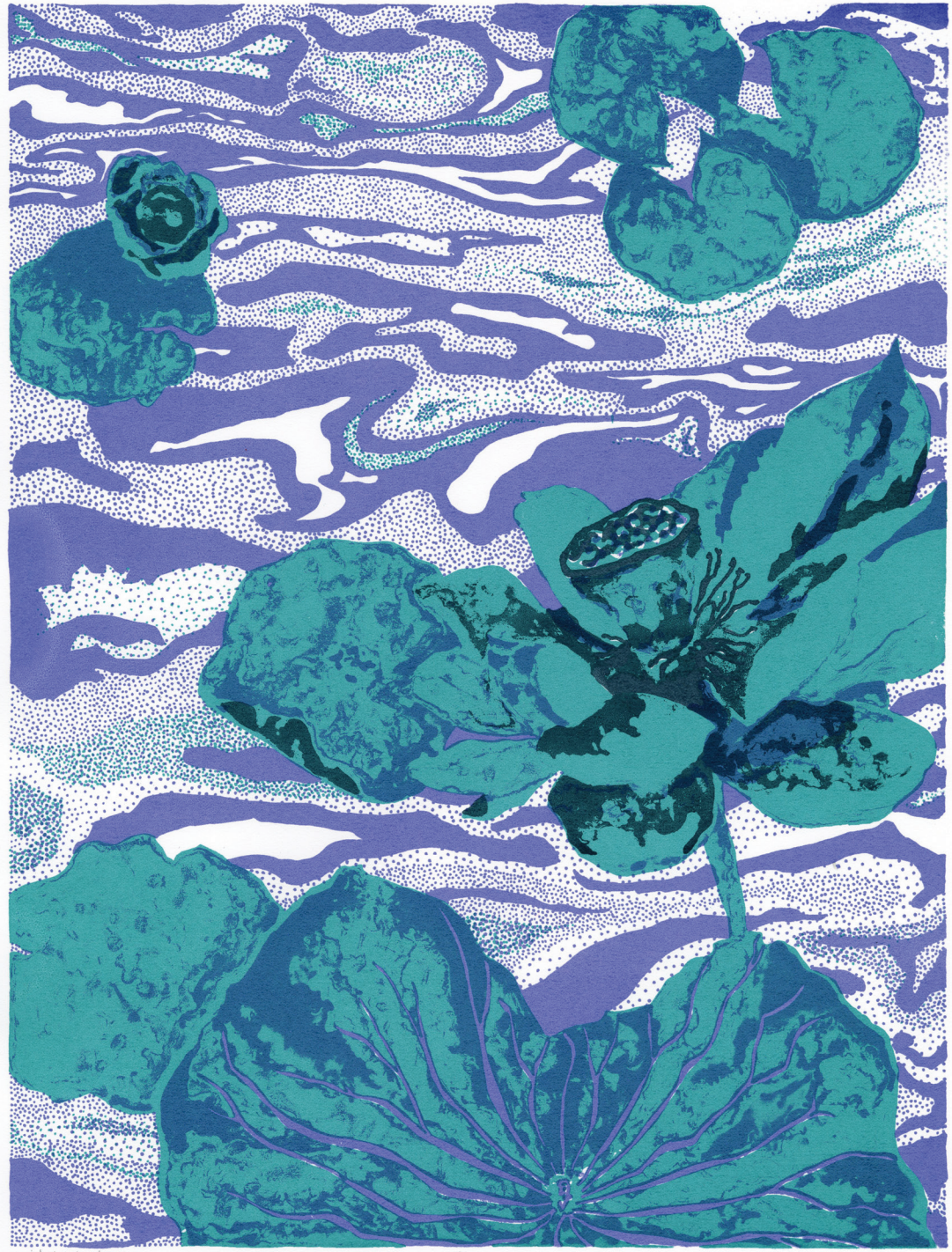
The me that had walked out of that apartment was wholly new, a butterfly coming out of its cocoon. Ren. Ren is still broken, but he doesn't need a knight in shining armor anymore, and he isn't one either. He's a dragon, he's the monster under your bed. But he's also kind and loving and does all of the things 'Cat' did but better, he loves harder and burns just a little bit brighter. He's learning to overcome his brokenness and is building a better life for himself. Himself.

I smiled through the tears as I drove past the sign that said College Station. Hurtling towards home, I smiled because even though some lingering part of my high school self had died with the relationship I had ended, a new version of myself was reborn. And I think I could learn to love the new me.

Ren Sikes

# REBORN





midnight glow

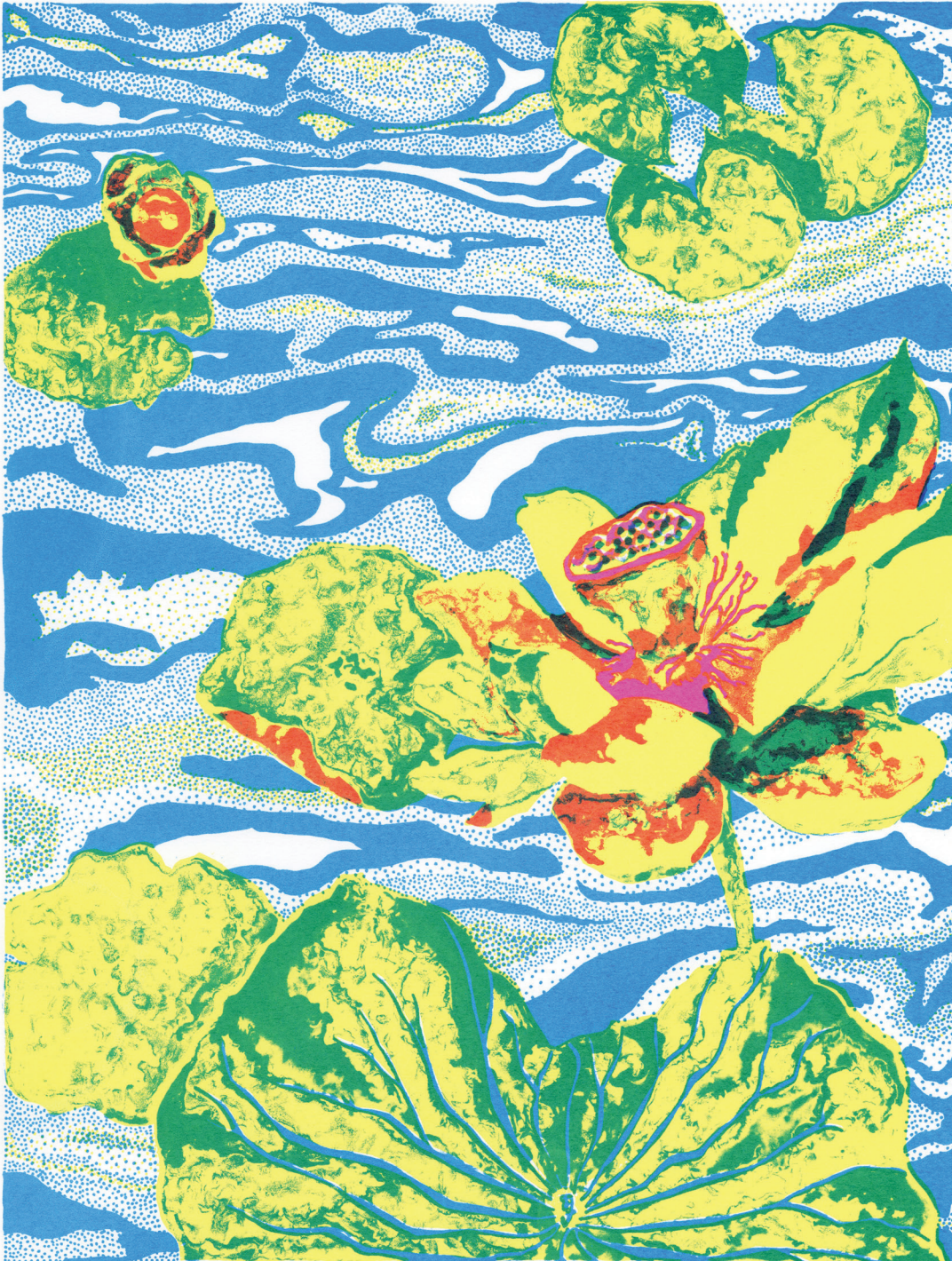
1/5

Kyleigh Streeter

# midnight glow MIDNIGHT GLOW

Kyleigh Streeter





Tidal Lilies

1/5

Kyleigh  
Streeter

# TIDAL LILIES

Kyleigh Streeter

It was lying on its side in the road. From a distance it could've been a pile of dead leaves or a clump of dog hair. Upon closer inspection, it was a baby bunny. No larger than a nectarine. A black eye was opened wide, and its feet were curled up.

"We should probably move it," my sister said, as she went to get a stick.

I stood over it and stared, and when she poked it I wanted it to spring up and hop away. To our horror, its tiny chest began rising and falling.

"Dammit. It's still alive."

I ran inside to grab a box and a towel.

"What's that for?" Dad asked, coffee in hand.

"A bunny got hit by a car."

"Jesus." He said.

He had seen this show before. Injured animals had a way of finding themselves being "rescued" by my mother a little too often.

The first one I remember had been the black goldfish in Walmart whose eyes had been eaten by the other goldfish. We had been going on our weekly Walmart and McDonalds outing and were looking at the fish when my mother spotted him.

"Oh no! No no. They're tearing him apart!"

Within five minutes, we had an employee scooping him out of the tank with the green net.

"Ma'am, he ain't got no eyes ya know. He ain't gon' make it long." The employee frowned at the plastic bag holding the little fish.

"I know, I just want him out of his misery," my mother said.

In the car, it was announced that his name was Little Ray, after Ray Charles, who had also been blind. Little Ray didn't make it the whole car ride before floating to the top of the plastic bag.

"At least he died in peace," Mom said.

Another time there had been an acorn mouse that had gotten stuck on a sticky trap at my mothers' school. He had wandered into the classroom in search of stray snacks, and unfortunately it was the classroom of the sadistic kindergarten teacher.

"I've got a trap out, it's time to execute the little bastard," she had said to my mother while on a lunch break.

My mother had come into the classroom to drop something off after work hours, and to her horror she saw the little thing stuck to the poisonous adhesive. After attempting to peel him off with no success, she gave him Cheerios.

"I had your dad do something with him. I couldn't watch it anymore."

When I was six, a mouse that got stuck in a metal mouse trap and was halfway sliced suffered a similar fate.

# PATIENT 350

Olivia Pietras



"Your mother gave it a piece of popcorn like it was going spring back to life. Her hope springs eternal, that one."

"What happened to it?" I asked.

He looked at me for a second, and then said, "I dropped a brick on it."

Mom cried at that.

"She tried to save a duckling once too. She found it on a walk in a high school in a puddle and it was all jacked up. Then she tried to reintroduce it to its family and they killed it."

My sister and I pictured this. Dad continued.

"Then, there was this time we were at the farm one summer. I don't know who was with us but one of your moms' uncles accidentally mowed over one of those stray kittens that's always running around. Of course, your mom found it. Then one got stepped on by a horse too."

Mom had come back in the room at that point and was now a puddle all over again. I was too.

My grandfather also attracts injured animals and has the animal hospital of his town on speed dial. I have heard them answer and they must recognize his number because they always say his name. The most depressing "rescue" to date was the bat that got in through their attic and flew into our bedrooms late at night like a little vampire. I could hear the flapping as it flew in, and once it bounced off the ceiling. In his attempt to rescue the grotesque little creature, he ended up bringing him to his end.

"I'm afraid we're going to have to see if he had rabies..." the woman and the wildlife said.

My grandfather, in what had become his uniform since retiring which consisted of a plaid shirt, jeans with a brown belt, and a baseball cap, looked puzzled.

"We're going to have to euthanize him."

His face fell, and the little orange plastic bucket with the lid he had captured the bat in was pulled into his chest a little more.

"Oh."

He left the wildlife center a broken man.

As I sat in the car with the limp bunny, I understood all their attempts. We arrived at the only center that would take him, which happened to be 45 minutes away. When we walked inside, my sister explained the situation. I tried to telepathically communicate to the woman that we knew he was going to die, that we weren't stupid. We just couldn't end his suffering, it would cause too much of our own. She handed me a card.

"He'll be patient 350 if you want to call in and check on him."

We didn't call to check on patient 350. I've decided that he's on a farm somewhere, eating all the vegetables he wants. He made a miraculous recovery and lived as long as possible for a bunny. I'm sure my mom and grandfather would happily support this delusion.



sticky  
STICKY

Elena Bellisario

If love a life,  
and life a song,  
how to rewrite  
the measures lost?

You've slipped away,  
down endless dreams  
the journey far,  
the path unseen

The river Lethe  
runs dark and wide.  
For you, my love,  
I wade inside

Charon quakes,  
Cerberus shies.  
The night quivers  
at Elysian eyes

I'm here, my life,  
your smile sings.  
Upon your hand  
I spy our ring

Gentle chord  
Melodious, full,  
my life, my song,  
alive once more!

Just wait, my love,  
I lead you on  
soon to sing your  
re'ncarnate song

A beat, a rest,  
a misplaced stone,  
you trip, I turn—  
I walk alone

our ydices  
**EURYDICE**  
Elisabeth Schmitt





# so it goes SO IT GOES

Kaylee Peters



# untitled UNTITLED

Kaylee Peters



# have a seat HAVE A SEAT

Kaylee Peters



# A POEM WITH EVERYTHING IN IT

John Sebastian

I've always wanted to write a poem  
With everything in it  
Everyone I've ever met  
Old friends and lost family  
And love gone awry  
Even babies and lifeguards  
And abstract art pieces I squinted at

It will be witty and simple  
And inspire academic articles  
In which professors will debate interpretations  
While I rest my spine near the back  
And laugh hard as all hell, speaking  
"Well that's one way to view it."

And anyone I wrong  
I won't spit, I'll simply whisper  
"You're going in my poem  
with everything in it"  
Before veiling myself in my attic, safe,  
To add that part where I was right

But I don't think I will write that poem  
Because when I finally get around to typing all that  
Everything will have changed





inanimate  
INANIMATE

Mia Haas





# BREAKING THROUGH THE SHADOWS

Elaina Lear



i used to leap forward  
now i step hesitantly  
i want to dive right in  
right in to where the water is cold  
i fear the force of hitting its surface  
and being swept away by undertow  
afraid i won't be able to swim  
but desperately paddle away weathered  
with my skin wrinkled and raisined  
greeted by the warm sand i melt into again  
my mother always said i was born to swim  
so i count my bruises and heal my wounds  
and i will swim again

# swimming lessons

Lila Acott

“And remember,” spoke the voice from behind the desk. “No lies.”

The desk was tall and had a slight curve, with a sheet of tempered glass to separate her from the voice.

Her. The woman. She was handed a clipboard under a small rectangular gap carved at the bottom of the glass. “Take a seat.” The woman did just that.

The room was small with no windows. The only light came from a square glued flat against the middle of the ceiling. It shone a bright light, a white light, like one from a large department store with shelves so high and lights so bright, you could hardly see the top. However, in this particularly small room, it had the opposite effect, where every corner and crevice was hidden from its own shadow.

No one else was there. In fact, there was only one iron door. The woman couldn’t remember if she had used that door to get in, but she must have, seeming there was nowhere else she could’ve entered. She looked down at the thin sheet of paper over the clipboard. A black pen dangled from a metallic band that loosely stemmed from the clip. She lifted it and hovered her finger over its top, pressing down until she heard a click, and read the first question.

In big, bold letters: **What is Your Name?**

The woman gulped, though felt nothing of her throat.

**Do You Love?**

**What Did You Do?**

The woman stared at the distorted symbols on the page. She peered her eyes up. “Excuse me,” she said. “What is this?”

The door shuddered open. There stood a figure dressed in all white. White slacks, white shoes, and a white short-sleeved shirt that almost resembled scrubs. The figure even wore a surgical mask over their mouth, one that was bright white. Everything was so white, it made the figure’s skin look as though it had a blue-ish hue. Even the figure’s hair was bleach blond and curled, with some curls draping over their face.

“You can follow me,” the figure said, in a neither feminine or masculine tone of voice, and turned around, expecting for the woman to follow.

“Wait!” the woman exclaimed while standing from her seat. “Where are we going?”

The figure slowly turned back around, gazing at the woman’s soul. Their eyes had no distinguishable color, or at least not one the woman could compare them to. It might have also been that she was more infatuated with what laid under his eyes. Deep-pitted circles of brown and gray under eye baggage startled the woman, as it strikingly contrasted against the figure’s blue-tinted skin. The underye’s skin buried into the figure’s bones, which dug into their sheer layer of flesh, and sculpted their facial structure—their skeletal structure.

“You’re sick. You were admitted here.”

The woman paused in thought. Sick? Why can’t I remember?

Down she followed. Down a short, slithering, hallway that had these weird curves. Following, she noticed the back of the figure’s shirt bulging and discolored, as though something dark laid beneath it. The lighting was the same; however, there were more shadows lurking behind each curved corner since there were fewer lights. There were no other doors or windows, but only a singular door at its end. They entered it.

This room was dark, with only two wooden chairs and a lonesome light-bulb that dangled from the ceiling. One chair was directly underneath it. “Take a seat in that one,” the figure said.

The woman did just that. Hesitantly. She could not see the corners of this room at all. The figure took a seat in the other chair.

“Name?” the figure asked, though it sounded more like a command.

The woman paused.

“Come on.”

“I-I don’t know,” she stated while fidgeting with her ridgeless fingers. “Is that why I’m here?”

“Next question.” The figure ignored her. “Do you love?”



She paused, again.

“Come on. Do you love?”

“I—”

“Don’t lie,” the figure interrupted.

“I do.”

“How do you know?”

“Because,” she said, her words ascending shakily from her lips. “I can feel it.”

“How?”

“I just can. Can’t you?”

“You don’t even know your name. How do you know you love?”

“Because, I just do!” She grew impatient with his questioning. “Next question, please.”

Before moving on, the figure started writing on that clipboard she had earlier. She couldn’t remember the figure taking it from her. It must’ve slipped her. The figure began writing on the clipboard with the attached black pen, only the ink wasn’t actually black. It was red. Bright red. Like it belonged on a tree.

“What did you do?”

The woman disregarded the shadow’s question. “What’s your name?”

“I asked you. What did you do?”

She repeated to herself aloud. “Did I do?”

“Yes. What did you do?”

“What?” she furrowed her eyebrows. “What did... I do?”

“Yes! What did you do?”

“What does that mean?”

“Answer.” The words began to fall from the figure’s mouth.

“I—I can’t answer that. I don’t know what it means!”

“Don’t lie.”

The woman stopped. What did I do? Huh. What did I do? A sudden warmth glazed over her body that she never before felt so aware of. She felt her skin, lungs, legs, fingers, toes—everything, as though they weren’t there before. She could even smell the nothingness of the room. Suddenly, everything was life. And so, she answered his question.

“I skipped classes. Failed tests. Snuck out. Got speeding tickets. Blacked out. Argued with co-workers. Complained about co-workers. Bought useless shit instead of paying rent. I’ve lost a handful of friends along the way. But, I’ve also gained genuine ones.”

The figure stared at her. Their pen was frozen, lifted off the paper. They clicked it. Clicked it. And clicked it again, and again. Until the sound of the click deepened, for the buttons on a patient’s monitor didn’t have the same spring as a pen.

“Nurse! She’s awake!” cheered a voice.

The woman opened her eyes.



# A SPIKE IN ENTHUSIASM

Maggie Grunden



It's easier to isolate than to open up to you

You know I am unable to lie

Instead of lie I'll hold the truth

Hopefully so long I'll die

It's easier to be closed than to open and I wish that's what you'd accept

Let me float down this river and over the bend

I'll be something that nature protects

Since I can't lie and will hold this truth

Look for me in the wind

And when it blows and starts to whistle

maybe I'll tell you then

i'm in the wind  
**I'M IN THE WIND**

Sarah Ryan

# ETERNAL DANCE

Jenna Shuman

a symphony of birth and death  
when one life is done another takes breath  
but when light falls upon me once more  
will my scars go forgotten  
or will nuance seep from their core?  
through mortal coils and cosmic grace  
i peer through the glass to an unfamiliar face  
each rise of my chest spells a cruel fight  
and inevitably, dusk will fall to night  
i am reborn through the shadows reaching  
and with this, the cycle begins slowly creeping  
i am back before i know  
and in nature's arms does the soul grow  
in each new disguise, a purpose found  
and in every lifetime, we are endlessly bound  
oh, this journey divine  
leads us through the realms of time  
and in every life, a lesson learned  
through different forms is wisdom earned



# HERE IS MY WORSHIP

Jayonna Johnson





# decolonization DECOLONIZATION

Bailey Papesh







Dear Amber,

I keep wheezing as I dance around the slow walkers to get to class. Don't even think about telling me to get my inhaler. You'd be proud of me, I took it before even leaving. It's still too chilly for my lungs to function anywhere near a normal level. Snow falls like it expects to land, though you know nothing ever sticks around here. It feels like burning knives are continuously slicing through my lips. You'd laugh at me for forgetting my Chapstick, but I must insist that it only makes things worse. I'm pleased to let you know that I've finally found a suitable jacket for the cold. That's right, no more double long-sleeved shirts under my thick university sweatshirt. It's leather because you know I'd never be caught dead in a puffer jacket; it's so fancy I fear wearing my various pajama pants won't cut it anymore. Remember those mom jeans you always used to wear out? Yep, my new staple. Steven makes fun of me endlessly, but it engulfs me in your presence, almost like I can still feel your hugs. My bones still sear at the thought of going outside these months, but at least I can pretend I'm warm.

I make sure to visit Ma'am Lane more often these days. Forcing Steven to go and sit there as she goes on and on about her various assortments of plants is highly amusing. She misses you. Sometimes she insists you'll come to visit soon. I told her you're too far to make that trip, she doesn't get it. Though, I'm sure the cold isn't catching up to you. The flutter of winter air was always your favorite type of weather. You must miss the frost like I never could. It's funny how viciously someone's opinion can change over time. I used to yearn for summer, the warmth singing in my veins as I roasted in the sun. Nowadays I dread leaving the strangling chill that keeps me grounded. I tried explaining it to Ma'am Lane, describing how the wave of warmth scrapes me back into the memories, she never understands.



I guess your favorite things are slowly burrowing their way into me. Steven tried to take me ice skating once. I ripped right through a crowd of struggling teens and was ordered straight off the ice. You were always a lot more graceful than me. Why didn't we ever go ice skating when you were still here? If I remember correctly, it was all you ever did. Maybe you had the excellent foresight to never bring me onto a body of anything that slippery and cold. When I'm alone or just with Steven my heart likes to chop into a million tiny pieces, he helps me find them all afterward. Though I think, and let's not tell this to Steven, that I always come back with fewer pieces every time.

Sorry, I'll stop being so grim. It's just, you're the only one I've ever been able to tell much of anything. Steven doesn't even fully know what happened that day. I think it's only right that stays between us, don't you think? The anniversary is coming up soon. 2 years without half your soul is a long time, too long. I'm not even sure how I've kept myself breathing all this time.

I didn't want to visit empty-handed, so here's this letter, I guess. Figured you'd want to know what's going on around here. Don't worry, I'll burn it, so it gets to you properly. You'll probably be seeing Ma'am Lane soon. Assuming you get her in her normal state, tell her I'll always love her.

Love you,  
Minnie

DEAR AMBER  
Eva Lonneman

# A LIGHT TOUCH

Staci Z-R



# PERCEPTIVE [dis-CONNECT]

Evelynne Brown

I fear I'm unavoidable  
—or maybe, I'm just nervous.

I called you  
in the evening  
you were drinking,  
“my love – sometimes, when  
the sky starts pouring rain,  
all that's left is mud.”

I wonder if the mud is plagued  
like the rest of us.

Sometimes  
I feel so sad.  
The world spins under my feet  
and it becomes obvious  
I'm unsettling the sun.

If I can keep quiet for just  
one moment longer  
maybe the world will  
not seem so daunting and  
life will be less heavy, like  
bricks to feathers.

“We've been experiencing a drought,  
the rain has left us for better days.”

If I think about you less,  
the love will disappear.

I wonder if candles are portals  
into a better world  
—where someone's  
roasting cinnamon during  
a numbing autumn rain.

I breathe too much, I'm selfish  
with my consumption.

I wonder how long I could hold my breath  
before the soot invades my lungs  
and spreads and spreads and spreads.

I cough up candle wax and spices.

In my mind the world's an  
impossible bottle,  
life pours out, replaced by  
mildew, mushrooms, and  
freshly grown grass.

“Never worry, the trees will grow  
over our graves.”





# hibiscus

Katie Timko



Lily  
Katie Timko



"Atlas!" I yell, "Come here boy!" After some playful rustling in the leaves, an old golden retriever gently hops out from behind a bush. He's not as fast as he once was, and by the white patches of fur around his head, not quite as young either. "Drop it," I say. Atlas slowly walks up, with that same friendly face and plops a disgustingly slobbery tennis ball at my feet. By the barking and the tail wag, you can tell he's got another throw in him. I pick it up one more time and toss it near the back of our property, not too far or else he'd lose it... again. Atlas just sat there and watched as the ball landed near the tree line, then with a little effort started his slow trot to go retrieve it. I always thought he'd make a good emotional support dog, not that he hasn't done his fair share of moral support.

My wife and I picked him out as a puppy two weeks after the birth of our first child, James. We wanted a dog that our son could grow up with, and when our neighbor's red goldens had a larger-than-expected litter, all the pieces sort of fell into place. With a two-week-old taking up 80% of our time, we ended up with another child: this rusty colored puppy. My wife thought he sort of looked like a fried chicken leg, but was quick to turn down my name suggestion of "The Colonel." In hindsight, getting a puppy was probably a mistake. James at least peed in a diaper. On top of that, we were still figuring out this whole "family" thing.

Some geese started flying over, stopping Atlas in his tracks. "Don't do it," I say under my breath. A few seconds pass as the geese disappear behind the trees, but he stayed still. He continued on for the tennis ball like nothing happened.

I took him hunting once, only once. 2008, I had just been laid off from my job, James was probably around 6 at that point. He and Atlas were basically inseparable, but I managed to sneak off with him early on a Monday morning. One perk of being unemployed, I guess. In truth, I just needed to get away from it all. We must have spent five hours out there in the prairie. Birds would fly, but I kept missing my shots. As my frustration grew, Atlas was having the time of his life. If I wasn't there to stop him, he'd probably run miles chasing birds. After a while of this I just started laughing. He wasn't sneaky, stood out like a sore thumb against the dying but still green Indiangrass and did this weird wiggly thing when he saw a bird. I called it his happy dance. We stopped for lunch and I asked him, "Atlas, how do you do it? How are you so happy all the time?" Atlas just stared back, impatiently waiting for me to put down his food bowl. "Maybe you're right. I just got to stop worrying so much. Live more in the moment." I started at a new job a week later.

# GOLDEN GOODBYE

Gabriel Kelley



Atlas finally reached the tennis ball, but didn't pick it up instantly. He looked as if he was trying to catch his breath. I yell over to him, "Atlas? You okay buddy?" He turned his head up to me and looked as happy as he could be. 14 years and he still has a puppy face. "C'mon, let's go inside." He eventually starts walking back, but not without first grabbing the tennis ball.

He really would make a good emotional support dog. James's 10th birthday party was lumberjack themed. Buffalo plaid tablecloths, foam axe-throwing, we went the whole nine yards. We had activities planned out for the whole day; it was going to be great. What we didn't plan on was James wrecking his bike and breaking his leg two hours before the party. Needless to say, not one of his favorite birthdays. He couldn't walk for a few days, and had to stay in bed until his leg was stable enough to walk on (with a cast of course). I'm not sure Atlas ever left his side during that time. He wouldn't even come down to eat, we'd have to bring food up for him along with James's. Even after James started getting around again, Atlas would usually replace one of his crutches and try to walk him wherever he was trying to go. I never know whether to think of Atlas as James's brother or some sort of godfather. I've had dogs as a kid, but none of them cared about me like Atlas did James. I guess I never realized how important Atlas was for this family. He helped James get through an otherwise difficult time, and as a parent, well, I'm just glad my son didn't have to go through that alone.

I started walking towards the back door, Atlas not too far behind. "Looks like they're watching a movie without us boy, how about I let you eat in the living room tonight, hm?" I turn back to him, slowing down his stride and watch as he drops his favorite ball. "Boy, are you okay?" He falls over. I start running towards him, but he barely notices me. I put my ear up close and hear the sound of hoarse, unsteady breathing. I run to go get the car, but I already know what's going to come next.

As I hold his torn-up tennis ball in the waiting room of the emergency vet, everything finally sinks in. James is going to lose a best friend, and I'm about to lose a son. Atlas has been by my side in every keystone event the last 14 years. Why is it just now that I'm appreciating all he's ever done for us?





# FINDING THE LIGHT

Laurel Grelle



the smoke burns in my throat  
the ash falls all over my favorite sweatshirt  
leaving little holes  
traces of you  
i sigh as you berate her  
knowing if i speak for her,  
against you,  
i will pay  
knowing i should have done something more  
than breathing  
knowing the hitch in my breath  
would not allow me to  
  
would make me appear weak.  
  
would make the corners of your mouth curl up  
knowing what you carry against me  
  
the good memories do not hold up against the trauma  
so i throw my favorite sweatshirt away  
ridding myself of you

father  
**FATHER**  
Jenna Shuman



starved in accordance to the institution  
women marinate in one realm of tolerability  
trying to tame an inevitable collision  
no room for craved flexibility

how to escape decomposition  
how to gain unyielding respect  
how to resurrect ambition  
how to stop the disconnect  
It's all within complacency

justifiably consuming individual difference  
joining arms in cells of resistance  
turning to those who are analogous  
no longer in constant paralysis

# decomposing hunger

Eva Lonneman

# REBIRTH FROM WINTER

Maggie Endres



# GOODWILL TO MANKIND

Melina Blank

“Noel Noel”

Had this not been a cry?  
Can you not see me beg?  
“Thou shall show mercy,”  
the preacher said.

So what about grace?  
Eyes wet tar  
under Phoenix sky.  
What about welcome?  
Your arms are arbitrary!  
Can paternity be a lie?

Where is my basket  
of bread and fish?  
O, Father,  
you never lent me your hand.  
Seated on the righthand side  
is a pack of Marlboros  
and purple marks  
now tanned.

Remember Christmas?  
A tree in the window,  
goodwill to all and mankind—  
Midnight reaped warmglow,  
dogs nipped at crossroads.  
Gluehwein’s hoarse cough,

“Hennessy in the snow!”

If I show you my forehead,  
do not mark it with ash.

Kiss it for me?

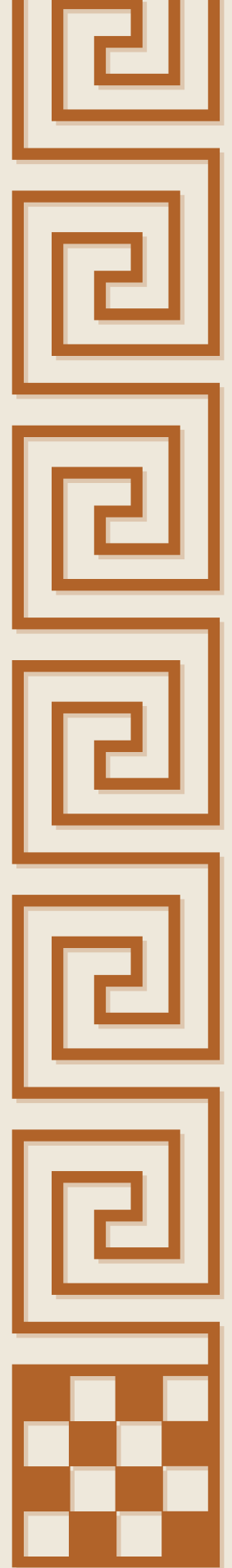




SUMMER SOUNDS

Lucy Reed

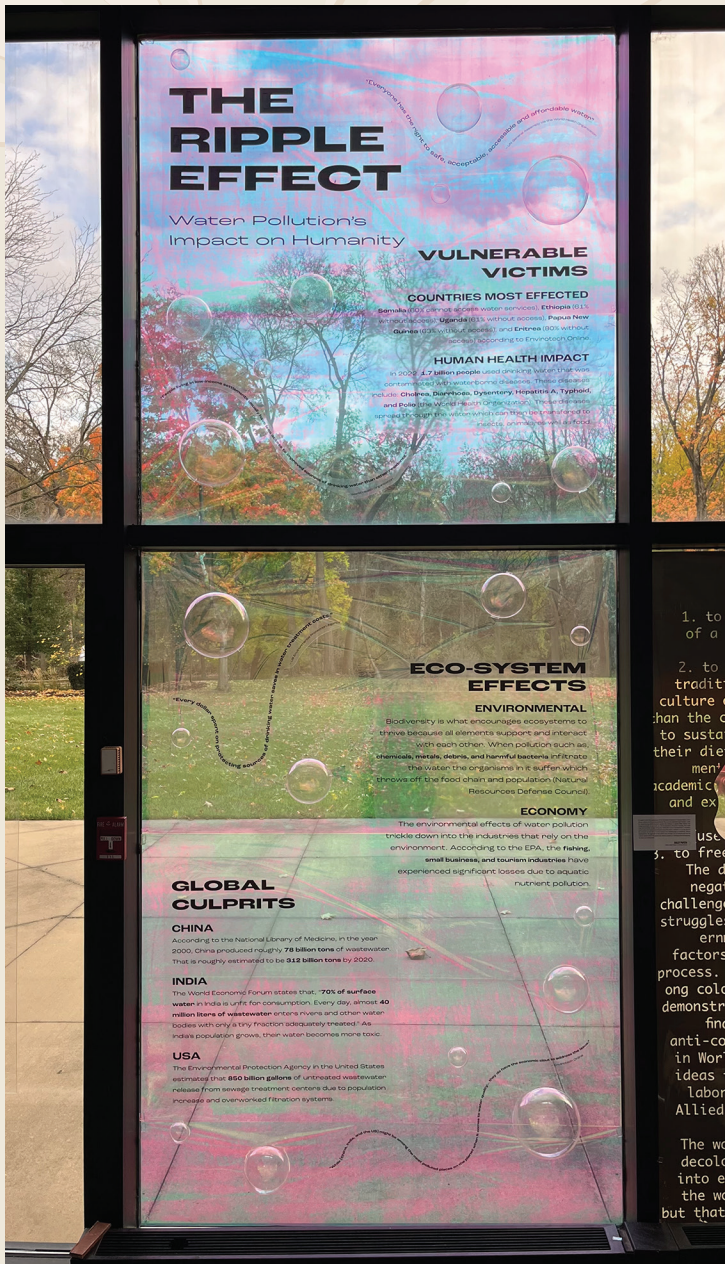




# the ripple effect

Maeve Fleming







It is gray out. Or at least, it feels so. Night shift makes everything hazy. I walk into work sweating. 5:57 pm in June is humid. I walk in as shift change starts.

*Hour 1.*

"Female. 36. Abdominal pain."

"How long?" the doctor asks the nurse.

"Two days."

He nods.

"She's in room 5?"

Female 36 is the priority patient. Her blood pressure is low, 90/40. She's pale. Her abdomen is distended. It's a shift change with only three patients. The other two aren't urgent. One is here with chlamydia. Again. Then there is a suspected COVID patient.

"Go grab a rainbow from 5."

I grab plastic tubes. Each with a different color top. A 22 gauge needle and tourniquet. Gauze. Band-aids. I pull back the yellow curtain. She looks younger than 36. Then again, what does 36 look like?

"Hi!" she says. She meekly waves.

I wave back

"I'm sorry, I have to take blood."

"Oh, it's ok! I'm a nurse!"

I prep her arm. I tear open the alcohol wipe. We both wince at the scent. I find her vein. It's not hard as she's getting paler. We make small talk. She looks like a Carey to me. Like Carey Mulligan. That's not her name, but I'll think of her as Carey anyway. She has three kids. Her family was on vacation in Virginia. I notice her eyes are brown. Dark brown, like espresso. Her hair is blonde, like straw.

"They're going to need a urine sample. For a pregnancy test."

I leave a cup on her table

"Thank you!" she says.

*Hour 3.*

"It's positive."

We're all huddled at the main desk. The paramedic and I are eating tacos.

"This isn't good," says the doctor.

"Is it ectopic?"

"Probably."

"Have the tech take her for an ultrasound," the doctor says. He gestures in my direction.

"After, we break the news."

12 hours  
12 HOURS

Olivia Pietras

*Hour 4.*

I wheel her down the sterile hallway. It's always creepy in hospital hallways. The fluorescent lights. The smell of hand sanitizer. The occasional squeak of shoes. Carey grips her thin blanket. I can see her pink toenail polish. I have the same color at home.

"We've never gotten pregnant without ivf," she says. I look down and see her wringing her hands.

"My husband is going to be surprised!"

I respond.

"I bet he will."

"He'll be so happy," she chirps.

We turn into the ultrasound room.

"I never thought I'd have four kids."

The ultrasound tech makes it quick. We all know it's not good. Even Carey. Her face falls.

The ride back is silent, and her thin hands shake as she grips the sides of the wheelchair as I take her back to her room.

*Hour 7.*

The surgeon comes into her room. He explains the procedure to her. She knows what will happen. Her mom has come back to be with her. She places a hand on Carey's thigh. Her husband is with their kids. They talk on the phone. He is given the rundown. They say they love each other. Her mom leaves to get water. The surgeon leaves to prepare. We look at each other. Tears stream down our faces, hers more heavily than mine.

"I'm sorry," I say.

We hug. She thanks me for being sweet.

*Hour 9.*

Carey has her procedure.

*Hour 10.*

"She's doing well," the doctor tells me.

I nod.

*Hour 12.*

I walk to my car. It's still dark out, but humid already. It's early morning in June. My phone buzzes in my pocket with a news notification. The headline reads *Roe v. Wade Overturned*.



# CITRUS

Mia Haas





# REVIVAL

Alejandro De Jesus





# the split THE SPLIT

Gretel Helm



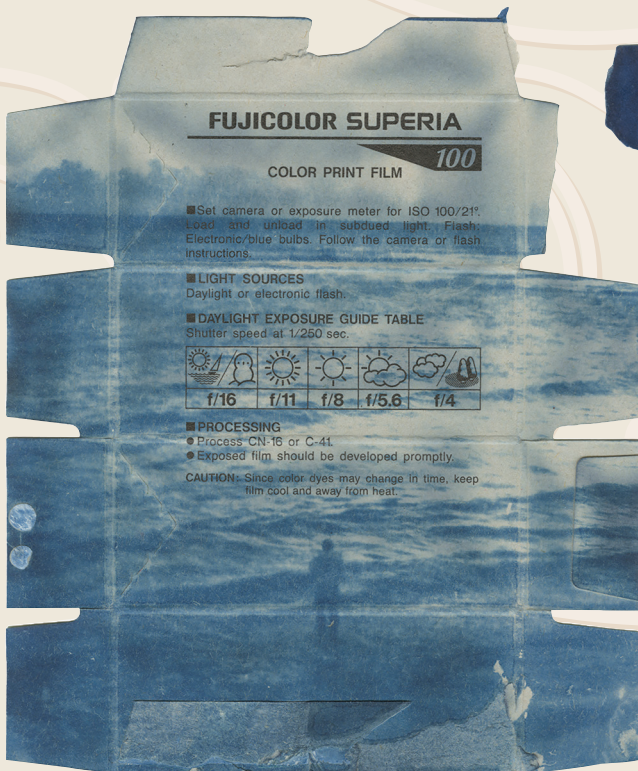
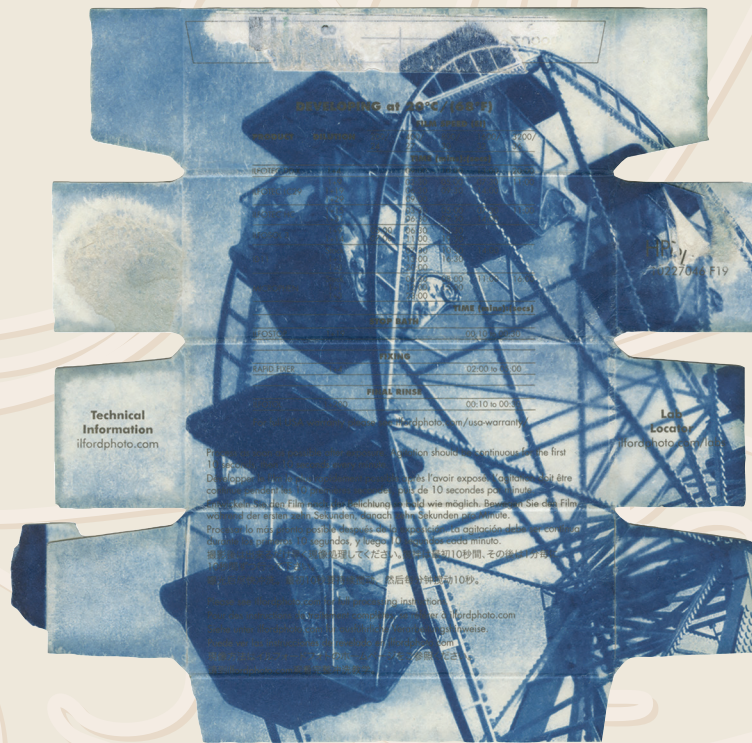




# COERCION

Gretel Helm





# SOMEWHERE IN MEMORY

Kaylee Peters

# asteria ASTERIA

Mary Feller

Raindrops  
Wash away the moon  
And I know dear  
I'll see you soon

White lies  
Crystalize  
Into a diamond  
And dawn begins her dance

Between the grave  
Between the dead of night  
The life of day

Teardrops  
Of the willow tree  
Whisper to me  
"I'll see you soon"

Their eyes  
Mesmerized  
Piercing through me  
The solstice of a soulless life

Between the grave  
Between the dead of night  
The life of day

Falling stars  
There's an open door  
And it beckons me  
To cry no more

White light  
Fantasize  
Of an angel  
But feathers have fallen down

Between the grave  
Between the dead of night  
The life of day

And so  
I pray



That little girl has angry eyes,  
as she glares up at the men who so crudely describe her body from the back of the bus.  
I often wish that I could set those angry eyes down,  
for they are so heavy.  
But they were burned into the back of my head that day,  
and I think that I shall carry them with me until my last breath. I sometimes wonder if my  
mother could see my childlike softness grow hard as I looked up at her for answers she didn't have.  
A twisted sort of coming of age.  
I cried that day.  
It was the last time.  
I would never cry like that again.  
If only I could have carried my trusting, wide-eyed gaze past the age of eight. I miss those gentle eyes.  
I fear that I am destined to miss them for the rest of my life. Some things  
cannot be regained  
once they are torn from your grasp.

# ANGRY EYES

Anne Meyer



# the creature

Gretel Helm



trinkets  
**TRINKETS**  
Eleanor Keelan



# the in-between THE IN-BETWEEN

Sarah Ryan

Why does no one talk about the in-between

In-between holidays

in-between get togethers

in-between vacations

in-between meaningful conversations

in-between feeling alive and dead

The days that feel mundane and repetitive are the days I hurt

I rot inside my calloused brain with no way through the thickened wall

I stare at someone who has known me since I was little, yet they don't know me at all

"How's school"

"Good, yeah"

"What's your major, what do you want to be"

The question you get asked when you enter and exit the in-between

The fateful in-between never makes me feel less alone

Work up for the days where you gather around and take a look and think this is what it's for

Each passing year the childlike familiarity dwindles like the pixie dust that it's promised on

Evaporates as soon as it appears

I don't think it'll ever get easier I've been singing the same song on loop for years

And the tape won't give

I'd cut the mic, but I'd upset those close to me

So, I let the song play over and over



Anel Solares

# BORN ON WINGS

Frame by frame, a camera struggles  
To capture the kind of beauty  
That disappears before you blink.

Elegant, like a dove  
that comforts a mourning mother,  
and blends in between snow covered branches.  
Drifting gently on a breeze  
like a fallen love letter in the wind.

Royal, like a quetzal  
draped in iridescent robes of red, green, and blue,  
that inspired worship from my ancestors  
for their creation of mankind.  
Long tail zipping through the forest  
on a comet made of stardust.  
Fearless, like an eagle  
with pupils that pierce its prey  
and a persistence that rivals the blinding sun.  
Brazen and bold and a natural born leader,  
tasting victory between its teeth.

But when I am reborn  
I'd like to be a monarch.  
Resilient, spanning generations despite  
a long way from home,  
nonetheless they migrate.

Like a bouquet of chrysanthemums  
they huddle for warmth.  
Hibernating in silence  
before the sun's first beams  
light them into flames.  
A thousand fireworks bursting  
like confetti across the sky.  
With fragile wings  
they flutter and fly  
and fly.



# SALVATION

Staci Z-R





# MY SUNDAY RITUAL

Kyleigh Streeter



The man hunts shadows.  
He cuts them off at the source,  
transfers them to thin sheets of parchment,  
and places them in rectangular glass cases.  
He has a museum of shadows, laid side-by-side,  
illuminated only in the glow of a singular torch.

He feeds on disillusionment, the ones who think they can hide at night.  
All it takes is one star, the unquantifiable drops of Jupiter  
to make a new target.

Mind you, this is no silhouette saboteur.  
He doesn't trace each prisoner in his museum so they can be clearly defined.  
He just wants yours.

He despises how they stick, a shrink wrap to skin.  
It corrupts the figure.

He times his incision to the moment after the body moves.  
He studies every pattern of muscle contraction and stored tension before its release  
to catch the mimic in the act.

It has a silky coolness  
but is quick to slip.  
The hunter must have a tender grasp  
but unrelenting endurance.  
A lingering blink is enough for the subject to be lost entirely.

Most are obtainable, but a few prove to be especially elusive.  
In the light of truth, the shadow of a doubt is barely existent.  
The man seeks false promises and half-truths;  
the alibi of a spouse gone out for dinner  
with the exclusion of dessert.

With one certainty, though, there is even tougher game.  
The man must find the unnaturally sick and suffering,  
not to grant them reprieve,  
but to capture what is cast by the dwindling light in their eyes  
before it's gone.

The man had yet obtained all of these  
in studying the world  
but there was one whose movements he could not predict  
nor could find unaware in a sliver of light.  
No book could enlighten his lack of expertise  
or explain the figure's actions.

In despair, the man realized his museum  
could never be complete  
until he enclosed himself with a glass case  
and went forever to sleep.

# total eclipse

Peter Bonasso



# ON MY WAY

Mia Haas









# little traveler LITTLE TRAVELER

Katie Timko

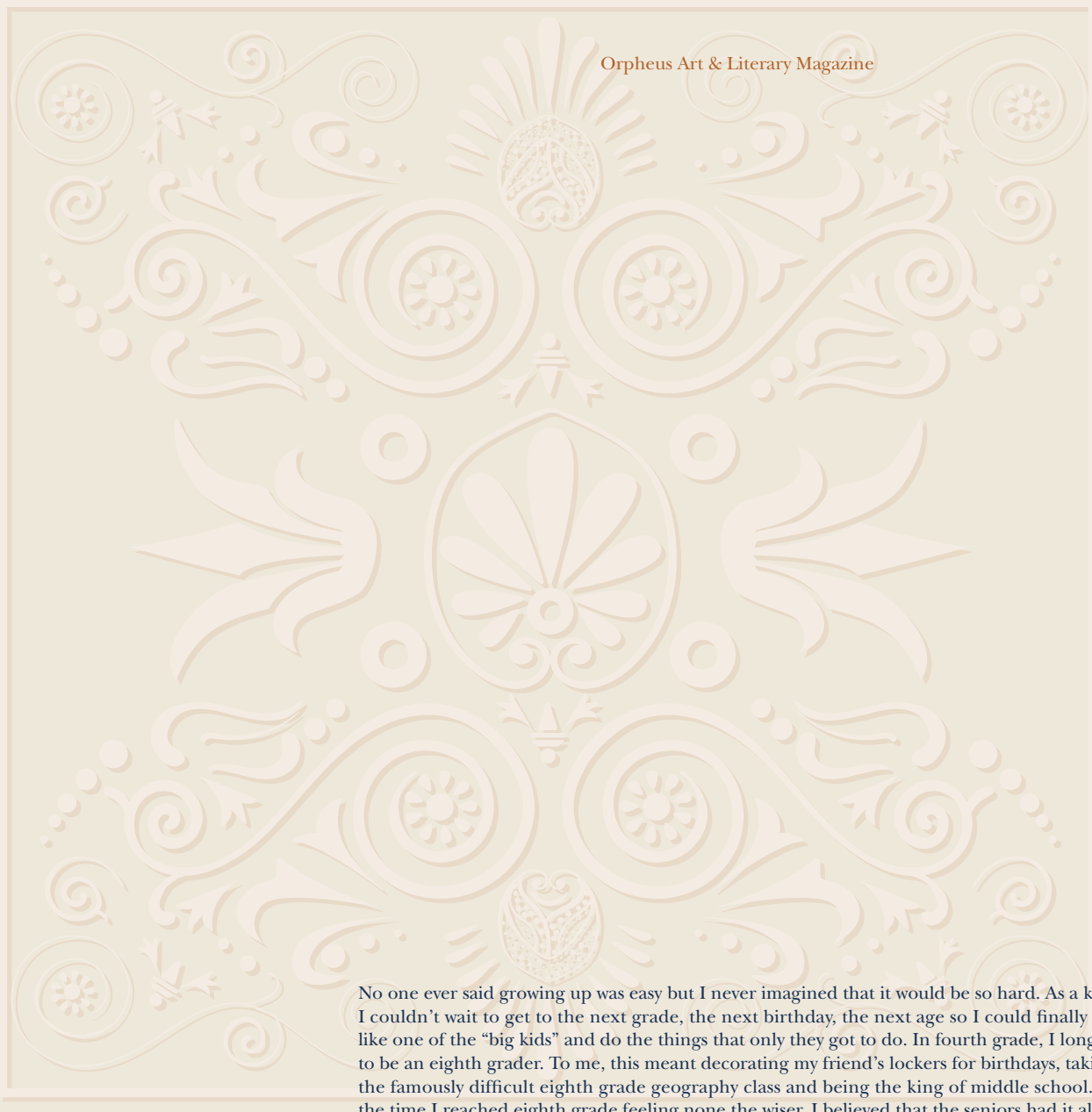


# AT THE END OF TIME

Michael Kennelly







No one ever said growing up was easy but I never imagined that it would be so hard. As a kid, I couldn't wait to get to the next grade, the next birthday, the next age so I could finally be like one of the "big kids" and do the things that only they got to do. In fourth grade, I longed to be an eighth grader. To me, this meant decorating my friend's lockers for birthdays, taking the famously difficult eighth grade geography class and being the king of middle school. By the time I reached eighth grade feeling none the wiser, I believed that the seniors had it all figured out. They were almost graduated and must know practically everything. They could drive, have real boyfriends, leave campus for lunch and go to prom. As I finally made it to senior year, I felt like I knew nothing about myself or the world, which was quickly becoming more complicated around me.

I longed for time to slow to a standstill so I could delay the inevitability of needing to figure out who I was and what I valued. I still felt the shrinking space inside of me where a six year old me crouched, nervous of the bustling world and just wanting to make a pillow fort and eat chocolate chip cookies. Freshman year of college came and went, and I decided that once I was past the first year I would understand everything. No wait, once I was in my twenties; no, that magical moment of "figuring things out" must be 25? 30? As I get older, the numbers keep growing and growing until I am forced to admit that no one has any idea at all what they're doing. Sure, we become better at hiding our uncertainties and anxieties and better at burying our awe of the world around us, but inside each of us still rests those small children from all those many years ago.

They wait in the wings, hiding in forgotten and cobwebby places as we chase down our ambitions and dreams. They watch as we stumble and fall, time and again brought down by our own ego or stubbornness. They twiddle their thumbs and look to the ceiling as we blushingly get ready for first dates, fall in love with the wrong people and let go of the right ones. Pacing the floor, those small kids wait and wait until we grow old. Old enough to have forgotten about the way our first apartments smelled or how our best friend laughed. When our hair has gone gray and wrinkles trace the smile lines on our faces, we open the door of the room that we've kept them locked in all these years.

Finally free, they leap forward to do jumping jacks on our hearts and tap dances on our brains. They are the ones in control when our gnarled old hands appreciate the warmth of the sun and when we crane our aching necks down to catch a glimpse of the tousled hair and ruddy cheeks of the newest member of the family. These children inside us rejoice to be given a front row seat to our lives once again. "Youth is wasted on the young," we groan as we watch twenty-somethings get stuck in a job they hate and teenagers scared to profess their love.

That strawberry-blond little girl that exists in the golden and sunshiny corners of my childhood wore her feelings on her sleeve, threw tantrums with reckless abandon and clung tightly to the people she loved most. She went fiercely after what she wanted and was never afraid to say "I love you" and "I miss you." Taking our final unsteady bows and drawing the curtains on childhood is inevitable but perhaps our days of playing tag, watching cartoons and eating fruit snacks may actually have been some of our wisest. And as our bones creak and muscles sag, maybe we wish we'd given over the reins to our life sooner. Maybe we realize that the most we have ever known is when we were kids.

# GROWING PAINS

Rose Philbin





# A PLACE IN BETWEEN

Kaylee Peters



I'm standing over myself, damp earth freshly turned. There is no marker, no cross staked in the ground. But I know.

It sings to me, deep, discordant tones like bells thundering behind my eyes.

I'm covered in dirt, mud caking along my legs, flaking from my hands when I ball them into fists. It's stuck under my nails, like I had dug myself out. But the earth is whole, no exit wound. Just soft dirt in a mound, covering myself in the ground. I'm not sure how I got out.

Fresh soil clings to my knees where I kneel on the grave, hands pressing against my forehead. It smells like rain and my mother's perfume.

When I sit up, something glints in the dirt, buried. I dig it from the ground until I feel my fingernails break, but when I hold it up, it's intact and so am I.

It's my bracelet, iridescent globes of lilac and cream and baby blue sparking in the sunlight, some pearls marred with dirt and ash. I hadn't noticed it was gone until it's here again. Deep down there's a feeling that it's the last holy thing I will ever touch. Holding it, the cool metal against my palm, the grave asks, "Are you coming home?"

It startles me, voice wrapping around my brain, and my pulse pounds against my chest, bloodflow prickling against my fingertips like static. I am not dead. Or am I? Have I been this entire time? Have I ever been alive?

I don't answer the ground, but it stops talking, jarred quiet like a music box being shut. I guess that was answer enough.

The grave is at the base of a tree, roots spreading out all over the ground, gnarled and thick. Its branches spread out above me, bare from leaves. It sways lightly in the wind, and when the air runs through the empty canopy, it says, "You are born from my hand and you will die at my hand. Are you coming home?"

This place is not like where I am from. But where am I from? It's hard to remember now, memories far away like stones warped under water. Again, I don't respond and I close my eyes. An eternity passes. Well, that was easy.

I stand above myself in the ground, where the earth swallowed me whole. I am what remains.

Sun warms my skin, melts away the lingering snow laying upon the grass. The sky is bright, white and shining and jarring. I'm not used to the light. I think maybe I lived in the dark. My eyes water.

There's someone on the horizon, a dark speck among the colors of the sky and sun. His shadow falls long, stretching so far I can almost feel the shade. I feel like I know him—the set of his shoulders, the outline of his body.

I don't want him to come near me, pristine black outline drawn neatly into the sky. If I were to touch him, lay one dirt-covered hand upon his face, his figure would disintegrate, crumble apart like freshly fallen snow.

I cup my hands around my mouth, yelling across the field. "I came from the dirt! I'm unclean!"

He must know this, seeing me standing over the grave, the freshly turned soil beneath my feet. He doesn't move to yell back, but the grass around me waves in the wind and says, "You are the cleanest thing I've seen."

Wind howls around me, picking up my dress and pushing it behind me. Loose dirt gets into my eyes, stinging, and I blink to clear it.

The man is gone. I remain.

# three days THREE DAYS

Molly Campbell



My feet drag past half-opened boxes, scattered along the hallway. Despite spending the past twelve hours on my feet, my apartment still feels like a crappy shoebox. The white walls sit bare, with a fresh coat of paint on them, so boring and confining. The door frames have years worth of scratches on them, but it's about the only character this place has to offer, so I don't mind them. The carpet, a grungy grey color, is not particularly soft nor fashionable, but it will do.

I turn the corner to my bedroom, which may be the most pitiful room so far. The only items occupying it are a twin-sized blow-up mattress, a perfectly fluffy pillow that is calling my name, and a pill bottle.

I fall into bed, my eyelids begin to shut, and I take a deep breath in, anticipating a long night of sleep ahead. But as I try to let my body decompress, my brain works overtime to keep me up.

As I lay in bed, my eyes frantically burst open, my chest becoming heavy and tight. My mind wanders between uncertainty, fear, and loneliness. I feel my heart beating in my chest, accelerating by the second. Suddenly, the past year of confidence I built, talking myself up to getting here, seems to have disappeared.

"How...how could I possibly feel anything other than proud of myself?" I keep repeating out loud, trying to calm the chaos going on in my head.

As fear comes crawling into the chaos, a shuddering thought, my greatest fear, my worst nightmare, hits me out of nowhere: He'll find me. I run through my leaving, acting perfectly calm on the outside. Like I was going to work at Hy-Vee, just like every other shift, scanning groceries for ten hours straight. Only I knew this time was different, this time my life was packed in a suitcase I'd been slowly filling up in my trunk for the better part of a year now, and I was escaping. Escaping him, escaping Iowa, escaping this life I'd outgrown. Although I only had a couple hundred bucks left over after laying out the deposit for my apartment, it had to be enough. I couldn't wait any longer, so I left, without a trace. I drove all day and night until I reached the southern belt, the place I'd always dreamed of settling down.

The memory acts as a buffer for a second, but the names, the degrading words, and everything else that he put me through these past four years, all come running back to me. His memory has been imprinted on me.

The first time I came home a minute too late from the bar, I was met with rage. Seth jumped up off the couch the second the door opened and stopped me in my tracks before I even had my second heel off. Cornering me, he asked,

"Where were you? Who were you with? Why are you home so late?" Although I had perfectly reasonable, and truthful, answers to all these questions, it wasn't enough for him.

# DOWN SOUTH

Alexis Angoff

“What are you doing spending all my money?” he scowled. While he made only a few bucks more than me a week, I convinced myself he was right, and that I was in the wrong. As he continued to scold me, I could smell the bourbon he had been sipping on. The smokey smell and spicy taste rolled off his tongue as he slurred his speech. Only a foot away from my face, his shoulders were right in my eyeline, and I could see the tension he held in them. I feared what he was capable of, and that’s when the picture-perfect life I’d imagined for myself was left behind.

Instead of laying a hand on me, he let me get a word in.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” I repeated, over and over. He followed me to our bathroom, us both stumbling over dirty towels and weeks’ worth of laundry. I sat on the edge of the toilet, my head lying low between my legs. “Don’t cry, don’t cry, don’t you dare cry,” I whispered to myself as he lingered over me.

“Stop the damn mumbling, go to bed.”

He began walking away but turned his head and muttered words I never seem to forget. The words I let run my life these last few years.

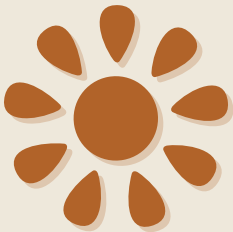
“Don’t forget darlin’, you’d be nowhere in life without me,” he said, slamming the door simultaneously.

I snap back to the now, my body shaking, tears rolling down my eyes. These tears aren’t tears of fear now though, they are tears of freedom. These are the tears I never let myself cry or made myself wait until he was asleep for the night or gone for an hour. Back then, when I cried, I kept it silent, and I kept it shallow. I never let him know the power he had over me.

Looking back at that night, along with the countless others, that started only months into our relationship, I should have seen it. I hate myself for the choices I made, and the great life I left behind by getting myself involved with him.

But now I’m here, all alone, in this small town I don’t even know the name of. A few miles south of Savannah, Georgia, all I know is I am by the sea. The thoughts of the waves, effortlessly rolling in each morning. The crowd of people surrounded me, not knowing a detail of who I was or where I came from. That calmed me.





mind of color  
**MIND OF COLOR**

Mia Haas



The days become shorter,  
the sun hides from a mother's rage.  
The colors of harvest lost,  
in the darkness of her cage.

*Mom, you've told me this story before.*

My childhood bedroom,  
now with walls white as snow.  
A shield of crystal  
covering the meadow.

*Mom, I know.*

Sin tore Persephone away,  
grief left the world in disgrace.  
But famine forcing Hades' hand,  
allows spring's sweet embrace.

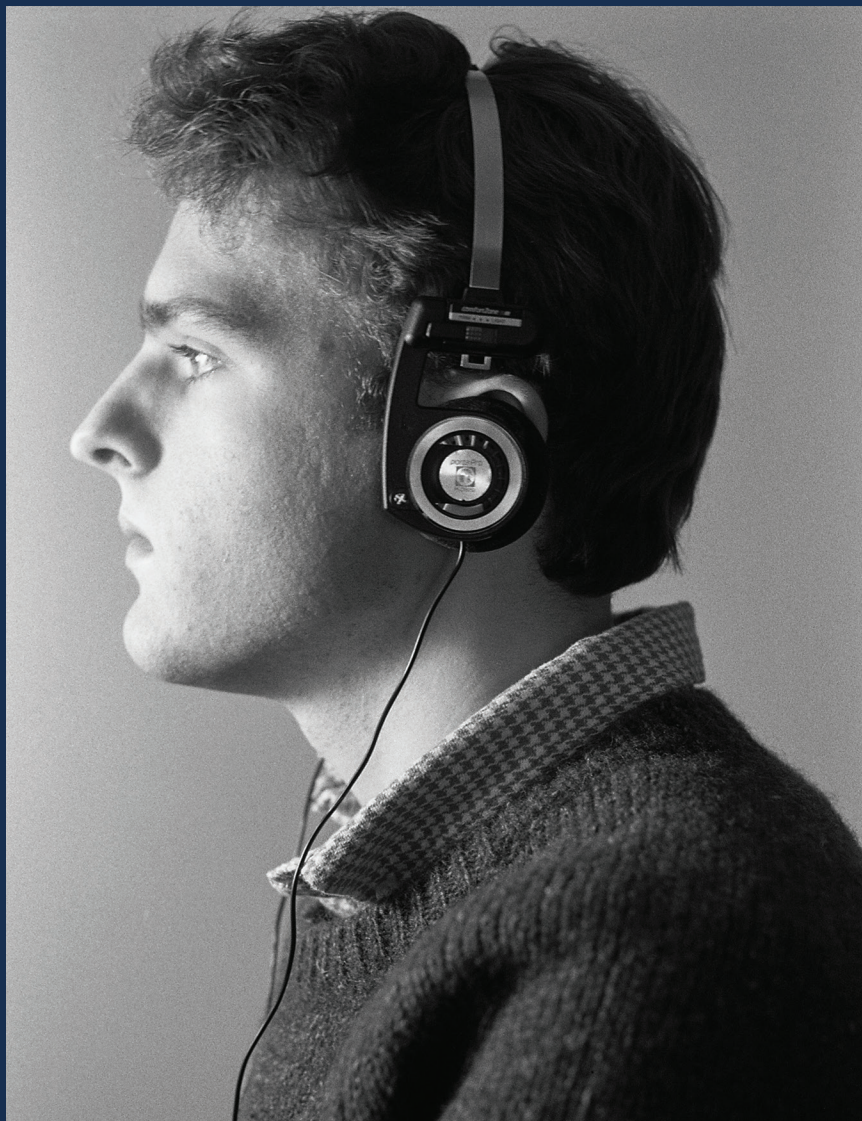
*Mom, I'm sorry.*

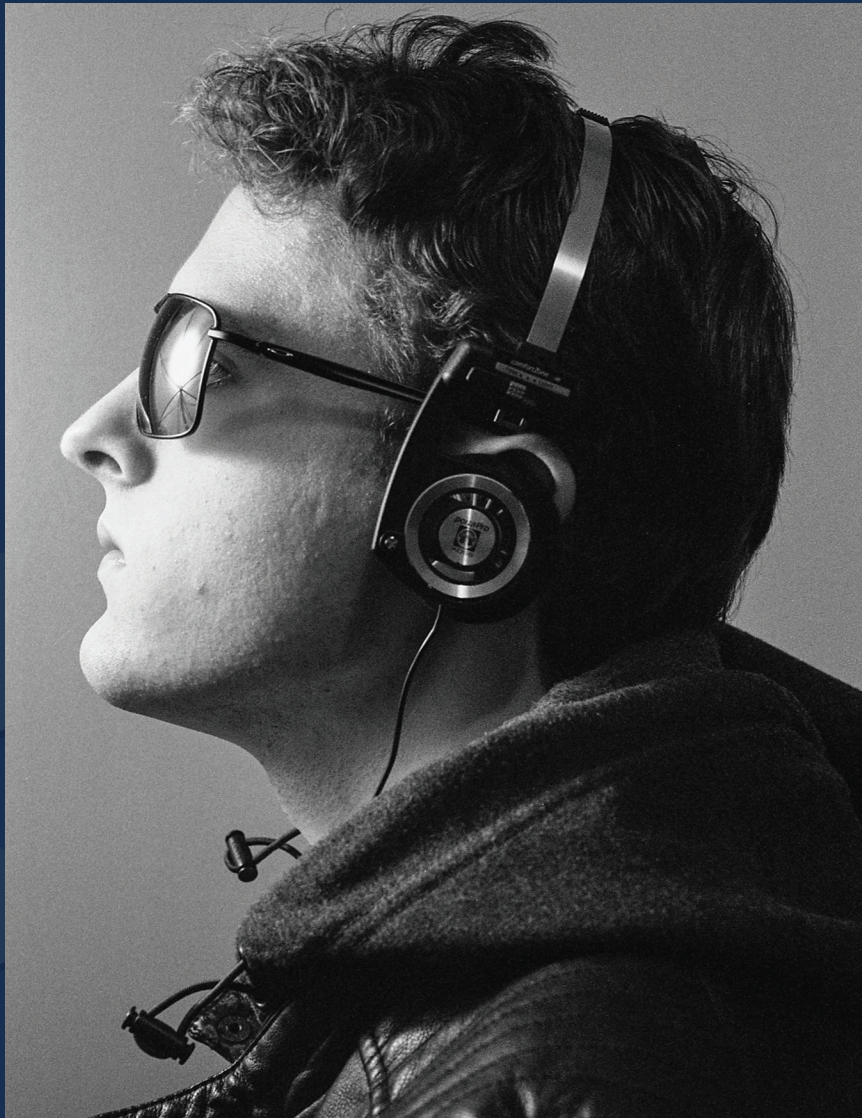
*Please, tell me again.*

# PERSEPHONE'S FOOTFALLS

Melanie Harris







# identity

## IDENTITY

Michael Kennelly



## LILA ACOTT

*Human Rights and Political Science; Junior*

Lila Acott (she/her) is from the Chicagoland area. When she's not studying for her BA in Human Rights Studies and Political Science or working on her French minor, you'll probably find her at Heritage, on a walk, or reading on her porch. Lila has been writing poetry and other creative works for as long as she can remember. She has never shared her writings with others which makes her even more excited to share her poetry with Orpheus and the rest of the UD community!

## ALEXIS ANGOFF

*Pre-K 5 Education; Sophomore*

Alexis Angoff is an ambitious second-year student. At school, she has her hands full balancing her academic and athletic roles. In her meager free time, you can find her cozying up to read a romance novel. Alexis is a homebody at heart but can pull out her bubbly, outgoing side from time to time. Originating from a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, she appreciates where she's from, but hopes to make the south her permanent residence post-graduation. She aspires to live a carefree lifestyle, surrounded by the sand, sea, and summertime bliss year-round.

## ALEXANDRA AMRHEIN

*English; Political Science Minor; Sophomore*

In her eyes, writing is the connection we forge with others, beyond the constraints of place and time. She thinks it's amazing that this magazine gives us a space to share our insights with the campus community and fill our readers' lives with meaning.

## ELENA BELLISARIO

*Photography; Entrepreneurship Minor; Senior*

I am a senior photography student with a minor in entrepreneurship. I am from Chicago but hope to travel around the country and explore new places once I graduate. I have a passion for photographing people but also love product and fashion photography!

## MELINA BLANK

*Marketing; Creative Writing Minor; Sophomore*

While she spends a lot of her time in the business school, she has a passion for writing and serves as *Orpheus'* Assistant Literary Editor. She is also involved in Sigma Kappa, Delta Sigma Pi, and Marketing Club. In her spare time, she loves to go on coffee runs, work out, spend time with her friends, obsess over her Spotify playlists, and watch the newest true crime docuseries. Her biggest loves in life are her giant family, good company, summer, creativity, and laughter.

## PETER BONASSO

*English; Junior*

"What's up, it's your resident Michigan man back at it again." Here at UD, you'll probably find Peter either making coffee, running, or singing a cappella. He often thinks about sensations that seem so easily imagined despite being impossible: walking on clouds, finding the end of a rainbow, and the taste of snow cones from a children's Christmas book, to name a few. This piece is inspired by one of those such musings, and he hopes you enjoy it.

## EVELYNNE BROWN

*English; Senior*

Evelynne Brown started writing when she was in the 5th grade. She enjoys creating new stories, developing worlds, and mostly, writing weird little poems. She tries to live by the motto "shut up and write," and hopes to work closely with literature following graduation.

## LAUREN CARR

*Graphic Design; Senior*

As a graphic designer, my work is a reflection of my deep personal commitment and passion for graphic design. Everything I create has a genuine desire to make a meaningful impact on the world and resonate with viewers. I invest time and creativity into ensuring that my designs not only captivate aesthetically but also convey messages that leave a lasting impression, fostering connections and evoking emotions.

## ALEJANDRO DE JESUS

*Graphic Design; Sophomore*

Hello! I'm Alejandro, an artist whose work strives to transcend boundaries. With a diverse imagination, I craft vibrant worlds on any medium I can get my hands on, inviting viewers to explore realms of emotion and beauty. I try to implement a unique style that blends traditional techniques with contemporary flair.

MAGGIE ENDRES

*Photography; Sophomore*

Maggie is from Speedway, Indiana living her life to the fullest. Her photography love started when her dad let her carefully play with his camera when she was seven years old. Her love grew and grew into the person she is today. She hopes you enjoy this magical magazine, and enjoy some yummy ice cream sometime soon.

MARY FELLER

*Communication (Media Production Concentration).*

*English and Creative Writing Minors; Senior*

Mary Feller is from Chicago. As one would probably guess, Mary has always had a love and passion for writing. While originally finding her writing passion in short stories, Mary has expanded to poetry, novels, and song lyrics. Mary has never had sushi, she is left-handed, and her favorite animal is a fox.

LAUREL GRELLE

*Graphic Design. Marketing and Fine Arts Minors; Junior*

I am from St. Louis, Missouri. Ever since highschool, my interest for the graphic arts skyrocketed while also having a love for other art forms such as drawing, sculpting, and photography. I strive to utilize my creativity to the fullest and create compelling work that drives the viewer to investigate my work further. To see more of my photos check out @laurelg.photography.

MAGGIE GRUNDEN

*Graphic Design, Junior*

When using my favorite art medium, clay, I love making thought-provoking works, and this 'spiky stress ball' has been my favorite to make so far. My ceramic mentors and influences, my Uncle Clate, high school art teacher Mrs. Southard, Geno, Stephanie, and Jess (here at UD), continue to encourage me to make approachable artwork like this.

MIA HAAS

*Fine Arts. Graphic Design Minor; Sophomore*

I am from Wheaton Illinois and graduated from St. Francis High School in 2022. I enjoy using a variety of mediums throughout my work. I am involved in multiple clubs on campus here at UD. I have a strong passion for exploring, reading, and learning more about myself as an artist and the world around me during my free time.

MELANIE HARRIS

*Psychology. Creative Writing Minor; Senior*

Melanie discovered their love for poetry when taking a class for their major and decided to make it a larger part of their life. Melanie has lived in the Dayton area their entire life and can usually be found at home with their roommates doing some sort of craft.

GRETEL HELM

*Fine Arts; Junior*

Gretel Helm is from Dayton, Ohio. Her work explores the abstraction of natural forms and energies through the use of color, light, and biomorphic shape. It is an intuitive exploration of new environments and shifted realities. She enjoys working in many mediums, with a primary focus in painting and printmaking.

JAYONNA JOHNSON

*Photography; Junior*

This piece shines a light on the significance of worship to God from a Christian perspective and reveals a conceptual body of work that relates to faith.

ELEANOR KEELAN

*Graphic Design; Senior*

I'm from Chicago and I recently got salmonella because I ate some oatmeal I knew was recalled. Not sure if this experience will change my actions going forward, but we'll see. I still really like apple cinnamon oatmeal.

GABRIEL KELLEY

*Pre-Dentistry; Sophomore*

Gabriel is from Springboro, Ohio. He likes cycling, reading, cooking, and lifting weights. He is also involved with our campus's River Stewards program, and does sustainability work for our local watershed. Funny how you can sum up a person in so few words, isn't it? This is Gabriel's first foray into writing, and he says he "honestly wouldn't have written anything for *Orpheus* if it weren't for the encouragement of my English professor, Dr. Meredith Doench."



## MICHAEL KENNELLY

*Electrical and Computer Engineering Technology, Photography Minor; Sophomore*

Best described as an old soul, he enjoys piano, 80s rock, reading, tinkering with electronics, and taking pictures. He finds himself inextricably drawn to objects before his time and chasing a previous life he has never lived. You can find out more on: [www.michaelkennelly.xyz](http://www.michaelkennelly.xyz)

## SERENA LABELLO

*English; Sophomore*

Serena LaBello is on the creative writing track. Her stories focus on the mystery and suspense genre. Her short story, "No Lies," falls into this category and was partially inspired by John Milton's classic, Paradise Lost, with concepts of temptation and deception. She hopes to pursue a career in publishing after college.

## ELAINA LEAR

*Graphic Design; Junior*

I am from the Dayton area. I enjoy making sports graphics but also take interest in photography. Taking photos of my friends is something that I have always done and have been fond of. My process consists of going to thrift stores and picking out unique outfits for my models to wear and then adventuring out somewhere I've never been before and just shoot photos!

## EVA LONNEMAN,

*English, Film Studies, Women and Gender Studies Minor; Junior*

Eva Lonneman is a junior with a creative writing concentration. She is currently working on a science-fiction novel and an abuse-based short story collection along with several other stand alone short stories and poems. She loves reading and writing and hopes to continue doing so after graduation.

## ANNE MEYER

*International Studies, Sustainability, and French. Political Science Minor.*

When not running or rock climbing she can usually be found hanging out with her lovely roommates and cheffing up the latest NYT Cooking recipe in their kitchen.

## BAILEY PAPESH

*Graphic Design, Marketing and Art History Minors; Senior*

Hi! I am Bailey Papesh. I have a passion for design and aim for clear communication while adhering to my creativity. I am motivated by bettering myself in all ways, including learning about design principles and strategy in marketing and advertising. I hope you enjoy it!

## ROSE PHILBIN

*International Studies & French; Junior*

A Minnesota native, she enjoys baking, hiking, reading, traveling, and watching the latest season of the Bachelor!

## OLIVIA PIETRAS

*English; Senior*

She enjoys reading personal essays as well as writing them. In her spare time, she enjoys running and painting, though she wouldn't say she is exceptionally good at either. Once a month she employs her skills as a medic in the Air Force Reserves. In her opinion, most of the time a bad day can be turned into a good story.

## LUCY REED

*Graphic Design; Senior*

I'm from Lancaster, Ohio. I enjoy experimenting with typography in design, as well as painting and photography as other forms of creative expression. My work frequently incorporates multiple layers of significance, inviting viewers to interpret them in their own unique ways.

## COLLETTE ROTH

*Graphic Design; Senior*

Hi! My name is Collette Roth. I'm originally from Chicago, IL. I am a graphic design major with a love for all things creative. I have two print pieces in Orpheus, both that I have a deep connection with. "My Kitchen" represents my love for all things culinary. "Always With You" is a piece made in honor of my grandma and my mother. Art and design have a big impact on me and my journey!

SARAH RYAN

*Fine Arts; Junior*

She writes poetry to process how she feels about things. She says this is common for many people, and finds peace in doing it. It's a more expressive form of journaling. In for "I'm in the Wind," she was writing about not being able to be 100% truthful about herself and her feelings with those closest to her. "I wanted a place to escape the inevitable," she says.

ELISABETH SCHMITT

*History. Spanish and German Minors; Sophomore.*

She enjoys writing fantasy and is currently working on her first novel. Between classes, you can find her crocheting comfy blankets, buried in her journals, or curled up with a good book.

JOHN SEBASTIAN

*Music Technology and English; Sophomore*

He often tries to intersect those two worlds through creative pieces such as poetry or his own music making. He'd like to dedicate his poem to Stevie Wonder, who actually wrote songs with everything in them!

MADELINE SHELLEY

*Management Information Systems. Cybersecurity Minors; Junior*

She has lived in Vandalia her whole life. While she chose a business major, she has always loved reading and writing, and would have become an English major if money were not a factor. Her favorite genre is fantasy, and her favorite book is The Silmarillion by J.R.R. Tolkien.

JENNA SHUMAN

*Pre-Medicine; Sophomore*

Jenna Shuman is from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her unexpected, yet fervent passion for writing has shaped her perspective on life and provided an outlet to the inevitable struggles that come with a career in medicine. Through her poetry, Jenna seeks to uncover the happiness inherent in the human experience while hoping to radiate a light that brightens our existence and leaves the space we occupy a little more beautiful than we found it.

KYLEIGH STREETER

*Fine Arts. Art History Minor; Junior*

She is from Cleveland, Ohio. She enjoys working in printmaking, painting, and drawing processes. Her work focuses on moments where the natural and human made worlds interact with one another, in addition to trivial, missable moments. She aims to bring these special moments to a larger audience. Outside of the studio, Kyleigh loves hiking, cooking, and crocheting.

ANEL SOLARES

*Communication Journalism; Junior*

Anel Solares is super happy to be able to contribute to this semester's edition of Orpheus. She enjoys writing, photography, fashion, and scrapbooking. She is trying to go outside of her comfort zone and learn new things to broaden her horizons. She wishes to be a stylist or creative director in the future and hopes you like her piece!

JAYLEE SOWDERS

*Music Therapy; Graduate*

Along with completing a BA in music therapy and minor in psychology, they recently completed an honors thesis on music therapy treatment for adolescents with attachment trauma, which was supplemented by a summer term at the University of Oxford in England. During her time abroad, Jaylee found peace with her gender, as she discovered a grounding sense of community and culture in other western countries. Jaylee hopes to return to the UK following their board certification, where visibility of queerness is more accessible.

KATIE TIMKO

*Visual Arts; Senior*

Katie Timko is a part-time Visual Arts major, and received her BFA in Photography while working for the University. While earning her first degree, Katie fell in love with alternative photography. The work displayed in this issue are examples of the work she creates in both classes and her home studio, including pinhole images, cyanotypes and lumen prints.

STACI Z-R

*Photography; Sophomore*

Staci is originally from Bellbrook, Ohio. She is inspired by her own emotions, memories, dreams, and experiences as well as music. She hopes to one day photograph for Rolling Stone. To see more of Staci's work, check out @stacizrphotography on Instagram.



