



PHOENIX
2012



PHOENIX 2012
VOLUME 32

The Art and Literary Publication of Clark College.

EDITORS' STATEMENT

Phoenix has risen once again! This year's staff steered *Phoenix* in a new direction, one of mystery, intrigue, and a sense that light can be seen through the darkness. We strived to establish a suitable canvas for all of the wonderful creations we received within the past year.

When the cogs weave and thoughts begin to form, one can create a work of art. Due to the arduous labor that goes into an artistic piece, each contributor should be commended for his or her efforts. It takes dedication and originality to create a piece as well as the confidence to submit it.

We are proud to present several new contributors to *Phoenix*, having received pieces from many writers and artists who have not previously submitted their work. The staff collaborated with the purpose of representing Clark College's students by following a theme to convey a varied collection of creative works, while maintaining a general sense of cohesion throughout the magazine. Finding a way to express this ambition with a fitting cover proved to be our greatest challenge. Using teamwork, determination and perseverance, the 2011-2012 *Phoenix* staff met any obstacle to publish this contemporary, yet eccentric, issue.

Take this journey with us, and unravel the secrets hidden within the *Phoenix*.

ABOUT THE PHOENIX

Phoenix is published annually by the Associated Students of Clark College (ASCC) in collaboration with the Art and English departments at Clark College in Vancouver, Washington. All contributors, editors, and volunteers are current Clark College students. Anyone enrolled in 100 level courses or above in the year of publication is eligible to submit work for possible inclusion. The ASCC finances the publication solely for the benefit of Clark College students, and it is unavailable for resale.

Submissions are chosen through a blind process by selection committees composed of students nominated by their discipline-respective instructors in Art and English. Selections are chosen for inclusion based on criteria of quality, craftsmanship, originality. After the respective selection committees forward their selections to *Phoenix* staff, the editors then further refine selections to present breadth and balance within our allocated number of pages. Additional selections not published in the magazine due to space constraints, an archive of past *Phoenix* issues in PDF format, plus all information for submitting works, the current staff, and contact information are posted at www.clarkphoenix.com.

Phoenix is a non-profit publication and is copyright 2012 by the Associated Students of Clark College. No portion of this publication may be reproduced in any form without express written permission from the individual contributors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

5	Just Breath
10	The Mango Tree
15	A Spring Reverie
20	Human Ways
29	Hidden Whispers
34	Vantucky and Its Surrounding Areas
41	Brand New Old News
44	Sunday Counting
55	Waiting
59	Freedom in the Fall
65	Luminous
68	A Paranormal Romace
81	Prediliction Susceptibility Agreement
85	A Wandering Star
89	Timeless
91	Ghost
104	Marketplace
113	Stories for People Who Need Them
122	Sirens



CIARRA LORD
Food For Thought | Mixed Media on Paper



Into the Sunset | Digital
JERI LEE

Just Breathe

by T.M. McGullivary

My lungs are filled with the bitter cold of the Pacific.
I can taste crisp sweetness in the air;
Feel the tense anticipation of the winter to come.
I look around and am assaulted on all sides by long forgotten sensations.
Trees are filled with a blend of brick red and sunshine yellow and neon orange.
Each glistening with dew-drops from the rain clouds over head.
I breathe again to fill my senses;
Colors for my eyes,
Sweet-salt for my tongue,
The quiet busy sound one can only find in a sleeping city,
And a brisk breeze that turns my ears and nose pink.
A hush falls over the metropolis as it awaits my response;
I release the air in my lungs and laugh.
I can see the breath leave my lungs and mouth in a puff of gray steam that that floats up
to join the hovering clouds.
I look around again and everything settles into place.
In the hectic maze of thoughts and emotions that create the matter of my mind,
A single word stands out:
Home.

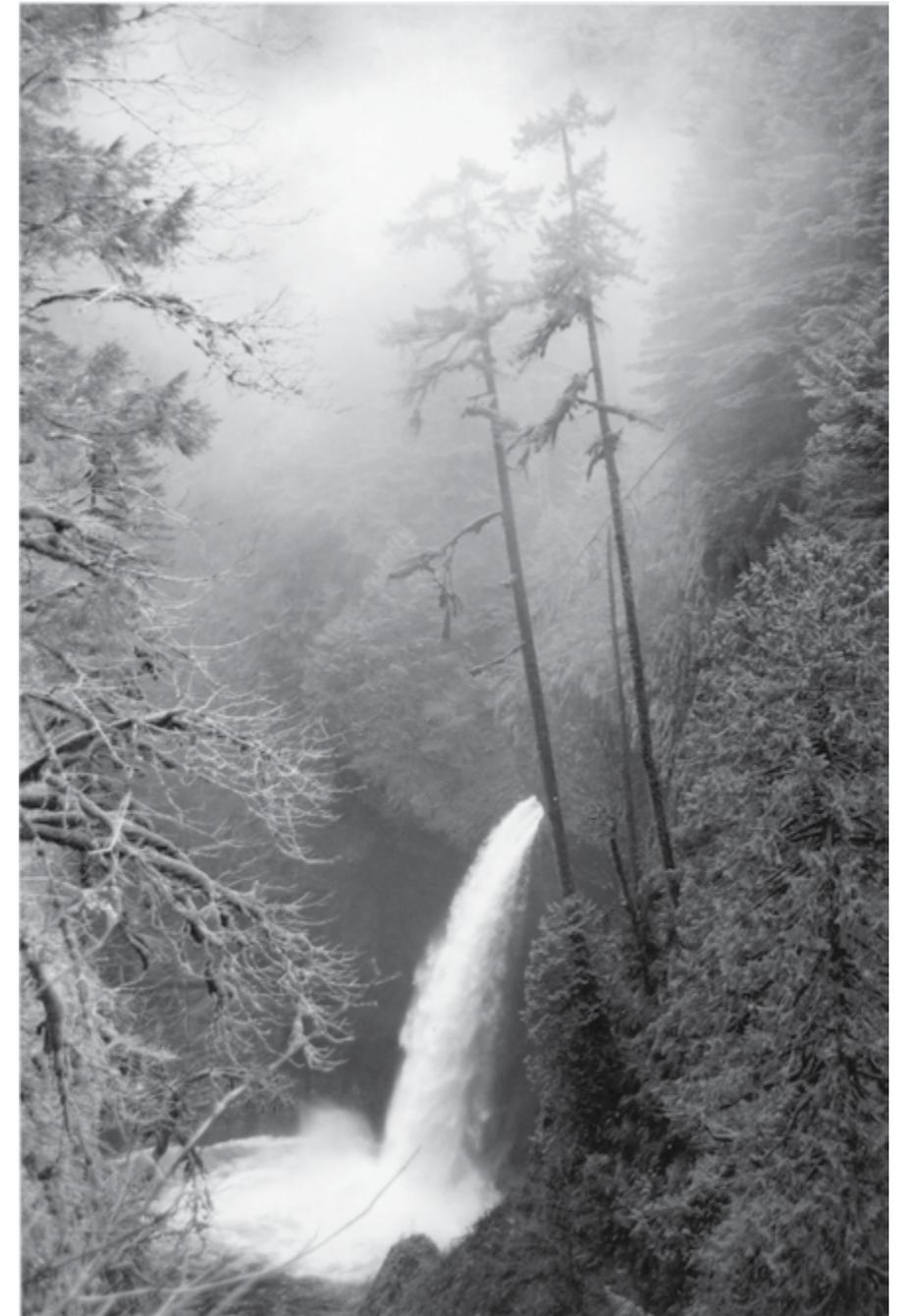
Design by Levi Savage



Spring from the Four Seasons Series | Graphite on Paper
ANNIE LEE



Recycled | Acrylic on Paper
STEPHANIE CLAFLIN



Metlako Falls | Digital
EMILY WATERS



From the Sea of Fire | Ceramic
ROBIN HOMINIUK



Tea Set 2 | Ceramic
STU MYERS



Mingei Vase | Ceramic
STU MYERS



Pair of Three Footed Bowls | Ceramic
DENNIS LO



THE MANGO TREE

by Huiting Jian

When I went back to China in September, I found the mango tree had disappeared from the garden. My father told me the mango tree was too old to live, I felt so depressed. I saw the tree stump, and it was then that I felt a huge hole in the depth of my heart. It drew my memory back to my childhood.

I had been a very naïve girl at the age of four, and my grandfather always took me to someplace interesting. He was the kindest old man. His gentle smile was so much like the sunshine that it was able to melt the ice and snow.

At that age, I would always go into the hills to cut firewood with my grandfather. I can still remember the smell of the wood, the voice of the river and the roaring of the birds. Nature was the best place to go, because when I get there, I forget anything that made me feel upset. That was why I would always go to the hills to work.

While my grandfather worked, I would sing a song to him. My voice, along with the thread of the saw, filled the hills. If he was too busy for a song, I would pick flowers. The smell was always one of my most favorite things; it

was beyond words. I would often compare nature to a magician, because it had the power to create many of the things that decorate this world.

Finally, when he finished his task, we would walk back down the hill, heading back to our home. My grandfather would take this moment to tell me a Chinese folk story. I still remember “Zengzi Kills the Pig,” a story of being honest with others. These were some of the happiest times of my life.

One day, my grandfather and I went to the hill as usual. When we arrived at the halfway point of our route, my grandfather suddenly stopped. He looked at a tree hanging down like a patient with a serious illness. My grandfather went down to observe the poor tree. He concentrated on it. Time seemed to slow, and the world fell silent: the birds, the river, and the wind all stopped. Suddenly, a happy smile spread over his wrinkled face as if he had discovered a rich secret.

He took out a spade from his tool bag and dug out the tree’s root with great care, as if this were treasure. I stood behind him, very curious about this tree.

When he finished, we went home without collecting anything else but the sick tree. On the way home, I asked my grandfather, “Why did you save it? It looks ill.”

My grandfather laughed. “Why do you think it is dead? Don’t forget, we are not losers until we truly fail at the end of a struggle.”

This quickly became the most valuable lesson I ever took in my life.

As soon as we got home, my grandfather excavated a hole for the tree, and he planted and fertilized it. He told me the tree was a mango tree and now was one of our family members. It was my job to take care of it, he told me, just as I take care of my little dog. After that, it became one of my most important daily tasks.

Whenever I arrived home from kindergarten, my first

assignment would be watering and talking to the mango tree. I would tell it what happened in my class, any new friends that I made, and whatever else made me happy on that day. In a way, I told it everything. It was my good friend. Every time I talked to it, it seemed to shake itself, as if to express its opinion. When the summer came, our family sat under the tree to enjoy the wind blowing over the leaves, making a wonderful sort of sound, like the sweetest of music.

Four months after the mango tree came into our lives, Grandfather left our country to go to the United States. Before he left, he urged me repeatedly not forget to take care of the tree. I promised him I could do it.

After my grandfather left, I did my best to take good care of the mango tree. Each day flowed smoothly into the next. The mango tree was growing up into a tall tree,

Time seemed to slow, and the world fell silent. The birds, the river, and the wind all stopped.

quickly becoming the strongest tree in our garden. It was just like my grandfather had said, “we

are not losers until we truly fail at the end of a struggle.” That frail little tree overcame many difficulties in order to grow tall, and that was beyond my imagination.

The days flashed by, and before I knew it, I was off to boarding school. Sometimes, when I would dream at night, it would be about the mango tree. My grandfather and I would be sitting under the tree, and he would be telling me a story. In my dreams, I was still that naïve girl, and the mango tree still sang its songs.

The news came while I was studying hard for my college entrance exam. My mother called me, informing me my grandfather passed of a heart attack. I couldn’t think straight after hearing the news; my whole world felt empty. It was as though I couldn’t even hear anything, and I let my tears fall.

I was not able to see my grandfather before he was gone, but I could still remember his smile, his voice and his philosophy of life. Whenever I would sit under the tree, I could feel my grandfather sitting, talking, and enjoying the wind with me.

During my vacation, I spent every day under the tree talking to it. It felt just like talking to my grandfather again. Once again, I talked about what was happening at my school, what kinds of new friends I made, and what I learned in life. It was my connection to my grandfather.

Now the tree has accompanied my grandfather in heaven, but still, it has a connection with my grandfather and me. It is still a part of my dreams, and I can talk to it the same way I talked to my grandfather. To this day, it remains one of my most important family members.

When the mango tree died, it taught me the true meaning of Grandfather’s words: “We are not losers until we truly fail at the end of a struggle.” Now, when I meet difficulties, I will be strong. I will face my struggles with motivation because they are no longer an obstacle. I vow to find the root of any problem and to solve it.

I still miss my mango tree. I still miss my grandfather. Maybe they are smiling and waving to me from heaven. ☸





Silver Pearl Coat Pin | Sterling Silver and Pearl
JACOB HALLENBECK



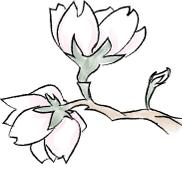
Kats | Sterling Silver and Bloodstone
KATERINA J. McCANN



Profile 3 | Digital
SAMANTHA MARTIN



Drink-In Portland | Emulsion Lifts on Recycled Glass Bottles
TARA OMNES



A SPRING REVERIE

By Brittany Willard

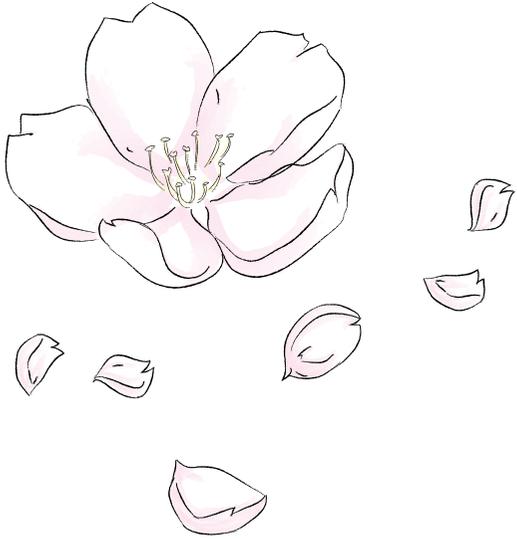
I dreamed of a foreign world,
where blue looked like green,
and where the sun beat red.

I found you there,
at the base of a tree,
half hidden by a cloud of blossoms.

The wind whispered to us,
and we heard a song
from a thousand years ago.

Immersed in our reverie, the blossoms fell.
I awoke to a familiar place and time,
Before I could say farewell.

Yet, despite my surroundings,
and unlike transient blossoms,
my heart can never let go of you.



Design by Nicole Antonacci



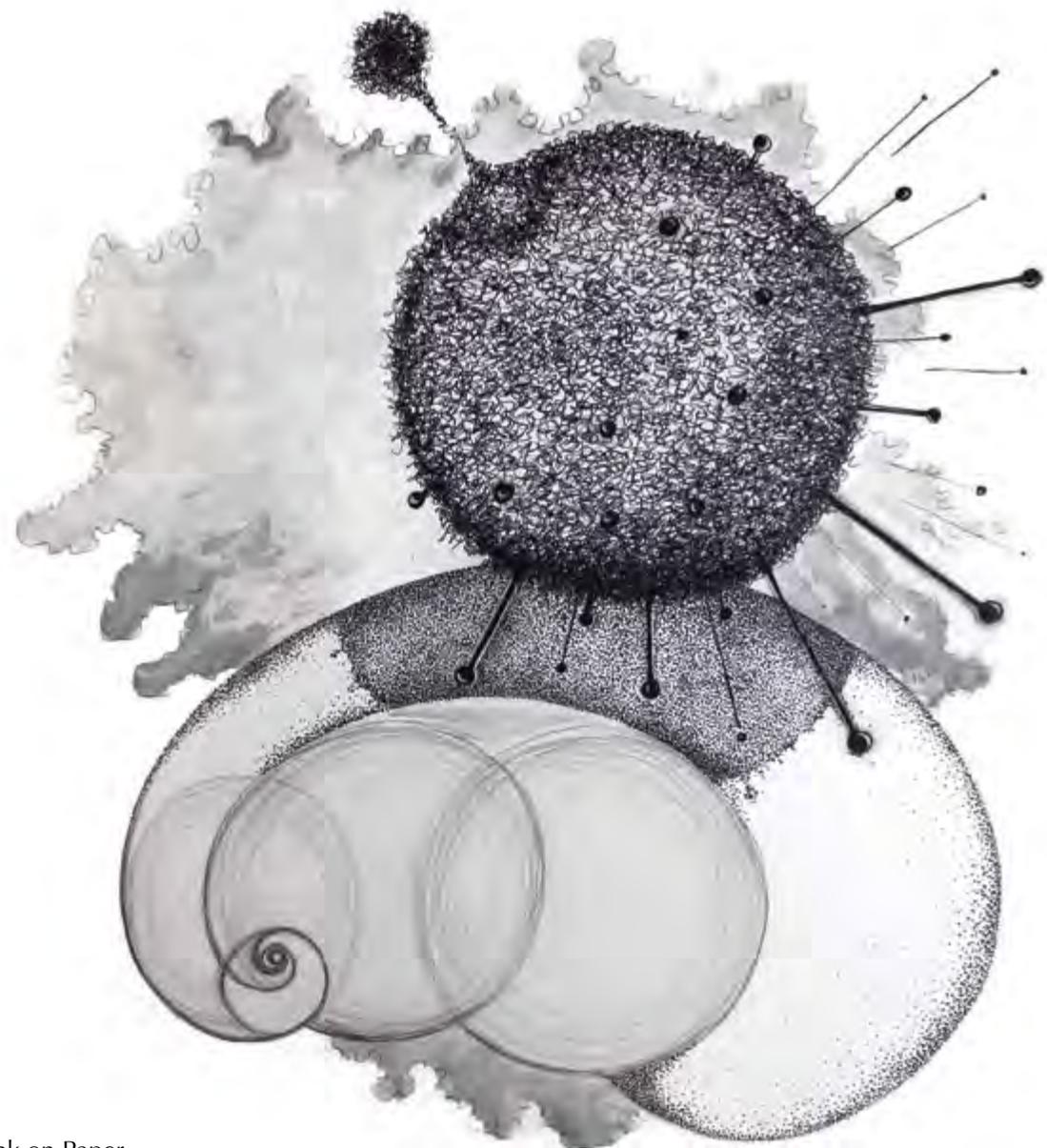
No Strings Attached | Mixed Media on Paper
SARA ELLIOTT



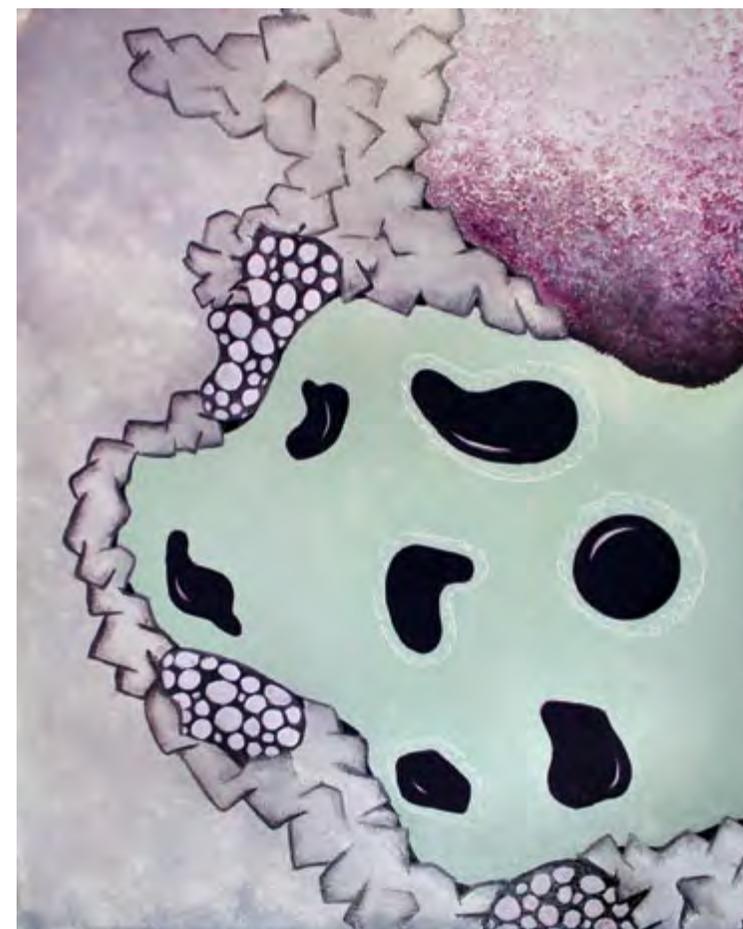
Teapot and Bottle | Ceramic
DENNIS LO



Any Way's The Right Way | Ink on Paper
C. DARLEY MILLER



Conception | Ink on Paper
NIKKI KANGAS-WINSTON



Virus Attacking A Cell | Acrylic on Paper
ALYSSA WILLARD



Invasion | Ink on Paper
JACK HOLCOMB

Human Ways

By Kesha Fisher

The rains had come and gone, and the earth was sweaty beneath the scorching Sudanese sky. Out came the women to the measured call of the first drum. One foot led the other in-sync, equally decorated at the ankles with rings of shells and sharpened twigs. Bodies swayed gently, wrapped from top to floor in the colorful *toub* that flowed in the settling wind. Heads were adorned with crowns of braided hair, cowrie beads and feathers from fertile birds, and their feet quickened feverishly to the sounds of a pending celebration.

One head was bare, smooth from the razor's trip around her skull just moments before. They called her *Ma'a*, the word for water, for all the rain that accompanied her birth. Ma'a followed as the elders split a path to the center of the field, though she wished only to see more of the dancers.

The darkness ahead hung high, pulling dread from its deepest lair. Her heart thrashed inside its cage like gasping mackerel, yet Ma'a let her lips spill no distress.

Grandmother spoke, "Come along; show your worth," and the words slipped into and gonged around her head. Trusting the mouth of an elder whose worth was exhibited similarly long ago, Ma'a stepped forward.

The formerly lonesome drum merged with others to strike a beat that flowed into the heavens. When the sound returned to earth, it awakened a dance among the caste of women, and their voices hummed in tune. The matriarch stood on quivering knees to sing, and their bodies shook as if fire took hold of their feet.

The beat rattled the ground, and Ma'a wanted to send her fearful mind away. All she had ever seen lay between the points of the untamed Red Sea and the surreptitious gardens outside her village. Spread behind the horizon was a world far beyond her grasp and Ma'a knew this. To see it required traveling an obscure journey; but just as she allowed her mind to carry itself away, a pinch at her side pulled her from those distracting thoughts. Then she moved her fearful feet.

As if suddenly empowered by the unknown, she pictured all that was good: warmth from the night air, rain fresh from its seasonal break and food for the way it made her feel complete.

"Show my worth," she whispered to herself. "Go in there and lie down; soon, it will be over."

A pair of old freckled hands led her into a tent. Inside the cabin of stretched goat hide and reinforced branches from Arabica trees, Ma'a spotted a bed of dried and woven banana leaves. She let her knees lead her to the floor before twirling onto her backside. As if descending upon her, eyes as hollow as the blackness of night blinked above her petrified body. Hidden behind the glare of mothers and daughters of great-grandmothers was blatant camaraderie and hopes of another smooth transition.

The earth grew loose inside Ma'a's grip and bridled was her fright. Indeed, she spread those callow legs, and another duo of more mature hands placed the sharpened metal between them before severing the evil that lured so many to sin.

Ma'a screamed.

Warmth began the slow travel down her split. Crying and thrashing, she cursed at them, swore at the dirt as it drank from the pool of her blood.

Four pairs of hands pinned her limbs against the ground as the remaining flesh was sliced off in one brazen swipe. Two more available palms cupped her mouth, trapping the cries of a child en route to womanhood.

"Don't scream anymore! Your younger ones are listening," hissed a voice as coarse as the withered leaves beneath Ma'a's bleeding bottom.

The severity of pain as that special skin split from her body was unexpected, even with all nine years of preparation. She called upon death for rescue; it was

seen as the only gate from that hell, for nothing worse than death could exist in the world, she believed.

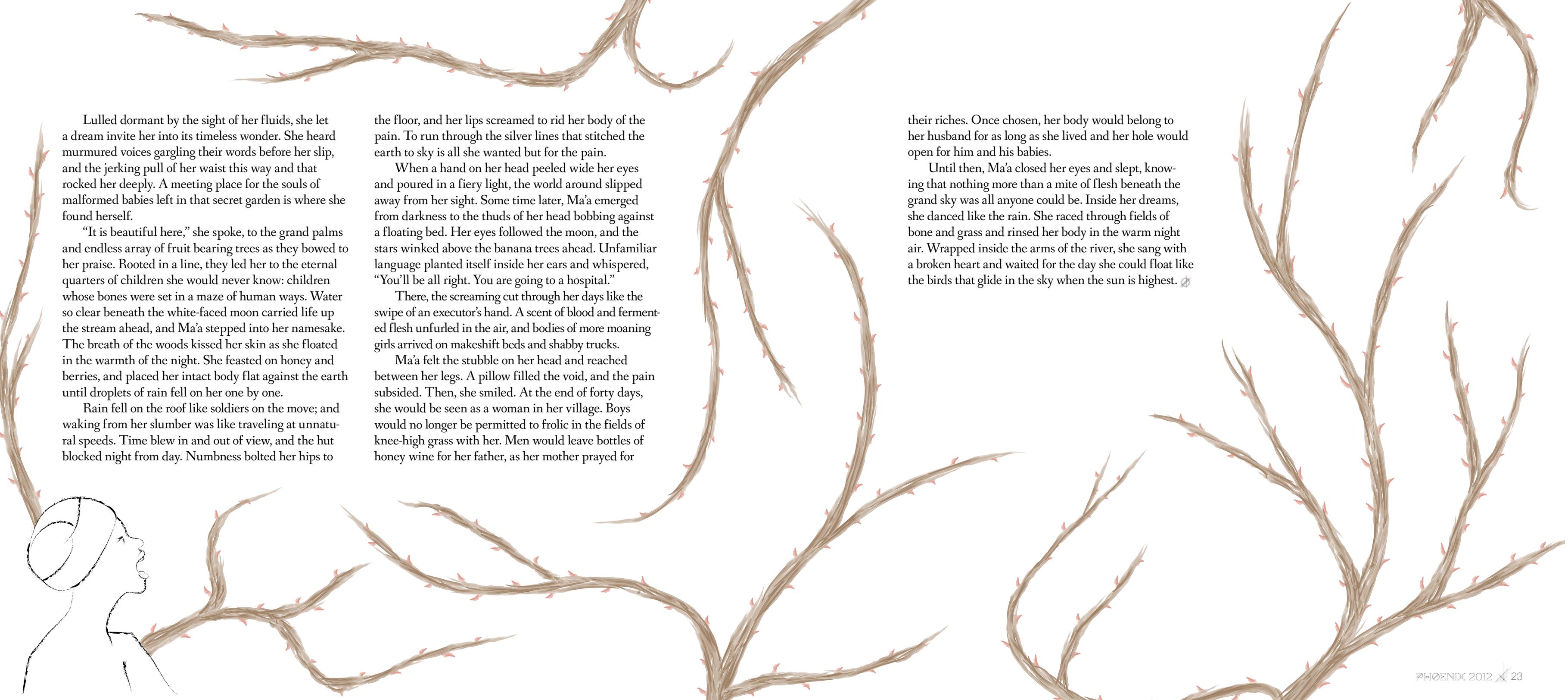
"Please come for me!" She cried, again and again until her screams dwindled into the soft whispers of defeat.

Ma'a continued crying into the universe for relief, as the oldest of hands sealed the hole with thorns and anointed it with a mixture of oils and juices. Chants ran from all their throats but the bitterness of her tears overrode their song. With her eyes shut, she imagined herself gifted with the freedom of birds that glide in the sky when the sun is highest and said, "If only I were one of you."

When night fell, the tears did not retreat into their hole as the grandmother promised, and Ma'a felt cheated once more. By morning, the sky ripped the blackness off its chest, and trees raised their heads to welcome the sun. A rush of hot water filled the basin, and Ma'a reached in with a cloth, soaking much of it for cleansing her body.

"Soon, a husband will come for you," said the timid voice inside her head, and she swatted away at it as she had the flies circling her meals.

The spikes inside her wound tempted her hand to scratch. Ma'a picked at the patch of leaves and cloth boarding the wound, hoping to find her missing flesh behind the fold. Each time she glanced between her legs, the bath carried away the red until there was more blood than water.



Lulled dormant by the sight of her fluids, she let a dream invite her into its timeless wonder. She heard murmured voices gargling their words before her slip, and the jerking pull of her waist this way and that rocked her deeply. A meeting place for the souls of malformed babies left in that secret garden is where she found herself.

“It is beautiful here,” she spoke, to the grand palms and endless array of fruit bearing trees as they bowed to her praise. Rooted in a line, they led her to the eternal quarters of children she would never know: children whose bones were set in a maze of human ways. Water so clear beneath the white-faced moon carried life up the stream ahead, and Ma’a stepped into her namesake. The breath of the woods kissed her skin as she floated in the warmth of the night. She feasted on honey and berries, and placed her intact body flat against the earth until droplets of rain fell on her one by one.

Rain fell on the roof like soldiers on the move; and waking from her slumber was like traveling at unnatural speeds. Time blew in and out of view, and the hut blocked night from day. Numbness bolted her hips to

the floor, and her lips screamed to rid her body of the pain. To run through the silver lines that stitched the earth to sky is all she wanted but for the pain.

When a hand on her head peeled wide her eyes and poured in a fiery light, the world around slipped away from her sight. Some time later, Ma’a emerged from darkness to the thuds of her head bobbing against a floating bed. Her eyes followed the moon, and the stars winked above the banana trees ahead. Unfamiliar language planted itself inside her ears and whispered, “You’ll be all right. You are going to a hospital.”

There, the screaming cut through her days like the swipe of an executor’s hand. A scent of blood and fermented flesh unfurled in the air, and bodies of more moaning girls arrived on makeshift beds and shabby trucks.

Ma’a felt the stubble on her head and reached between her legs. A pillow filled the void, and the pain subsided. Then, she smiled. At the end of forty days, she would be seen as a woman in her village. Boys would no longer be permitted to frolic in the fields of knee-high grass with her. Men would leave bottles of honey wine for her father, as her mother prayed for

their riches. Once chosen, her body would belong to her husband for as long as she lived and her hole would open for him and his babies.

Until then, Ma’a closed her eyes and slept, knowing that nothing more than a mite of flesh beneath the grand sky was all anyone could be. Inside her dreams, she danced like the rain. She raced through fields of bone and grass and rinsed her body in the warm night air. Wrapped inside the arms of the river, she sang with a broken heart and waited for the day she could float like the birds that glide in the sky when the sun is highest. ☼





Tea Kettle | Digital
MARK HYDER



Hungry | Digital
NIKKI KANGAS-WINSTON

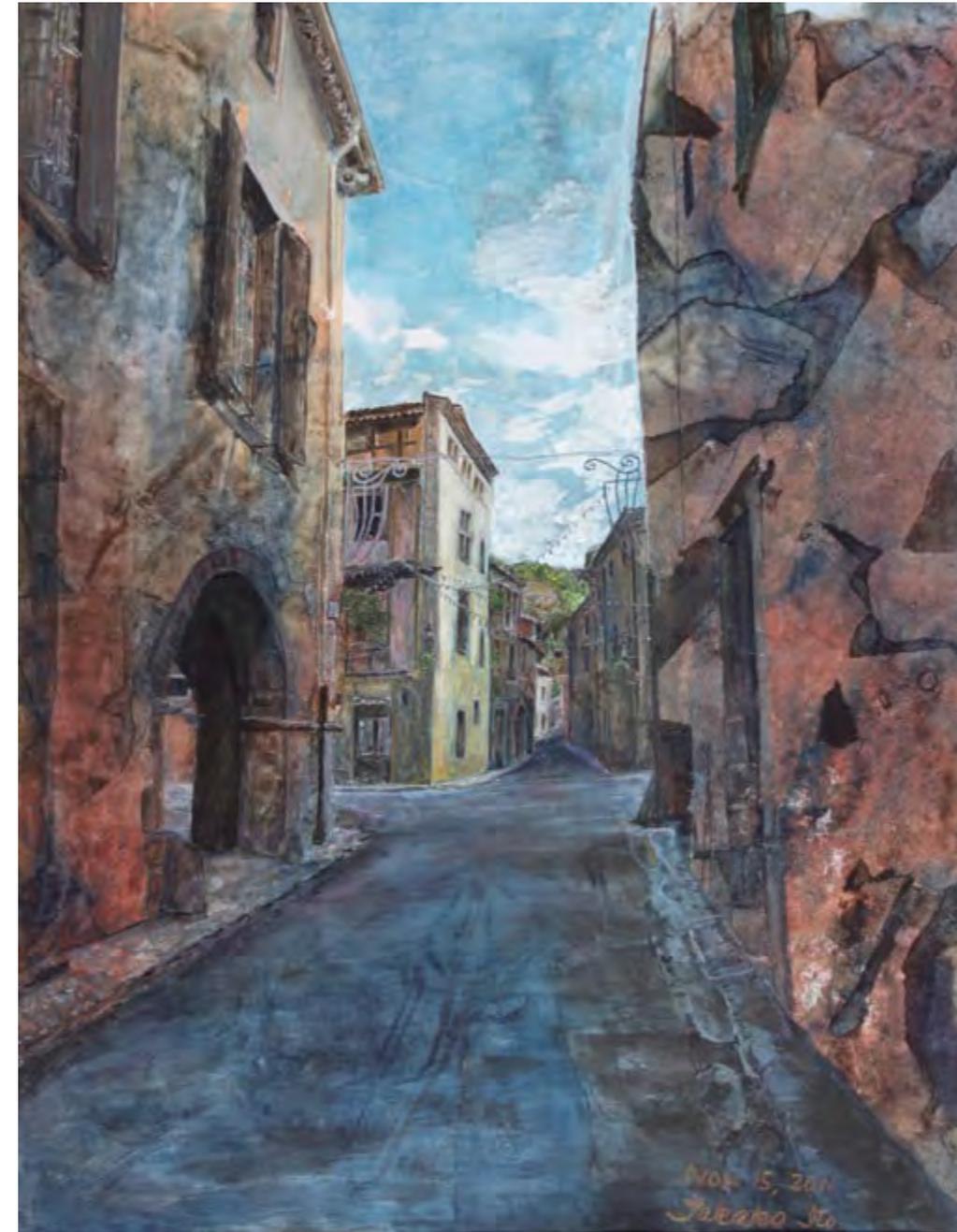


Around | 16 Gauge Steel and Rock
KATERINA J. McCANN





Once Upon a Palm | Ceramic
TREVYN HIEMANN



Alet-Les-Bains | Watercolor
TAKAKO ITO



Chops 11/26/1982 - 11/6/2011 | Oil on Paper
SHANNON WONSER

Hidden Whispers

By Rachel Shefchek

The mystical flaw of leaving things all alone
hides nothing but openness, like a budding rose.
There is nothing but petals, stems, and leaves,
so the only secrets created are not meant to keep.

There is a definitive potion of absolute serenity
when cautiously handling all things clandestine.
Like how an old sofa, with fabric of deepened red,
doesn't show the sodden stains of blood.

A secret can be exchanged between close friends.
It's a confidentiality given with permission,
Like a gift wrapped with paper in shades of hued gold:
It has a purpose, meant to bring people closer together.

The whispered words oft come in a soft sounding caress,
It is the reason they can sometimes sound more than a little sad.
But a small child will only shed tears when he or she is unheeded,
so always share your closest words with those that are the best.

Design and Photograph by Debby Corzine



Self Portrait | Ceramic
KELLY KEIGWIN



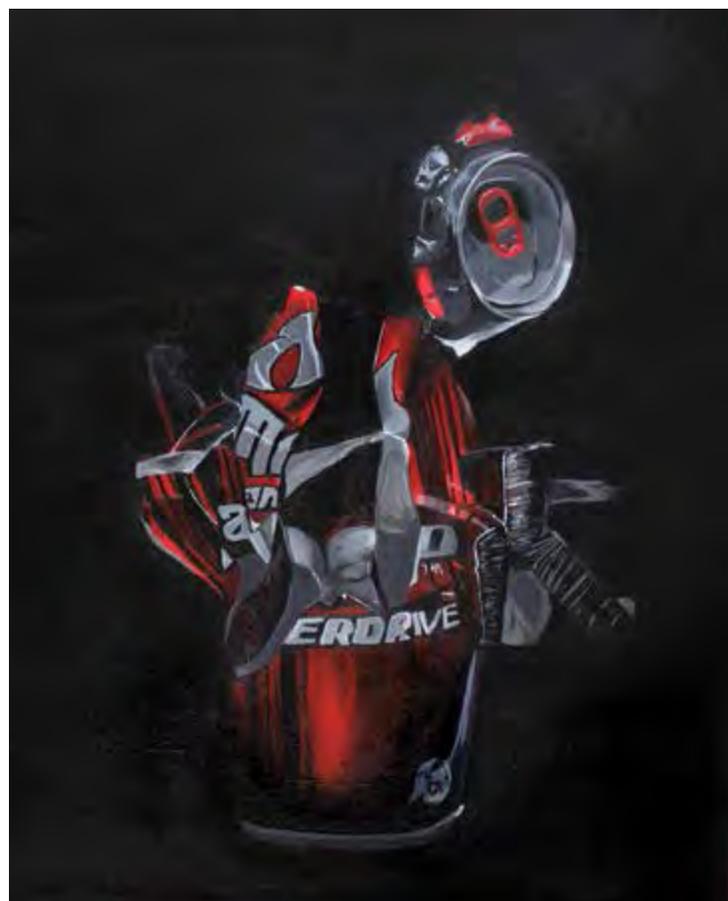
Beetle of the Nimble Forest | Ceramic
DAVID HERNANDEZ



Memories | Ceramic
KELLY KEIGWIN



Red Fans | Acrylic on Paper
SAMANTHA MARTIN



Amped | Acrylic
NICK SVILARICH



Portland Lensbaby Play | Photographic Mixed Media
TARA OMNES



It is a September day, standard for the 'Couve: gray, cloudy, void of all entertaining activities (except for the die-hard sports fans), and cold. Today is the first of many days marked by an endlessly gray, clouded dome with no holes to heaven, no spots for sun, no hope of better days to come. The people here admire this dome, as if in the safety of a favorite childhood blanket, they feel warm and safe. They take comfort in the constant grey and it only deepens their love for all things Pacific Northwest. Today, it isn't quite cold enough for North Face rainbow rain-jackets to appear but, oh, how those die-hard North Facers seethe at the sky, beseeching for rain so they all can flaunt, like the hipster peacocks they are, their North Face jackets.

Only in Vantucky could there be an abundance of Portlandia and suburbia. Portlandia hipsters are known to breeze the downtown Vantucky streets and lurk among the hidden, alternative coffee shops that only their kind will ever know. Vantucky middle-class moms parade the parks and run strollers down neighborhood streets to keep everything in tight, fine shape. High school students run rampant around all parts of both city and town. They know the secret that once you have lived here, you've only time before you run out of fun things to do.

In Vantucky, routine trumps all. Life as a middle class, suburban family rules everything. In Portlandia, however, indifferent independence is the master puppeteer. In Portlandia, tattoos peek out from beneath slightly dirty, alternative 70s, 80s, and 90s clothing sold at high-trade prices and worth every hipster penny spent. Trying hard to look like you aren't is the face sported by the masses, the attitude worn by the people, the lifestyle practiced by the faithful followers. Evidence is found in the cosmic amount of part-time and full-time coffee shop employees, dying to get their hands on a piece of the Portlandia gold. Or through a local, organic farmer growing what he can manage on his half-acre of land, or maybe in the food-cart cook whose specials drips with fatty, thick, organic grease. More evidence still is found in the numbers of elitist artists that boast their own creations at friends' galleries every fourth Tuesday of each month, come rain or more rain. Trying hard not to try hard, a motto this city secretly runs by. Through the main medium of commerce, the coffee shop, you see the strain of this effort on almost every enticing inch.



Walking in from the welcomed gray rain, you whisk North Face jacket off and run a not-entirely-clean hand through tussled bed-head hair, to brush off rain from your oh-so-stylish mustache. Walking up to the counter, you notice paper oval lamps hanging equal lengths apart, four feet above, four of a kind. They cast a soft, not uncommon light across a gray carpet set to mimic the sky. A low coffee bar with three bar stools stares you directly in the face as the chicly organized, russet magazine rack on your left encourages you to sit and stay awhile with an

unknown magazine discussing politics, procedures, and new must-have experiences around the city. So focused at the task at hand, you see the barista taking your order, which he expects you to know and know damned well. He looks exactly like you, skinny jeans and all. After a brief exchange, he hurriedly scribbles down your order in mumbo-jumbo to the barista at his right, while you give him cash and he pushes you aside too quickly, impersonally, with his listless eyes. The other barista rushes to give enough care to your coffee, and when she delivers the goods to the well-worn receiving counter, she acknowledges you with only a glance and an unfamiliar name you realize is what your order is called.

A long, oblong mirror beside calculated, roan-brown cabinets and smooth, long, coffee-colored counters frame the baristas. You saunter down the long walk to an elevated, stage-like sitting area with fake desert plants in 60s style fishbowls with white rocks to match. White pleather couches that offer little comfort and a glass coffee table sit adjacent, accompanying you and your handy-dandy MacBook. Music you have heard through the grapevine around town rings softly from small-white speakers placed innocently above your head as the place slowly fills with other lost and wandering hipster souls. (Here is a prime watering hole for all kinds.)

With coffee gone and body re-warmed, you feel a different type of nature calling. Down the dark, softly lighted hallway, you can choose between three rooms. Black doors beckon you and, thankfully, you choose the right one. Upon your entrance, you hear all the echoes left from visitors past who left marks and signs and handwritten lines all over the floor, the paper holder, various and specific places on the exposed water-heater, stalking you silently in the opposite corner and upon the black door frame. One light you don't bother to observe gives

you sight and the color of coffee lightly kisses the walls. After doing your business, you return to the hustle and bustle of the shop and look at every minute detail. Every decorative element screams it was planned to a "T" in immensely, coolly, calculated preparation. Yet, as a whole, the room so boldly, so loudly, states, "eh, I just threw this on," and if not the room, then certainly the people. With coffee cup recycled appropriately, you return MacBook to shoulder bag, North Face jacket to back, and rain to face as you step out the door into the silent storm ahead.

**"I AM
DIFFERENT
DAMMIT!"**



Only in Portlandia will indifference wear the same clothes, faces, shoes, jackets, and attitude every fifth person. Only in Portlandia will laziness look chic and not complete without unmade hair. Only in Portlandia will everyone who tries to scream so vehemently, "I AM different, damn it!" be so complacent to take a simple seat between similar friends in looks and interests. When walking through Portlandia, birds

will fly through the skies, but only on certain accessories. Oxfords will be worn by shoe size six through sixteen in every color brown could ever hope to be (for now at least). Subdued hair colors will adorn women's and men's hair follicles, shirt patterns will hop from person to person until everyone has been tagged at least once, and fetishes will spread like wildfire across this green, green land. Biking, hiking, obsessing about mountains, going green, supporting locally, reading newspapers, having iPhones, posting updates, playing guitar in fashions unknown and unwelcomed to the rest of the musical world, dying for food to die for, stalking artists, critiquing books, dissecting people, trying practices and keeping practices. Only in Portlandia could this life be made so complete. ☺



Baseball Dream | Ceramic
ROBIN HAMBLIN



Twisted | Digital
AMANDA BONDURANT



Labor Lines | Silver Gelatin Print
ZOEY DEJONG



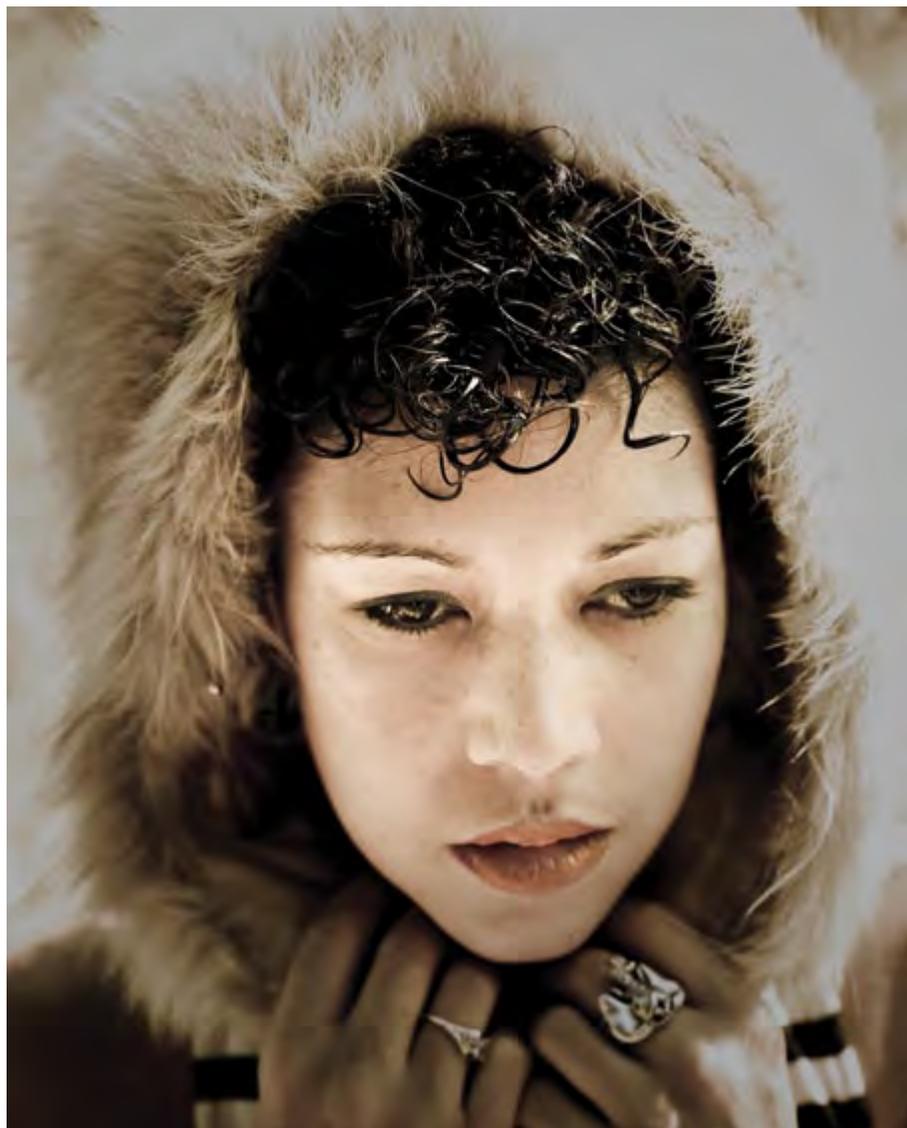
Self Expression | Silver Gelatin Print
ZOEY DEJONG



Roll The Bones | Mixed Media on Paper
KERRY HENRY



Mushroom | Mixed Media on Paper
DANIELLE LAUGHLIN



Terminally Beaut-ill-ful | Digital
AMANDA BONDURANT



Endangered Species | Brass
RYAN L. WILLIAMS

Brand New Old News

by David Brannan

Put down your weapons,
my daughters and my sons.
Put aside your questions,
For more answers will come.

Put your trust in the music
To carry you away with each passing note.
Trust in love
When you feel all alone.

Somewhere, there is a ray of sun
Where you may see your God and truth.
Somewhere, there is a cumulonimbus,
That not even His light may shine through.

Pick up the fallen soldier next to you
And carry him with strength up the hill.
Bandage his wounds, and clean his pails
Until he is no longer injured or ill.

Make passionate love to your lover,
And sleep through the bleak morning weather.
Think not of the thoughts of others,
And simply dwell in the peace together.

Let your scars heal with Time,
Let her run Vitamin E on your scrapes.
Let her words mend and heal your mind;
Allow her soul to soothe the aches.

When you dream of the plaguing fears
Clouding the purpose of your life,
Just remember that somewhere, someone loves you,
And one will love you until no longer alive.

Design by William Rushing



Several Hours with Local Heroes | Silver Gelatin Print
NICK HERBER



Portrait #1 | Silver Gelatin Print
TAYLOR LEWIS

Sunday Counting

by Jami Hendrikson

William James Raymond II stuffed his pockets with a trove of objects plucked from Granny Elba's utility room junk drawer. Essential Sunday morning mining for a six-year-old boy. William quickly learned the necessary skills to make it through Pastor Ebenezer's longwinded sermons by sitting through countless Sunday mornings on the hard pews at Lone Oak Hollow Baptist Church. Surviving Sunday services took real planning.

William looked like a misfit in his Sunday best. Black suspenders stood out against his oversized starched white shirt as they tugged at the waistline of his trousers. Granny Elba did not much care if the whole world could see the dull blue dress socks exposed by William's high-water grey trousers. The socks belonged to his late granddaddy, and William learned to tuck the extra toe room of the sock under his feet so the heel of the sock didn't protrude over the back of his shoe. Brown twine helped to cinch the oversized shoes onto William's thin feet. Granny tried futilely to tame the unruly cowlicks in his flaming orange hair with a Brylcreem, a Sunday morning ritual.

William allowed the old screen door to slam against its jam as he left the kitchen. The floppy shoes exaggerated his steps, causing them to look like puppets. It took real effort to catch up with Granny as she led the way down the dusty dirt road. Like many of the congregation, she never missed a Sunday service. They always arrived early so Granny Elba could take her usual position in the front pew, William's prison under her watchful eye.

Granny's full body swung side to side as she pulled the worn Radio Flyer along behind her. Dishes clanged and rattled as she trudged down the rutted road. The dishes held Granny's dripping pecan pie, fried okra, steaming butter beans and a gallon jar of the best sweet tea in Montgomery County. Granny Elba cut no slack when it came to feeding the masses.

The last Sunday in August always meant baptisms in Kettle Creek and one ridiculously long sermon. The congregation ended the service with a potluck. The white oak trees provided the shade for the picnic blankets that were spread out on the patchy grass beneath them. All the ladies used their own hand pieced quilts, made from countless seasons of Gold Medal flour sacks, with the exception of one. Granny thought an old worn sheet was plenty serviceable.



Design by Nikki Kangas-Winston and Jeri L. Lee

The annual event brought out the best Southern cooking among the women. The meal often stretched on for hours, and was only complete when the men folk served up dishes of their fresh peach ice cream. The boys played rounds of marbles. The winner's pockets bulged with their clacking glass treasures. The girls picked wild daisies and proceeded to weave them into long chains they wore around their necks.

Granny Elba and William continued their walk to the church wordlessly. The squeaking of the wagon's wheels spooked a few lark sparrows out of a roadside mulberry bush. After some distance they descended a gentle, sloping hill. William held onto the back of the wagon to keep it from getting away from Granny. Once down the hill, they passed the church cemetery and turned into the empty churchyard.

The congregation held families: pretty mommas, tired daddies, wiggling babies and lively children, all weekly reminders of the family he did not have.

Bending over the wagon, Granny rummaged between the dishes to find the hidden towel-wrapped Mason jar. Straightening up, she lifted the dish towel away from a freshly cut dahlia bouquet, a favorite of Granny's; she planted every color dahlia in the beds around the old farm house. The prized sixty-four count box of Crayolas did not touch all the blooming shades in Granny Elba's gardens.

Handing the bouquet to William, Grandma Elba nodded and in a soft voice she said, "Go ahead, Child. I'll just sit here and rest my tired knees. Take your time, you hear?"

Like a child waiting for a single lemon drop, William accepted the flowers with both hands. William turned and walked through the whitewashed gate into the cemetery. In the far corner, he kneeled over the headstone

holding the names of his momma and daddy, parents he never knew. William was just a baby when a cotton factory fire killed his hardworking momma and daddy. Without fail, Granny always found something pretty for William to give his Momma. William removed the jar of spent, dried flowers and then placed the bright dahlias at the base of the grey headstone. He touched the headstone and wondered if his momma and daddy had been waiting for this Sunday morning visit.

Pastor Ebenezer once preached the cemetery is where the old kinfolk rested. William knew his momma and daddy were not old, and he also knew that resting was something you did only on Sunday afternoons. William did not question Granny about this; he guessed he would figure it out like an arithmetic problem. Maybe when he turned seven.

Lone Oak Hollow Baptist church held seventy souls this Sunday morning. Pastor Ebenezer's stood before them. His white robe made him look like a moving mountain of snow. Sweat beaded on the brow of his dark skin. His flashing hands jumped up and down in unison with his booming voice. Ebenezer had found his calling, his sermons could carry on for two full hours, and the only thing that would shut him down was food, his one earthly weakness.

Humidity sapped the life out of Sunday morning service. Granny fanned her face with a hymnal to slow down the dripping sweat, and William's shirt stuck to his moist skin. The congregation swayed and clapped their hands in time as they sang out the lines of "Go Tell It On the Mountain." Granny never tired of singing. William liked the singing, too; it gave him a chance to move around and pull something out of his pockets.

Returning his numb backside to the pew, William opened his hand. There, in his palm, he saw a wooden clothespin, a thread spool, a wide pink rubber band and

an almost new 1934 wheat head penny. These just so happened to be the necessary items for one fine slingshot. As long as he remained seated beside Granny and the sermon held her attention, she paid no attention to his busy hands.

As much as Granny loved church, William despised it. He felt like a hostage. The congregation held families: pretty mommas, tired daddies, wiggling babies and lively children, all weekly reminders of the family he did not have. William did not belong.

After thoughtful consideration, Ebenezer looked up into his masses with a smile.

Drawing in a full breath he read the entire chapter in his authoritative tone: “Chapter Seven of St. Matthew. Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with that measure ye”

As Ebenezer droned, William counted twenty-six *ye*'s in the chapter. William could not be sure of the twenty-six because *ye* sounded a great deal like *he*, so he would have to check the counting once he returned home. Once he counted thirty-nine *thou*'s which proved a hard record to beat. Granny found pleasure in William's interest in rereading the chosen text. Little did she know he was betting on the words of Jesus.

During the lull immediately following the reading of the text, William patted Granny on her plump knee, and whispered, “Granny, I need to pee real bad. Can I go out for a spell?”

Granny nodded and replied, “Make it fast and no dilly-dallying, you hear me?”

William wasted no time; he almost bounded from his torturous seat on the front pew. His penny let out a ping when it hit the ground. William quickly scooped it up and put it back in his front pocket. He took care not to trip over his shoes on the way down the center aisle.

He learned not to look into the faces he knew belonged to families. William tried hard not to imagine how good it would feel to have a daddy and a momma and maybe even a little brother. William thought to himself, *I do not miss having a sister, no Sir. not only did they dress real nice, they cried and to top it off they played only girl stuff, no baseball.* He counted the steps that it took to get out the door. Seventy-three, same as last week.

Once out the door, William noticed the thick mid-morning held not even a slight breeze, just the relentless Georgia heat. Still, William found the outside of the church more comfortable; after all, his momma and daddy were outside.

He followed the worn path to the tree line where the wooden outhouse stood. The smell of the

outhouse in this weather caused even a church escapee to rush and finish his duty. William let the spring door crash closed and strolled over to the wash bucket beside the pitcher pump. Working the worn red handle, he pumped until his muscles weakened. The tin wash bucket sat in the middle of a puddle. William did not waste his time with hand washing; instead, he splashed the cool water onto his face, releasing one of his cowlicks from its greasy hold. William ran his sleeve over his face and rubbed his cumbersome muddy shoes against a tuft of swamp grass.

Looking up, William glanced over to the cemetery and smiled when he saw his momma's pretty flowers. As he neared the church doors, Ebenezer's voice grew, booming into the still air. Ebenezer had begun his interpretation of the Seventh Chapter of St. Matthew. If the service were a baseball game, it would still be the bottom of the

third inning. William knew Ebenezer could carry on for another hour and a half at least.

As William walked up the center aisle, he noticed a freckle-faced, redheaded girl sitting next to Miss Betty. She winked at William and then stuck out her tongue. William thought her front teeth were all messed up; she looked to be a second grader.

Miss Betty did not have a husband. She moved to Lone Oak Hallow last fall when Old Man Gentry opened the savings and loan. William liked Miss Betty immediately. Apparently, like William, she had no family, which meant Miss Betty didn't belong to anyone. Sure, he had Granny, but besides her, he belonged to no one.

William remembered one Sunday right after Easter when he heard Ebenezer tell Miss Betty that it wasn't ladylike to ride a bike in a dress. Miss Betty used her quiet Southern voice as well as her beautiful smile to reply to the reprimand. William saw Miss Betty lean toward Ebenezer and quietly, yet matter-of-factly, say, “My Oh my, Ebenezer, do you really think so?” She paused as if in thought and then continued on. “You know, I'm glad you pointed that out.” Ebenezer nodded in agreement while



Miss Betty continued, “You know what I think Ebenezer? I think you can go straight to hell, because I've never seen any place in the Bible that says I can't ride a bike naked, let alone in a dress.” She delivered this with a pleasant little smile on her face as if commenting on the weather. Then Miss Betty smiled widely. “You have a nice day, y'all hear?” she said. After that, Ebenezer kept his distance from Miss Betty, and William looked forward to seeing her on Sundays.

William returned to the front pew refreshed. He wondered if the little girl belonged to anyone. As Ebenezer carried on preaching the gospel, William's imagination swirled with thoughts. Before he knew it, they were all singing the closing hymn, “The Old Rugged Cross.”

William followed the crowd as they filed slowly out the doors into the still hot air, heavy with the static hum of cicadas. Once outside, William scanned the crowd for Miss Betty. The church women bustled about, adding their prized dishes to the serving line. He saw Granny lick something off her thumb as she continued to direct the women to put the main dishes together. Salads followed, and as for the desserts, they were to be stowed away. When it came to food, Granny took charge.

William finally caught a glimpse of Miss Betty. She was pulling a wagon out of the shade and, there beside her, he saw the girl. When Betty spotted William, she called out. “William, come help me, would you?” Wasting no time, William squeezed through the crowd and walked toward her.

When he neared them, Miss Betty said, “Emily Anne, this here boy is William James Raymond II. He

lives with his Granny up on Spur Hill. William, can you take this bowl to your Granny for me?”

Miss Betty handed another bowl to Emily and told her to go along with William. William worked his way through the women and handed the heavy red bowl to Granny. She quickly pulled the waxed paper from the dishes and worked them into the place among the other dishes on the table.

Returning to the spot where Miss Betty left the wagon, William and Emily Anne looked around. There in the shade next to the cemetery fence Miss Betty busied herself picking up the loose branches scattered underneath the giant live oak trees. Emily Anne spun the wagon around and headed for Miss Betty. Dropping the wagon handle, Emily Anne bent over and snatched up a crooked stick, then wound up and let it fly into the brush along the tree line. William thought it funny to see a girl throw. Before long, like other families' claiming their favorite spots in the shade, the three cleared the picnic area of sticks and spread the quilt.

Miss Betty called out, “William would you grab my quilt out of the wagon?”

Turning toward the wagon, William found Emily Anne pulling it toward him. He pulled the stuffed pillowcase holding Miss Betty's quilt from the wagon. William could hardly believe his eyes when he saw a new Rawlings baseball roll into the corner of the wagon. Emily Anne snatched it up, brought it to her mouth, and worked up a spit. William watched in awe as she spit on the ball and rubbed it in with both hands.

Emily Anne said, “Betcha can't hit my fastball.”

At that moment William froze. He wondered if he were losing his mind. Good Lord, not only did he see a girl with two ratty red braids holding a genuine baseball, she spat right there on the red Rawlings stitches, and she

even rubbed it in until it shined. Emily tipped her head to the side, waiting for William's response.

William stuttered out, “Well I betcha your Momma is fat and she sucks eggs.”

Emily Anne winced and said, “William James whatever your name is, and my momma ain't fat.” Emily's eyes glossed up at the insult. She took a quick breath and continued on. “And she don't suck eggs either, 'cause I don't have a momma. So there.”

William had nothing in his arsenal of comeback lines. His face flushed bright red and his stomach clenched. He turned quickly and went to find Granny.

Granny Elba called out from behind the table. “It's dinner time; you men folk grab a plate.” She waved a

hand in haste. “Come on now, hurry it along. Good food is wasting.”

With that, the men fell into line behind Ebenezer, and Granny went back to the women.

Granny listened to a cluster of women gossiping together for just a minute. Then, scowling, she said, “Listen here, that is no business of ours. The sins of that girl's momma are nothing but the devil's gossip.” She put her fists on her hips and said, “Miss Betty took her in and this here church is going to give her some of the good Lord's loving, you all hear.” Granny scanned the group with her eyes. Shamed face women looked at their feet. No one challenged Granny's authority; they knew in their hearts she was right. The message penetrated; it would be done.

William worked hard to avoid Emily Anne the rest of the afternoon. Emily Anne threw the baseball at him and, without thinking, he leaped to catch it before it bounced.

Dropping the wagon handle, Emily Anne bent over and snatched up a crooked stick, then wound up and let it fly into the brush along the tree line. William thought it funny to see a girl throw.

Miss Betty grabbed a long stick and hollered out, “Play ball.” The boys dropped their marbles and gathered around. Soon the Lone Hallow Baptist Church had a real genuine baseball game on their hands.

Emily Anne pitched for both teams while Miss Betty played home base. If Ebenezer thought his Savior didn't approve of baseball on a Sunday, he never said. It turned out there were no souls in need of baptizing this Sunday in Kettle Creek, so the game continued. Miss Betty counted the runs and, after nine innings, the score tied up at sixteen apiece.

Granny Elba called out, “Peach ice cream is melting.”

The ice cream created another surge toward the serving line as the congregation lined up for the cool, creamy confection. After the last bowl had been licked clean the sun began to sink behind the tree line. Reluctantly, the good people of Lone Oak Hallow began to trickle on toward home with their empty dishes. William pulled the

wagon up the hill for Granny, she said her knees were plum worn out from working.

That night William counted twenty-one *ye's* in the Bible, twenty-one. He had been wrong; he would have to listen a little better next week. Despite missing the *ye* count, this Sunday went down in his memory as the best ever. The day stirred something in Granny, too. She took out her measuring tape and measured William's waist and the length of his legs.

Granny explained, “I reckon with fall coming, it's about time you get you some new britches.”

That night in bed, William counted to himself. He realized when he woke up it would be only six more days until Sunday. He could hardly wait. He felt the leather laces of his daddy's worn baseball glove tucked beneath his feather pillow. William James Raymond II breathed in the smell of the polished leather and drifted off to sleep. ☾





The Dream | Mixed Media on Paper
KALISTA LEVESQUE



Imaginarium | Digital
SAMANTHA MARTIN



Fading Feelings | Digital
ASHLEIGH CUMMINGS



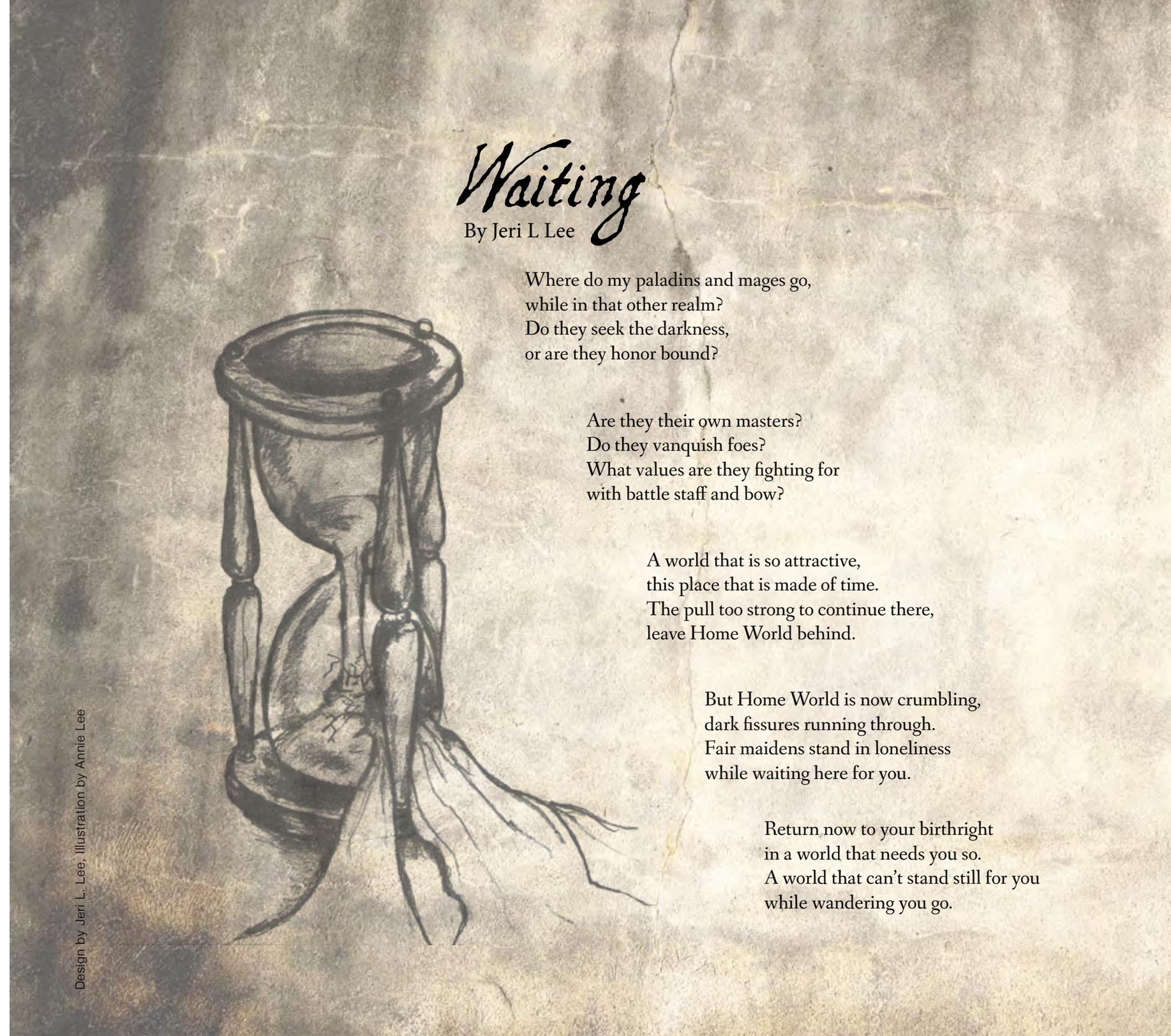
Moldavite and Silver Ring | Silver and Moldavite
JOAN HOLT



Possibilities | Copper and Sterling
ROBIN HOMINIUK



O'Keefe Study | Sepia Toned Silver Gelatin Print
SAMANTHA MARTIN



Waiting

By Jeri L. Lee

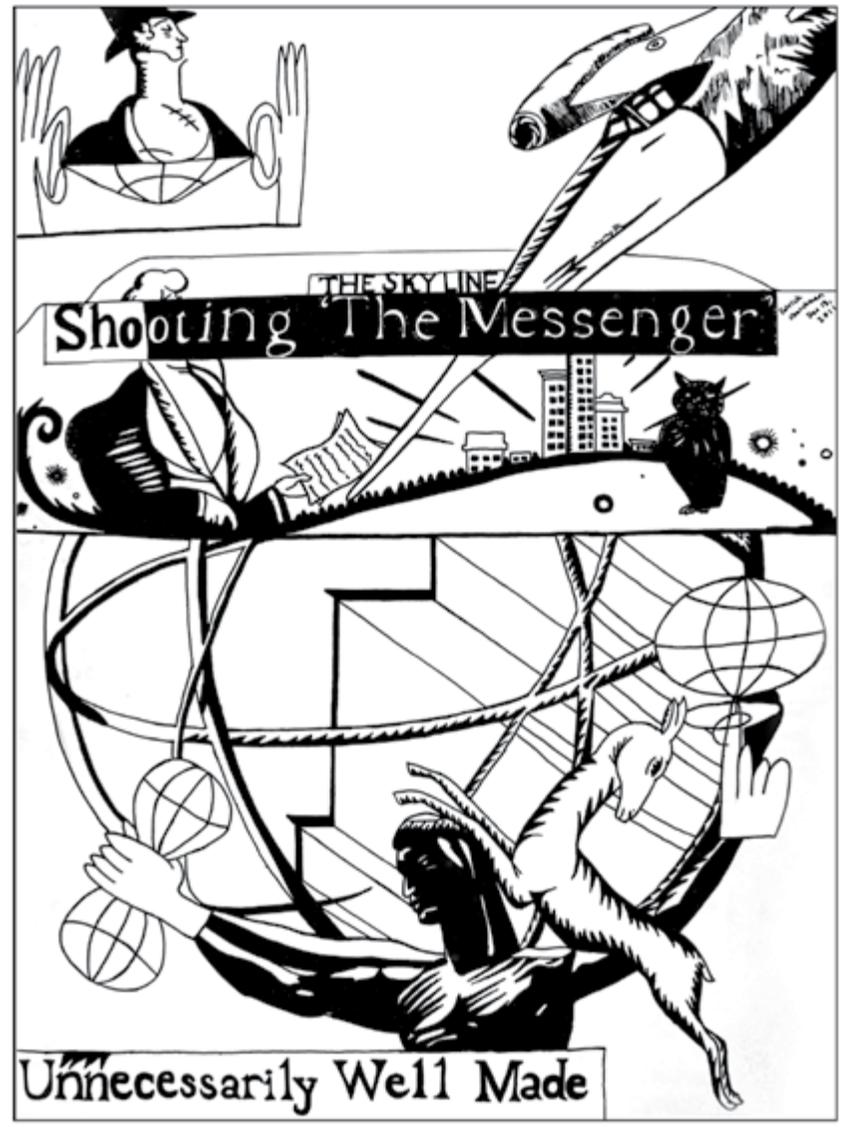
Where do my paladins and mages go,
while in that other realm?
Do they seek the darkness,
or are they honor bound?

Are they their own masters?
Do they vanquish foes?
What values are they fighting for
with battle staff and bow?

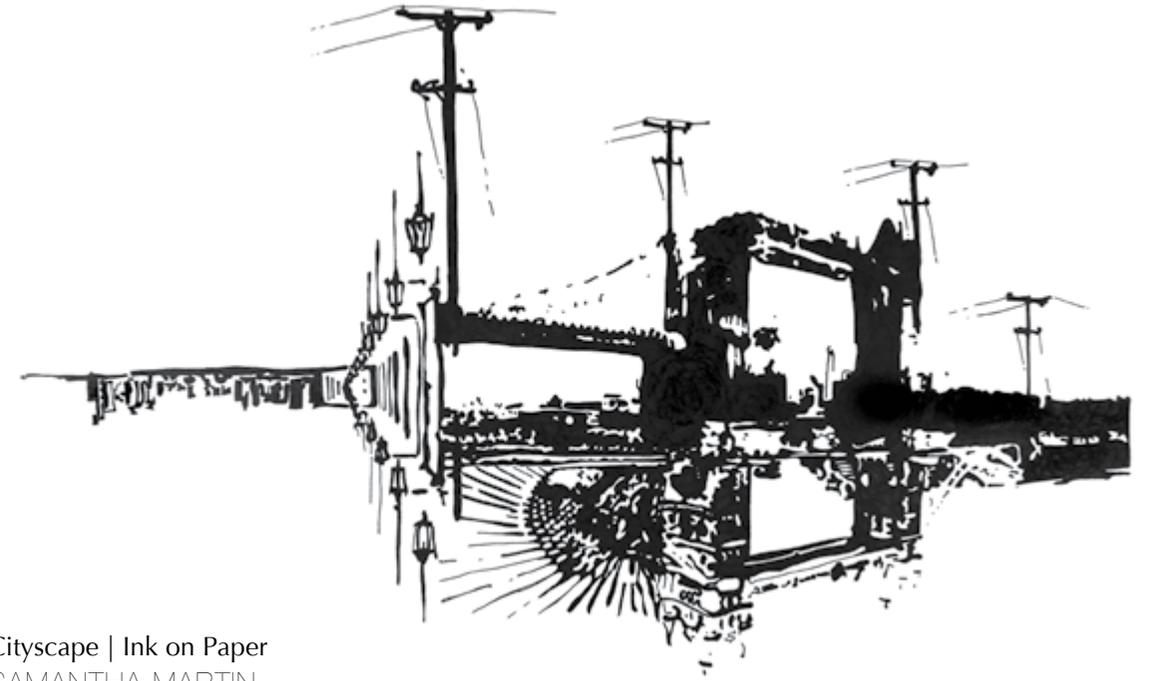
A world that is so attractive,
this place that is made of time.
The pull too strong to continue there,
leave Home World behind.

But Home World is now crumbling,
dark fissures running through.
Fair maidens stand in loneliness
while waiting here for you.

Return now to your birthright
in a world that needs you so.
A world that can't stand still for you
while wandering you go.



Shooting the Messenger | Ink on Paper
PATRICK CHURCHMAN



Cityscape | Ink on Paper
SAMANTHA MARTIN



Gasworks | Digital
LAUREN DWYER



Occupy and Movement | Digital
BRADLEY YORK

Chapter 2

FREEDOM IN THE FALL

MARIAH DORNBERGER

Veil was putting away his recently purchased groceries when he heard the knock at the door. He stared at it in surprise, as the building had up to date security and, usually, any visitor checked in with the guards in the lobby before entering the elevator. This usually involved a call to the resident's apartment to ensure the visitor was allowed up. Veil received no such call, and the knock made him nervous as he approached the door.

Two men stood waiting there, both dressed in slacks and dark colored shirts, though one wore a full-length coat and the other only a jacket. Veil recognized neither man.

"Can I help you?" he asked, quirking a brow at them despite his nerves. A few less than savory characters had visited him in the past, interested in leverage against his stepfather, and none of those events ended well.

"Are you Veil Marksbury?" the man with the full-length coat asked.

Veil cocked his head, looking at the man for a long moment in indecision before he spoke, "I believe you need to tell me who you are and why you're standing outside my door before I answer any of your questions."

The two men glanced at each other before the man who spoke dug into the inside pocket of his coat and pulled out a length holder, which he opened and showed to Veil.

"I'm Detective Remington Kolya and this is my partner, Detective Armand Steel. We have some questions for you, Mr. Marksbury."

Veil examined the badge carefully before nodding slowly. He stepped out into the hall, closing the door behind him. As Veil had just arrived home, he still wore coat and shoes. Carefully, he locked the door behind him before gesturing towards the elevator.

"I was just on my way out, actually," Veil said, the lie coming easily. He knew not to let police officers into his apartment without a warrant. If they thought he'd done something, they would already be looking for anything to incriminate him. It was always better to err on the side of caution. The fact he was still filled with nerves didn't add to his creditability at all, but Veil could do nothing about that.

Kolya nodded once, the two men following Veil down the hall and to the elevator. "If you don't mind, actually, we'd rather speak to you down at our precinct. The matter is a rather serious one."

Veil shrugged a shoulder nonchalantly; internally, he winced. This could mean nothing good, not for him, and not for his stepfather, Cameron. Veil knew Cameron would be upset as soon as he heard what had happened, and Veil did not want to worry the man just yet. Despite

Design by Bradley York



his reluctance, he faced the men as they entered the elevator.

“What is this regarding?” he asked finally.

Kolya stared at him for several moments, clearly studying Veil before he spoke. “Alfred Zetski was murdered yesterday morning. I’m sure you saw it all over the news.”

Veil nodded once, dread pooling in his stomach at the words. “Yes, I saw it.”

“Well, you were the last person to see Mr. Zetski alive.”

Thrall looked out the window, eyes watching the darkened city as the rain pounded down, filling

the streets with water. The dreariness of the weather matched his mood, and he sighed quietly as he turned towards his advisor and friend, Amily Gray. She sat in the middle of the large couch, the coffee table before her filled with papers, folders, and books. The rest of the living room matched the mood outside, with only a single lamp glowing on the coffee table. The bookshelves and pictures that adorned the walls were all cast in shadow, as was the television mounted on the opposite wall. The entire room felt like a secret place, as if the meeting between the two of them was a clandestine affair.

Though Thrall supposed it really was, considering some of the things they’d planned during their time spent in this room, many of them being dark in nature. Thrall watched Amily for a moment, noting the stressed lines on the otherwise rather young face, the only sign of recent events. A perfect bun tied her auburn hair back, and spotless makeup spread across her cheeks regardless of the rain. Even her suit was wrinkle free. Despite all this, Thrall knew her mood matched his; both of them felt the depression digging in, hoping to take root after the tragedy of the day before.

The death of Alfred Zetski threw things into chaos. The man had been a significant figurehead, the person behind whom everyone rallied. Alfred had lobbied for many of the bills introduced into Congress that would change the current system, undaunted by the fact that nearly all of them had failed. The leader had not deserved the end he’d met at the hands of the Doms’ hired killers, or the slander his name would soon likely face in the media.

Alfred’s death also made Thrall’s job much more difficult. He’d long relied on the man to do the public things Thrall himself couldn’t. His shadow status kept him, as well as his identity, safe, but it meant that little

could be changed about the situation. Thrall could not come forward and take Alfred’s place; he and Amily needed to find someone, and fast. Someone that could stand in the substantial shoes Alfred left behind.

“It has to be a Dom,” Thrall murmured, glancing at Amily from his position before the window. “A sub will only be ignored. People are more likely to listen to a Dom who is respected, and charismatic.”

“Desla?” Amily volunteered quietly, naming an up and coming Dom both of them were familiar with.

Thrall shook his head. “No, Desla is too young. He doesn’t have the power base to take this on, not yet. Maybe in another few years, but not now.”

“What about Coriander? She’s well known, and many people respond to her well. She’s also accrued numerous friends over the years.”

Thrall hummed thoughtfully as he considered the senior female Dom Amily knew very well. “Perhaps. Coriander is getting older though, and much of the interest in our work comes from the younger generations. She may not appeal to them as well as someone closer to their own ages.”

Amily flipped through the papers in her lap and grabbed a stack on the coffee table before her. She was silent for several long minutes before she spoke again, voice tentative. “What about Cameron Vega?”

Thrall snapped around, eyes narrowed. “Excuse me?”

“Veil Marksbury was brought in for questioning this afternoon, regarding Alfred’s death,” Amily said, looking at Thrall significantly. “Vega was there twenty minutes later, with the best defense attorney in the state, possibly the country, and has spent all his time since with his stepson at the police station, even though Veil isn’t facing charges yet. I believe they’re still there, actually,” Amily said thoughtfully as she scanned a document on her tablet.



“Vega is well known for caring a great deal for Veil, as well as his son Luca. Maybe this could be the perfect time to pull him in, to get him to stand up and fight for submissive rights. The incident with Veil could be just what we need.”

Thrall turned away from Amily, teeth grinding, as he struggled to reign in his temper. He owned a long and complicated history with Cameron Vega, which Amily knew. She was one of the few who knew he

hated everything about the man and considered it his personal mission to end Vega's life one day.

"I would rather cede all of the gains we've managed these last few years than allow Cameron Vega to become the new face for submissive rights," Thrall finally said flatly. "If what he's done ever came out, Amily, it would ruin everything. You know that. Even ignoring my personal issues with him, Vega is too much of a risk to what we've accomplished."

Thrall heard Amily moving behind him, so he was unsurprised when her arms twined around his waist and her forehead rested on his shoulder. The position was one they'd been in before, when they'd both needed comfort and could seek it only from each other. Amily was one of the broken Subs, so there were few people she allowed close in her life.

In infancy, babies sought out their matches as they slept; it was a form of dreamwalking long studied but never able to be replicated. While dreamwalking, they found someone who complimented their dynamic and bonded with this person, forming a mildly empathic bridge between the two. Usually, this gave the two a feeling of comfort and security through their lives until they were able to find each other later on. It offered the safety of knowing someone out there wanted you, was waiting for you. A majority of the population, an estimated sixty-five percent, bonded this way before six months of age. Those who didn't were called the Unbonded, and had to seek out those who matched their dynamic on their own.

At age eighteen, Doms set out to find their bonded Subs. Some succeeded, other failed. Some Doms died before they could, and their bonded Subs felt this break. Those who had lost their Dom were often called broken Subs, a term many disliked but used widely regardless. Despite the connotation of being forever alone, Subs

with broken bonds could bond again with another. All it took was the touch of skin on skin to potentially open a bond between the two, if they were compatible. There were a handful of different types that could happen through touch, each one unique.

"I'm sorry I brought it up," Amily murmured, breaking Thrall away from his introspection. "We just need to find someone who can do this and who's willing to stand up for what he or she believes in and help make the changes we need. Subs shouldn't be seen as property," she said vehemently. "We're people, too. Just because of our classification, we're treated as if we're less than human. Because of what I am, I can do more, but it's not the same for everyone."

"I know," Thrall said with a nod, ignoring Amily's minor lecture, as he was just as passionate about the subject as she. He pulled away from Amily's embrace and turned around to face her. "We'll find someone, I promise. Let's keep looking through the information. Someone has to be capable of doing this."

Amily followed him back to the couch, and both of them sat before the coffee table. Thrall handed her a stack of folders before grabbing his own and beginning to leaf through them. They were basic profiles on all of the members of their group, and most of them were simply average people of all classifications who were interested in the same changes Alfred had long pressed for. Only a dozen, perhaps two at most, had the connections to take over as their leader.

Thrall tossed most of them aside quickly, only one sticking out from the pile he'd searched through. A deeper look had him discarding that one as well. While he longed to just allow whoever stepped up to take Alfred's place, he couldn't let that happen. It would be too easy for those against the changes they fought for to mold someone weak willed. They needed a strong

leader, someone who was willing and able to speak to the public, and who could deal with the danger that came from the position.

"It's really too bad it can't be you," Amily said, glancing at him with a small smile tinged with regret. "Most of the news channels are speculating about what you'll do when you take over, and the internet is going wild. Some people think you'll go for revolution, and we'll have another Civil War on our hands before too long. Others think you'll bargain with Congress



with your stepping down in exchange certain changes. There are a myriad of other ideas as well, but most everyone seems to think it'll be you who takes over."

Thrall flopped back against the sofa with a sigh. "I know. That's part of the problem. Whoever we put in charge has to compete with that, with people being in my favor. I can't do it, you know that, or I would."

Amily offered another smile before she frowned suddenly at the folder in her lap. "Torian Bailey."

After a moment, Thrall shook his head, frowning himself at the lack of recognition. He rubbed absently at his chest as he took the folder she offered. He scanned through it before he looked back at Amily. "Why didn't we know about him before?"

"I don't know," Amily asked with a quick shrug. "He doesn't seem particularly active, apart from being a member and attending the occasional public event. From what little information we have, he might be exactly the right person for the job. He's well off, seems connected, and rather charismatic, if his friends are anything to go by."

"He's as shadowy as I am," Thrall murmured absently. "If nothing else, I'm intrigued enough to meet him. I want to know why we know so little about him, though. There are only a few pages in here, and that doesn't make any sense, especially not with our resources. Do some digging on him, and see what you can find. In the meantime, I'll set up a meeting, and we'll go from there. That might be all it will take to get my foot in the door, but either way, let's see what Mr. Bailey has to say about himself." ❖



Egg Shell Bowl with Stand | Ceramic
ROBIN HOMINIUK

Luminous By Savannah Singh

Drawing its breath across the
planes of white,
the frigidly cold blanket
renders us speechless.

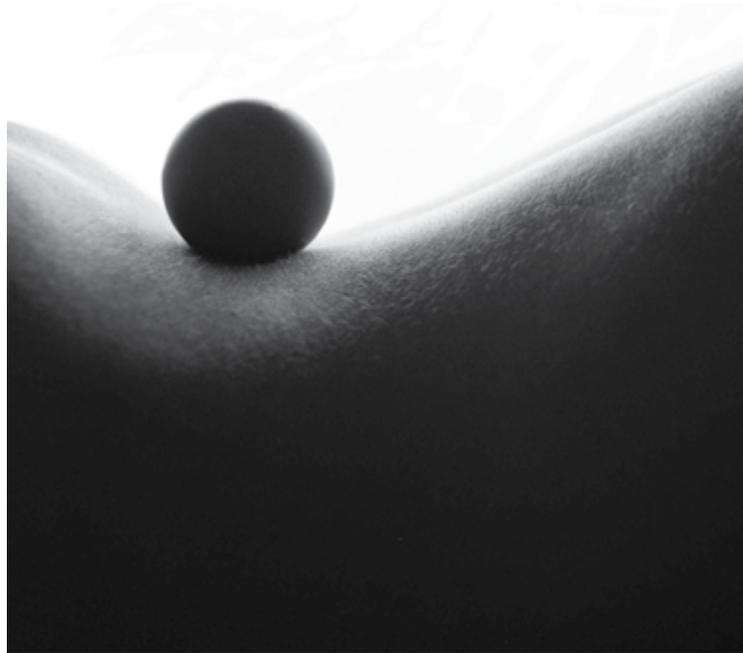
We're not sure what to do
with what we know,
so it tells us softly
how to grow.

It moves closer,
guiding us gently.
taking us by the hand
reminding us we are human.

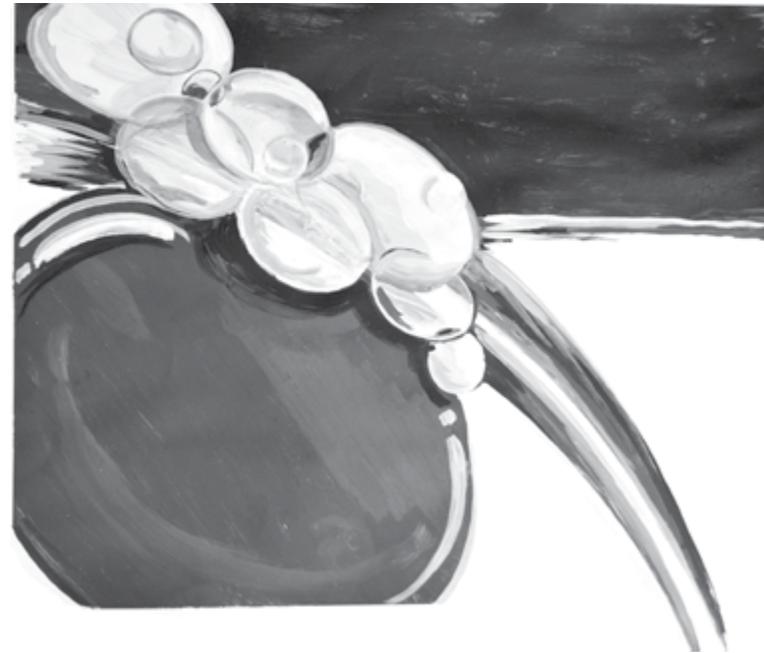
But still we fall victim to the white.
We're so hesitant, so wary
to move beyond the sight;
the perfection in the scenery.

It spills its sighs
into our eyes,
cleansing our minds
of all the lies.

It holds us fond and close,
relaying to us the magnanimous prose
that all is love and it loves us the most,
but that we are nothing without knowing.



Life Form | Digital
EMILY WATERS



Valued Expression | Acrylic on Paper
TONI GRIDLEY



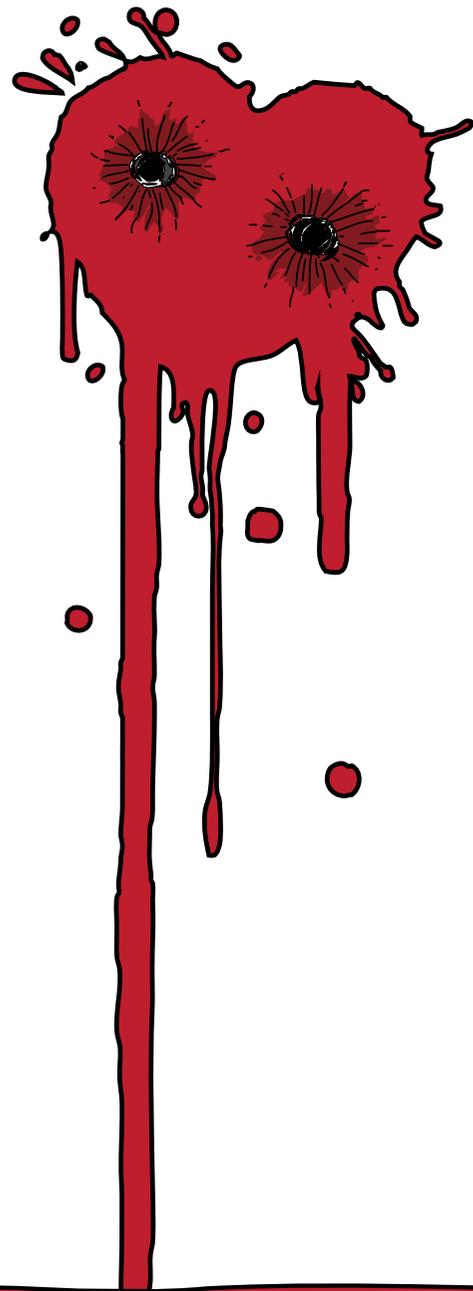
Unisexy | Mixed Media Collage
GREG PEIFFER



Lightbulb | Digital Photomontage
SAM STEPHENS

A PARANORMAL ROMANCE

By Phillip England



He gazed deeply into her eyes. She gazed deeply into his eyes. They gazed deeply into each other's eyes. In the background, violins reached a soaring crescendo. She wiped her hands on her apron, reached over, took the shotgun from its place by the kitchen door, and let him have it point-blank in the face. Then she walked over and blew the antique record player to hell for good measure, silencing the violins. Throwing the shotgun on the counter, Stephanie Redding grabbed her car keys, stormed out, and drove away into pre-dawn darkness.

Josh Redding returned from therapy in the late afternoon. His mother stood to one side of the kitchen sink, sharpening a wooden stake with a butcher knife and trying to aim the wood shavings down the garbage disposal. A pair of legs stuck out of the open cupboard below where she worked, and Josh could hear a voice intoning a steady stream of muffled, nonsensical words. He walked in, slightly worried. Blood spatter covered the front of the refrigerator and the shotgun lay on the counter rather than its usual place. Josh failed to put the two together when he dragged his tired body out of the house that morning. But now he wondered. In any event, he decided to forgo the sandwich he usually made himself upon returning home.

"Hi, Honey, how was your day?" Stephanie asked.

"Fine," Josh mumbled noncommittally, throwing his backpack into a chair. Therapy had actually gone very well. His new counselor helped him make definite progress during their session, and the omnipresent thoughts of vampires ceased to plague him for the first time in a long while. As he walked toward home, whistling, a little brat in a black cape jumped him from behind some shrubbery and ruined everything by having a go at his elbow with a

pair of plastic vampire fangs. After all, vampires were all the rage. Josh ran the rest of the way back to the house, screaming. Of course, he would never tell his mother any of that.

"Mom," Josh asked, "what are you doing?"

"I am going," she said happily, "to stake your father." *She looks like she means it this time*, Josh thought to himself. He knew this shouldn't surprise him.

"Well, then," he asked, pointing to the grubby jeans protruding from underneath the sink, "what's *he* doing?" Stephanie put down the stake, ran a hand through her graying hair, and turned toward him. Josh couldn't help but notice a bulky silver crucifix around her neck that he'd never seen before. His mother, usually a devout atheist, rediscovered her religious fervor every time she and her husband had a falling out. He looked at the twisted image of the savior nailed to the cross, the exquisitely detailed pain in the screaming face. *Huh*, he thought. *Jesus looks like he's having a better day than I am.*

"That's a," she paused for a moment, "friend of mine." The word "friend" bore a funny intonation, and Josh raised an eyebrow, but his mother didn't notice. "He's an auto mechanic who happens to moonlight as a priest. He's doing me a favor and blessing the plumbing. Pretty soon, we'll have holy water gushing from every God-fearing spigot in this house. Praise the Lord!" she said, raising her hands toward the heavens. "No use taking chances."

Josh sighed, wishing he could have been born a nice, normal kid with a nice, normal father who had a nice, normal drinking problem. But back in the day his mother, an avid devourer of popular paranormal romance fiction, fell head over heels for a handsome, bloodthirsty, undead monstrosity named Edgar. Inevitability ensued.

"Mom," Josh said, "that's not a priest." Upon hearing

this revelation, his mother graced him with the tolerant, understanding smile she usually reserved for complete and utter idiots.

"Of course he is, child. Can't you hear the Latin, that wonderful language of the Lord?"

"That's not Latin," Josh said, listening to the muted chanting. "That's gibberish."

"And how would you know what is, and what is not, Latin?" his mother rejoined, sharply. Josh rolled his eyes.

"Maybe because I'm been taking it in school for the past two years."

"Shut up, you little shit!" This last came, surprisingly clear, from underneath the sink.

Instead of responding, Stephanie turned back to her work and began belting out some catchy little tune about driving out the devil and all his little minions. She put unmistakable emphasis on the minions, singing about them louder than she did the actual devil. Josh left the kitchen in a hurry, deciding to keep a low profile for a little while. His mother had definitely slipped into one of her weird moods, and she might very well try to exorcise him again.

Josh headed down a short hallway, toward the basement door on his right. He tripped over something squishy just before he reached it. Kneeling down, he looked at the body of a rather bulky fellow with a large chunk taken out of his neck. It didn't take long to recognize their newest neighbor, Ernie Gardner. Josh sighed, and tried to remember if he liked Ernie Gardner. They all blurred together. He'd become very used to the meals his father left strewn about regularly—he theorized his mother originally went off her nut after cleaning up one too many of them.

Lugging the corpse aside with an easy familiarity,

Josh cleared the path to the basement door. Grasping the door handle, he gathered his nerves before the descent, trying to convince himself the coffin waiting at the bottom couldn't hurt him. His father had scared him ever since his early childhood, when his mother used to tell him bedtime stories about how a certain vampire would creep in and drain all the blood out of little boys named Joshua. But he found himself stuck between a monster and a crazy place, and the monster slept during the day. The basement would serve as a good place to hide, and in any case, Josh wanted to see Stephanie try to stake Edgar.

The Redding basement consisted of a few shelves of dusty knickknacks, a freezer, a rusty metal sink, a television surrounded by a few old stools, and a wooden coffin close to the stairs. There were no windows. A single bare bulb hanging overhead provided the only true source of light. As Josh neared the last of the creaky basement steps he saw, to his horror, his father wasn't asleep. Instead, Edgar sat on one of the stools, angled slightly away from Josh, holding an icepack over the right half of his face while a cigarette dangled from his white lips. On the muted television screen, brand new cars raced silently across enticing, but desolate, landscapes, illuminating the rifle slung across the vampire's lap. As Josh hesitated, trying to figure out the quietest way to move back up the stairs, Edgar swung around and nailed him to the spot with an intense gaze.

"Hi, Dad," Josh said nervously, looking at his father's neatly-trimmed mustache and wondering whether it made him more or less terrifying. Edgar grunted, blowing smoke out of his nostrils. Although he insisted on the parental title, Josh could never think of him by anything but his first name.

"Your mother found Jesus again? Figured as much. Should I stop washing my hands?"

It took Josh a moment to connect this last comment to

the pseudo-priest upstairs. "I wouldn't worry about it," he said slowly, realizing his mother must have tried pulling a similar stunt in the past. Plucking up his courage, he prepared to ask what Edgar needed the gun for.

The basement door banging open interrupted him.

Stephanie started down with many a "Glory!" and a "Hallelujah!" bursting from her lips, holding the crucifix on her neck out in front of her with one hand and brandishing a stake above her head with the other. Edgar dropped the icepack, revealing a shapeless mass of red where the left half of his face used to be, grabbed the rifle, and let off a shot. Josh dove down the last few steps and crashed onto the chilly cement of the basement floor. The bullet imbedded itself in the wall, and Stephanie turned around and beat a hasty retreat.

"That's not fair," she called down from the safety of the upper hall.

"Why not?" Edgar bellowed back.

"Because you're a vampire! You're not supposed to use guns and things. It's not in any of the books, and that includes that piece of trash you wrote!"

"Oh, so just because I have superhuman abilities, I'm not allowed to use a firearm? I've got news for you; I'm not letting you get anywhere near me with that crucifix, let alone a stake, Lady." He let off another round to accentuate his point. The door at the top of the stairs slammed.

Josh recognized Edgar as some sort of metaphor for his parents' marriage: dead beyond a doubt, but somehow walking, talking, and shooting the crap out of stuff regardless. Perhaps just getting a divorce would be too pedestrian for the both of them. As he considered making a run for it, Edgar told him to sit down.

Josh slowly got to his feet, walked over, and grabbed a stool, dragging it a few feet toward the stairs before taking a seat. His mother gave birth to six other children in the six years before he came along. Since no method existed

to tell which genes any given child inherited from each parent, Mr. and Mrs. Redding kept their brood out of natural light until they could walk. When the time came, they bundled their children up for safety: hat, ski mask, sunglasses, coat, gloves, and long pants. They looked like miniature bank robbers. The Reddings sent every child out with the strictest of instructions not to let sunlight touch their skin. Of course, sooner or later they would forget, or get too uncomfortable, or just feel rebellious, and wander into the sun unprotected. The ones who burst into flames took after their father. As it turned out, only Josh survived. Because of this, Edgar always took an interest in him. The same passing interest, as far as Josh was concerned, one might give a curious bug—not enough to prevent you from squashing it should the whim take you.

Josh sat there. His father laid the rifle down on the floor, reapplied the icepack, and just looked at him. An awkward minute passed, and Josh shifted in his seat. Finally, he forced himself to break the silence.

"So, what's gotten into Mom?" he asked. Edgar took a drag on his cigarette.

"She's just pissed about the whole book thing." Josh nodded cautiously. Edgar had recently written an autobiography which included a lot of intimate and embarrassing information about Stephanie. He made sure to discuss it with her, but only after he got the thing published. It became a bestseller in no time, sparking off a vampire craze; everyone took it as a work of fiction.

"I wouldn't worry about it," Edgar continued. "She's done this before." He took a piece of paper out of the left pocket of his jeans, awkwardly unfolded it with his left hand, and read.

"Next they'll be a lot of praying to God to smite me

"...Next there'll be a lot of praying to God to smite me down, and then she'll go back to not believing in Him when nothing happens..."

down, and then she'll go back to not believing in Him when nothing happens, and then we'll make up. Of course, there's still my face to consider. That was rather unexpected." As he finished speaking, the door at the top of the stairs opened and a Molotov cocktail sailed through the air toward them. He put the piece of paper on his knee as his coffin burst into flames, produced a pen from the same pocket, and clumsily wrote a word or two. "That's new, too."

Josh said he should leave, citing the fact he had a lot of homework to get done before the flames from the coffin caught the wood stairs and the whole house burned to the ground. Edgar agreed cordially enough, but asked if Josh would do him a favor. It didn't sound to Josh like a request, so he nodded.

"Go to the flowerbed out back and fetch me some dirt before your mother thinks to consecrate it and ruin the ground, would you? I don't care so much about the coffin," he tilted his head at the flaming wood, "but I need to line where I sleep with the soil of the place I was born in, and the stuff I had in there isn't any good anymore for obvious reasons."

Josh blinked. Getting up and walking over to the shelves on the basement wall, Edgar explained while he grabbed a fire extinguisher. Although he hadn't actually been born there as a human, the flowerbed marked his birth as an undead creature. After he started dating Stephanie back when he was still mortal, they rented the house for a dirt cheap price, because some enterprising moron built the place right over a cemetery built right over an ancient cursed Indian burial ground, and moved in together. One day, Stephanie grew tired of Edgar, murdered him with an axe, just like most other people she couldn't stand, and planted him near the begonias.

Edgar paused briefly to smother the coffin fire before

sitting back down and continuing. The night after his murder, he came back as a vampire, catching Stephanie in the process of getting ready to move and change her name again. After the initial awkwardness, she immediately became more attracted to him than ever before. They married shortly thereafter, and bought the house outright. Josh tried to decide why his mother found his father more appealing after he died, turned pasty, and grew a taste for human blood. He failed. Must be a female thing, he decided. The whole story sounded ridiculous, but at the same time he didn't think vampires possessed a sense of humor.

"Anyway," Edgar concluded, "your mother reformed her serial killing ways. It was unfortunate, because once in a while I'd get access to a fresh corpse those first few years without having to lift a finger. Not too long after that, I pissed her off and she found religion for the first time. Guess the crazy had to go somewhere." He shook his head twice, slowly and deliberately, as if trying to bring himself back to the present. "Now be off with you."

A quick rush up the stairs later, Josh felt immense relief in managing to get the hell out of there with his neck intact. He ran to his room, planning to lay low until everything blew over. He needed a pen and some paper, badly. In order to stay sane, Josh broke off completely from reality every once in a while and immersed himself in worlds he could control. His mother wouldn't allow him to play video games, worried the violence would desensitize him, so he wrote fiction instead. Just as he reached his door, it opened and his mother popped out like some ghoulish jack-in-the box.

"I tried," she raved, seemingly to herself. "I tried to save our marriage. I did my best. Dragged him off to a marriage counselor. And how does he thank me? He *eats* the guy." Her focus suddenly turned to Josh. "Ah. Praise the Lord. There you are, you little hell spawn." In times like these, she always forgot it took more than just her

husband to bring her son into the world. "Would you go put this on the flowerbed out back? I've got other things to do." She handed him a small wooden cross. "Now, please. Thank you."

With all other options now rendered moot, Josh headed outside. He stopped by the kitchen for a moment to grab a large Ziploc bag, just in case he decided to take the dirt for his father rather than put the cross on it for his mother. He didn't know what in the world to do.

Josh walked out into the chilliness of the overcast October day as if in a trance, and went around the house. He moved slowly through a green sea of unkempt mist-shrouded grass, past crumbing, mossy gray tombstones, and arrived at the large rectangular patch of earth which housed the flowers. The boy looked at the red of the roses which others found so beautiful, and could only think of fresh blood. Josh knew he couldn't avoid it; he needed to side with one parent over the other, declare his allegiance. He could either stand with his vampire father who might very well devour him once his usefulness ceased, or his former axe-murdering mother whose hobbies included extreme religious fanaticism and occasionally shooting a close family member in the face.

Josh knew hard choices like these defined great men. But great men can't exist without not-so-great men, and not-so-great men can't exist without an easy way out. Josh paused for a moment to thank whatever higher power might or might not exist for that glorious concept known as the path of least resistance. Shoveling as much soil as he could into the bag, he placed the cross on the ground and returned to the house.

Hiding the dirt under his jacket, just in case he ran into his mother, he went back to the basement. Opening the door cautiously, he peered down. He couldn't see his father. Josh took a step in, intending to toss the bag down and be done with it. Something cleared its throat from

above and slightly in front of him. Josh looked up to see his father clinging to the ceiling a few feet above his head.

"Surprise!" Edgar said, dropping down. Grabbing his son, he slammed the basement door shut and dragged Josh down the stairs. In transit, Josh took a moment to reflect on how he really, really hated vampires.

Taking the Ziploc bag full of dirt, Edgar tossed Josh down in a heap. The facial wound had almost entirely healed; only a few fine lines of red could be seen threaded across his cheek. "Good," he said, nodding at Josh, "now all I need is something to drink." He drew back his lips and licked his fangs.

Knew I should have sided with Mom, Josh thought.

Someone knocked on the basement door. "Mr. Redding?" an unknown voice called, "Are you down there?" The door opened. Edgar told Josh to stay out of the way and not try anything stupid, or else. A portly, balding man waddled down the steps. "Ah, there you are. Saw the dead guy decoration up in the hall. Nice. Very realistic. Still, you're getting ready for Halloween a bit early aren't you? The month just started." Edgar stared at this jovial apparition, not sure what to make of him. The man kept talking, regardless. "Anywho, your wife told me where to find you. It's about the movie adaptation of your book."

"Ah." Edgar smiled and slicked back his black hair, finding his bearings again. "What about it?"

"Well, there isn't going to *be* a movie adaptation of your book at the moment; we ran into some unforeseen financial problems." The man rubbed his hands together. "We're getting it produced as a play, though."

Edgar narrowed his red eyes and his mustache bristled. "A play?"

"A musical," the man said, cheerfully. "But some slight changes are going to be made to your main character. He's problematic. Violent. Scares small children. So we're turning him into a vegetarian vampire named

Waldorf, who helps homeless people and orphans instead of munching on them. When he needs food, he sucks the juice from rutabagas, that sort of thing."

Edgar went over and plopped down on a stool. His left eye twitched. "Waldorf?"

"Yes, everyone thinks naming the guy after yourself is a little too narcissistic. I'm sure you agree." The man grinned from ear to ear. Edgar shot him a look full of malice and got up.

"Well, thank you for letting me know." He walked over, extending a deathly white hand. As the man reached out to shake, Edgar punched him in the face, knocking him out cold. Josh watched his father get down on his hands and knees, take out a penknife, ram it into the man's carotid artery, and then calmly sip at the ensuing spout of blood like a stream from a drinking fountain.

Although saved for the moment, Josh still couldn't go anywhere. Edgar watched him constantly, trembling in suppressed rage, muttering the name "Waldorf" to himself. Hours passed in this manner, neither of them daring to sleep. While Edgar smoked cigarette after cigarette, Josh spent the time thinking up a story about white unicorns frolicking joyously in the woods. They lived in harmony with their friends, the fluffy pink bunnies, singing bubbly songs and making daisy chains. But then the unicorns decided pink really wasn't their color, so they gutted all the bunnies and ate them.

Josh shook his head in an effort to clear his thoughts, wondering where on earth that last bit came from. Mentally scratching out the pink bunny massacre,



he picked things up from the frolicking. He had a lot of time to craft the story and make it perfect; he would put it down on paper later.

At long last, Edgar looked at his wristwatch and announced the sun should have set by this time; he would go and confront his wife. He picked up the rifle and made Josh go first, just in case. Stephanie's recent actions proved far too erratic for comfort, Edgar mused to himself, and she had been quiet for much too long.

Stephanie sat at the kitchen table, crucifix cast aside, weeping, a stereo beside her. She looked up as they entered and only said two words, repeating them over and over again: "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

Edgar sighed, then smiled. He leaned the rifle by the refrigerator. "I forgive you," he said. Just then, the auto mechanic "friend" sauntered in the kitchen door. Josh recognized the jeans. The rest of the fellow looked just as scruffy. Spotting Edgar, the man's eyes grew wide and he instantly hastened back out again. Edgar gritted his teeth, exhaled sharply through his nose, and picked the rifle back up. "Excuse me for a moment," he said quickly, and followed the man outside.

Thank goodness, thought Josh, grateful for the timely, mood-killing interruption. He knew exactly where all that mushy reconciliation was headed. A single gunshot resounded from the porch. Edgar came back, put the rifle by the refrigerator again, turned to his wife, and continued without missing a beat, to Josh's dismay.

"I forgive you," he said, "because damn it Stephanie, I love you."

"Really?" Stephanie asked. She pulled a light yellow handkerchief out of her pocket, wiped her eyes, and blew her nose. "I love you too. You're so," she paused. "You're so *masculine*."

If this reconciliation gets any more sickeningly melodramatic, Josh thought, *I'm going to see if I can live with my therapist*. Josh possessed a very high tolerance for the gruesome vampire-related violence which permeated his life. This, however, was too much.

Stephanie punched a button on the stereo, and slow violin music resounded throughout the room. She got to her feet and slowly walked over to her husband, who proceeded to wrap his arms around her.

He gazed deeply into her eyes.

She gazed deeply into his eyes.

They gazed deeply into each other's eyes. As the violins prepared to sweep up to a crescendo, Josh slowly reached for the shotgun lying on the counter. ☸



Obsessive | Ceramic
CAMERON VISCONTY



Morning After | Conte Crayon on Paper
KRISTEN BUTCHER



Study After Diana Arbus' *The Puerto Rican* | Charcoal on Paper
KAEDI MANEY



Exports Kill | Digital
LEIF CLAUSEN



Far From Home | Digital
JERI LEE



Wicker | Ceramic
BEN BEGIER



Bow and Tie Vase and Leaf Vase | Ceramic
BRENDA PEREBOOM

Predilection

Predilection Susceptibility Amendment By Jamin Watson

Amendment

Sitting here with the motion of pause,
Giving me time to think of my flaws.
Some are obvious, others unseen;
Occasionally represent my state of being.
Hushed in depth is the thought I possess,
Soon to withhold individual progress.
Possible improvement may be greater to see,
So this heart of mine is a transparency.
Verifying polarity towards all the aggressions,
Using virtue to supplement impressions
and understanding these words of mind,
bring forth truth not far behind.
To be exact, a direction inclining from above;
This choice I have is love.

Susceptibility



Design by Levi Savage



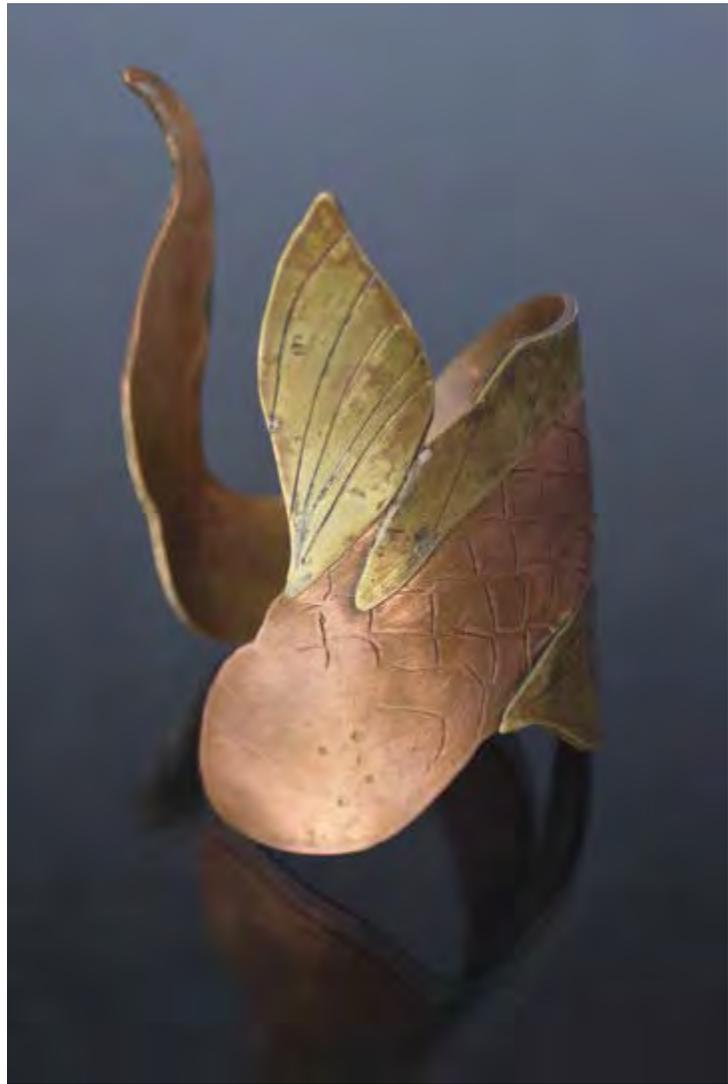
The Mantra | Ceramic
ELISE CRYDER



Antique Wedding Cake | Fondant
TAMERA JONES



The Chorus of Nature
Acrylic and Mixed Media
SUSAN HATHER



Koi Cuff | Copper and Brass
LARHEA PHILLIPS

A Wandering Star

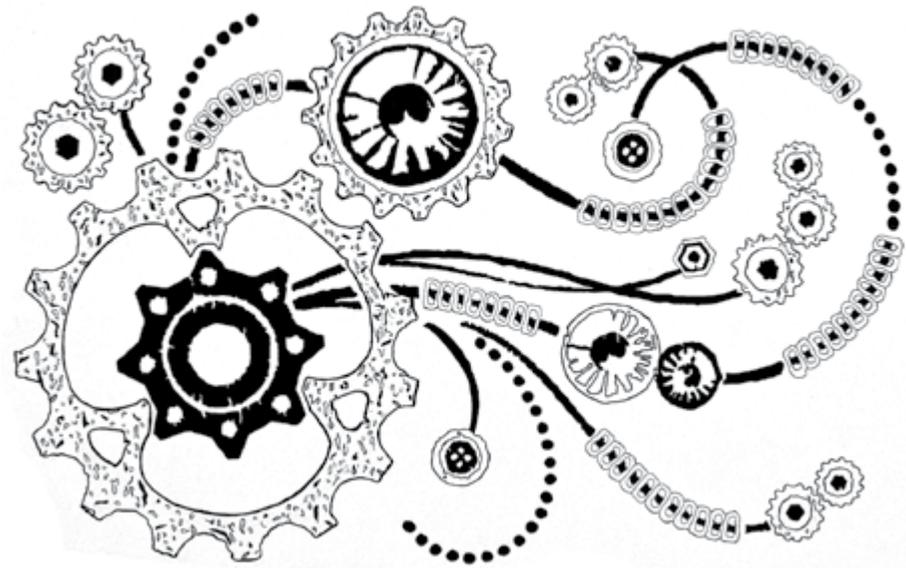
David Brannan

I want to study the texts until the spells are well read.
I want to hear you pronounce each syllable so I know it is well said.
I want to hear you sing so loud and far it stretches across the sky and shatters the stars.
I want to reinvent my heart and soul, like diamonds on the shore.

We were once told that if we saw God, we would die instantly,
yet he exists in everything.
For you may shine light into darkness, but not darkness into light.
There are times when we look at the beauty in this world
and God isn't paying attention,
so we receive a glimpse of him and his perfection.
Every time I look at you, I swear I see him.

I want to create a sphere, in which to sail the universe.
To watch the galactic display
and the fantastic array of stars and planets
hidden far from life, and the theories
that attempt to understand it.

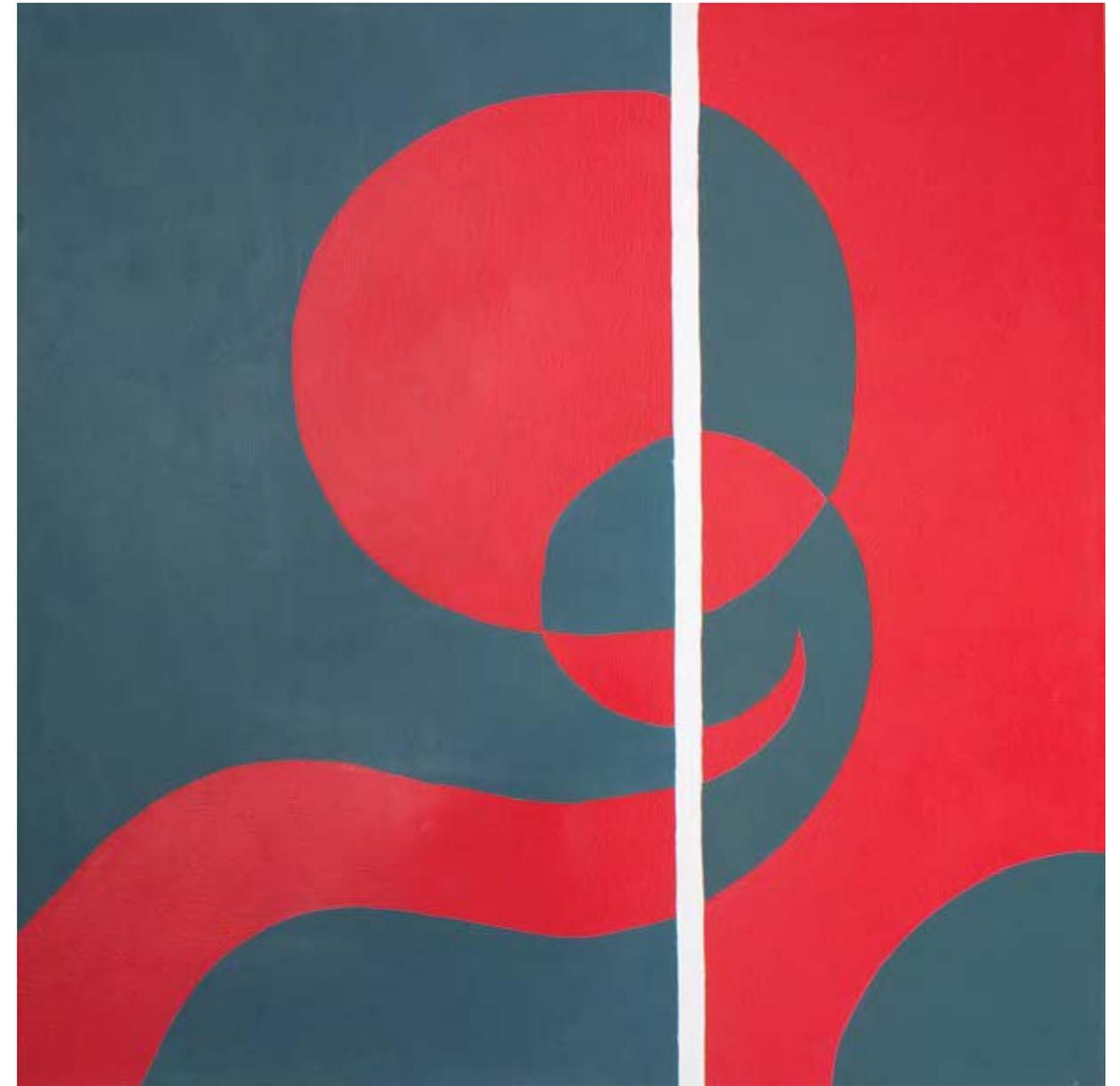
Design by Megan Lorenz



Harmonious | Ink on Paper
MARZA LUTZ



Coffee Cup Series | Ink, Paper Cups
ALBINA BAK



Neverending Hall | Acrylic on Canvas
MEGAN LORENZ



Bricks and Graffiti | Digital
MELISSA MITCHELL

Timeless

By Jared O'Brien

Don't be deceived by the beauty in the beast.
Trix are for kids but it still tricked me.

Time can be your best friend or worst enemy.
Just watch what side is picked and spend it carefully.

Because a girl's best friend ain't diamonds.
Do you want to know the truth? I'll tell you: time is.

It happens in a blink, and it happens in a flash;
Two shakes of a lamb's tail and the presents in the past.

So point the camera this way,
Life's a Kodak moment I can never replay.

Should we look past the mirrors we hold in our hands,
And reach forward for the best with the time we have?

To retain in our brains for all it's worth,
The melodies and memories of life's mirth.

Because if we are the artwork, then time is our frame.
Oh, there's time to kill, yet we're defeated by its blade.

Instead of looking for a remedy to satisfy the enemy,
Weigh the cost of what's lost when we wander, aiming hopelessly.

Let's see the whole horizon, not just the sun,
And catch the fraying of the rope before it's undone.

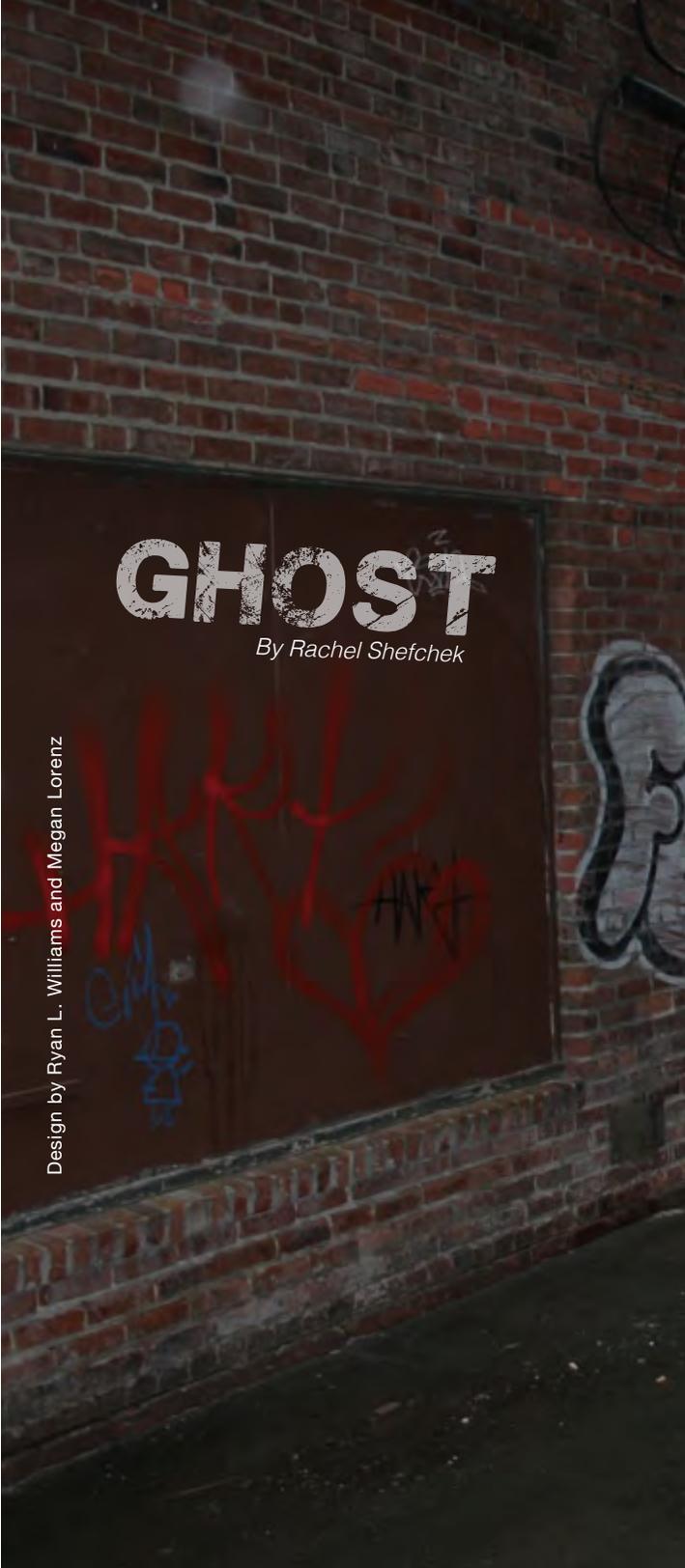
Since we're limited editions, lives limited to one.
Limited edition, lives limited to one.

Design by Jeri L. Lee





Ring...Ring | Digital
MELISSA MITCHELL



THE CRISP NIGHT AIR could easily be described as that of a stinging cold -- one that bit at the flesh and seeped through clothes. Such a chill could only be found along the North Eastern coast of the United States. Maryland, in particular. The wind that blustered through the streets felt dark, but there was a strange sort of peace clinging to the wil-
lowing breeze. That sentiment of serenity was not a feeling that Aleyria Jayden Bennett wanted to feel, so she fought against it with an iron fist.

“What the hell do you mean, *your* case?” Aleyria questioned.

To say that she was fuming would be an understatement. She was so far beyond livid that her insides felt as if they could pass for a boiling mass of molten lava. She wondered how long it would be until she exploded.

“I meant it exactly as it sounded,” he countered. The sneer that peeled across his lips was prominent even in the shadowy depths of the night. “My case means *my* rules.”

Her fingers curled tight, and she debated internally over punching him.

“When exactly did this case become *your* case?” She wondered if she frothed at the mouth.

“When your incompetent ass failed to pick up any leads!” His words were liquid fire that slid harshly down the length of her spine. Strangling him sounded like a better option in that moment. That way, she would be able to watch the life drain slowly out of his grey eyes. A vision flashed in her mind, and her grin turned maniacal as her thoughts played out before her.

Agent Ryan Langley stood at six-foot five, by far the tallest member of her team and also the most arrogant. His dark brown hair bordered on black and contrasted with his lightly tanned skin. Arguments with him were not an uncommon thing. Every day, it seemed, he tried to undermine her authority, and she continuously made it a point to call him on it. He would learn eventually she wouldn’t stand for his posturing act of male dominance, even if she had to force the lesson upon him herself.

“What makes you think you’re suddenly lead agent on this case?” She paused to suck in a breath. It allowed her to get her thoughts at least somewhat in order before she did something she would regret, like attack him. When it came to him, her emotions tended to be volatile. “Because you’re not. I am! And as soon as you can get that thought through your obnoxiously large head, the sooner we can move forward with this case!”



Her head was pounding. He never failed to irritate her without putting forth much effort, and that only infuriated her further. She figured he practiced ways to get under her skin each night after he left work, because it wasn't as if he had anything better to do with his time. She was positive he didn't have a life outside of work. Not that she was really one to talk.

"You don't act as if you could be anyone's boss," he grumbled.

His words were soft enough that she knew she wasn't supposed to hear them. It didn't matter to her though; she would just find a way to make him eat his words later. She always did. Ever since she started in this field, she learned if she wanted to make it, she had to stand up for herself. Often, she said to herself, *I don't take any shit from anyone anymore!*

Langley had been transferred to the county precinct six months prior, and her dislike for him was almost instantaneous. The fact he always styled his hair to messy perfection did nothing to help matters. She always thought that the act of anyone's giving himself "bed head" was contradictory.

Either you just rolled out of bed in the morning, or you didn't. You can't have it both ways. Those had been her first thoughts upon seeing him. Her second thought had been that the infuriating smirk that constantly quirked the edge of his lips was damned annoying; she wanted to wipe it off his face. For the sake of her position, she held herself back from acting on her feelings. She chose, instead, to continue her silent hate for him.

From the beginning, it was clear he thought himself the better person, as well as the better agent. She refused to stand idly by while he tarnished her name. If he took her down, then she would bring him with her. It was a promise she made to herself, and she never backed out of a promise.

"All right, let's get this over with," Aleyria called. Her boots felt heavy as they slammed against the dry pavement, but she didn't let that hinder her balance. The night already dragged out for far too long. She wanted to end it as quickly as possible.

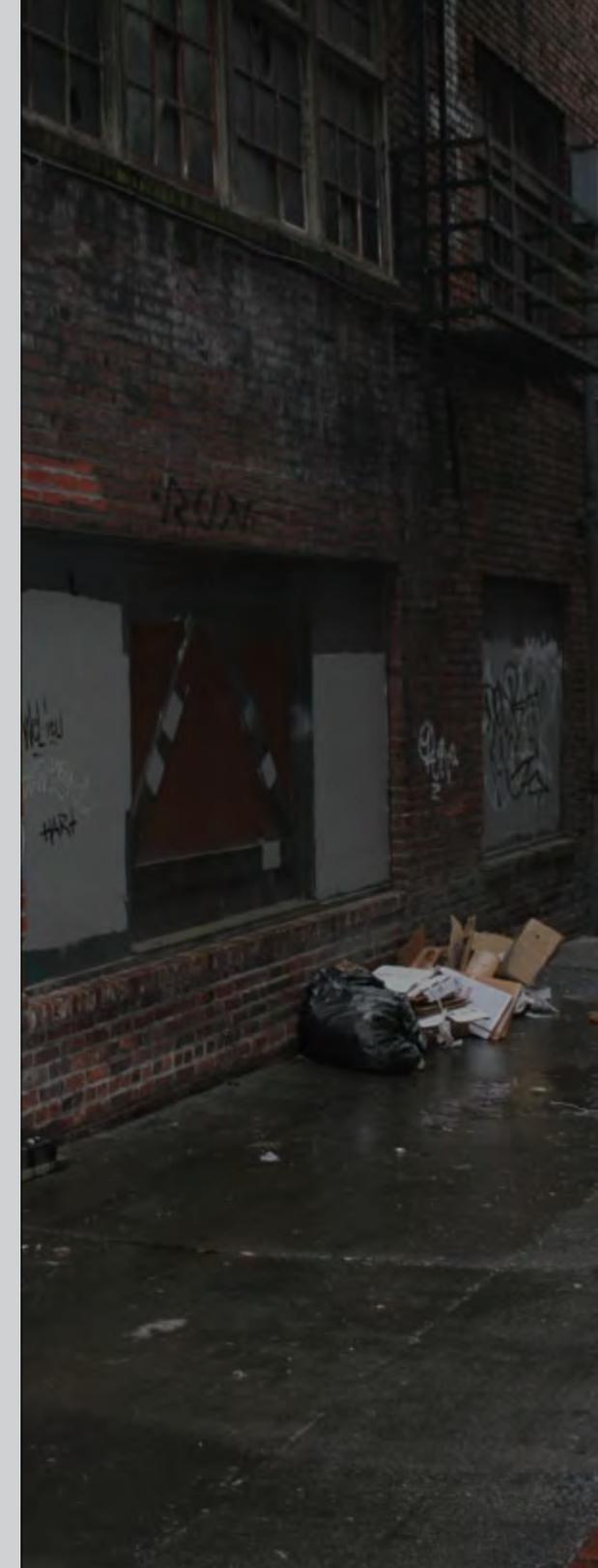
The street was clear of any civilians; the Cecil County Police Department made sure of that. Squad cars filled the empty stretch of road, property of the CCPD, as well as Dodge Chargers from her own

agency, the Cecil County Detective Agency. Her own team stood on the sidewalk directly in front of the intended building, whereas the police lined the streets, acting as backup just in case the situation got too far out of hand. It was the exact same lineup that happened every time the two departments shared jurisdiction, because she couldn't stand being second in command to anyone.

She peeled off her jacket, tossing it onto the hood of the squad car without giving it a second glance. The night air nipped at her skin through the thin cotton of her long-sleeve white tee, but she was used to it. A heavy jacket caused too much hindrance to her movement, so it wasn't feasible for her to keep it. She learned the hard way it was better to freeze than feel restricted, and the scar on her left bicep acted as a reminder. The heaviness of her vest could easily be seen as it stood prominently against the smooth angles of her shoulders. Her hair was tied back into a thick braid that lay heavily against the length of her spine, covering up the yellow lettering on her vest that read "CCDA." Her badge was clipped firmly to the front edge of her belt, stationed right in front of her department issued 9mm glock lying holstered against her side. She doubted she would really need to use it in a case as easy as this one, but she never went anywhere without it.

She took in a quick perusal of the people surrounding her in an attempt to decide which plan of action would be her best choice. Langley was the newest member and, though she loathed to admit it, the strongest. Roger Smitty and Aaron Davis were partners; they worked much better together than they did apart. Jared Gain, the computer specialist on her team, was a squeamish when it came to any and all field assignments. She knew he felt much more comfortable placed behind a computer screen, but there were times when it was necessary to have all members out in the field. Then there was Ethan Moran, a former member of her team who transferred to the agency's Minor Crimes Unit. She blamed that change on Langley as well.

"Smitty, David, you're with me," she called. In the end, she didn't have to give it much thought, because it was fairly obvious how she needed to play this. "Ethan, Gain, you go with Langley. Take the back entrance, and make sure that it's secured. We don't need anyone getting in or out until this whole mess is sorted out, got it?"





“This is my case, Bennett!” Langley shouted.

“And this is my team, Langley. For once, will you just focus on the matter at hand?” She wasn’t going to argue with him. Right now, all she wanted was to get in and get out. That way, she could get home and run a nice hot bath. She never did give herself enough time just to relax anymore; she could feel it within the tense ache of her spine.

She gestured over her shoulder briefly, before drawing her gun from her holster in a smooth succession. Even though she doubted the need for it, drug busts were sometimes the most complicated of situations. It was best to be ready for any outcome, just in case.

She looked up at the one-story warehouse in an attempt to ascertain the interior layout by its exterior. The building was in shambles, having obviously been abandoned for quite some time. The once white walls were lined with graffiti and smattered with browning mold. On the front of the building sat one black door, meaning that the back or sides of the building held the truck entrances.

Aleyria’s steps were slow and calculated as she moved towards the building, and as soon as she felt the cool metal doorknob in her hand, adrenaline pumped through her veins. She placed her shoulder against the door, giving the agents behind her a quick nod before she twisted the handle and nudged the door open with her body, entering with her gun at the lead.

It took a moment for her eyes to adjust to the unlit room, but in the meantime, all of her other senses went on high alert. The air smelled of musky dust particles that clung to her esophagus, and she could barely hear the dull murmur of voices echoing off the walls further inside the building. That was where she knew she needed to be.

As soon as she was sure the front room was clear, Aleyria waved in Smitty and Davis. Just as she’d assumed, the front section of the warehouse had been used for an office-type setting. The main entrance led to a big open room with a thin slip of a hallway towards the back.

There were no windows to offer any outside forms of light, so she pulled her mag-light from just behind her holster. There was a thin clinking as metal hit metal when she aligned her flashlight with the barrel of her gun. This aided her sight as well as enabled her to shoot if anything unexpected went down. With the room bathed in a beaded

stream of light, she took one last preliminary sweep of the room, just in case she missed something.

“Clear,” she called out finally, before advancing out of the room towards where she could still hear voices.

The light thud of footfalls was near silent as she wandered through the darkened corridors of the building. It was almost embarrassing how the people of Cecil were nothing more than a walking cliché, she thought. Sometimes, she found her job boring in that everything here was expected. Aleyria wanted something new and exciting. She didn’t think it asked that much.

Her light flickered across the hallway, making it harder for her to see in the murky corners of the rooms. She checked every crevice, keeping an ear out for anything that might spell trouble for her team. Even though she sometimes didn’t get along with everyone, she would never do anything to jeopardize their safety. She was always willing to sacrifice herself in order to spare her team, though she doubted that they knew that.

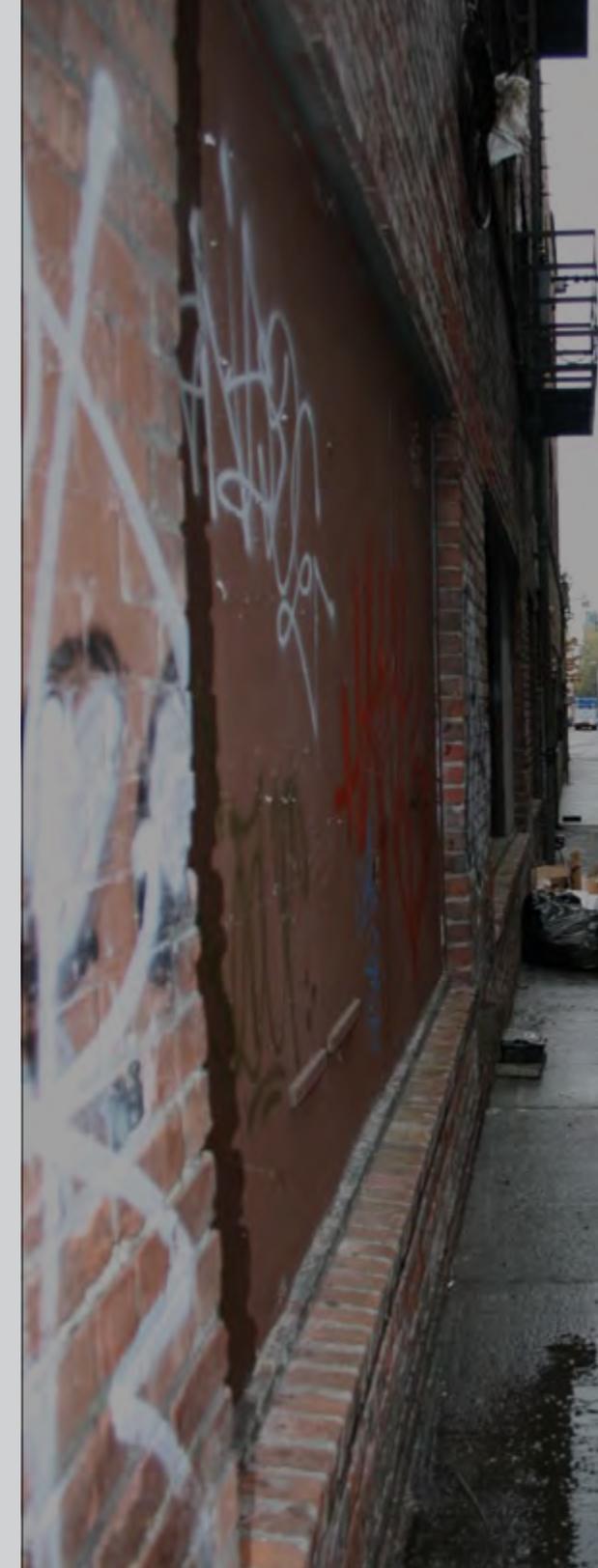
She came to a halt just outside of the final door at the end of the hall. The voices were louder now, and it was obvious that whatever was going down was happening just beyond the barrier that stood in front of her. She wanted to give Langley time to make sure everything was in place, so she waited a moment longer, pumping herself with thoughts of what would occur once she was inside.

Smitty and Davis flanked her sides, jittering with the same type of anticipation coursing through her own blood.

“On my lead,” she whispered, although the instruction was hardly necessary; they had worked together long enough to understand the things others wouldn’t pick up on.

Her entrance was quiet. No creak from the door or slap of rubber soles against pavement. It came from a childhood spent staying one step above three older brothers as well as practicing drill upon drill at the academy. This job was in her blood; she couldn’t do anything else.

The room at the center of the building was spacious, surrounded by cemented walls lined with steel slabs. Closed wooden crates stood tall in front of warehouse doors, while the open ones sat in front of the worktables. It was obvious they were still readying themselves for the next shipment.





A group of five men huddled near the corner, talking in hushed murmurs while they packed clear bags filled with white powder into the remainder of the crates. She always enjoyed catching perps in the act, it made it that much sweeter when she brought them in. She stepped further inside of the room, listening as Smitty and Davis filed in behind her.

“Freeze!” Her voice was firm, and she watched as the bulkiest of the men turned in her direction. His lips were curled into a tight smile. It was evident that he would put up a fight. “I really wouldn’t do that if I were you,” she warned.

Her finger twitched as she held it steady over the trigger. Hers was the steadiest hand on the team, but everyone suffered from an itchy trigger finger from time to time.

“What ya gonna do about it, lil’ girl?” His voice was thick and accented. If she had to guess, she would wager he came from Scottish descent. The heavy undertones curling around his words gave him away, meaning these men were most likely linked to the Campbell Cartel, lead heroin distributor in the area.

“Little girl?” She fumed. One thing that irked her more than anything else was being called “girl” in any form. “Little girl” was even worse. She breathed in deeply as she watched the other three agents file in through the back unnoticed. She was stepping towards the men at a slow pace without even thinking about it. She might be a hothead, but she knew breaking protocol would result in her suspension. She didn’t want to go through that again.

“Step away from the crates,” she threatened. “Put your hands up.”

“I don’ think so.” The same man spoke, his gaze intense as he stared her down.

She always felt disgusted when their eyes slid over her body like dirty fingers. It only fueled her resolve.

“We can do this the easy way or the hard way,” Aeyrial said, hoping they chose the hard way. Ever since her earlier argument with Langley, she wanted to fight something physically. The big man would go down hard, that was for sure, and it would be just what she needed to calm her steaming anger.

“We’re not goin’ anywhere.”

Her eyes trailed over the remaining four men, quickly taking note of their dilated eyes and fidgety hands. Some of the suppliers usually partook in a bit of their sales as a way to prove to their buyers that the shipment wasn’t tainted. The only one who didn’t seem to be hopped up was the man that she was speaking with. The other ones looked about ready to wet themselves. “You’re resisting arrest,” she grinned.

“Dolly, ya don’ know who ya messin’ with.”

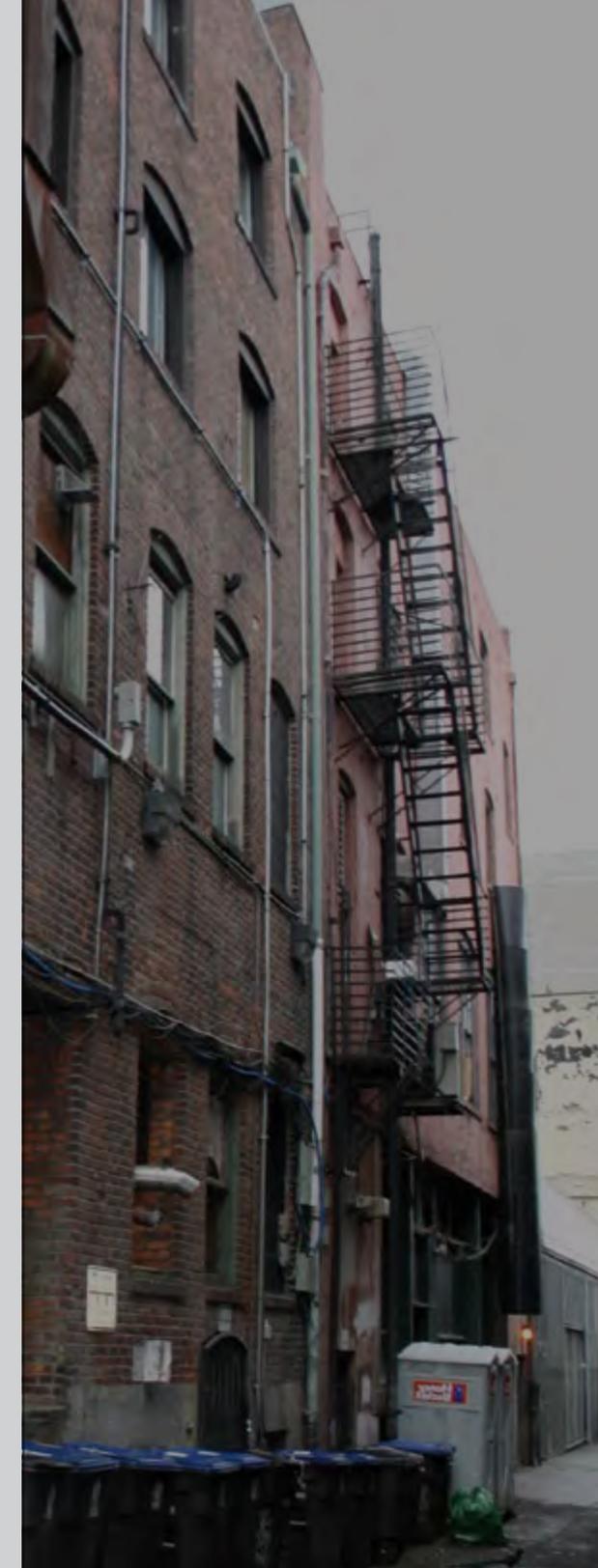
“Doesn’t matter. According to Maryland State laws, you’re under arrest. That’s all I need to know.” She stood a few feet away from him now, biding her time before he made the first move. It was apparent that he would. He was already getting antsy, she thought, and she hadn’t even started yet.

She gave a single, imperceptible nod. It was a signal only the men on her side would know, and it was all that they needed. When this man came at her, they were to arrest the four other men. Tonight, she would not allow any of these men to get away; they wreaked enough havoc on the streets.

“Fuck ya,” he spat. Those were his last words before he came barreling towards her with all of his might. His lips were parted and he panted heavily as he pushed himself to the limit. His brash resolve to stampede towards an obviously armed agent had her questioning her earlier assessment about this man’s being drug-free. Either way, he was under arrest.

Her heart pumped heavily against her ribs, and she pushed herself onto the balls of her feet swiftly, bending her knees gently. Gun aimed, she was ready for anything he might throw at her. At the very last second, she stepped to the side, easily avoiding his reaching hands. As soon as he was behind her, she turned around, sending her elbow careening into the back of his skull, thudding him against the ground in under a second. She was on him before he could react, cuffing his hands behind his back a little tighter than necessary.

“You *are* under arrest,” she said, her tone pleased. She might look small compared to the other members of her team, standing just shy of five-eight, but she owned enough muscle to bring down some of the toughest men, yet another perk of growing up in a house full of military men. “You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and





will be used against you in the court of law.”

“I know my rights, Bitch,” he cut in.

She tugged against his bindings once, hearing him hiss as the cool metal dug into the soft flesh of his wrist. “You have the right to an attorney,” she continued. She felt unreasonably smug, as she always did after making sure one less criminal littered the streets.

“I don’ want a lawyer.”

“You sure?” Her tone was glib, though she had been expecting his response. “Just remember you said that, okay?”

She pushed him out the way she’d come in, noticing at once that all the other offenders had already been cuffed as well.

“Good work, guys,” she tossed her men a quick grin, grateful her team was so efficient, despite all of their problems.

She felt unreasonably smug as she guided her team outside. Her heart no longer pumped with unused adrenaline, but the aftereffects felt just as sweet.

“What is a pretty girl like you doing a job like this?” the big man asked.

She wondered why perps always got so chatty after their arrests, but more than that she wondered why he had to ask her *that* question. Too many people asked her the same thing. It never really bothered her before, because she never cared about what others thought of her. She just never had an answer on hand to give them. The question was simple; therefore, the answer should be, too. What bothered her was that it wasn’t.

“It was the only one that offered such a cool badge,” Aleyria replied. She gave the man one final shove, before they were once again enveloped by the winter chill that clung to the night air. She relished in it, having just noticed the muggy heat that encased the walls of the warehouse.

She led the man to the nearest squad car, helping to stuff him into the back before slamming the door closed. She granted the police officer a brief smile as she gave the slightest of bows. “All yours, boys,” she announced.

She turned on her heel, making the trek back to the agency’s

Charger in quick strides. Never once did she allow herself to feel remorseful over how abrasively she might come off. She had to harden herself to get to where she was today. It was not something she would regret. The road to success was never easy, but she wouldn’t have had it any other way. She never did mind getting her hands dirty, as long as she didn’t have to sort through the politics of things.

“A.J!” The voice cut through her thoughts. The nickname had been something she acquired in the academy. The lieutenants wanted something easy to shout, and the name stuck with her ever since. She would pick that over “Al” any day, another of her many pseudonyms.

“Thanks for tagging along, Ethan. I know how much you hate the grind nowadays.” She patted him on the shoulder briefly, the gesture coming off more awkward than friendly. Ethan was probably the closest thing she had to a friend in a long time. She had sharp edges, and an even sharper tongue; most people found that combination more than a little rude.

Ethan simply shook his head, his golden hair falling limp against his forehead as he stared at her with curious blue eyes.

“You ever want to get out of your head?” he questioned. “You’re constantly thinking, ignoring the world. I wondered if you ever wanted out.”

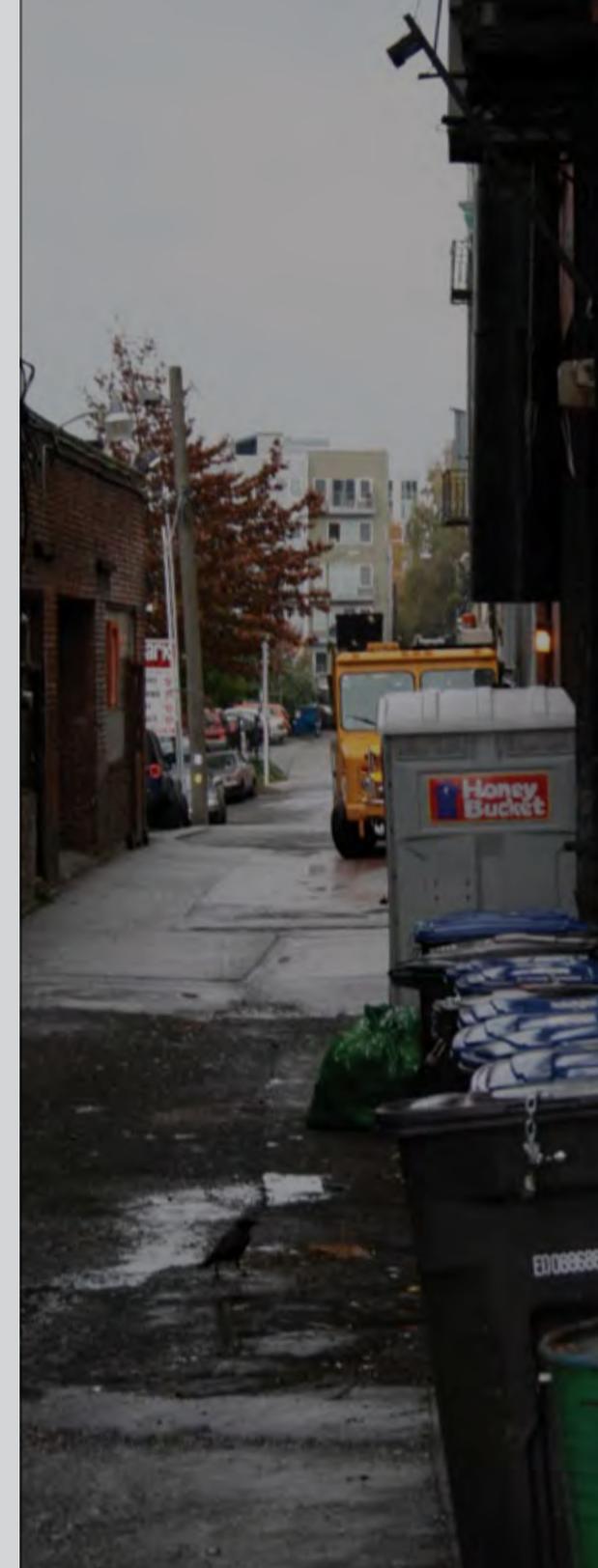
His words were not meant to be condescending, but after dealing with so much shtick for simply being a woman, she couldn’t help but feel her hackles rise.

“No.” Her reply was curt, a clear indicator he needed to drop the subject.

“At ease, Soldier,” Ethan held up his hands in a placating gesture, the same soft smile lifting the edge of his lips. Aleyria wondered how he was ever able to make it as a field agent in the first place. His demeanor was intact despite everything he had seen. It was hard to imagine him being anything but kind to anyone. She had seen him hard at work though, and the transformation was astounding. She supposed that he preferred being a handler above all else, because it was easier to separate work and life that way.

“I’m a little testy,” she apologized.

“That’s nothing new, but don’t worry, I actually find it kind of



endearing now.” He laughed lightly, and she couldn’t help but offer him a smile in response.

“You’re a real pal,” she said, her eyes narrowing at him as the words fell past her lips. They felt foreign on her tongue.

“Always, A.J.. See you at HQ?”

“Yeah, I’ll be there to fill out the paperwork.” She pulled her hair out of its holding before running her fingers through the dark tresses. There was an ache pounding against her temples, and she really wished she could just go home. “I think I’m going to need to hit the gym afterwards,” she mumbled to herself.

“What, you didn’t get enough action already?” Langley’s voice sounded from just behind her, and she stopped her arm before it could connect with his chest. It was a reaction: someone sneaks up on her, she strikes.

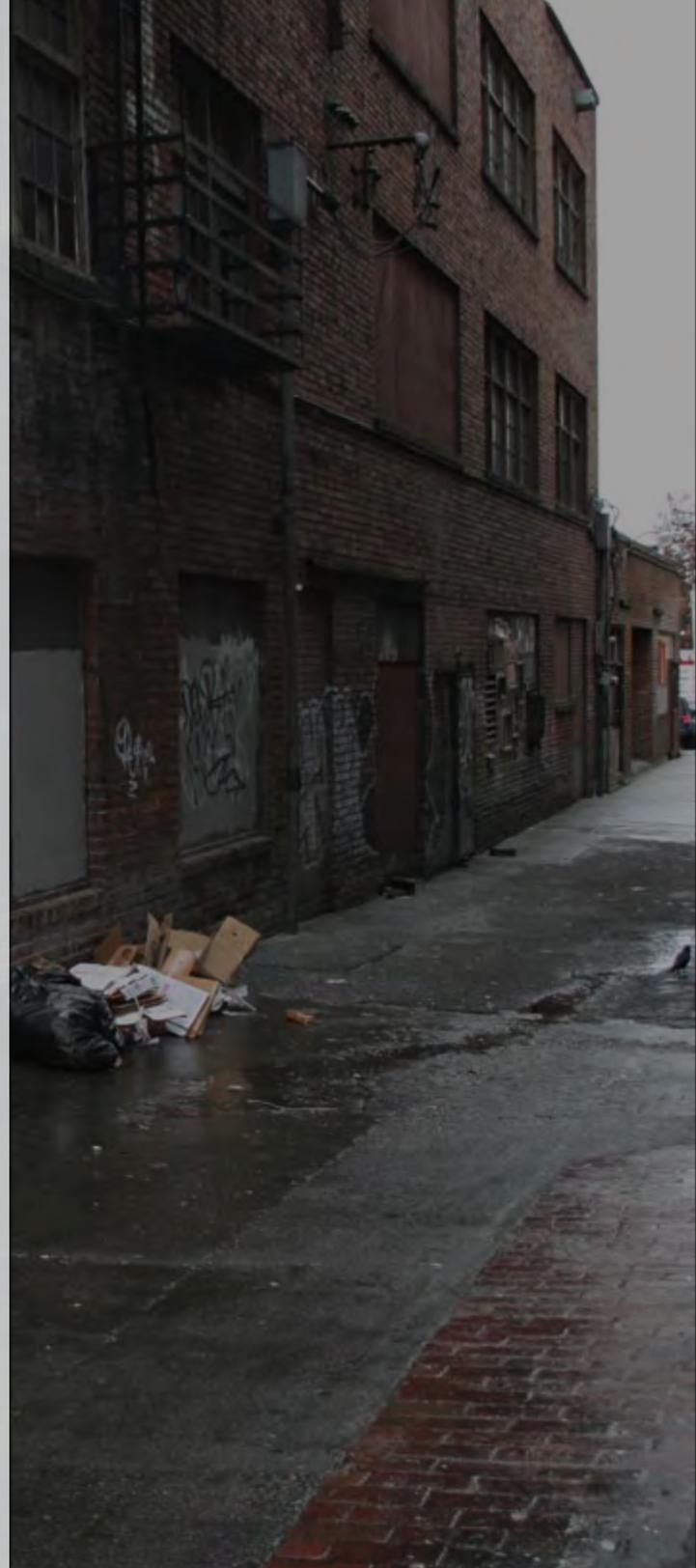
“Don’t start, Langley,” she pressed. Her blood was still pumping with her earlier anger, and she would not be opposed to an impromptu spar with the man before her. Any way she could send him sprawling to the ground felt good with her.

“I’m not starting anything, *Bennett*.” His tone was flippant, and she knew he mocked the way she called him only by his surname. It seemed he took it a little too personally, but the only one she felt comfortable enough with to be on a first name basis was Ethan, and that was a whole different story.

“Just get in the car; the night’s not over.” Something in her tone must have indicated her fragile state, because Langley opened the passenger door without any questions.

“You got it,” he paused. He breathed steadily for a few moments, waiting until she had situated herself before he bothered to continue, “Partner.” He grinned at her briefly before slamming the car door shut with enough force to rattle it.

A bitter taste crawled into her mouth as she cringed at the term, hating the reminder they were supposed to be equals. She refused to believe that, because she had worked much harder than he. Suddenly, the gym sound more appealing, particularly the punching bag. ☺



Glossy Night | Digital
KELLEIGH STRANGE



When I Get to the End of the Bridge | Digital
RYAN BROUWER



Prong Horn Antelope *and* Winterthistle| Kallitypes
E. PAUL PELOQUIN



Speaking Bone | Ceramic
ANNE BURDEN

MARKETPLACE

by kesha fisher

The day began when the sun stretched its arms across the sky, and the clouds scattered from its fiery embrace. Shade came from colossal palm trees sitting as rooted guards. Buildings boasted of a past when Colonialism grabbed a hold of the land, though slowly they started to lose that shapely stucco form. Incontinent water tanks and extended bouts of rain could be blamed for the way those buildings leaned into one another tethered by the still wires leisurely carrying electricity; and that lure of modern amenities was what drew many there, blind to the dangers of the city.

On the streets of Lagos, uncertainty was the only sure thing. Just a few miles from the heart of this city was its beat—the thing that made it pulse—and brought villagers in search of work and tourists hungry for a taste of Africa to the marketplace. All were hopeful for a valuable spot as the morning train scooted to a steady halt like an exhausted caterpillar. The colorful spill of shoppers and tourists arrived, and I was one of them.

Swirling in the air was the funky desperation of capitalism as the push and pull of attracting customers began. Some waited to trade what's in our wallets for goods and services, while others tendered only a mind full of fear. I watched the crimson-dusted floor cling ankle-high to bare black feet like boots made out of clay. Each pair trekked along, prepared to roam far if necessary, when the game of earning a living began. Objects of their livelihoods donned their mats, tables, heads and limbs.

The well-to-do vended from covered brick stalls, and others used sections of dirt separated by wooden planks or, if needed, a male member of the family quietly perched on a stool.

In no observable pattern, people trailed into those stalls abuzz with consistent chatter. Greetings of the day flowed from stand to stand, like a chorus rising to a coarse blend in the morning breeze. The hacking cough from the disease-ridden bus zoomed by, mingling in the air with the throaty calls of adolescents dangling liquid-filled

pouches and singing, “Pure water. Buy pure water.”

With that, the cries “dried fish,” “fresh vegetables,” or “boiled eggs” for sale carried on as boys raced bicycle tires with stretched wire hangers, and girls steadied the beginnings of a lifetime of carrying goods on their head or babies on their back. Everybody had a place.

I was there to capture a specific moment. Walking aimlessly, I searched for that thing to find me, my camera eye at the ready. The hunger and thirst of every man, woman, and child in the marketplace filled every inch of space; yet, I didn't see that thing. Up, down and even across the road, I saw life but no one living, only working. I took pictures of the trees, the train, tourists, and dilapidated buildings paying homage to Nigeria's past, but none of it meant anything to me. My camera saw and kept frames of eight men dressed in matching collared shirts, khaki pants and open-toed sandals. Each posed

meticulously along a concrete fence chewing on licorice root in the sunlight. Riveted by their appearance, I approached them.

“What do you guys do?” I asked, as I continued to collect their faces with my lens.

One man rose suddenly, agitated that I would steal a moment in their lives without permission. He glared at me, dribbling tattered wood and syrup from his lips. The licorice root hung there like a cigarette in the corner of his mouth and he said just above a whisper, “American? See you go pay me for dem pictures?”

“I'm sorry. Do you mind if I take your picture?” I spoke with confidence, expecting his affirmation.

Instead, the seven others sauntered near me. While most looked on, one man asked to hold my camera and another took steps around me, stopping just beyond my ear. I felt his wood-scented breath lift the hairs on the nape of my neck. Shock held me still.

“*Abi aya en ja,*” he said, which may have signaled the thunderous laugh from the rest of them.

I laughed not quite as heartily as they did, but long enough to turn myself around and face the man who cradled my backside. Two deep lines etched above his cheekbones met the level of my eyes. I stepped back to soak in his features, secretly hoping to douse the fear swelling inside my gut. The white from his beguiling smile exploded between the black cushions of his lips, and I was relieved. I needed to say just the right thing then, something comforting and truthful if I were to keep whatever they came for. Though I wished for his beautiful face to sit within a frame in my portfolio, my focused mission was to escape, preferably with my camera. I returned a smile of my own and mouthed the words, “Please, I am really sorry. I should have asked first.”

When he stepped to his left, I pulled forward, taking my freedom on a tearful walk back to work.

My week in Africa was inching toward its finish, and still I did not have the “money shot” my editor had ordered. Naively, I expected to see near-nude dancers wooing handsome drummers or medicine men performing sacrificial acts. The dancers I met were the affected and drunks moving to an invisible beat. Those with the power to summon the gods didn't walk openly or care to speak to an American about the supernatural world. I blamed myself for coming to that same market daily wishing for more of something that I believe now just didn't exist.

“The old ways fell with the rise and fall of colonial influences,” someone had said on the train; yet, all I wanted to do was spend my last day in Nigeria feeling as if I had, in fact, been to the Motherland.

Snatched from my own naiveté by a woman's voice yelling “Tola,” I positioned my camera in her direction. I was far enough away and she too centered on her walk to notice me. Her crown was a basin of goods planted firmly atop her head. I watched her unravel the loose *wrappa* from her hips exposing a black slip very briefly before she retied the garment high on her chest without missing a step. Beside her energetic feet were two children who seemed to carry well within her pace. The girl, no more than eight, was dressed in a singlet and shorts and dutifully dragging along her shirtless brother. They paused when a spot opened between heaps of tomatoes and the community tap to start their own business of selling mangoes.

“Everyone comes to this side for water and tomatoes for soup,” said the mother, as Tola settled her brother's wandering hands.

The children stayed put, mimicking their mother's greetings to the others in the market. The woman held her feet apart, firmed them to the ground and bent at her knees to lift the tray off her head. Closer now, I snapped her picture, and she didn't smile when she caught me. She only gestured for the girl to stand next to her before

speaking to me in Pigeon English, “I beg, photo me and my pikin for one more.”

I marked their moment and gave them a look of it on the screen. She offered me a mango and sipped a sigh at the still frame of mother and child.

“Ai, I resemble old woman,” she charged, smoothing the wrinkles around her eyes.

I continued snapping photos of them as her boy grinned incessantly, and I was equally excited to show him the frames. The mother spread mangoes out on a blanket, and I caught that as well. She sorted green ones there, orange ones next to the bright red and, in a separate bin, a collection of rotting brown ones sat waiting for Tola to peddle on foot. “*Ta won ton o!*” Sell them all! Said the woman as her child trailed off to work.

The bowl wobbled above Tola’s head, and one of her hands held it steady as if her body lived in that shape. She headed directly into the ebb and flow of traffic, as rickety lorries and dilapidated taxis drove by, and she clung desperately to their sides for sales. The distraction of an American photographer held no place in her mind since the determination to return empty handed was her only goal. I left her to her work in order to complete mine; the gesture of a wave severed our tie.

In an alley behind a salon called *Chic Boutique*, I noticed some liquid dripping into the gutter from a hole in the wall. Stepping across the plank for a picture of it was the most daring thing I did all day. I watched the flow of foam gush into the murky stream of trash and human waste, before swallowing the rising bile in my throat. Landing on the other side of the gutter steadied my fear of falling into sewage, and my relief might have been noticed by two ladies who cackled like hens next to me.

“Can I take your picture?” I asked, hoping they would do the rest.

They posed, smiled and tossed vulgar American slang my way; I enjoyed watching their natural ability to conform to the moment with a stranger. During the shoot, the owner of the salon ran out carrying a broom. She moved around us swiftly and swiped at something just behind me. I hadn’t seen a young man standing there until I heard him screaming.

“Commot from here, you thief!” she snarled, beating him into the ground. He didn’t beg for mercy; only whimpered like a broken puppy even when the bottom of her foot took a turn across his head. The words to stop his assault would not leave my lips no matter how vigorous my attempts to cough them out. When the handle of the broom caught his teeth, a spill of blood pooling inside his mouth finally ended the attack.

I stood over him and offered my hand. In return, he lent me a gaze that nearly stopped my heart. His dark and defeated eyes cuffed my instincts to coddle him, but my reach was rejected. As if startled, he scraped away at the ground erratically before pulling himself upright. He cupped the tattered meat of his dangling lip, stumbled and then limped away. I followed, still hoping to comfort him somehow. When he saw me again, he turned the corner, quickly disappearing behind a fabric shop. Before I could yell for him to stop, I was distracted by a little black hand clutching at my hem.

That hand pointed to her mouth. I handed her my mango and the few *Naira* bills left in my pouch. A mistake, no doubt, when I looked up to spot a polio-stricken man clawing away at the earth in my direction. The mass of flesh and bone resembled the roots of an old tree stump pulling itself from the infinite hold of the ground. He twisted his mangled body to its highest height before me and was still no taller than the tops of my knees.

“Food. Food,” he cried, and I was astonished by the starvation that lived amid so much life.

To pull out any more money would be suicidal on my part, but walking away was worse. I motioned for him to follow me, and we began a quick-paced journey toward a canteen. Stares followed my steps as my hungry friend trailed behind me like a leashed dog. We stopped at the high heat of a kerosene stove and watched as the gutted corpses of fish swam in a vat of oil. I offered my watch for a plate of rice, beans and fried fish smothered in pepper sauce.

“Madam, you want give me whole watch for one plate of food?” asked a woman stirring soup inside a pot. I nodded assent, and she eyed me from head to toe, feverishly leaking sweat from her corpulent face and neck.

Momentarily, we were both distracted by a pack of boys heckling that same thief from moments earlier. I snapped a few frames of their tossing an old rubber tire around his naked body; the feel of their child’s play did not sit well with me. The cook yelled at them, “Take that nonsense away from here *jare!*”

I didn’t miss the chance to shoot her spirited motions before she turned to me once more.

“So, you say you want pay wit your watch?” she asked, unaware that seconds of her life now belonged to me.

“Yes, for the hungry man,” I replied, and she peeked over my shoulders for a look at the kind of mouth that earned a meal from me.

“Ai, God go bless you today, Ma,” she cooed, eagerly snatching my watch.

I didn’t stay to see him slurp his food like a beast confined to the ground. Instead, I walked back toward the produce stands in search of that smiling boy and his generous mother.

On the way, I caught a glimpse of shirtless men on the go, corralling famished goats for a final trip to the

slaughter yard behind a massive brick wall. Animals bleated and squawked in back of that monstrous block as globs of red formed a trail into the gutter. I watched as dogs and fowl roamed freely into the same sewer for food and drink; and the heads of red-necked lizards bobbed to the music of it all. From the shallow troughs of floating sewage, to the walkways carpeted in garbage, and the high smoke from kerosene tanks frying fish and the grills charring flesh. The stink from it all baking in the midday heat was fresh air to a people who lived to make a living. I snapped away, hoping to capture at least one worthy shot.

It wasn’t quite noon, and I felt the day slipping away. I decided to fuel my head and gather my thoughts over a meal, but that break lasted mere seconds before I was

summoned by a *Mama*, a woman of stature selling expensive fabric and jewels. She delegated servants here and there as customers poured into her stall. To quote the price of

materials from Dubai and silks from China was another way of flaunting her status as a world traveler in a city where few ventured past the points of their home and the Lagos marketplace.

She waved me in. A single tooth behind a half smile is all she offered when I entered.

“Would you like me your picture, Ma?” I asked.

Without missing the opportunity to use her finest English with me, she straightened the costly garbs draped across her body and barred her eyes with a pair of sunglasses before declaring, “Yes, of course you may take my picture.”

She and other *Mamas* held the highest draw of tourists wishing to bring home a piece of Africa. Weavers were next, for the intricate structures spun from jute, and jewelers beading necklaces and bracelets tied with mahogany carvers. A world of sheer desperation unfolded

I SNAPPED AWAY, HOPING TO CAPTURE AT LEAST ONE WORTHY SHOT.

around me as I continued to walk the marketplace, watching everyone with something for sale. Mothers with babies on their back walk all day carrying heavy loads on their head. Barefoot men selling hand-made leather slippers used every part of their body to carry goods. Children dangled bags of sugar, salt or water with smiling faces; I brought something to vend as well -- a dream of living in an unimaginable place where work is as simple as watching the lives of others.

My recurring shame fell short when the rushing sounds of a crowd cornered my attention. The weight of my feet doubled with every step, and the shifting air left me in Purgatory. Before my eyes, smoke filled the street ahead. Darkness seemed to come more rapidly as an invisible hand separated a sea of unsuspecting folks. I fell to the side when a man tore through the marketplace with flames at his heels. All eyes followed his frantic body as he begged helplessly to live. I watched, bewildered by how quickly the bright endless layers of heat melted his flesh, and I hoped someone could simply flip off the blaze with a switch. When he fell still, the crowd pulled near, and the man allowed the fire to consume his screams.

I sat shaking like a malaria patient before taking my hopeless self back to my hotel. After peeling off my dusty clothes in the bathroom, I scrubbed vigorously at my skin. Sorrow filled my untamable heart as the horrid stench of burning flesh stained my soul.

Calmed by the last sips of warm whiskey, I decided to sift through the day's work. Frame by frame, I was unable to cut my mind from the horror that ended my shift until I saw the eerily auspicious eyes of that thief glaring back at me. Then I saw his naked body shrouded in a blur of flames and, in my own sheer desperation, I smiled.

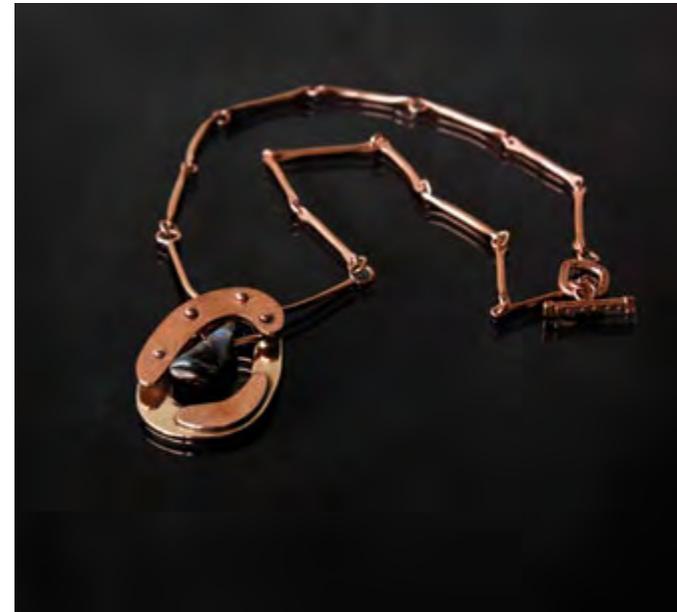
The money shot. ☺



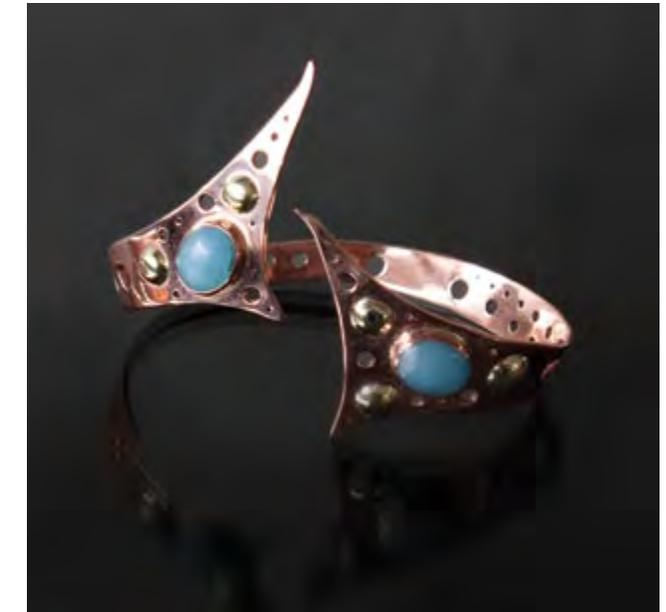
Twisted Arms | Copper and Bronze
LARHEA PHILLIPS



Zina (Ring) | Copper and Brass
KATERINA J. McCANN



Riveted Opal Necklace | Copper, Bronze and Opal
JOAN HOLT



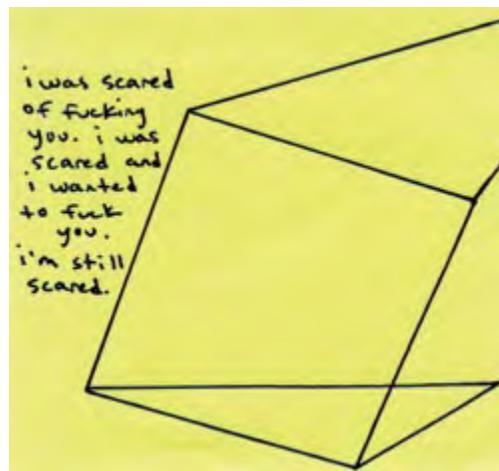
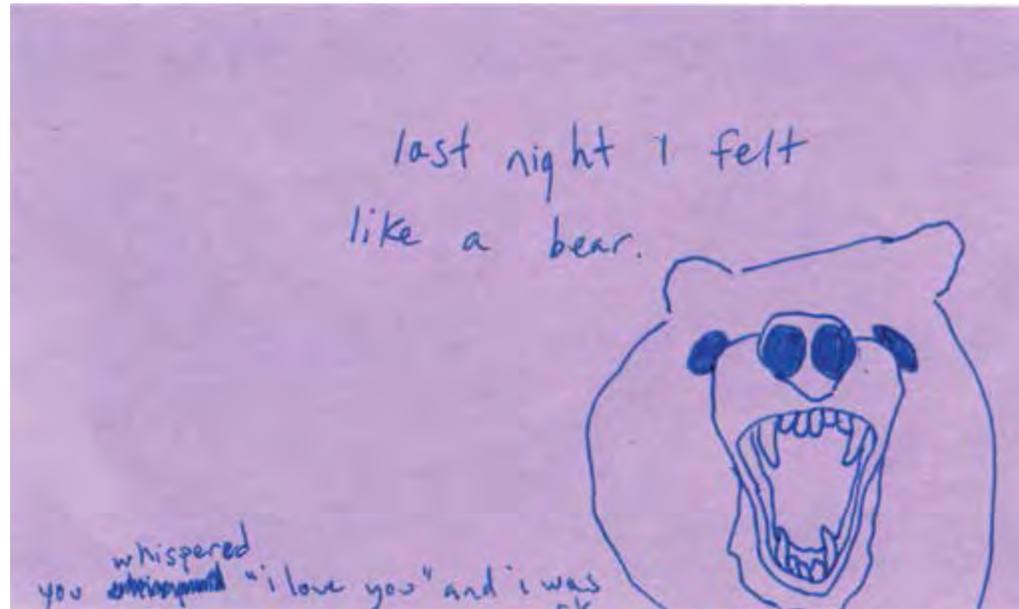
Zina (Cuff) | Copper, Brass and Blue Stone
KATERINA J. McCANN



Four Seasons and Horizon | Acrylic on Plexiglass
DOUG KESSLER



Characters series | Watercolor and Ink on Yupo
ALYSSA WILLARD



(For a Moment) I Was Okay | Ink on Post-it Notes®
OCTAVIA TETREAULT

Stories For People Who Need Them

By Brian McFarland

My brother Jerry used to look at the Missing Persons page of the FBI website. I don't think he actually believed he'd find anybody. He just liked to make up stories for them, as if it explained a little bit of the world's cruelty.

"Hey, Rick," he'd say, "You see this boy here? The FBI says he's missing, but I know what really happened. He's a prince, see, and the one that did the real kidnapping are his so-called parents. He didn't disappear, he escaped to find his princess and rule over his kingdom. Ten bucks says he has a pet dragon waiting for him in his castle."

Or he'd say, "Hey, Rick, you see this woman? Three years she's been missing, but she wasn't abducted. She just got caught in one of the thin places of the world, where the fabric of reality breaks down. No Lovecraftian horrors for her, though. My guess is she's somewhere in the sixties, partying with hippies."

Or he'd say, "Hey, Rick, there's a Missing Persons for a little baby here. Only, see, the baby wasn't really a baby at all. It was an emergent A.I. Its real parents were a supercomputer and one of those robotic arms. The kid wasn't kidnapped, it just merged with the A.I. that secretly lives in all our satellites, that's all."

I'd listen and nod along, letting him have whatever small comfort he could have in his stories. The truth is often an ugly beast; some people think it's better to ignore it entirely. Jerry was one of those people.

This was before our sister went missing.

Back then, Jerry didn't have any real reason for looking and making up stories, it was just something he liked to do. I guess it helped him keep an optimistic outlook on things. After Little Leslie (that's what Jerry always called her, Little Leslie) disappeared, his tales of the lost took a darker tone.

"Hey, Rick," he'd say, "you see this poor bastard? He's been missing a few months, and for good reason. He's been abused by his family. They lock him in the cellar, and his only friends are the toads down there. He feeds them the maggots in his food. They only let him out for appearance's sake, and he finally escaped. He's been hiding in a marsh somewhere with the toads ever since."

It was probably his way of grieving, lashing out at people he had never met and would never see in person. He didn't have anyone else at the time. I was too busy trying to glue our family back together to pay much attention to him. Mom and Dad had to deal with losing a child, so they didn't have any time for Jerry either.

And then Jerry disappeared.

I helped out as best I could afterward. Mom was pretty far-gone; she hadn't really given up on Leslie yet, even though it had nearly been a year, so losing Jerry, too,

The truth is often an ugly beast; some people think it's better to ignore it entirely.

was a little much. Dad hung on by a thread, he blamed himself for losing Leslie, and since Jerry had probably disappeared on account of Leslie, he blamed himself for Jerry too. It was after he disappeared that we found the needles in his room. We couldn't say for sure when he started shooting up, but I'm certain it was after Little Leslie vanished.

They were born eight years apart, Jerry and Leslie. Dad used to say she was a "happy accident." Jerry loved that girl to pieces. He fed her, he read to her, he carried her around when she was fussy, he even changed her diapers on occasion. When she was old enough, Jerry walked her to school, made sure nothing happened to her. Then, when something did happen to her, he took it hard. Harder than we realized. I thought his chronicles of the lost would be enough for him, but I guess Jerry wasn't the only one who chose to ignore obvious truths.

We filed a report, same as with Leslie, and nothing really happened, same as with

Leslie. We knew that, even if they found him, the best we could hope for is some strung out junkie. I thought up a story for him, that the needles were for a serum that allowed him to see into a higher plane of existence, that he appealed to God on Leslie's behalf, and he had left to save her. I think he would've liked it, and it wasn't too far from the truth.

Dad took to the bottle after Jerry vanished, something he hadn't done in twenty years. If he was awake, he was drunk, and usually crying over his children. Mom filed for divorce, and moved out west; I think she had family there. Dad stayed put, content to drown in his

sorrow and booze. I moved out after Mom left; there wasn't much point in staying after she was gone.

Time went on. Mostly I'd just work and try to forget how lonely I was. I'd try not to miss Jerry and his stories, and I'd try to forget I ever had a sister.

Sometimes, Mom would call to check up on me. Sometimes, I'd visit Dad to check up on him.

Of course, things couldn't be as simple as a crushing void of isolation.

One day, as I walked back home from work, I noticed a homeless man

I'd seen around before. His back had always been turned, or he'd been rooting around in the trash, or he'd been covered up in old coats. But now he stared right at me.

It was Jerry.

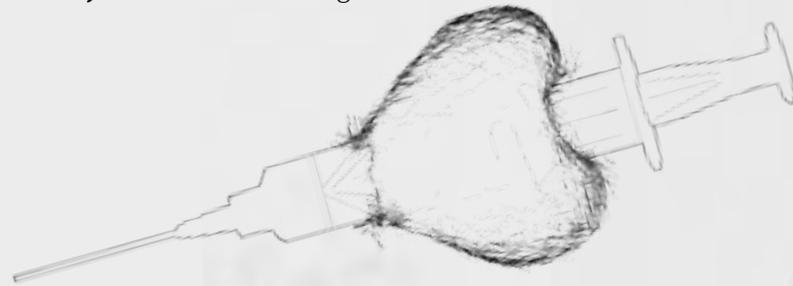
Of *course* it was Jerry.

Even underneath the coats, I could tell he was too thin.

His lips were cracked, and his eyes bloodshot and yellow. He had a ratty, blackened beard with equally ratty, blackened hair. He was caked in dirt, which would probably explain why his hair was so dark. In short, he could've been any bum on the street.

But he wasn't any bum; he was my brother.

"Hey, Rick," he said, scratching at his arms. I half-expected him to start in with a story about one of his homeless friends who disappeared. Instead, he just sat there, shivering.



"Hi, Jerry," I said, after I realized he wasn't saying anything else.

"Man. How long's it been? Twenty thousand years?"

"Nah, just ten. Ten years."

"Huh. Feels longer." There was another silence. "So, how's Mom and Dad?" he said.

"Gone and drunk, respectively," I said.

"Whoa. I didn't know Dad drank."

"He stopped before I was born and started after you left."

"Oh. Shit."

There was another pause, longer this time. After a while I said, "Well, come on then. My place is up the street a ways, let's get some food in you."

"Oh. Cool. Thanks, man," he said.

So we went home. I made us some salami-pastrami-onion-mushroom sandwiches, and we ate them in silence. Afterwards, we sat in silence.

"This is your fault, you know," I said finally. Jerry just looked at me questioningly, so I went on. "Things wouldn't have been so bad if you stayed. Our family broke up because of you."

"Yeah, you're probably right, man," he said. For his part, he looked guilty. "I wasn't really thinking straight back then." I just snorted at that, and the silence returned for a time.

"Jerry," I said, "why didn't you just die?"

"Hey, I tried, man," he said, "It just didn't work out quite the way I planned, that's all."

"At the very least, you could've just stayed away, disappeared somewhere like you did."

"Right, and how was I supposed to know where you

lived? I would've stayed away if I knew."

There was a pause, and then I said, "Fair enough, I guess."

We sat there for a while longer, me staring, him scratching and shivering.

"How much have you been using?" I said.

"Not as much as you'd think. Only when I need to remember." He paused, and leaned in. "Do you want to know what happened to Leslie?" he whispered.

"No. No, Jerry, I don't want to know what happened to Leslie."

"Ah, the adventures of Little Leslie," he said, resuming his original position. "I'll tell you, Rick, I've been over it backwards and forwards. I think I've finally figured it out."

"Jerry, I swear to God if you start up I'll throw you right back out on—"

"Leslie's dead, Rick."

That shocked me. I never thought Jerry had been capable of accepting that sort of thing when he was home, much less after he'd been out on the street for ten years. I was very still for a moment, then I said, "I know, Jerry. I know she is."

"Only, see, that's not the end of it. When she was born, she was given an angel's soul. She died before she really had a chance to sin, so now she's working for the Big

Guy Upstairs. I mean, this is some seriously divine shit, Rick. She's doing stuff like guiding kids back to their parents, and stopping people before they walk into traffic, and pointing charity people to families in need. Hell, she's saved my ass more than once, hence my not dying. I think it's a little unfair to the others that she's paying special

attention to me just because I'm her brother, but what're you gonna do?"

"Jerry," I said with a watery sigh, "Jerry, you stupid ass. That isn't true. None of your stories were true. Those people weren't princes or mer-folk or celestial beings. They didn't escape to spaceships to start colonies on Mars, or dig down to the city at the center of the Earth. They're just dead, Jerry. They're just dead the same way Leslie's just dead.

She's dead, and you ran off to marry your needles, and Dad tried to find answers at the bottom of a bottle, and Mom ran off to try to escape it, and I tried to bury it all away and pretend I never even had a family, but you had to just come up here and dredge it all up like the stupid ass you are. If you want to believe your stories in your drugged-out haze, that's your business, but don't you put them on me."

"Okay, Rick," Jerry said. A few tears were running down his cheeks, cutting through the dirt. "Okay."

We sat there for a while, Jerry crying and shivering and scratching, while I just felt numb inside. Then Jerry said, "What do we do now?"

I thought about it for a while. "You go check yourself into rehab, and see a counselor or something," I said. "Or don't, and keep using and dreaming. I don't care.

Just don't come here anymore. I don't want to see you. Ideally, I wouldn't hear from

Mom or go visit Dad, either, but I know I can't have everything."

"Okay, Rick," he said. "Okay."

I motioned for him to leave, but he sat there a while longer.

"Maybe I'll try to die again. Maybe Leslie will be busy," he mumbled as he got up and shuffled towards the door.

"One can only hope," I said.

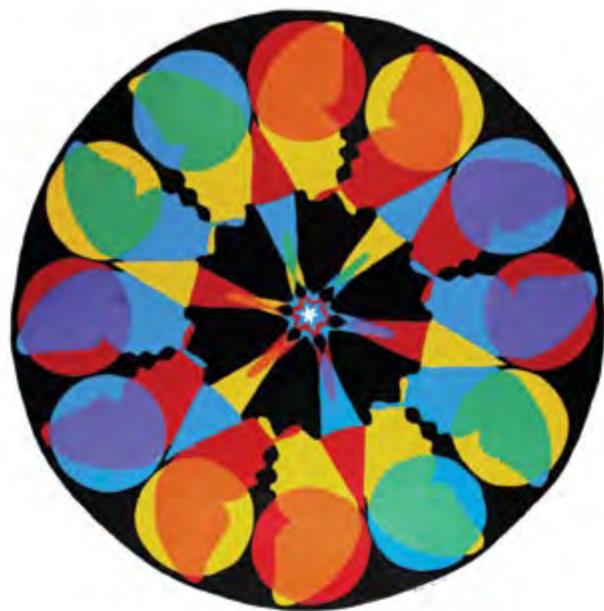
It took a little while, but I eventually got back to imagining I never had a brother who told stories about missing people, that I never had a happy accident of a sister, that I never had a sober father, that I never had any mother at all.

I haven't seen Jerry since then.

I'm glad. ☹



Triple Threat | Cut Paper
MARGHERITA NICOTRA



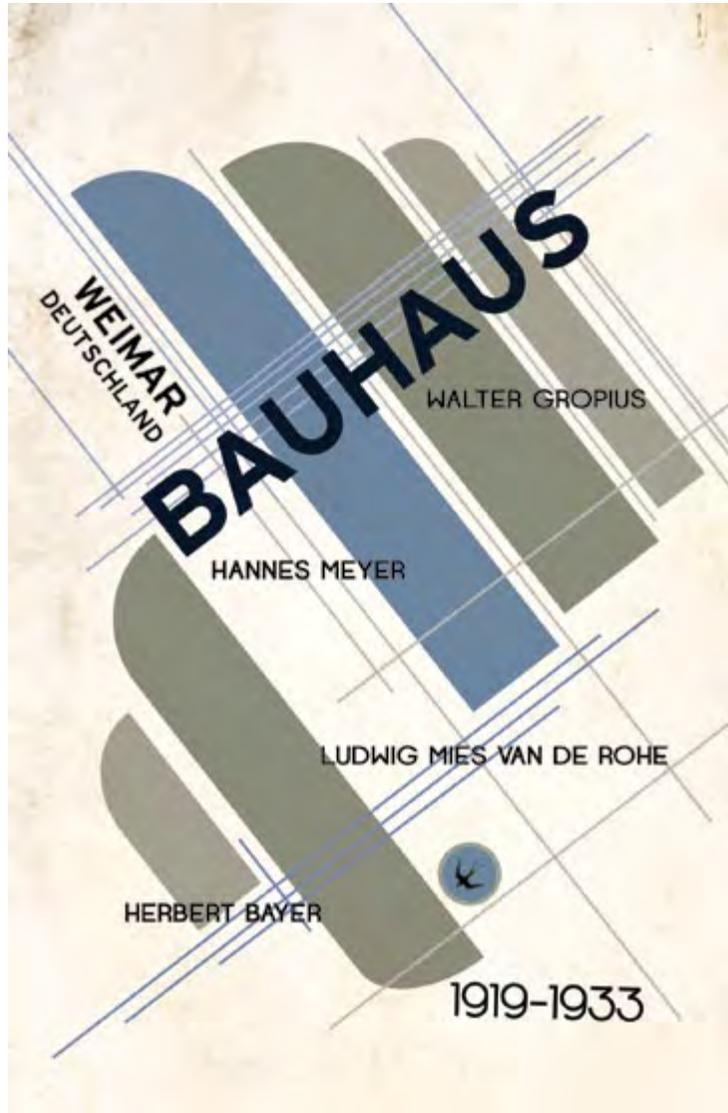
Kaleidoscope Transparency | Acrylic on Paper
KAT MCNEILL



Hawaiian Pops | Digital
VICTORIYA CAMP



Einstein | Acrylic on Paper
SAM STEPHENS



Bauhaus Poster | Digital
ASHLEIGH CUMMINGS



Crystals | Acrylic on Paper
TRISTAN CASEBEER



Celtic Trinity Box | Ceramic
JILLIAN BAKER

Sirens: Chapter I

By Patrick Sifton

Summer rain fell silently, cooling the night air. His headlights cut a shallow cone from the darkness ahead, and Jason gazed intently through the windshield. The shrubs by the side of the road wilted under the season's heat, and shriveled green leaves waved over the fences lining the road. Thirsty, the shrubs drank the rain in relief.

Jason brushed shaggy brown hair from his eyes and sighed heavily. He was relieved, finally, to be heading home. His job wore him out, and he was fighting a yawn after the hard eight-hour shift. Bleary eyes stared back at him from the rearview mirror. He wasn't sure he should be driving when he was so drowsy, but he had only a couple more miles left.

He scoffed and cracked a grin. As gruelling as the day had been for him, it had to have been better than his sister's. He didn't have to wear a ridiculously awkward uniform to work like she did. He reminded her of it every chance he got.

Kenny, as everyone called his sister, had a sarcastic bite and, despite their being twins, he found himself on the wrong end of her wit too many times. He needed anything to hold over her, just to even the odds.

There was only one reason either of them hadn't quit already: the Reverend. They never knew their parents so their uncle raised them. He had been the one to "suggest" they find jobs for the summer. It was supposed to build foundation or perspective. Something like that.

At the moment, Jason didn't care about what perspective he was supposed to receive. From his point of view, the only good thing about the summer was getting his car. But reality threatened even that happiness.

His car had been the oldest, cheapest thing at Al's Used Cars. The thing was a dented, rust-bucket. When he wasn't paying for gas, he was saving up for another repair. But it represented freedom and independence. It was *his*. He loved knowing he had the ability to pick up and drive off, even if he had nowhere to go. Jason gave another sigh and slapped the steering wheel. He took a deep breath and tried losing himself in the song's squeaking from the only working speaker, but the heavy static wouldn't cooperate with him.

A figure stepped out into the road, and Jason lurched in his seat. Frantically, he stomped on the brakes as hard as he could. Squealing in protest, his brakes screeched; but, the car slid on the slick road. He saw a quick flash in the headlights as the figure raised a hand toward the oncoming car. Jason grimaced as he imagined the person's fending off a moving car with bare hands. His stomach was already crawling into his throat from shock and the violent movement; now, it curdled against the vivid image of what his car would do to the person in the road. He pulled desperately at the steering wheel and pushed his weight on the brake, praying frantically for the car to stop.

The car gave a fierce shudder and jerked to a halt, just inches short of the other person.

For several haggard breaths, Jason could only sit in stunned silence. He slumped over in his seat, thanking whatever force had answered him. His heart pounded wildly in his chest, desperately seeking a way to calm. A pool of sweat formed under his palms, and his fingers ached from gripping the wheel. He forced his fingers loose, flexing them against the strain. His breath slowed, and he heaved a hardy sigh of relief.

An angry fist slamming into the hood made him jerk. His relief quickly evaporated as he realized he had to face

the person he'd nearly run over. Reluctantly, he looked up at the person standing in the headlights. His mouth gaped. Her skin seemed luminescent in the light, and her brilliant blue eyes shined. Long strands of crimson hair danced wildly in the wind as an arc of electric light shimmered its way back and forth. A black pleated skirt hung from her hips and flowed loosely to her knees. Black stockings travelled the length

of her leg. Her jacket draped loosely from her shoulders.

A dark blue, satin vest clung to her form and the plunging neckline revealed black lace and pale skin.

Anger infused her features with an attractive dangerousness. Her eyes narrowed, and her brow furrowed in a stern frown. The woman's vibrant red lips were set flatly, as if restraining her from taking a bite out of the car ... or him. As one fist rapped the hood again, the other planted itself on her hip. Her toe tapped in agitation.

"This just keeps getting better," Jason muttered under his breath to himself. He watched in horror as she marched over to the passenger door. Hastily, he reached over to roll down the window.

"That was close! You could have killed me," she said.

Despite her tense demeanor, he could tell she was just as relieved as he that he hadn't run her over. The way she leaned into the window had him feeling light-headed and wishing she feel really feel that mad at him.

Whatever response he might have made evaporated as her vest slid up slightly. She frowned as he stammered, trying to speak. Her hand flexed slightly, tightening on the door. Nervously, he brought up his eyes. Locks of

"His heart lurched in his chest and he knew he was in trouble the moment their skin touched. An unearthly chill crawled over his skin and slithered into his bones."



damp, scarlet hair framed her face, and he wouldn't have noticed the ring in her eyebrow, but the lower studs were set at the end of her eyelashes and looked like golden tear drops. Her eyes watched him expectantly.

"I'm sorry about that. I wasn't expecting anyone. I didn't see you...on a night like this..." he stammered.

"Usually, I like the feel of summer rain on my skin," she glanced up with annoyance, "but this is a little ridiculous."

Those captivating eyes returned to him and her lips curved in a flirtatious smile.

"Hey," she said, "as long as you're already stopped, mind giving me a ride? I have places to be."

Jason gulped and nodded silently. He had to clear his throat before he could answer. "Yeah. Sure," he told her.

She already opened the door before he could finish his sentence, careful to smooth her skirt as she slid into the seat. The girl tried scraping her muddy boots on the pavement before slipping them inside. She frowned again, attempting to roll the window back up.

Jason's face burned with embarrassment as he remembered how difficult that window could be to roll. Suddenly, he became very self-conscious about his car's decrepit state of disrepair. With that small flash of insight, reality flooded back to him. He realized what he must look like at the moment. He was driving an old, beat-up car with lost layers of paint and one working speaker. He was still in the stock boy uniform he'd sweated in for hours. He needed a haircut all summer long and now regretted not making it a higher priority.

Here he was, a nervous, shaggy, smelly high school kid, eyeing the gorgeous woman sitting next to him while trying to ignore the fact he came so close to running her over. He didn't think he could feel like a bigger stooge than he did at this moment.

Jason cast a sideways glance in her direction. His eyes scanned from her muddy boots to the skirt that hiked up

slightly. For a minute, he found himself staring into her eyes. He'd never seen anything like them. As he stared at her, it took him a moment to realize she was staring back.

His face burned with humiliation. He wondered just how long he had been sitting like that. Fortunately, he noticed a playful twinkle in her eye. She smirked and wagged a finger at him.

"Keep your eyes on the road," she said. "We wouldn't want you running anyone over."

Jason squirmed in his seat and turned his focus to the road ahead. Despite looking away, he was very aware how close she was. He sensed her fiddling with her hair, pulling it aside. He forced himself to stare straight ahead.

From the corner of his eye, he could see more piercings in her ear. Two emeralds glittered on the bottom while a diamond sparkled on top. He was unsure why he noticed them at all. Perhaps it was way they glittered in the streetlights, or he just wanted to take in any detail about her that he could.

Jason shook his head, trying to clear his thoughts of her. It took several minutes of driving before he gathered himself enough to think clearly again.

"Where exactly am I taking you?" He cleared his throat again.

She gave him a blank look, and he faltered, shrugging.

"I was on my way home," he struggled to explain. "It's the only place I know down this road."

She gave a nod of understanding and pointed out at the road ahead. "Take a left at the stop sign coming up. It'll take you back into town."

"Oh," Jason grunted. "I've never been down that road. I always take the right to get home."

"Traffic's better on Covington this time of night." She flashed her pearly teeth in a smirk. "Besides, you're not going home this time. You're rescuing a damsel in distress."

His cheeks flushed from her comment, and he shook his head. His bashful grin fell from his face as a strange feeling washed over him. He wasn't sure if he flushed from her cliché or something else.

The near accident and her closeness had him second guessing every thought and sensation. He could swear he felt something stirring inside his head as she spoke. There was a small, almost subtle click followed by a greater stirring, like a pebble tossed into a pond. The ripples reverberated against his skull and washed over him, sinking into his bones.

Jason tried to ignore the feeling and concentrate on driving. Hoping she hadn't noticed anything in his expression, he grinned at her.

"I always wanted to do something like that," Jason shrugged. "My uncle says, 'when choosing how to act, choose honorably.'"

"How ...," she paused, "quaint."

She may have kept her face impassive, but Jason noted her hesitation. He scolded himself for having anything better to say than some adage from his uncle.

A minute of uncomfortable silence passed before he tried starting a conversation again.

"Who are you?"

"Oh," she said, startled by her own lack of manners. "I'm Alexis."

"Jason," he said, holding out his hand awkwardly

She reached over to shake, and Jason's heart lurched in his chest. He knew he was in trouble the moment their skin touched. An unearthly chill crawled over his skin and slithered into his bones. The hairs on the back of his neck stood up and goose bumps formed on his arms. His nose crinkled as the strange scent of freshly turned soil wafted toward him. The image of a graveyard formed in his mind.

His hand jerked away from hers and he struggled to find some reasonable explanation for what he sensed. The coldness of her skin might come from being out in the weather. It was possible the dirt smell could be coming from her boots, even if he couldn't see how it would be that strong. But there was nothing to explain the eerie, unnatural feeling he felt emanating from her.

Jason noticed that she stared down at her own hand in suspicion. Her jaw set in a grim line and her eyes narrowed to mere glints in the passing streetlights. Her eyes locked on his and reexamined him. He wondered what kind of impression he had given her. He could clearly see she had been just as startled as he from their touch. She had to have sensed something to challenge her perception of him. Her expression was full of wonder and fear. Whatever she had sensed seemed to puzzle her, and he had the feeling that confusion worried her more than any unnatural aura.

He watched while she shook her head slightly, and her expression changed instantly. Playfulness returned to her eyes, and her flirtatious smile was back. She seemed completely at ease with her surroundings, and her gaze turned back to the road.

"Take a left at the second intersection. It'll take us downtown." Her voice was level, with no trace of concern.

Jason complied almost blindly. He was too distracted with her reaction, and her smile no longer felt as genuine as it first seemed. She was too comfortable with the situation. His beat up car would be enough reason to be anxious, but no one should be that resilient after a near collision or a touch of the supernatural.

Her only assurance would be her own self-confidence, knowing she could handle herself if the situation got out of control. Yet, Jason had barely any time to blink before she suppressed any sign of doubt with layers of tightly-wound control.

Inhibitions wormed their way through his mind. He realized that her expression implied experience with concealing her thoughts. If she felt just as startled as he, though, why did she need to conceal anything? Was deception something that came naturally to her?

She shifted uncomfortably in her seat and the hem of her skirt rose slightly. Jason found his eye drawn by the movement, drawn to the hem.

No. Eyes on the road, eyes on the road, Jason chanted silently. He tried forcing his thoughts away from her but failed horribly.

How did any of this happen? he wondered. He was travelling down the road and, in a moment’s distraction, this woman stumbled across his path. Her hypnotic eyes and tight skin had gotten her in his car and her pretty smile took him on the wrong road.

He drowned under the weight of his thoughts as an awkward silence permeated the air, broken occasionally by her directions. The hush felt intense, like a predator waiting to swallow him whole. Cold sweat formed on his forehead as anxiety churned his stomach.

He was incredibly confused. He wanted to reach out to this woman. On the other hand, danger loomed about her. He felt like a moth drawn and dazzled by her flame.

“What the—” Alexis’s surprised mutter pulled him from his reverie.

His eyes went to her first, then he scanned the area around them. Her directions might have taken him down roads he hadn’t ridden before, but he recognized this area of town. On his right, he could make out the bulky shape of an apartment complex. Even though he could see lights coming from only two structures, he knew more stood beyond sight.

The run-down strip mall on the left stirred unwelcomed memories. Despite his and his sister’s protests,

their uncle dragged them along on some trips to the hardware store there. The twins spent all of the previous summer painting the house and tangling with the garden.

The memories were a brief flicker as his attention easily drew to the image directly ahead. It didn’t take much to see what surprised Alexis. Since he wasn’t old enough for nightclubs, Jason had never been inside Tear Drop, but he recognized the place. What he never saw before, were the police cars around the place. There were four in his current view, but from the volume of lights, more parked around the corner.

“Turn left,” she told him. Distracted, she waved toward the mall’s parking lot.

“What?” Jason looked at her with wide eyes.

“I have an apartment on Second Avenue,” she said.

Even though she spoke to him, her gaze stayed on the police. “It would be easier to pass through the parking lot than through that mess,” she said, waving at the police cars.

Jason blinked, watching her for a moment. Her eyes flickered, anxiously taking in details. Feeling his quizzical gaze, she turned back to him.

“Take a left,” she told him more firmly.

Dimly, he followed her direction and asked,

“What’s wrong?”

“The police don’t come around here.” She shook her head. “It’s been years since they even patrolled this area.”

“Really?” Jason frowned in skepticism.

“Someone must have called them,” she said, craning her neck to look back at the lights.

“Do you think anyone you know is back there?”

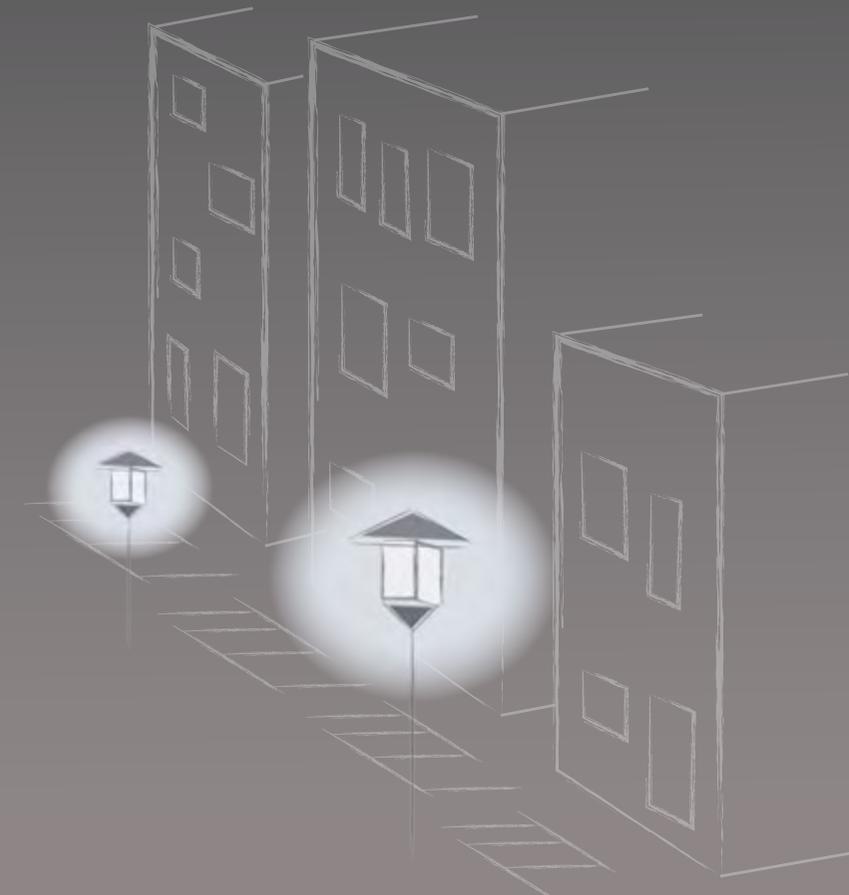
Jason asked carefully. He wondered if he should turn the car around.

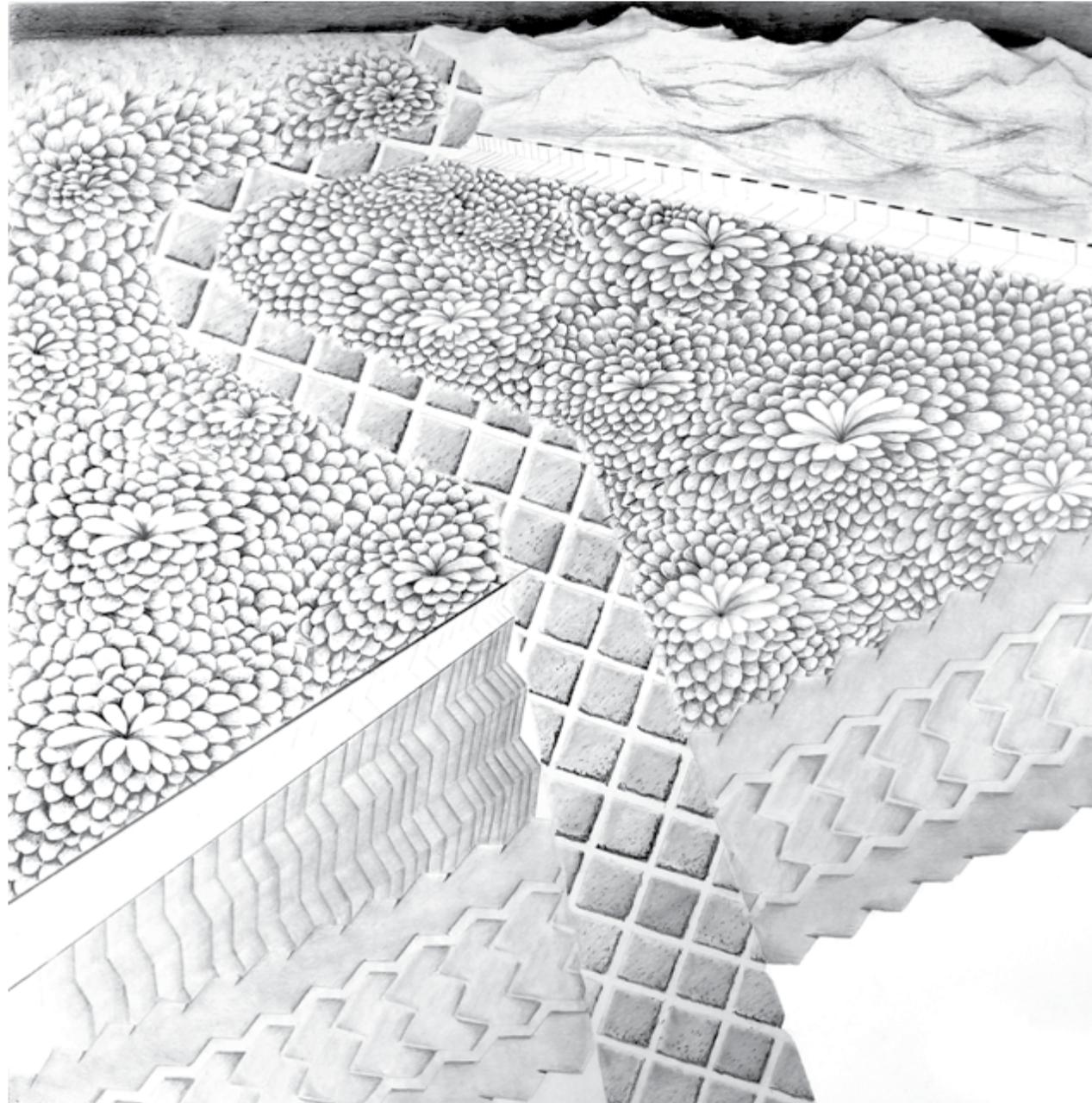
“I hope not.” She settled in her seat again. “I hate to think anyone I know involved in that.”

Even though she spoke reasonably, he felt there was more to the situation than she let on. Worrying about it now would do him little good. Instead, he decided to concentrate on his driving. He kept his eyes to the road ahead, trying to ignore her presence as much as possible.

Jason was grateful he knew the area well enough from driving around in the daytime. Nearly half the streetlights in the area were broken, and the darkness became extraordinarily thick. He worried about running over a curb, unsure his car would survive it.

The turn for Second Avenue seemed especially shrouded and perilous. He could see the silhouettes of trees lining the road; they seemed like shadowy claws reaching out of the darkness. Jason felt like he was diving head first into a snarling mouth, waiting to devour him. ☹





Texture Map | Graphite on Paper
ALYSSA WILLARD



Black and White Bowl | Ceramic
SHIRLEY MORGAN



Great Wall of Stephany | Ceramic
STEPHANY SCHUELLE



Snorkeling and a Plane | Watercolor on Paper
LUKE ACEVEDO



Little Creature Form | Ceramic
EMILY LUCESCU



Lily | Ceramic
SHIRLEY MORGAN



Rainy | Digital
SAMSON SOUTHAFENG



Sleepy Gamer | Digital
CIERA JOHNSON



Card Shark | Ceramic
ANNE BURDEN



The Willendorf Family | Ceramic
BRENDA PEREBOOM



After Hundertwasser | Watercolor on Paper
BEN ROSENBERG'S WATERCOLOR CLASS

CONTRIBUTOR STATEMENTS

ARTISTS

Luke Acevedo, *Snorkeling and a Plane*, p. 130

This watercolor piece was based on a preliminary collage I made. I was interested in the relationship of different things juxtaposed in a composition. I enjoyed the process and working with the media.

Albina Bak, *Coffee Cups*, p. 86

I created these pieces in my free time at Clark College. Each piece brings back memories from the time I made it.

Jillian Baker, *Celtic Trinity Box*, p. 121

I have always been intrigued by my Scotch-Irish heritage and Celtic knot work.

Ben Begier, *Wicker*, p. 80

Wicker is my attempt to combine wood's hardness with wicker's softness in a clay medium, while keeping a realistic appearance.

Amanda Bondurant, *Terminally Beaut-ill-ful*, p. 40

This is an image of my cousin, Jaci, who is dealing with a terminal illness. Despite her struggles, she continues to be a very positive and uplifting person. I wanted to illustrate her strength, inside and out.

Amanda Bondurant, *Twisted*, p. 37

While walking with my son and photographing the trees in the distance, I noticed something much more interesting in front of me. This fence, although hard and twisted, had a very soft look to it in the field it surrounded. It made me think of how people's perceptions of others can be greatly influenced by those who surround them.

Katie Bowen, *Pagoda*, p. 142

Finally, I have made a take-out box of which I'm proud. With each new draft, I improved upon the last, adding more intricate details. My piece encompasses all the new skills I have acquired at Clark.

Ryan Brouwer, *When I Get to the End of the Bridge*, p. 101

Each time I look at this piece, I try to imagine different outcomes for the traveler. Things like: what could happen to him, where is he headed, and perhaps even where he comes from. He is on a one way path to anywhere.

Anne Burden, *Card Shark*, p. 133

Each bowl is made to resemble a card suit, with the exception of the circular dice cup. Their purpose? Poker night snack dishes.

Anne Burden, *Speaking Bone*, p. 103

An interpretation of an old jawbone, the cups act as teeth in its sockets. It seems as if it could almost speak and tell its story.

Kristen Butcher, *Morning After*, p. 76

Originally this drawing was meant to express solitude. When I look at it now, humorously, all I see is a wild night on the town gone sour. Even still, I can see the beauty in the woman.

Viktoriya Camp, *Hawaiian Pops*, p. 118

I walked into the kitchen to discover my daughter had been creating designs with some just purchased Hawaiian Pops on top of my canvas. The contrast of the bright popsicles on the white canvas caught my eye, so I grabbed my camera and started taking pictures.

Tristan Casebeer, *Crystals*, p. 120

This was an exercise in transparency, using various tones of gray.

Patrick Churchman, *Shooting the Messenger*, p. 56

It's the inversion of perspective, spiraling through the path of time to the point of man as scripture. I tried to portray the division between power and balance with an example of unnecessary force.

Stephanie Clafin, *Recycled*, p. 6

Recycled is an environmental piece and was created with elements from nature. The background represents a fingerprint. It is up to us to keep the earth pure and beautiful.

Leif Clausen, *Exports Kill*, p. 78

I designed this poster for *Basel Action Network*, an organization striving to strengthen laws forbidding the exportation of waste for processing by women and children in primitive conditions.

Elise Cryder, *The Mantra*, p. 82

Tibetan Buddhists believe saying the mantra, "Om Mani Padme Hum" out loud, or silently, invokes the powerful benevolent attention and blessings of Chenrezig, the embodiment of compassion. Viewing it in written form is said to have the same effect.

Ashleigh Cummings, *Bauhaus Design*, p. 120

This poster was a fun project from graphic design class that shows the style of the Bauhaus school of design. It was a challenge to design the poster in the right style that also describes it.

Ashleigh Cummings, *Fading Feelings*, p. 52

This was a study of texture and color, as well as a focused investigation proving that interesting subjects can be found as close as your front door—or sidewalk.

Zoey DeJong, *Self Expression*, p. 38

I wanted to capture a self-portrait in an untraditional way that still integrated my mood and personality.

Zoey DeJong, *Labor Lines*, p. 37

This piece is from a series exploring how lines shape our world. My goal was to show lines expressing my own unique perspective.

Lauren Dwyer, *Gas Works*, p. 57

Gas Works Park is one of my favorite places to go in Seattle. Not only is there a neat gasification plant, but I also get a spectacular view of Seattle.

Sara Elliot, *No Strings Attached*, p. 16

Although I don't know how to play an instrument, I would love to learn. Music is, and will always be, a part of my life.

Toni Gridley, *Valued Expression*, p. 66

The real story is told between the stark black and whites. The subtle changes give much more explanation and value to what is seen by the viewer.

Jacob Hallenbeck, *Silver Pearl Coat Pin*, p. 12

I enjoy large pieces that draw people into asking about their history.

Robin Hamblin, *Baseball Dream*, p. 36

Some of my favorite, cherished memories are of sitting with my dad and grandmother watching the San Francisco Giants play ball. Watching games, playing, and going out to a field with my friends is something I will never forget. Baseball is my passion and my dream.

Susan Hather, *The Chorus of Nature*, p. 83

This piece started simply, but adding layers upon layers became such a highlight and inspiration to me.

Kerry Henry, *Roll The Bones*, p. 39

I awoke fall term crying, my heart still starved, struggling with Hottle's "Eloquence of Bones" and Durden's "Think in Ink." I exhaled, unclasped my heart, and just let it flow through my fingers.

Nick Herber, *Several Hours with Local Heroes*, p. 42

A tribute to veterans, this photo was created by sandwiching negatives in the darkroom, a much more challenging method than Photoshop compositing. This photo is meaningful.

David Hernandez, *Beetle of the Nimble Forest*, p. 30

My inspiration for this piece was the idea of fantasy and how we create alternate realities, such as *Avatar* or the *Dark Crystal*. This aggressive beetle lives in the Nimble Forest and breeds rapidly.

Trevyn Hiemann, *Once Upon a Palm*, p. 26

I always take Ceramics in the winter quarter, because it's cold and grey in the Northwest, and I miss living in Hawaii.

Jack Holcomb, *Invasion*, p. 19

Invasion is a composition of movement and imagination in which concepts of science-fiction and technology capture an epic conquering on a galactic scale. Relying on the use of contrast and negative space, the depth and dimensionality come from the interaction between black and white.

Joan Holt, *Moldavite and Silver Ring*, p. 53

In Metal Arts class, I cast a ring for the stone I had purchased earlier. The design in the silver came from the stone with pull lines and little pits. The prongs are in the deeper pull lines in the moldavite, and the pitted pattern is repeated on the sides.

Joan Holt, *Riveted Opal Necklace*, p. 109

Riveting, laminating solder joints and metal texturing were three techniques I learned on this project. The texture on the copper is from steel wool. I used spacers in the riveting, so a wire could attach the opal bead. I attached the unriveted copper piece by laminating it to a piece of bronze.

Robin Hominiuk, *From the Sea of Fire*, p. 8

This plate is a pictorial definition of wood firing-pools of melted ash, kiln drips and flame pattern offer visual evidence of what make this firing process so unpredictable and exciting.

Robin Hominiuk, *Egg Shell Bowl with Stand*, p. 64

Hand-crafted, this bowl is frail, yet strong; cradled in the hand or at rest in its stand, the bowl reflects the journey of the flame.

Robin Hominiuk, *Possibilities*, p. 53

This copper and sterling bracelet is one of my first metal projects. All components are hand formed. I chose to use a closed box as focal piece, because boxes represent unknown possibilities.

Mark Hyder, *Tea Kettle*, p. 24

This image was made possible only with the help of my family. My sister left the kettle on too long and dunked it in the sink to cool it off and then my mom sprayed soap on it and left it soaking. Ironically, it was one of the most wonderful things I've photographed.

Takako Ito, *Alet-Les-Bains*, p. 27

I used my memories and photos from an art student's tour to the Languedoc region of France to compose this painting. Sparse strings of festive lights hang across the dark angular alley scene.

Ciera Johnson, *Sleepy Gamer*, p. 133

The Halfling, Squeaker, is a boy/cat who enjoys classic N64

games. Here, he's fallen asleep during a *Tetris* game. There's nothing better than playing games, relaxing in the comfort of your own room.

Tamera Jones, *Antique Wedding Cake*, p. 82

This was the required final cake for the cake decorating advanced class, and it had to be our "dream" wedding cake. I am planning an old fashioned antique wedding.

Nikki Kangas-Winston, *Conception*, p. 18

There was no plan when I began this piece; I started and finished it within a twenty-four hour period. It reminded me of the energy and spontaneity of conception.

Nikki Kangas-Winston, *Hungry*, p. 24

This is a self-portrait compilation using digital photography and combined in Photoshop.

Kelly Keigwin, *Memories*, p. 31

This is a portrait of my past. I have many memories tied to these plastic objects and the music they provide, even 26 years later. In this digital age, they are a lost art form, which I celebrate.

Kelly Keigwin, *Self-Portrait*, p. 30

Gender is a very fluid thing. Society tells us it is strictly defined and those who do not conform are wrong. I don't like to wear dresses; I prefer a shirt and tie. We should embrace each other's differences; it is not wrong to be yourself.

Doug Kessler, *Four Spheres and Horizon*, p. 110

This composition is blind in the sense that I put down the basic elements without looking at the canvas, which then allowed a meaning to emerge. It captures a nice combination of two and three dimensional perspective as well as movement.

Danielle Laughlin, *Mushroom*, p. 39

I love mushrooms, and this piece was one of my favorites during the 2011 Fall Quarter. I decided it needed a little something more, so I used coffee grounds and coffee to paint the sepia tone.

Annie Lee, *Spring*, p. 6

I spent the first half of my childhood in the Rogue Valley, which is full of pear and apple orchards. The second half I spent on a farm in the mountains surrounded by pine and oak trees. I feel most at home in the trees. I combined my love of trees with my love of human form and ethnic diversity to create the *Four Seasons* series.

Jeri L. Lee, *Far From Home*, p. 79

I designed this poster to make people aware of child sex tourism in places like Thailand. It's easy to ignore the problems in the world, because we're so busy. Using my granddaughter as a model for this photo made the point hit home for me.

Jeri L. Lee, *Into the Sunset*, p. 4

I took this photo of my uncle a few months before he died of cancer. He knew he was dying and, when I look at this, I can't help but wonder what he was thinking.

Megan Lorenz, *Never Ending Hall*, p. 87

This assignment required I use only two colors. This usually hangs at the end of my hall, and it makes it look as if the hall keeps going through the white line in the middle.

Kalista Levesque, *The Dream*, p. 50

I composed this piece from a collage assignment which required working with the surreal.

Taylor Lewis, *Portrait #1*, p. 43

I really love the feeling of tranquility that you can feel in her. But I also love that there is a bit of mystery surrounding the scene. She was really natural which made my job as the photographer really easy.

Dennis Lo, *Pair of Three Footed Bowls*, p. 9

China's Shang Dynasty bronze tripod cooking pots inspired these forms. The pieces were wheel-thrown, brushed with colored clay slip, graffiti covered, and stained with various oxides and underglazes to achieve an aged and weathered aesthetic.

Dennis Lo, *Teapot and Bottle*, p. 16

Something is not quite right about this tea party: a hookah and a bowling pin? Faded stripes of once bright colors encircle the forms in their scalloped and grooved edges against a sugarcoat of white glaze. The teapot perches, almost precariously, above the handle and spout. A blackness mysteriously invades the bottle form.

Ciarra Lord, *Food for Thought*, p. 3

This is a representation of my memories, feelings, thoughts and ideas. They are contained, yet spilling over one another in organized chaos. The chopsticks are my way of sifting through it all.

Emily Lucescu, *Little Creature Form*, p. 131

A few years ago, I made a little round devil similar to this one. I liked it so much that I made this guy, but the only similarity is the size and shape. He reminds me of a frog in a swamp.

Marza Lutz, *Harmonious*, p. 86

A texture study, the title seems odd because it is worn gears being depicted, but I thought they all flowed together so well.

Kaedi Maney, *Study after Diane Arbus' The Puerto Rican*, p. 77

This drawing, based on an Arbus photograph, represents the crazed woman within all of us. What will she do next?

Samantha Martin, *Cityscape*, p. 57

I enjoy using simple materials, and this piece combines my favorite design elements done with a simple, common tool.

Samantha Martin, *Imaginarium*, p. 51

I asked a little boy what he was going to do today, and he told me that he was going to be someone else. A magician today, a robot tomorrow, and a king the next. I told him that sounded like a good plan.

Samantha Martin, *O'Keefe Study*, p. 54

I love this piece, because it is the biggest dark room print I have done. The giant print turned out so clear, even though the negative was 35mm film, and this makes it special.

Samantha Martin, *Profile 3*, p. 13

It was much too cold to be outside, but we were out regardless. The sign said "No Trespassing," but there we were, trespassing. It was just that kind of day.

Samantha Martin, *Red Fans*, p. 32

This started as a simple design that filled my notebook margins. I am glad it's finally its own, completed piece.

Katerina J. McCann, *Around*, p. 25

The rocks included come from all around the world; I was always able to talk my parents or grandparents into letting me go home with a bucket or two of rocks. It feels very satisfying to have found a great use for these treasures of my childhood.

Katerina J. McCann, *Kats*, p. 12

I enjoy the design of this sterling silver cast pendant with blood-stone, because it is based on the type of doodling I did when I began to draw. The experience helped open my eyes to the possibilities of metal and design.

Katerina J. McCann, *Zina*, p. 109

This ring and cuff is part of a set that is made of copper, brass and blue stone. I named it *Zina* because the jewelry looked like a weapon the warrior princess might carry. It reflects a strong, faithful, hardworking woman I have been fortunate enough to know.

Kat McNeill, *Kaleidoscope Transparency*, p. 118

I created this piece in Color Theory class. My goal was to mix colors to create the illusion of transparency.

C. Darley Miller, *Any Way's the Right Way*, p. 17

I took this piece out of my sketchbook, and I believe the interpretation should be left to the viewer.

Melissa Mitchell, *Bricks and Graffiti*, p. 88

I love how the worn black and red brick building coated with graffiti almost glows in this photograph. The sun made this fantastic lens flare that adds color and another element altogether.

Melissa Mitchell, *Ring, Ring*, p. 90

A favorite of mine, I love the rich shadows in comparison to the bright rays of light, creating a beautiful contrast, emphasized by the black and white tones. I am showing the viewer that even though each picture is of the same subject, with a new angle it can be viewed in a new light.

Shirley Morgan, *Black and White Bowl*, p. 129

Using natural materials to imprint the clay enables me to capture things at their peak, like grape leaves in summer. These leaves are so fascinating they needed to be stored permanently in clay.

Shirley Morgan, *Lily*, p. 131

The inspiration for this lily pad came from the lake near my brother's house in Orlando. I was pleased with the outcome of the glazes and the finished look.

Shirley Morgan, *Tough Guy*, p. 139

I've long used lace in some of my pottery, and since the hand is so large and seems so powerful, I thought that the lace draped in the hand would soften it and add a bit of a sense of contradiction; bold, yet soft.

Stu Myers, *Mingei Vase*, p. 8

While making this vase, I wanted to emulate nature and folk art. The way the glaze fluxed was exactly what I was looking for, and I feel it is successful.

Stu Myers, *Tea Set 2*, p. 9

This was one of my tea sets to which I grew attached. The flow is very pleasing, along with where it draws the eye.

Margherita Nicotra, *Triple Threat*, p. 117

The challenge was to keep the shapes as simple as possible, so the finished signs were still easy to understand even without the use of words. Everyone giggles at the *Barista Sign*.

Tara Omnes, *Drink-in Portland*, p. 14

I love alternative photo processes. This piece incorporates Polaroid transfers of some of my favorite peaceful places around Portland. The title, *Drink-in Portland* refers to that quiet moment to enjoy your surroundings.



Tough Guy | Ceramic
SHIRLEY MORGAN

Tara Omnes, *Portland Lensbaby Play*, p. 33

Using a Lensbaby, I photographed some of my favorite iconic places in Portland. I want people to look at this piece and feel familiarity and nostalgia over these locations.

Greg Peiffer, *Unisexy*, p. 67

Unisexy uses mixed media— collage, acrylic, ink and spray paint. It is an indoor/outdoor piece with multiple, simultaneous scenes.

E. Paul Peloquin, *Prong Horn Antelope* and *Winterthistle*, p. 102

These pictures capture my favorite wildlife subjects digitally. Using a platinum toner helped to create the soft appearance and look.

Brenda Pereboom, *Bow and Tie Vase* and *Leaf Vase*, p. 80

I wanted to design a set of two vases that I could show together. I wanted to concentrate on contrasting textures: a dimpled surface against a smooth surface. I experimented with different glaze combinations, attempting to create a natural color for both pieces.

Brenda Pereboom, *The Willendorf Family*, p. 134

This piece represents the cycle of life. It was my hope to recreate an object one would recognize as the *Venus of Willendorf* and extend the concept of the single Willendorf (“Venus” was created first,) to a family of fertility figures.

LaRhea Phillips, *Koi Cuff*, p. 84

This bracelet was one of my first projects. I learned I have to work around issues and put in time with my projects until I get it just right.

LaRhea Phillips, *Twisted Arms*, p. 109

This is my second project involving sea life. While I’m not particularly fond of sea life, I find these creatures beautiful and amazing.

Ben Rosenberg’s Watercolor Class, *After Hundertwasser*, p. 135

This collaborative project was based on a Hundertwasser painting that was divided into grid sections for each student, who then were to break the color shapes down further using analogous colors. The finished pieces were then reassembled and hung on the wall in the Frost Art Center.

Stephany Schuelle, *Great Wall of Stephany*, p. 129

I think chinese artwork is really beautiful, and on a small piece of wood, there was a watercolor painting of the Great Wall. I wanted to bring this painting to life in clay.

Samson Southafeng, *Rainy*, p. 132

This portrait has many emotions mixed into one concoction. Despite all of the dark, moody times that disturb your peace, just be there to smile and laugh with a friend who shines your light.

Larry Stark, *Flight*, p. 144

The initial drawings and paper models were basic triangular teepees. These evolved by interlacing and stacking them, eventually resulting in a multiplicity of reflections and refractions.

Kelleigh Strange, *Glossy Night*, p. 101

This picture is important to me because it was my very first night photograph and I was so excited it turned out! It was taken on a night out in downtown Portland right after it started to rain.

Sam Stephens, *Einstein*, p. 119

The idea was to overlap primary colors and create the colors that fall over each other within the shapes.

Sam Stephens, *Lightbulb*, p. 67

I used about nine pictures and assembled them together to create a panoramic view, mixed with a little humor and my dog.

Nick Svilarich, *Amped*, p. 32

This piece is probably the best painting I’ve ever done. I can’t tell you how many hours I spent at Clark to get it just right. I’m my biggest critic, but I can honestly say I am proud of this piece.

Octavia Tetreault, *(For a Second) I Was Okay*, p. 112

This is a new body of work exploring the personal using everyday materials.

Cameron Visconty, *Obsessive*, p. 76

A physical representation of the solidarity of the expectations of our society seen as an intrusive object forcefully existing within the organic flow of the human body rather than an external barrier.

Emily Waters, *Metlako Falls*, p. 7

I took this photo on a misty day on one of my favorite hikes in the gorge. The photograph reminds me of true Pacific Northwest beauty.

Emily Waters, *Life Form*, p. 66

This photograph is a play of light and shadow using organic forms. It was printed large scale to highlight the detail.

Alyssa Willard, *Character Series*, p. 111

This series is made with watercolor and india ink on Yupo paper.

Alyssa Willard, *Texture Map*, p. 128

This piece was days straight of constant shading work. I even had to work with my right hand to give my left hand a break. I am pleased with the finished product, though I noticed if I stare at it long enough it starts to move.

Alyssa Willard, *Virus Attacking a Cell*, p. 19

This work was inspired by a picture I found in a biology book of a cell being attacked. I looked at it only once, and then I drew what I remembered and gave each area a different texture.

Ryan L. Williams, *Endangered Species*, p. 40

While designing this wearable art, I am combining the textural elements of nature and transforming them into something that seems just a bit familiar and yet it makes you just a bit curious.

Shannon Wonser, *Chops 11/26/1982 - 11/6/2011*, p. 28

I began this piece just after my friend of twenty years passed away. He took his own life after learning he had stage four kidney failure. I used this piece to work through my grief, rocking out to our favorite music while I painted. I intend to send this to his mother.

Bradley York, *Occupy* and *Movement*, p. 58

These shots were photographed during the first day of *Occupy Portland*, capturing the pandemic of Guy Fawkes masks.

WRITERS

David Brannan, *Brand New Old News*, p. 41

Sometimes, we forget to love one another. We go through life with burdens and responsibilities crushing us like gravity. We become so self-involved that we forget to ask others for help. If you take one thing from this poem, please let it be hope in one another.

David Brannan, *A Wandering Star*, p. 85

I wrote this piece to convey the loneliness in the world. I’ve spent time volunteering for churches and homeless shelters, and I’ve had war veterans tell me in tears they are grateful I was there to listen to their stories. They just wanted someone to talk to. This poem is my way of saying to them that you are the person you are, and there is nothing wrong with that.

Mariah Dornberger, *Freedom in the Fall*, p. 59

Freedom in the Fall is a favorite of mine. It goes a bit outside the norm, so I must give thanks to the friends who have helped me develop it, as well as Dr. Carey’s fiction writing class!

Phillip Englund, *A Paranormal Romance*, p. 68

Irritated with the whole *Twilight* phenomena and really bad romantic fiction in general, I used this story to explore where a human and vampire love affair would really end up. This is a work of fiction. Using a shotgun is not recommended to solve any relationship problems, even if your significant other is an actual member of the undead.

Kesha Fisher, *Human Ways*, p. 20

I was reared Christian in a city where Muslim children were as much my friends as any other. When I turned nine, many of my Muslim girlfriends could no longer play outside. I learned later they were being kept pure for marriage. I chose to relay how that loss in childhood felt, along with the sordid act that accompanied their absence.

Kesha Fisher, *Marketplace*, p. 104

As a child growing up in Nigeria, I saw all these people when shopping at the market with my mother. I included them in this story because they were people I would never get to know

even though minutes of their lives affected me in such a blaring way. I’ve seen love and horror sprout from the same place and I wanted to paint a picture of what that felt like to me.

Johnna Gurgel, *Vantucky and Its Surrounding Areas*, p. 34

This piece glimpses into the different cultures of people in Portland and Vancouver. It’s loosely based on the show, *Portlandia*, and meant to poke fun at all the facades people wear in life.

Jami Hendrickson, *Sunday Counting*, p. 44

This piece is a nod to my two all-time favorite writers: Rick Bragg, and Larry Blakely. From Rick Bragg, I learned to appreciate the stories of family members who struggled through hard times. From Larry Blakely, I learned I could tell a story with words. For this, I remain forever grateful.

Huiting Jian, *The Mango Tree*, p. 10

The fact that I was not able to see my grandfather during the last moments of his life will always stick with me. When I was only six he left our country and immigrated to the United States. Many of my childhood memories have already been forgotten; however, the memories of the mango tree and my grandfather are ones that I still remember. I wrote this piece entitled *The Mango Tree* so that I could commemorate my grandfather.

Jeri Lee, *Waiting*, p. 55

This piece is important to me because I worry that too many of the uprising generation get lost in time on their computers and ignore all the world has to offer them. It’s easy to let the important things in life slip past you while you are distracted. We give our lives to that which we give our time.

Taylor Lewis, *Just Breathe*, p. 5

I wrote this poem as a narrative about my first trip home after living in Georgia for three years. This is the last portion of the narrative when I walked out of the airport and in to a winter evening that was very familiar but hadn’t been experienced in a very long time.

Brian McFarland, *Stories for Those Who Need Them*, p. 113

My parents divorced when I was still very young, and my mother became involved quickly in an abusive relationship that affected the lot of us. You know the words to that story; say them with me. The one solace we had was the rest of our family, who took us in without question when things got rough. This piece involves the common fear of loss and loneliness.

Jared O’Brien, *Timeless*, p. 89

The piece is important, because it highlights a struggle in my past: the feeling of time slipping away from me and the struggle of finding the best thing to do with what I have. It brought me to a closer understanding of how precious I feel life is and how mundane it can become.

Rachel Shefchek, *Hidden Whispers*, p. 29

This piece offers that sense of calm when the mind is anything but calm. I wrote it to inspire friendships to stand strong against the world and to realize that keeping your close connections is important.

Rachel Shefchek, *Ghost*, p. 91

This is the first chapter to the novel I've worked on for two years. There can never be enough strong female leads in literature, and I am hoping to add a new spin on crime drama with this character. Although she starts as hard to connect with, throughout the story she will open up.

Savannah Singh, *Luminous*, p. 65

Since Winter of 2010, I have been taking classes at Clark College and I am now only five credits away from attaining my



Pagoda | Ceramic
KATIE BOWEN

transfer degree. I was made aware of the Phoenix early on in my experience at Clark and I was instantly drawn by the previous publications. My passion for literature and art pushed me to join the team of creative minds to create an exciting and unique edition for 2012's Phoenix.

Patrick Sifton, *Sirens*, p. 122

This piece is important to me because I've worked on my writing skills for a long time. I have even attended several classes at Clark with the intention of honing my skills. For me, this excerpt represents accumulated skill, experience and effort. My question for the reader: "Are you interested in reading more?"

Jamin Watson, *Predilection Susceptibility Amendment*, p. 81

I think there is a power in meditation and concentration, and I wanted to present a calming nature in this poem. I wanted to empower the reader to know that anything can be revealed, answered and achieved. Honesty with oneself is the first step to looking inwards.

Brittany Willard, *A Spring Reverie*, p. 15

I've been a student at Clark College since Spring 2009 and I began my education by taking art classes. Being a part of the art culture at Clark opened the door to the Phoenix and I've been fascinated by it ever since. I am so thrilled to be on the literary staff this year; it is a prelude to my dream job, a fiction editor. Currently I am a student at both Clark and WSU. I am studying Japanese and Linguistic Anthropology.

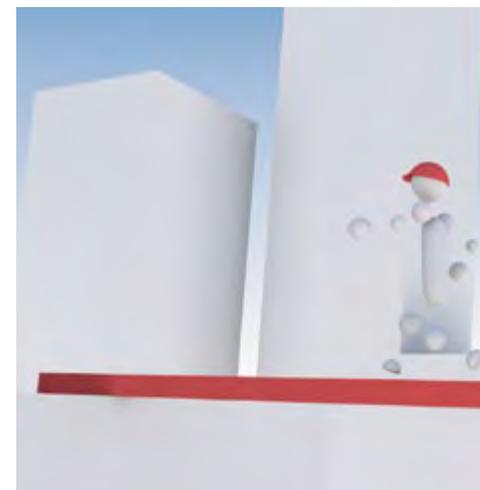
FEATURED ON WEBSITE



A Jar Full of Memories | Video
JERI L. LEE



In The House That's Burning Down | Music Video
GREG PEIFFER



Parkour | Digital Animation
PHILLIP MODIN



Melting | Stop-Frame Animation
BRIANNA STROH

COLOPHON

Phoenix was produced on Apple iMacs® using Adobe Creative Suite® software. Images were produced with Epson® scanners or a digital camera.

Phoenix was printed by Bridgetown Printing in Portland, OR on *Cougar* paper.

Primary typefaces used include Fanwood Text and Optima for body copy, and Machi and Helvetica Neue Ultralight for headers and captions.

PHOENIX STAFF

Co-Literary Editors

Rachel Shefchek, Savannah Singh, and Brittany Willard

Co-Layout Editors

Jeri L. Lee and Margherita Nicotra

Photographers

Ashleigh Cummings, Tara Omnes, Levi Savage, and Bradley York

Design and Production Team

Nicole Antonacci, Leiulf Clausen, Luke Culbertson, Ariona Ellis, Marinella Jiganie, Jacqueline Johnson, Joe Knepper, Levi Larson, Danielle Laughlin, Jeri L. Lee, Megan Lorenz, Margherita Nicotra, Igor Shevchenko, Levi Savage, Ryan Williams, and Bradley York

Fine Art Editors

Greg Peiffer and Nikki Kangas-Winston

Web and Promotions Team

Luke Culbertson, Ariona Ellis, Margherita Nicotra, and Angela Stapleton

Art Selection Committee

Shannon Wonser, Kelly Keigwin, Zoey DeJong, Mimi Boumatar

Cover Design

Luke Culbertson and Levi Larson

Advisors

Dr. Rita Carey and Prof. Kathrena Halsinger



Flight | Steel
LARRY STARK

