

Spring 2018

## SEEDS - 2018

Airam Velazquez

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**SPRING 2018**



**SEEDS**  
**Literary & Visual Arts Journal**

**Spring 2018 Edition**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thank you to all the writers, poets, artists who have contributed their hard work for the Spring 2018 issue this year.

Last but not least, thank you to the staff of SEEDS this journal would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work from all of you. Special, special, SPECIAL shout out to the best trio there is: Jenn Lee, Grant Spathis, and Airam Velasquez.

Thank you!

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# A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

To Community Readers, Participants, Supporters, and SEEDS Staff

WELCOME! This is SEEDS, NEIU's Literary and Visual Arts Journal. We are a collective of students who have come together to solicit submissions and be able to present the creative work of the Northeastern community to YOU.

It has been a wonderful experience working with everyone, to see our Spring 2018 issue become a reality is amazing. There has always been a strife towards creating something that is for students by students and we have expanded this philosophy to include our diverse, dynamic, vibrant community. As Editor-In-Chief I would like to congratulate everyone who has submitted for the issue; your work will forever be memorialized within our archives and for anyone to read. We here at SEEDS believe that such creativity deserves to be highlighted as the incredible positive force it is, whenever and wherever possible, now more than ever. We hope that this issue inspires and resonates with anyone who reads its content. NEIU has and is undergoing many changes constantly but as part of the student body we must remind others that our school grounds are meant to serve US—US the students.

Thank you,

Airam Velasquez

Editor-In-Chief

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
Drinking - Sarah Soto	1
Golden Over a Red Ocean Up Day - Nicole F. Anderson	2
Grand Work - Jany Lee	3
Monks of America - Peter Chan	4
On a Cruise - Kaitlyn Hui	5
On a Boat - Nicole F. Anderson	6
The Red Sea - H. R.	7
It Always Rains -	8
Immortal Souls and the Ocean - John Soto	9
A Note to Myself - Lee Soto	10
Keep Your Distance - Ray S. Soto	11
Light - Sharon Leung	12
Red's All a Day - Kaitlyn Hui	13
Red Light - Lee Soto	14
Red Light - Lee Soto	15
Red Light - Lee Soto	16
Red Light - Lee Soto	17
Red Light - Lee Soto	18
Red Light - Lee Soto	19
Red Light - Lee Soto	20
Red Light - Lee Soto	21
Red Light - Lee Soto	22
Red Light - Lee Soto	23
Red Light - Lee Soto	24
Red Light - Lee Soto	25
Red Light - Lee Soto	26
Red Light - Lee Soto	27
Red Light - Lee Soto	28
Red Light - Lee Soto	29
Red Light - Lee Soto	30
Red Light - Lee Soto	31
Red Light - Lee Soto	32
Red Light - Lee Soto	33
Red Light - Lee Soto	34
Red Light - Lee Soto	35
Red Light - Lee Soto	36
Red Light - Lee Soto	37
Red Light - Lee Soto	38
Red Light - Lee Soto	39
Red Light - Lee Soto	40
Red Light - Lee Soto	41
Red Light - Lee Soto	42
Red Light - Lee Soto	43
Red Light - Lee Soto	44
Red Light - Lee Soto	45
Red Light - Lee Soto	46
Red Light - Lee Soto	47
Red Light - Lee Soto	48
Red Light - Lee Soto	49
Red Light - Lee Soto	50
Red Light - Lee Soto	51
Red Light - Lee Soto	52
Red Light - Lee Soto	53
Red Light - Lee Soto	54
Red Light - Lee Soto	55
Red Light - Lee Soto	56
Red Light - Lee Soto	57
Red Light - Lee Soto	58
Red Light - Lee Soto	59
Red Light - Lee Soto	60
Red Light - Lee Soto	61
Red Light - Lee Soto	62
Red Light - Lee Soto	63
Red Light - Lee Soto	64
Red Light - Lee Soto	65
Red Light - Lee Soto	66
Red Light - Lee Soto	67
Red Light - Lee Soto	68
Red Light - Lee Soto	69
Red Light - Lee Soto	70
Red Light - Lee Soto	71
Red Light - Lee Soto	72
Red Light - Lee Soto	73
Red Light - Lee Soto	74
Red Light - Lee Soto	75
Red Light - Lee Soto	76
Red Light - Lee Soto	77
Red Light - Lee Soto	78
Red Light - Lee Soto	79
Red Light - Lee Soto	80
Red Light - Lee Soto	81
Red Light - Lee Soto	82
Red Light - Lee Soto	83
Red Light - Lee Soto	84
Red Light - Lee Soto	85
Red Light - Lee Soto	86
Red Light - Lee Soto	87
Red Light - Lee Soto	88
Red Light - Lee Soto	89
Red Light - Lee Soto	90
Red Light - Lee Soto	91
Red Light - Lee Soto	92
Red Light - Lee Soto	93
Red Light - Lee Soto	94
Red Light - Lee Soto	95
Red Light - Lee Soto	96
Red Light - Lee Soto	97
Red Light - Lee Soto	98
Red Light - Lee Soto	99
Red Light - Lee Soto	100



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	iii
<b>Staff List</b>	iv
<b>A Note from the Editor</b>	v
<b>Staff Biographies</b>	123

## Short Stories

<b>A Bottle of Gin</b> - Nicole F. Anderson	1
<b>Clutch</b> - Jenn Lee	5
<b>Monsters Among Us</b> - Grant Spathis	6
<b>Independent Women</b> - Ruby David	11
<b>Old Bird</b> - Jenn Lee	12
<b>Open Eyed</b> - Martin K. Davis	15
<b>Soul Among the Ruins</b> - Mary Thespina Kaltakis	16
<b>Stars</b> - Kat Losacco	21
<b>The First Seventeen Minutes of Every Morning</b> - Jenn Lee	24
<b>The Tale of Stahl</b> - Martin K. Davis	28
<b>To be me, or Not to be me?</b> - Bayley Schendel	29
<b>Wash me in a bath of sins</b> - Kat Losacco	31

## Poetry

<b>(TW: Eating Disorder) Internal Scars of 2009</b> - Nicole F. Anderson...	34
<b>#LOVE WINS</b> - Ruby David	35
<b>A New Day</b> - Loni Strach	38
<b>A Pocket for Everything, A Sonnet</b> - Loni Strach	39
<b>Anxiety I'm Panicking</b> - Kat Losacco	40
<b>Best Friend</b> - Ruby David	41
<b>Broken Glass</b> - Allegra Harper	42
<b>Broken Memories</b> - N.R.	43
<b>Café Gerund</b> - Nicole F. Anderson	45
<b>Candles</b> - Jenn Lee	47
<b>Chicago</b> - Nicole F. Anderson	48
<b>Danger Zone</b> - Bayley Schendel	49
<b>Dnt Wanna B Ur Grl</b> - Bayley Schendel	50

## Poetry

<b>Drunkards</b> - Bayley Schendel	51
<b>Getting Over a Bad Break Up: Day 1</b> - Nicole F. Anderson	52
<b>Hand Work</b> - Jenn Lee	55
<b>Hymns of America</b> - Ruby David	56
<b>I am a culture</b> - Kathryn Hudson	57
<b>I'm Awake</b> - Nicole F. Anderson	58
<b>I'm Not Sorry</b> - N.R.	59
<b>II</b> - Allegra Harper	61
<b>Iniquitous Suits and the Dead Brother</b> - Joris Soeding	62
<b>It Hurts to Stay</b> - Loni Strach	63
<b>Keep your Distance</b> - Bayley Schendel	64
<b>Lake Charles, Louisiana: The Dirty South</b> - Bayley Schendel	67
<b>Let's Sit &amp; Talk</b> - Kat Losacco	69
<b>Lilly-Lipped Liar</b> - Cristina Chaidez	70
<b>Montilla Four for Four</b> - Jenn Lee	71
<b>New Mexico</b> - Joris Soeding	72
<b>Obsession</b> - N.R.	73
<b>Parallel World</b> - Ruby David	75
<b>Post it Note Poem</b> - Cristina Chaidez	76
<b>Rester, c'est exister. Mais voyager, c'est vivre.</b> <sup>1</sup> - Vanessa Macias...	78
<b>Running from Death, Scene from Ghost</b> - Ruby David	79
<b>Session</b> - Kat Losacco	80
<b>Sleep, Then</b> - Cristina Chaidez	81
<b>Sorry to Interrupt</b> - Cristina Chaidez	82
<b>Spit don't Swallow</b> - Bayley Schendel	83
<b>The Love Poems</b> - Kathryn Hudson	86
<b>The Math Exam</b> - Nicole F. Anderson	87
<b>The Moon Says, Me Too</b> - N.R.	88
<b>Untitled</b> - Nicole F. Anderson	89
<b>Wait to be Erased</b> - Allegra Harper	90
<b>War of Peace</b> - Trudy Leong	91
<b>War On My Mind</b> - Bayley Schendel	92
<b>Watch Me Explode</b> - Bayley Schendel	94
<b>When Tucson Came for Amanda</b> - Joris Soeding	95
<b>You came</b> - Kathryn Hudson	98
<b>You Raise Me Up</b> - Ruby David	99



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Visual Art

<b>One Moment More</b> - Jennifer Kling	9
<b>Untitled</b> - N.R.	14
<b>Close Encounters</b> - Joesph Tinagila	20
<b>Acrylic on Canvas</b> - Nicole F. Anderson	23
<b>Don't Ask</b> - Shirley Vargas	27
<b>Remeber</b> - Kellie Jarr	32
<b>Mother Africa</b> - Michael Maura	33
<b>Untitled</b> - N.R.	46
<b>Content</b> - Kellie Jarr	54
<b>Deluge</b> - Jennifer Kling	60
<b>De Muizenval</b> - Kellie Jarr	66
<b>Undressed in Moonlight</b> - Joseph Tinaglia	74
<b>Untitled</b> - Darka Powers	77
<b>Bountiful Harvest</b> - Joseph Tinaglia	84
<b>Naked Lady</b> - Kathryn Hudson	85
<b>Sad Truth</b> - Alexandra Galvan	93
<b>Untitled</b> - Darka Powers	100
<b>The Way</b> - Alfredo Miranda	101
<b>Latina</b> - Alfredo Miranda	102
<b>Explorer</b> - Alfredo Miranda	103
<b>Mama Moderna</b> - Rocio Urbano	104
<b>Bathhouse</b> - Rocio Urbano	105
<b>Bad Painting</b> - Rocio Urbano	106
<b>Suspended Animation</b> - Veronica Cerda	107
<b>H</b> - Veronica Cerda	108
<b>N</b> - Veronica Cerda	109
<b>Flowers?</b> - Veronica Cerda	110
<b>Egg Ice Cream</b> - Brandi Nevarez	111
<b>Acorn Hedgehog</b> - Brandi Nevarez	112
<b>Beat my Heart Skipped</b> - Joseph Tinaglia	113
<b>IDGAF</b> - Joseph Tinaglia	114
<b>Future Flapper</b> - Joseph Tinaglia	115
<b>Muse of Logan Square</b> - Joseph Tinaglia	116
<b>Lumos</b> - Jenn Lee	117
<b>Glow</b> - Jenn Lee	118
<b>Jules</b> - Jenn Lee	119
<b>Snow</b> - Jenn Lee	120

## Visual Art

<b>Soft</b> - Jenn Lee	121
<b>Sunspot</b> - Jenn Lee	122



## A Bottle of Gin

Nicole F. Anderson

*Oh, come on. I'm not even drunk yet. I can't do this right now.*

Elizabeth and I are about to cross paths on the stairs. I can hear the old folks calling me a typical millennial with disgust in their voices as I pull out my phone and pretend that I'm not paying attention.

I can't even laugh about that thought right now because I've been spotted.  
*Fuck.*

She notices me and says, "Hi, Naomi." I nod hello. I focus on keeping my balance going down these damn deathtrap stairs. After I pass her, I rush down the stairs and throw myself out of the door. Once I'm into the gangway, I shove my hand into my backpack. I begin to panic about seeing Elizabeth as my fingers search for the familiar feel of the rectangular box covered in the plastic film. I can't seem to find the pack of cigarettes fast enough, but I finally do. I pull out the pack and look at it.

*I should quit.* I hesitate as I hold the pack of cigarettes in my hand but then hear a loud noise coming from above me. I look up to the third floor to see a random dude waving down at me. I don't smile or wave.  
*I don't care about you.*

I can see University Hall that towers over UIC and further off in the distance, I can see the top portion of Sears Tower. Tonight, the antennas are boasting a fluorescent shade of purple.

*Fuck it.*

I slowly pull out a cigarette, light it, take a long drag and close my eyes as I exhale. I can't help but to think about how much it irritates me that Elizabeth has become so close to my friends. Seeing her after everything that she has said to me, makes me so angry... but no matter how hard I try to get over it, I can't. It boils my blood. My ears and cheeks feel hot.

Maybe it's denial or pure ignorance, but either way, I can't ignore the fact that she helped free me. She ignites fire within my soul. Her beautiful, brown eyes melt my heart, and she inspires me to do great things...at least...she once did all of that. It's hard for me to think that someone who meant so much to me, someone that I held so close to my heart, someone who broke my heart so badly, is out of my emotional reach. But clearly not from my sight.

*Am I a masochist?*

I slowly take a few steps back to lean myself against the side of the apartment building. Looking back up to the third floor, I no longer see the random dude in the window. My mind momentarily clears, but then begins to wander.

A memory jolts in my head from the last time that Elizabeth and I were together. We were laying in my bed, facing each other, smiles on our faces and looking into each other's eyes. Elizabeth's eyes; a shade of brown that reminds me of fallen leaves in the fall months of Chicago. Then her smile; two semi-

symmetrical rows of teeth, enclosed with soft lips, adorned by dimples on her cheeks. I never was one to underestimate a smile, but hers has the power to brighten a whole room... with or without people in it.

*I need to stop.*

I turn my head to the left and look down the gangway, towards the street. This area of Chicago brings back so many bittersweet memories. But somehow, when I try to recall on them, my brain is foggy.

*Think. Think. Think.*

My mind keeps spinning in circles, each time bringing me back to a memory of Elizabeth.

*Shit.*

I open my eyes, pull myself off of the side of the apartment and turn around to look at it. This place is a landmark in the short timeline of my life. The red and brown brick covers the whole apartment. It looks average from the outside, but the inside is a god forsaken death trap. The original builder, whomever this mad man was, created the staircase in the shape of a rectangular spiral with isosceles triangles for the step boards. There are no emergency exits. Sure, there's a back porch with stairs that lead down to the outside, but if there was to be a fire, almost everyone inside would be fucked.

Taking another drag of my cigarette, I chuckle about all of the good and bad times I had here. This is the place where my friends and I drank to so many of our celebrations and sorrows, where we became the best friends that we are today. This is where I admitted to friends that I am gay, where I found the courage to express my feelings for Elizabeth and where she kissed me for the first time. I smile to myself at the last thought. I know that I shouldn't think that way anymore. I know that it's over and I need to forget about it.

*Why can't I just move the fuck on?*

Just as I begin to think that I was finally alone, I hear, "Naomi!" I recognize the voice, it's Heather, she more than likely saw Elizabeth come in and came down to check on me... Or is making sure that I haven't wandered off with a bottle of gin and passed out on one of the campus concrete benches again.

"Can I have a drag of that?" Heather asks. I hand her the cigarette and then look at her with a smile. Heather has been my best friend for a very long time. She is tall, thin, blonde and pretty. We have been to hell together and somehow made it back. I couldn't tell you how either of us have made it this far in life. That's a miracle in itself.

"I saw Elizabeth." Heather says to me.

"I did too, she said hi." I whisper back. I'm paranoid that Elizabeth will hear me.

Elizabeth and I met through a mutual friend of ours. Since we had a lot of the same interests, we immediately hit it off. Our friendship flourished with time but then one day, everything changed. She walked into the party that I was at and I saw her in a different way. It was as if I never have never seen her before. I noticed how her eyes shined, how her smile brightened the room and how my cheeks became hot and flushed with a bright red color when we talked.

For quite some time, I was in denial with myself that I was attracted to



women. I convinced myself that I "admired" them was not crushing on them. I told myself that everyone probably thought that way about people of the same gender. Maybe society conditioned me to think one way before I could even realize it myself. I put on a front for myself and others that I was straight. I forced it out of my mind and left it as that. But with Elizabeth...it was different, and it scared the shit out of me.

I struggled internally with, "*No, not me. I'm not gay, I can't be.*" Then I began to wonder... if you question your sexuality, doesn't that already mean you're not straight? I truly don't know. Whatever the case was, after that night at the party, I found myself writing poetry about her. I looked for every excuse that I could find to spend time with her. As the weeks turned into months, I finally admitted to myself that I was gay. Holy shit, let me tell you: that was a liberating moment. I stopped hating myself and started sleeping through the night.

When Frank and Pablo hosted parties, Elizabeth and I always ended up falling asleep on the same bed or couch. Those days, I never wanted to get up from bed. Sometimes I even pretended that I was still sleeping so she would continue playing with my hair. Four months had passed, and I finally worked up the courage to tell Elizabeth that I liked her, and when I did, she kissed me.

Her and I were laying in Frank's bed, with my head on her chest, and she said, "My heart is beating fast."

I said, "I know, I hear it."

Elizabeth said, "I think it's you."

I remember stupidly asking, "Why? Do I make you nervous?"

She told me that I did make her nervous, and then immediately afterwards, I blurted out, "Elizabeth, I like you. I was and still am scared to tell you, I'm not good at this kind of-." And before I could finish my sentence, she took me by the chin and kissed me. After we pulled away, Elizabeth said, "Me too." I still sometimes think about that night.

After that our friendship had turned into something else. It was time that I came out to my friends. I told Heather first out of everyone, we were sitting on her couch and I turned to her and said, "Heath, I have something to tell you."

"That you're gay? Yeah girl. I knew already. You like Elizabeth, don't you?" Heather asked. It was a similar scenario with Frank and Pablo, who both already knew as well. After coming out to my friends about Elizabeth, she had become close to my friends and things seemed to have been going really well... until they weren't.

The affection from Elizabeth came to a screeching halt on her birthday. After that day, every time she came to hang out her demeanor towards me was different. She was no longer affectionate. She was cold, rude and insensitive. I became so sick of her cold shoulder that I pulled her aside to ask what was going on, but she reassured me that there was nothing wrong and I was being dramatic. I knew I was being gas lighted. I should have sprinted far, far away. But shoulda, woulda, coulda. A few days after I confronted her, I called her to hang out, but she ignored my call. Weeks went by and I decided to reach out to her for the last time. When I called, she turned it around on me, making me sound as if I was crazy, telling me to leave her alone.

At first, I could not understand why she was acting this way towards me until I figured it out: she had a girlfriend. I was so upset and angry, not because there was someone else, because she didn't have the decency or respect for me to tell me. Someone I thought I knew so well and cared about me so much, didn't care about me or my feelings. I was so angry that I completely cut her off; every time she was in the same vicinity as me, I ignored her and acted as if she was invisible.

"Naomi. Hello, Naomi. Hello!" Elizabeth was talking to me.

I turn to face her again, embarrassed, I was lost in my own thoughts. Maybe I am crazy...or going crazy. "Heather, I'm sorry. My mind's not in the right place and I need a distraction. Let's go back upstairs."

Heather looks at me with a weird eye but nods in agreement. We turn to start climbing up the stairs. It seemed to have taken forever to get to the third floor. Right before we walk in the door, Heather turns to me and asks, "Are you sure that you're okay?"

"Yes, I promise" I tell her.

*I'm not okay. I'm pissed.*

I know why she's concerned; I never call her Heather. It's always Heath. We walk into Frank and Pablo's kitchen, and I see Elizabeth in the corner of my eye, standing by the pantry door, looking me up and down. With a surge of confidence, I walk directly in front of her to the kitchen table without hesitation or a glance. I swipe the bottle of gin off of the table and pour myself a shot. I laugh out loud while looking at the dinky shot glass.

I turn to Heather and say, "To bottle or not to bottle?" Heather looks horrified. She has good reason. Without waiting for an answer, I take the whole bottle with me, link arms with Heather and walk into the living room. The apartment is fairly small, it takes us less than fifteen seconds to walk there, where we find Frank. He gives me a hug and says, "Welcome back. You can spend the night at our place if you want to." I smile and tell him that I am going to have to pass.

*Elizabeth probably is going to stay and there's no way that I'm sharing a bed with her ever again.*

I look around the living room at all the faces here and start drinking straight from the bottle. "Speak of the devil..." I say aloud as Elizabeth walks into the living room, sits right next to me and then puts her arm around me.

*Is this a sick joke? Who does she think she is?* Anger consumed my whole body in a matter of seconds. I stand up, flash Heather a toothy smile, walk over towards Pablo and continue to drink gin straight from the bottle. I see the look of horror on Elizabeth's face, she knows what is going to happen next and knows it's not going to be pretty.

I smile at Elizabeth and laugh out loud.

*When the fuck did you start caring about what I do?*



## Clutch

Jenn Lee

The hens had stopped laying.

They stopped nearly a year ago. At first, no one in the family noticed. After all, chickens are fickle. Temperamental. The smallest insult might set them off their eggs. The family paid no attention until over a week passed and their stockpile of eggs dwindled. They stopped eating the eggs. Stopped using them to bake cakes and casseroles. Father thought it more important to sell the eggs they still possessed. The money might tide them over until the damn birds began to do their damn jobs once more.

So the family sold their remaining eggs.

Another week passed. Still the hens did not lay. Mother began to rock her rocking chair with a frenetic purpose, as though she might rock her brood into an egg-filled future. Brother favored threatening the birds with bullets.

*A bullet's no good, son,* Father said. But his fingers stroked the haft of his axe in contemplation. That night, the family fed on roast chicken.

An eggless month clucked by, and the henhouse posted several further vacancies. Mother knit with a speed that surpassed her rocking. Brother railed and ranted, stomped over creaking floors in boots caked with mud. Father stared out the kitchen window for hours at a time, glaring at the emptying henhouse.

A year scratched by without a single fresh egg. Mother had taken to foraging in the back woods for berries and wild onions. She pulled aside an old, fallen stump to look for mushrooms. Underneath sat an overflowing cache of eggs. She clawed down through the pile, eggs wobbling off down the sides of the mound, rolling away to rest against trees and rocks and under shrubs. Mother heard the snap of a stick breaking under a foot. A pair of mud-caked boots tromped through the woods, stopping a few feet away from where she crouched over the eggs. She lifted her head, looking up lanky legs in scuffed up denim.

Across the overturned stump, her son looked down at her, clutching two eggs in each hand.

## Monsters Among Us

Grant Spathis

Chapter 1

Sunday, August 21st, 1992 - 10:30 a.m.

Jeremy wakes up later than usual, unconcerned with the fall-out from his mom. His best friend was just kidnapped. How could he not be distracted? As far as the cops knew, Robert was dead.

But he couldn't be dead. Not when they had so much to do. They still hadn't figured out what the deal with the quarry was, even though they were pretty sure it was where the mob dumped bodies. Who cares that the mob doesn't exist in Springman, New York? They do in the city! It's close enough.

But now, in a world of caped crusaders and near mythical beings flying around the big cities, anything is possible. Shoving this thought aside, Jeremy pulls open drawers and gets dressed for the last day of summer before school starts. Freshman year is scary enough without having your best friend missing.

Rolling off his mattress, Jeremy takes a deep breath. Today is gonna suck. The last day of summer always does. He gets dressed slowly, slipping on a pair of tattered blue jeans, a dingy white t-shirt, and knock-off Converse low-tops.

By the time he gets downstairs, his mom is out of the house, likely at work.

"Phew, wasn't ready for that shit," Jeremy mutters to himself.

Opening the fridge to find nothing but eggs and bologna, he skips breakfast.

Running outside, Jeremy sees Scarlett in her yard, picking up dog crap. Grabbing his bike, he calls to Scarlett.

"Yo, I'm going to Elizabeth's. Wanna join?"

"Yeah, gimme a few to finish this up," Scarlett shouts back. After throwing away the trash bag, and grabbing the leash for her mutt, Ralph. She ties his leash to her bike handle, trusting him to keep up.

"You excited for the first day tomorrow," Scarlett asks.

"Nah, don't wanna think about school without Robert. Fucked up that he's missing still," Jeremy replies.

"Yeah, but they can still find him. And Alyssa. And Michael."



"You seeing a pattern here?"

"Sure. The cops said it was probably one guy. Some loner off in the boonies," Scarlett shouts as they peddle around the corner from Oak to Chestnut.

"Yeah, I guess. Just freaked out about that idea."

By the time they get to Elizabeth's, the conversation has stalled. No one wants to keep talking about (probably) dead kids. They hop off their bikes and knock on the door, expecting Elizabeth's mother to answer the door. She does, smoking her standard Camel Light, with a beer already open. It's not even noon.

"Is Elizabeth here," Jeremy asks.

"Yeah, go find her," she slurs, trailing off back into her traditional place on the couch.

The dark, smoky house Elizabeth lives in needs a bad helping of light. She runs downstairs, still pulling her tattered Converse onto her feet, and pushes Jeremy and Scarlett out into the yard.

"The fuck, man. At least warn a dude," Jeremy shouts.

"Shut up, I couldn't be in there anymore," Elizabeth replies.

"She's in one of her moods," Scarlett questions.

"Eh, she's just been up all night drinking. Swear to God, never drinking."

"People suck sometimes," Jeremy says, and throws his arm around Elizabeth, "but at least we don't."

She shrugs him off, pushes her curls back and puts them in a ponytail, and says, "What do you wanna do today?"

"Dunno," Jeremy shrugs, "we could go to the mall and wander around?"

"Booooooooo," both girls shout in unison.

"We could ride over to my place and see what Kristen is doing?"

Scarlett shouts "Hell yeah, your sister is awesome."

"So long as she doesn't have her bitchy cheerleading friends over," Elizabeth adds "Those girls suck."

By the time they reach Jeremy's split-level house at the end of Kildeer Circle, they see the cars parked out front.

"Well, I guess that ruins that... the cheerleaders are over," Jeremy mutters.

"Super. Maybe we can annoy the cops into telling us some stuff about Robert?" Elizabeth asks.

"Nah, but I do wanna see where they say he last was," Scarlett says out of morbid curiosity.

"Ew, why?" Elizabeth counters.

"Well, maybe we can see something the cops can't?" Jeremy says, starting to feel like this is a good idea, maybe get a lay of the land.

"Ugh, fine, but I am NOT crossing any police tape."

20 minutes later, they were all across the yellow line.

Within the 3 walls of a cave outside of Springman, New York, a hulking figure toys with the possibility of showing his face again, 3 years after being embarrassed, run off, and forgotten by the man he calls his nemesis. He has spent every waking moment plotting the destruction of Firehawk.

He has put together a small army of willing foot soldiers, culled from the population of wayward youth of New York. Kidnapped and brainwashed, they feel nothing but a desire to do his bidding. From his lair in this cave, he can command them to bring the world to its knees, just in time for the mastermind of this plan to reveal himself, once and for all, as the greatest supervillain of all time:

Maestro.





One Moment More - Jennifer Kling



## Independent Women

Ruby David

Women. We are complicated creatures. We have been called many things other than our biologically correct name. We have been called crazy mad stupid weak sensitive even boring.

Women. There are many of us. We are athletes, politicians, doctor's nurses lawyers engineers and educators.

Women. We are musician's actresses' poet's bartenders.

Women. We are athletes. We are Billie Jean King Martina Navratilova Williams Sisters and Maria Sharapova. Queens of clay and grass courts. We are the judges of the court. We determine how the gavel hits on the defendant. We are Mia Hamm Abby Wambach Megan Rapinoe Shannon Boxx Alex Morgan and Carli Lloyd. Our heads are on the field along with our brains. We are Simone Biles who grabs the mat by the horns and dances around to a very sad tune trying to score some numbers as if it were a game. We are Aly Raisman, Gabby Douglas, McKayla Maroney, Kyla Ross, and Jordyn Wieber, the cheerleaders aka Fierce Fab Five.

Women. Let's not forget the fierce Three Musketeers. Hilary Clinton and Sen. Elizabeth Warren had a run for their money. Also Nancy Pelosi. I do not know how she dealt with the circus, but I give her mad props. Lastly how can I forget the queen bee herself? Dear Old FLOTUS Michelle Obama. She did indeed climbed up to the glass ceiling. Not only did she break it, but she managed to puncture a great hole. "When they go Low, we go High", and boy did she go high.

Women. We are Christians Catholics Muslims Protestants even Atheists. We all have different views of our bodies and of different bodies that populate this already chaotic messed land we call America.

Women. We are small big tall short skinny young old Americans and aliens. We are straight we are lesbians bisexuals transgender. We are mother's daughter's sister's friend's wives. We take care of our families our communities. Yet we do not get the same wage for our hard work.

Women. In a time when America is divided we stand united.

## Old Bird

Jenn Lee

The old woman inched along the alley toward me. Her folding grocery cart, weighed down with four bananas and a single roll of toilet paper, squeaked with each step. A quilted housecoat, pastel flowers straight out of a Holiday Inn painting, zipped from chin to shin. She shuffled rubber galoshes through puddles. Blue hair curled tightly under a clear plastic rain bonnet. Smudged ivory gloves clutched at the cart's handles. I sighed. No better opportunity hobbled along and that itch in my veins bubbled up. At least old ladies carried what little money they had in cash.

I leaned back against the brick wall and trusted the lengthening shadows to conceal me from the old biddy's rapidly-degenerating sight. She probably picked her way down to the corner store every day to buy herself some fruit and a single roll of toilet paper. Occasionally she cut loose and sprang for something extravagant like prunes or a new bottle of blue rinse for her hair or Charmin Ultra Soft instead of the usual Scott's single ply.

The chirps of her wheels sped up as she vultured over and put on speed. She clearly hoped to get home by dark. Cut through the alley to slice a few minutes off her return trip to her rent-controlled apartment that she'd roosted in for decades. Old birds like her, hanging on to everything they had with their claws dug in, made it impossible for guys like me to get what we needed.

Poor dear should have stuck to the well-lit sidewalks. Better an aching hip than my alternative.

"Evening, ma'am." I eased out of the shadows as she approached. No good giving her a heart attack. "Need some help with that?"

She clutched her housecoat to her neck with scrabbling fingers, as though I had any interest in what lay under it. Her chin lifted and she squinted behind owlish glasses. The wheels silenced. "Who's that?"

"Just a neighbor, dear. Let me help you up to your place." I reached toward her cart.



She ruffled back a step. "I don't think I've seen you before, young man."

"Probably on opposite schedules. I usually work the night shift," I lied. "Well I used to. Normally I'd be mopping up the church floors right now. Polishing the pews." I fed the old dear all the corn she could eat. "But the boss wanted to give his nephew a go at it, so now I'm between jobs. Why don't I just hold the door for you? Is it back this way?"

She tilted her head and peered at me, weighing. Her jowls quivered with the movement. One dirty glove waved off over my shoulder with a slight tremble.

I escorted her to her door, helped her navigate the wet, uneven pavement and the loose pebbles that always collected in alleys. "You really ought to stay out on the main roads."

She nodded as she scratched in her purse for her keys.

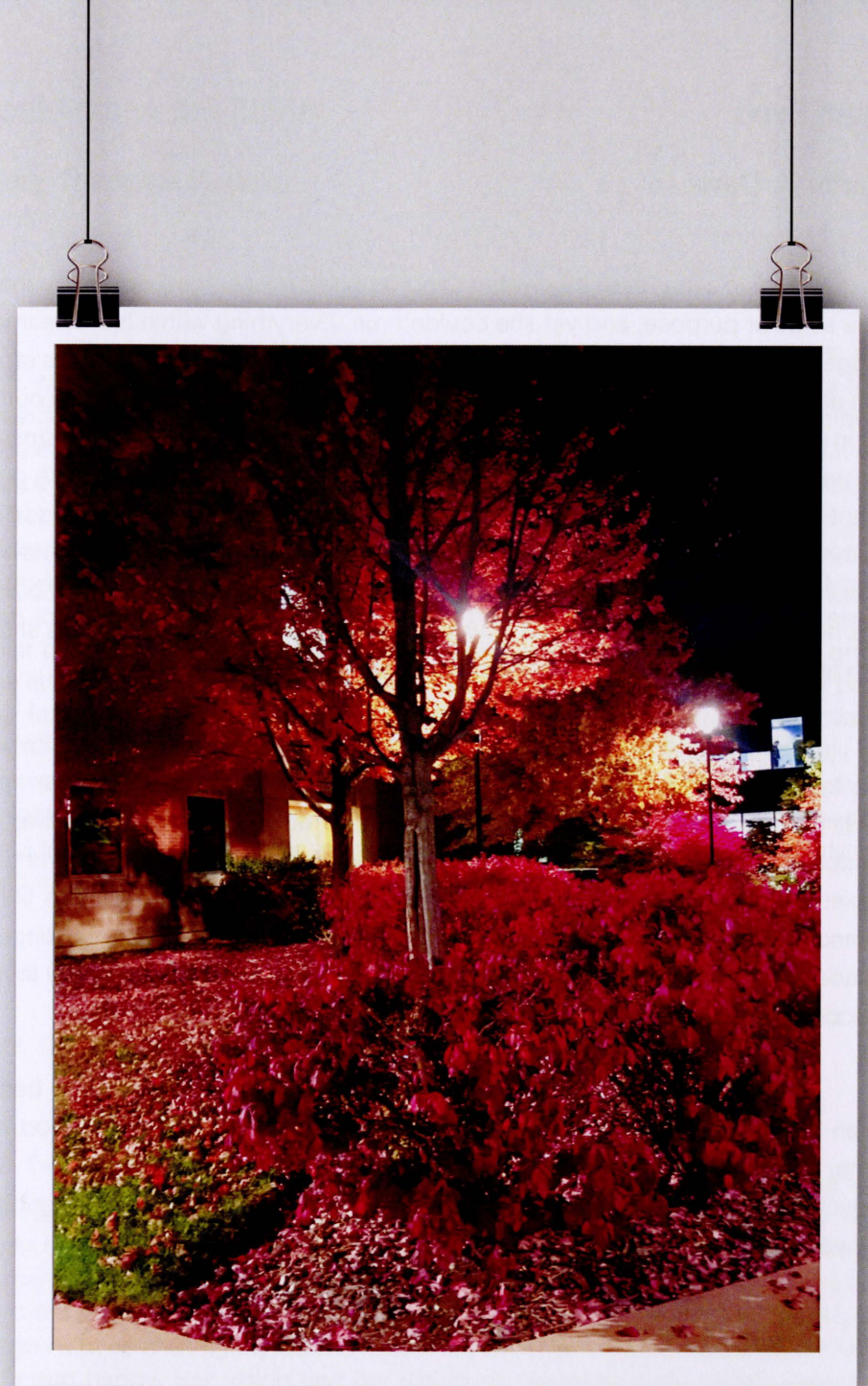
"You might fall or hurt yourself. I'd hate to see you laid up like that." I licked my lips and put on my best smile as I just happened to shift and block the back entrance to her building. "It just isn't safe back here."

"I know it, dear." She drew her hand out of her purse.

"Now I don't want to scare you, old girl -" I held my palm out to her as she stepped up to me.

Her gloved hand pushed against my gut. Ice rushed down my legs and ran up my spine. My fingers closed around the hilt of the knife protruding from my belly.

"You don't scare me, young man."



Untitled - N.R.



## Open Eyed

Martin K. Davis

Fabien's madness captivated Lyn. Here before her stood a creature made for a singular purpose, and yet she couldn't run. Everything within her screamed, begged and pleaded for her to lift her feet and flee. Her heart and her eyes stood firm as they froze gazing upon the monstrosity in front of her. Fabien could outrun her in a heartbeat, she posited to her conscious. So why not stay and bear witness? His earthen colored hair ran with vibrant red stripes. His body rippled with cruel intent. His encaptivating smile would be perfect if not for the blood stained white teeth. Lyn watched as this tiger made of human flesh stood but a breath away. Fabien may have ripped a few pieces of sinew and flesh from Lyn's friend, but he was not interested in satisfying a physical hunger. His mustard yellow eyes shone with an unnatural radiance, locking Lyn further into place.

"You should run little rabbit." Fabien whispered, his voice oozing its way into Lyn's every pore. A sticky sweet caramel sound that glued itself in her mind erasing all doubts that she would have a chance at running. No. There was no escape from this well-designed machine, this gorgeous image of destruction. Fabien cocked his head, a sharp movement that made his hair splash like a crimson wave. "What is the matter little one? Did the kitty cat grab your tongue? I made the mistake of being quick with your friend. Severed too many vital things all too fast. Tsk tsk shame on me."

There it was. The initial terror that had bubbled in her stomach before when Fabien ambushed them and her friend's life ended in a flash of blood and bone. *Now do you understand?* Her brain whispered. *Now do you see?* She knew that screaming wouldn't help, it certainly didn't help Timothy, but she did it anyway.

## Soul Among the Ruins

Mary Thespina Kaltakis

*It's going to be okay.* Meg tried to reassure herself.

She looked out the small window and then back down at her seat belt, over tightening it. An alarm rang in warning throughout the cabin as flight attendants urged passengers to return to their seats and fasten their seatbelts. Megan watched the panicking passengers and realized everything felt like it was happening in slow motion; her being the only person in the present. She looked to her right where a mother held her two children, one son and one daughter. There were tears running down the mother's face, but she managed to keep her expression calm for the sake of her children. The children both looked at Megan with their bold blue eyes, as she guessed they'd be close in age, maybe seven. Their blank faces were staring back at Megan like they were looking at a ghost. The little girl's hair was up in a ponytail that had many strands of her short blond hair falling out. The boy was younger with dark hair that was tangled, crowding his face. His eyes screamed fear, but his face laid calm as he held on tightly to a worn teddy bear. Megan wanted to get up and hug them and tell them it was just a nightmare and to go back to sleep. She turned and looked to her left, observing an older woman holding a cross on her necklace. The woman held on tightly with both hands, squeezing her eyes closed; praying hard.

Day unknown.

Megan slowly opened her eyes. Everything was blurry but vibrant with light. She blinked a few times, regaining her vision.

*What happened? Did I survive? Or is this heaven?*

Questions flooded Megan's mind as she tried to assess where she was. Her hands clenched through soft sand where she laid. She slowly rolled her weak body over until she was able to push her knees under her; taking her time to gather the little power she had left. As she kneeled, she saw dark blood dripping onto the sparkling white sand. The sight of blood made her dizzy and panicked. Megan's eyes shut tightly as she willed her mind to imagine herself somewhere safe and happy. Her vision had her sitting on her large fluffy couch along with her fuzzy blue throw-blanket her grandmother gave her. She felt that cozy feeling she got when she sipped coffee out of her favorite mug while watching George Lopez on T.V. She could feel the warmth of grandma's fuzzy blanket through her oversized t-shirt and pajama pants. She remembered the coffee smell that filled her room as the dim blue sky glowed through her window.



*August 19, 4:28 pm. No service. 5% battery left.*

Megan opened her eyes and looked at her phone. "Low battery" immediately popped up on her screen. Willing herself to keep calm, she felt her head where blood had dried along the side of her face. Two big cuts stung along her arm, with bruises already darkened on several parts of her body.

She scanned her surroundings. Plane parts surrounded the beach as debris from its interior was scattered as far as her eyes could see, some still washing up on shore from the rough waves.

Megan tore a piece of her shirt off and tied it over the cuts on her arm, pulling one end with her teeth. Taking a deep breath, she stood up and was thankful she was blessed to still be in one piece and able to walk. Forcing her legs through the soft sand, she headed towards the largest section of broken plane. Her heart shattered as the horrific scene looked like a tragic horror movie. Several seats in the broken section of plane were missing, while some still secured the remains of passengers less fortunate than her. Blood and human remains were splattered amongst the wreckage in grotesque masses forcing her hand to her mouth, keeping the bile in her throat at bay. She didn't realize how lucky she was to be alive until witnessing the fate of so many others.

But this had only been a section of the plane. The 747 had to have accommodated close to 300 passengers. Megan's heart lifted in hope.

Being cautious of the jagged plane parts scattered around her, she zigzagged along the beach like mines in a minefield. Scanning the stretch of wreckage, she cried out for survivors.

"HELLO?! ...CAN ANYONE HEAR ME?!"

She listened intently for a response, but only the waves of the ocean could be heard. She tried again. "IS THERE ANYONE OUT THERE?" Still silence.

After hours of trying, her energy was depleted. Megan took in a deep breath of the thick humid air and began reasoning with herself. It was beginning to get dark, so people must be aware of the plane missing by now. Surely a search party would be underway. All she'd have to do is survive until they found her.

*August 25th. Six days since plane crash. 0% battery left.*

Rummaging through the wreckage for anything useful for her survival, Megan was able to take shelter in a smaller piece of the plane's midsection that

was embedded in the sand a few hundred feet from the worst of the wreckage. Only the top half remained but was good enough to give her the sense of security she needed, and was far enough away where the smell of the decaying bodies could not haunt her sleep.

Every day more pieces of the wreckage washed ashore, as well as an occasional body. She'd search for anything of use while silently praying for any lost soul from the crash.

She lived off cans of warm soda, crackers, and small packs of peanuts she found in the plane's kitchen area. In the evening of day six, a large white box washed on shore. She dragged it to her sanctuary and pried open the latch. The plane's emergency kit contained a swim vest, medical supplies, flashlight, batteries, an assortment of dried food, and numerous things to keep several people alive for a numerous amount of days, if stranded.

Megan didn't wish to hold back the tears that spilled from her eyes as she rummaged through the contents. She came across a box tucked into the corner of the case. The label read it was a U.S. Coast Guard approved Emergency Strobe that could flash for 60 hours, which was visible for three miles. Also packed were two chemical light sticks good for 12 hours each, and a flare gun. Her sobs of relief took her over as thoughts of being safe under grandma's blanket revived her hopes in being rescued.

*August 31st. 11 days since plane crash.*

Megan wrapped her arms around her knees as she sat on a large rock near her shelter and watched the sun fade behind the distant ocean; the strobe and flare gun always near her side. She listened to the waves crash against itself and kept a transfixed stare at the vivid colors left behind by the heavenly sun. Stars overcame the dark sky while the moon took its place above the water. She thought she'd heard the sound of a blow horn in the far distance but shrugged it off as wishful thinking.

Then she heard it again. She straightened herself up to focus on the ocean. She thought it was a mirage at first, but the tiny silhouette of a ship barely showed itself in the darkness. Megan pushed the red button on the strobe and grabbed the flare gun.

Rushing off the rock as fast as her feet would carry her, she ran into the water until it reached her hips to get as close as possible within safe depths. She reached the gun high into the air and fired. The bright torch shot into the night sky leaving a trail of sparks and smoke. Megan blinked from the burst of color.



She waited.

Running back to the rock she quickly forced another flare into the gun and resumed her place in the water. Again, she aimed it high and pulled the trigger.

If the ship had seen her, it showed her no sign.

*September 3rd. 14 days since plane crash*

Meg woke up saturated in sweat from the heat. After taking a swig from a water bottle, she stood and stretched her stiff muscles. Looking out into the bright ocean, she wondered if the ship she saw wasn't just an illusion; a figment of her overactive imagination. She shut off the strobe that was still flashing where she'd left it the night before.

Tearing open a small bag of peanuts, she picked one out with her fingers and chewed it. The crunch in her mouth sounded odd and she paused from the confusion. A choppy echo invaded the air as Megan looked up. The reverberation was approaching quickly as Megan jumped out from her shelter and saw a helicopter appear overhead. It hovered several feet above the debris of the crash. Megan waved her arms and shouted to get their attention. A man in the chopper waved Megan over to a clearing away from the crash site.

She ran to where he set the chopper down as a medic emerged. Her emotions overwhelmed her as she threw her arms around him and cried. He led her to the door and helped her inside.

As the helicopter took the sky once again, the medic was checking Megan's vitals. They landed on an Aircraft Carrier several minutes later.

Waiting on the sidelines of the landing strip stood a mother and her two children, one son and daughter. They looked familiar to her, as if they met before. Her eyes met with their bold blue eyes. The expression of fear in their eyes were changed to a distant smile of joy.



Close Encounters - Joseph Tinaglia



## Stars

Kat Losacco

Her eyes met his & everything made sense. Everyone before him didn't matter. Every heartbreak & bitter breakup seemed to vanish & every love song & poem that has ever been written made sense. As he smiled her heart became whole. Her entire life had been leading to this moment, & it was perfect. He was everything that someone was supposed to be. A life without him would be nothing but an existence. All she had to do was show him that she was it, she was the one & she would do it & everything would be wonderful & perfect & just the way it was supposed to be.

\*

It didn't matter who he was with. The man I was with didn't have a home in my heart anymore & his "situation" was not the end of my story. It was the beginning. I was going to show him & we were going to build a life together because that was how love works. It just happens & he was going to see it. He was going to realize that it was me that he was going to be with & love...

\*

I tried so hard that I nearly killed myself in the process. It was okay because I was the right choice. Broken & bruised & bleeding, I was the right woman. My pain & tears would be enough. They would show him how much I cared. The bottles of wine & the handful of pills, the anxiety & the emptiness in the pit of my stomach, the raw face & the blistered cheeks, & the feeling of wanting to die would be enough...because, that's how love works. That is the way you show that you love someone.

\*

The days turned into nights, & the nights turned into vomit on my pants & the empty liquor bottles on my floor. Suddenly all my poems became about him & every breath I took was to continue to show how much I could love. Sometimes I would love so hard he would show up & let me love him...he would love me so hard that he would have to leave because staying in my bed for too long would give me the wrong idea. I could love him from afar & in my bed; sometimes his bed. That was all he could handle. Fucking & drinking was all he could handle. My love, the fucking & the drinking & the depression. While I was loving & fucking & crying & vomiting & swallowing pills while drinking a half of bottle of merlot....she was comforting the depression.

\*

He was so lucky to have her. Never expecting much. Never being foolish in all the ways that I was. She was a true woman. I don't even think she knew how lucky she was...till this day, she doesn't know.

\*

Loving a man who is only half yours is almost as bad as being told I Love You, but I can't be with you. Still, loving a man who is truly as amazing as he was seemed to be worth it. Late nights being home alone while another woman fixed his problems took parts of me I'll never get back. Vibrating messages from an overturned phone nearly ate away at my soul. Being kept a secret for months while I layed in his bed, while he fucked me, broke my heart into so many pieces that I still cannot find the remains -scattered. Being yelled at while crying & screaming to just be alive to a person who doesn't even know I exist...my bones ached with so much rage that my tears were scared to touch my cheeks.

\*

Life was good as I looked at him, fully trained to be okay with certain things & learning to not be so sensitive when it came to my heart. Learning to love a man that is only half yours is a project, but isn't that what love was? I was showing him that I was the right woman & in time I would be the only woman he needed. I just have to work a little harder, love a little harder. That is love.

\*

Every time I hear her name a little light burns out inside of me...I have so much light inside of myself that it doesn't matter though. There isn't any way that this will affect my spirit. How can it, when I have so much light to give...

\*

When someone loves with all of themselves. They don't have time to look- they don't have time to see that all of the stars that make up the light inside of their bodies are dimming. They don't see that every time he put someone else's feelings before mine, one more light goes out. He doesn't see the stars that burn out & fall & fall & die out because my heart is so fucking tired of fighting to love a whole heart, that after a while, there is no more light to be shown. There is nothing left to give to a man that I have been half loving because half of his heart is somewhere else.

\*

I have loved & loved & loved so much that all my lights have burned out & all I have left is hate & anger & darkness...





Acrylic on Canvas - Nicole F. Anderson

## The First Seventeen Minutes of Every Morning

Jenn Lee

You wake to pain.

You wake to pain. You wake before your alarm. Maybe pain is your alarm. Pain makes an excellent alarm clock, except for how you don't get to set it.

Some days you roll over, bury your face in the pillow, curl deeper under the covers. You manage to sink back into sleep for a short while.

Most days you lie as still as possible, sip at the air in shallow breaths. You try to detach your brain from your body.

You need to get up.

The alarm jangles. When you picked this song to wake up to, you chose it because of its soft sweetness. Delicate chiming you imagined would be soothing in the mornings. A song to gentle you into your day.

You hate this fucking song.

You need to get up anyway.

You used to think of getting up, getting ready for the day, as one thing. One action containing a few mini actions. You got up. You got ready. You went out the door and into your day.

Now you know different. You know that every mini action actually holds dozens of micro actions, and each micro action costs.

You can't just get out of bed. No such thing as just getting out of bed.

You sit up.

You gather your hands beneath you, and you push. Your palms sink into the mattress. You feel ridges of bedsprings digging into the heels of your hands. You know the springs have give. They're springs. But the heels of your hands feel like they fold around the metal. The metal encased in foam, in batting, in cotton, in quilted puffiness, encased in every form of softness imaginable. Your hands bruise on the bed.

You push yourself up. Your wrists throb. Your elbows crack. Your shoulders buzz. You lean forward until your arms no longer need to support you.



Sitting up in bed, you breathe deep.

You forget. Even after all these years, these decades of this pain, you still forget sometimes. It should be impossible to forget, but of course you forget. You're thirty-seven, not seventy-three. You forget that every micro action costs, even ones that should be as innocuous as a deeply drawn breath upon waking.

You forget. You breathe deep, and your rib cage lights up with fire. Your chest tries to unhinge like the jaw of a snake. Ribs pull apart from each other, stretching tendons and connective tissue until you think they might snap.

You take a shallower breath. Experimental. You count to twelve before taking another. The flames die down, but it takes time. It all takes so much time.

Scooting to the edge of the bed, joints creaking, you lower your feet to the floor and stand.

As though standing is a simple, singular action.

You slide to the absolute precipice of the mattress. Sheets bunch under your thighs and the skin burns. You put weight on the lower half of your body. Your ankles throb. Your knees crack. Your hips buzz.

When you stand, the world tilts. Instinct tells you to close your eyes until the swell of vertigo levels out, until the tide of pain ebbs.

Instinct fucking lies.

You know different now. You know that closing your eyes unmoors you. Closing your eyes ends up with you on the floor, head throbbing where it thwacked the bureau. You know from experience, and so you keep your eyes open. You brace a hand on the bed. A hand on the wall. Solid points of contact anchor you, let you breathe, take your weight.

Another lie. Nothing takes your weight but you. You keep you upright. You keep you steady. You keep you going.

But the wall helps.

You need a minute. You need many minutes. Your head drops forward, and you jerk it back up again. Another eternal twinge you somehow forget each morning. Every movement of your head that drifts too far beyond its axis sends shockwaves down your spine. When you move your head, the column of your neck sounds like it's made of broken glass grinding against itself. Electric jolts arc between your shoulder blades. And sometimes your neck simply seizes.

That's an unnerving sensation.

When you cannot move your neck. You cannot move your head on your neck. Sure, you could force it. But do you really want to force your neck to move?

So you wait. You wait a minute. You wait many minutes for whatever locks up inside you to release.

You spend a lot of time waiting.

Waiting terrifies you. How long? Do you wait out your life? How long?

Is this it? Standing stuck leaning on the wall. How many mornings? How many mornings are in thirteen years? How many mornings stretching back beyond the diagnosis that shot through you thirteen years ago?

When was the last time you woke without pain?

You don't know.

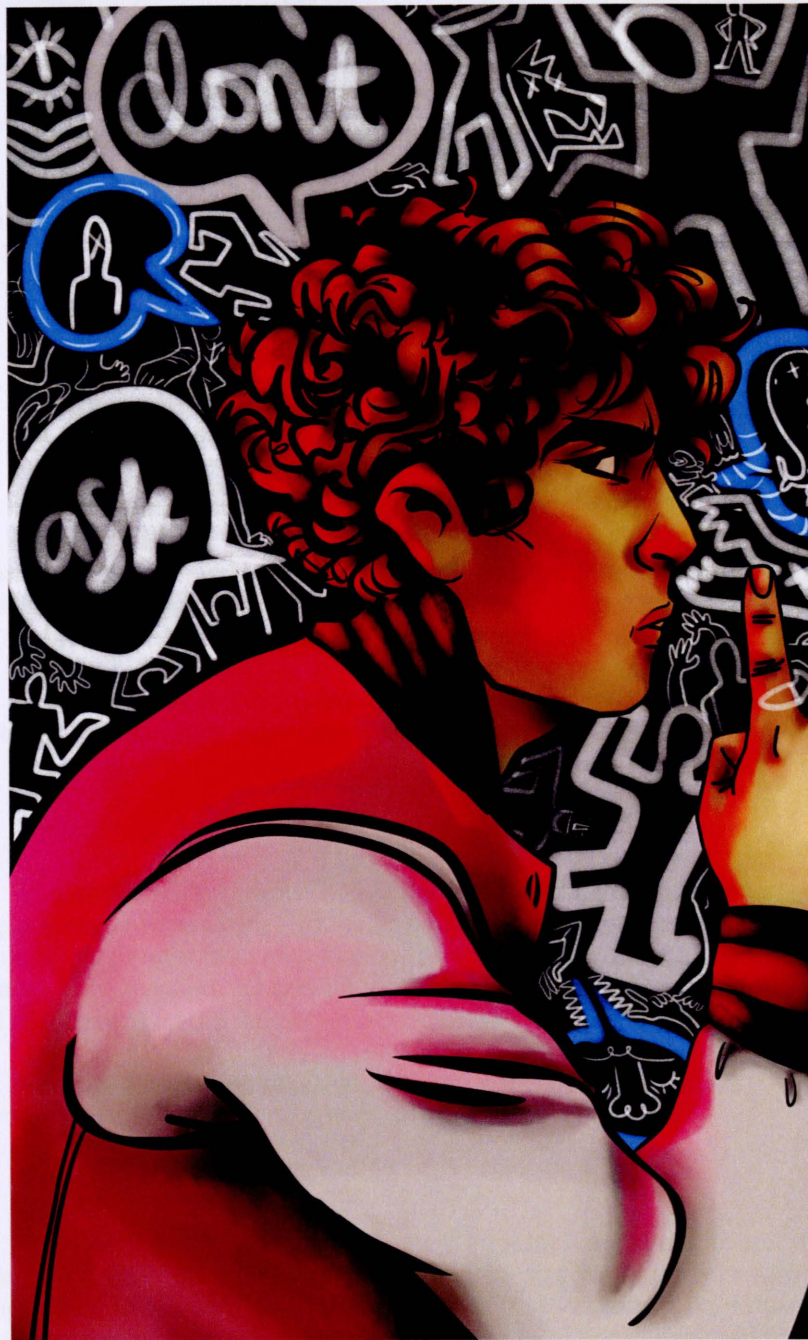
You do not remember a morning without pain.

You wake to pain because you everything to pain. You breathe to pain. You study and work to pain. You skip important events to pain. You weep, you sing, you dance to pain. You love to pain. You live to pain.

You wake to pain.

And then you keep going.





Don't Ask - Shirley Vargas

## The Tale of Stahl

Martin K. Davis

There was a boy, his age described him as a man, but alas a boy his personality forged him as. He did his best to keep his life together but no matter how hard he tried it fell into tatters around him. The boy, we shall call him Stahl, grew sad. Grew sad in the way a sunflower does when it can no longer find the sun. Stahl became sad in such a way that parted lovers, lost children, and abused pets could relate too. Stahl did not comprehend why everything around him fell apart, for Stahl was a child. Children only see the disaster before them, not the logic behind it as adults do, or at least as they try to do. Stahl tried everything he could, but circumstances took everything he had. Stripped him bare. His homes were burned or taken from him. His lovers left him. His jobs escaped him. Stahl fell into a great depression and with foolish intent found only in children, sought a relief of pain in cheap liquor and even cheaper drugs. With a crashing finality Stahl ended his life with a dull straight razor dug deep into his wrist. He probed with the razor, searching for an answer to his problems. He found no answers, only peace. A simple peace, one with a simple answer. "Why me?", the knife asked. Simply because. Because life is unfair, answered the blood. So ended Stahl's life. In a tiny dilapidated apartment, in an empty city, his life ended, but not his story.



## To be me, or Not to be me?

Bayley Schendel

I often wonder what secrets the people around me are hoarding. I often wonder if they try to figure out mine. I have never quite fit in, but fortunately, I instinctively excelled socially, and academically. Naturally, I stopped excelling once I grew out of my innocence. I remember being thirteen and full of angst, just like they say. Unfortunately for me, no one knew what was wrong with me when it came to my own neurosis, and I never knew how to explain it. Once I learned a little more about psychology and therapy, I became curious and did some research. My first time in therapy will always feel fresh, and even though I hated every minute of it, I continued to go. I was soon diagnosed with high generalized anxiety and depression, but there was one thing my doctor could not label right away. Emetophobia is the fear of vomit.

I bet you agree, you think it's gross. You find throwing up to be an unpleasant thing as well. Do you spend every minute of every day thinking about potentially throwing up or someone else throwing up around you? Do you avoid certain foods or restaurants because somehow you think it will make you sick? Do you go crazy when you start to feel anxious and then start to feel sick, which then causes more anxiety, and you know all of this, but it still does not stop the panic attack? I do. I have let my disease dictate whether or not I go to class, work or even out with friends. I have let it develop into an eating disorder. I have let it become all of me, but ever since I can remember, it has been a part of me. My fear of being sick (the phrase throwing up makes me anxious) has hurt my relationships with people, like my friends, family and boyfriends. It is extremely exhausting to know that I am being irrational, and it is so hard trying to hide it. I try to look clean and reserved on the outside because on the inside I am burning up. My whole being is wiggling around inside of me and I have yet to figure out how to settle it down. I wish I could pretend like I don't know how this phobia developed but, unfortunately, I do know, and it isn't pleasant. My parent's have always liked to go out and have a good time, which consisted of getting roaringly drunk and coming home screeching at each other belligerently. As an extremely sensitive and impressionable child, I did not enjoy any minute of it. I wanted it to stop, and

I thought I could make it stop by forcing myself to get sick, preventing my mom from going out.

My master plan worked for a short while, until my mom kind of caught on, and left me alone at home when I was eight on New Year's Eve. I brought in the New Year with tears, and panic attacks. After that single night, I began teaching myself how to hide any feelings of anxiety, because I did not want to feel as ostracized as I did then. I began a series of compulsions to help secretly calm me down, which then turned into obsessive compulsive disorder, or OCD.

Emetophobia consumes me...and maybe I let it, because it has become some strange comforting constant in my life. As much as I hate my anxiety and depression, I always appreciate it, because it has shaped me into the woman that I am today. It has formed me into a creative, smart, introspective, independent, strong, empathetic, and overall, a badass chick with an interesting story.



## Wash me in a bath of sins

Kat Losacco

I've always been used to living my life like a shitty country song,  
I like to drive with the music blasting so I can forget about the fact that my dad is cheating on my mom,  
I was once told to never get involved with a man that wears a mask...or was that what your father told you?

I tend to wash myself in a bath of sins

[There never seems to be enough bubbles to hide what needs to stay hidden]

I never sleep with the fan turned off...even when its negative two [[outside]].

9/10 women who were sexually abused tend to talk in child like voices at random moments in their everyday lives...

I may have just made that up, but I agree...I go through phases of hating myself; weekly.

I have been told that money cannot buy happiness... by people who have their lights turned off by the electric company

A shot of whiskey and a Xanax works better than any dose of Nyquil

And that last drink you are trying to order at the bar at 1:57 am on a Tuesday night will not make you feel any better.

If you have a female manager she will become jealous of you, NO MATTER WHAT.  
I don't care if she's your friend or if she has a daughter your age. It is going to happen. Women are jealous creatures by nature and you are not the exception to the rule.

I frequently think about my ex, and I hate him for it.

2 years, 6 months of therapy and a nervous breakdown doesn't seem to erase him from my memory.

My thoughts on love are as bright as a stick it and click it at target.

Loving a grown man and his dog doesn't guarantee you a life long dream of happiness, and it sure as hell doesn't promise you a wedding ring.

When I was 12 I realized that money was the root of all evil and by the time I was 19 I knew that money was the only way I'd ever get out.

I'm stuck between hating the world and wanting to be alive.

Detesting my surroundings but being proud of who I've become.

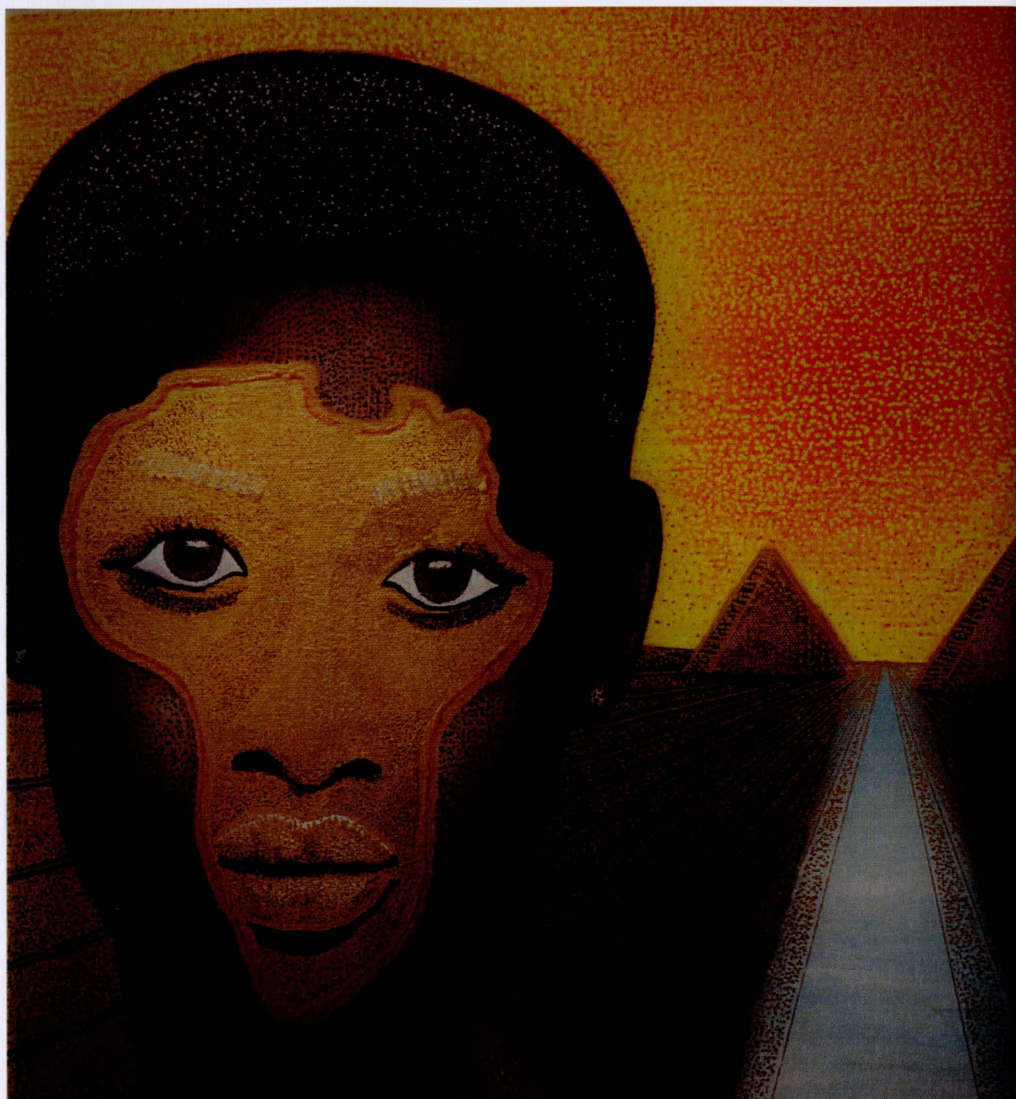
I feel alone a lot,

Even in crowded places.



Remember - Kellie Jarr





Mother Africa - Michael Maurer

(TW: Eating Disorder)

## Internal Scars of 2009

Nicole F. Anderson

Look around you, little one.  
 Don't you see that you're not good enough?  
 Mother says, "You eat too much."  
 Look in the mirror, little one.  
 Can't you see that your stomach isn't flat and your legs touch?  
 Don't you see the people looking at you with disgust?  
 What are you going to do, little girl?  
 Your clothes don't fit right and you're getting desperate.  
 Don't you know?  
 The demands of being perfect require you to be thin?  
 You skip dinner, you skip lunch, but you soon learn that's not enough.  
 You start frequently visiting the bathroom,  
 shaking and crying as you correct the day's mistakes.  
 Feeling guilty about finding this so twistedly pleasurable.  
 Why are you upset, little one?  
 You're becoming thin!  
 It doesn't matter that your skin is turning pale and your hair is losing its shine!  
 I'm your new best friend; I'll be here until the end.  
 Don't tell anyone, little one.  
 You don't want to be remembered as the fat one, do you?  
 Mother says, "Do you really need seconds?"  
 Little one, she doesn't know your ways, she doesn't know what you do multiple  
 times a day.  
 She doesn't know how vast amounts of pain she caused.  
 Or the damage she's done. "She was such a beautiful one," they'll say,  
 When you're gone.



## #LOVE WINS

Ruby David

I stand 5 feet 1 inch tall, but I am still small  
At night I lie in bed thinking things in my head  
My hair is fire red giving off a spark in the dark  
My teeth are bright, no need for light  
Everybody now knows my name, nothing will be the same

Nobody can figure me out or get the words from my mouth  
On the Internet getting clues and trying to figure out what to do  
There was something I had missed and couldn't find it  
Here I am frightened and scared, moving I hadn't dared  
Every night my mom asks what is wrong, but I just wanted her to move along

Looking hard to find the truth in a day or two  
Going to be a long week, trembling and cannot speak  
Blue, green, red, and yellow is what I know  
Total silence from me as I sit quietly  
Quiet like a mouse in this crowded house

Many times Mother Nature came, making me feel not the same  
Your sister will not be coming home since she is alone  
Only the smell of mint gives off the slightest hint  
Words were stuck like glue since I couldn't tell you  
Nothing else happened that day which is all I want to say

Speaking was tough enough  
This is a life I pictured for a while, even if it's a different style  
Only God knows what's in store for me and my family  
Rainbows I knew for a long time, even when I was nine  
Year after year everything became clear

Many people couldn't figure me out which made them shout  
Under suspicion they were indeed, didn't know about me  
Saw what is inside of me and couldn't say, until one day  
It keeps me sane not saying, this was not a game I was playing  
Closeted I was for so long, always thinking there was something wrong

Speaking became hard for me and I couldn't form words clearly  
And I do care if people believe me, it will help with my insanity  
Very few people knew, saying it out loud was hard to do  
Even back then my parents had no clue, but today they do  
Dad took a while to accept me, spoke to me differently

My mom reacted slowly, but least she acknowledged me  
Even my brother was cool, I hadn't taken him to be a fool

Now everyone knows so it goes  
Oh, what a beautiful life where things are just right  
These days are looking up for the best, I already survived the hardest test

Hooray for speaking my mind and now I can unwind  
Underneath my body was my heart that I didn't want torn apart  
Mackelmore's song is what plays on for days  
And I can't change even if I tried always made me cry  
Nobody should change we should remain the same  
Sending big waves of relief to something I had in disbelief

Sam Smith is a man of the hour for sure his records hitting the stores  
Abby Wambach is an athlete who is like me  
Mary Lambert a singer who is kind whom I don't mind  
Ellen DeGeneres is funny and wise when she wears all those ties

Leaders and celebrities helped me  
Others as well who aren't afraid to tell  
Victor Garber is an actor and a man who can understand  
Elton John with his music that has heart and soul nicely told

The right wing conservatives think it's a disease that infects me  
Have you read the Ledger lately? Only spitting out hate and cruelty  
Even if you wanted me to change I'd never do that for you  
Religion causes hate which leads people to discriminate  
Even that poison fills up the lungs of little ones

I can now say each and everyday  
Saying the word "gay" is easy for me  
Now that I know who I am, I strive as best as I can  
One man named Harvey Milk was smart in the head, sadly he is now dead

Saying who you are has brought you far  
Holding up signs on picket lines  
Avoiding people like me who are people too like you  
Making me feel degraded forever, which by the way doesn't make you better  
Everyone understands me but you, why is that difficult to do?

In the summer of 2010, this issue came to me again

Coming out was hard to do, which is why I went on YouTube  
And came across movies that helped me  
Man if they can so can I and not cry  
Every tear I shed was the result of horrors in my head



One day I went to their room, facing doom  
Unlocking the door, I went and spoke no more  
Talking was hard, but I realized I came so far

Five days I stayed away  
In a minute, I put my heart in it  
Very soon I said the words I held inside, then I broke down and cried  
Even my dog saw my face, wondering what happened in this place

Years and years my eyes filled with tears  
Everyone has opinions different from mine, it just takes time  
All the nights of no sleep allow my thoughts to run deep  
Restraining myself from telling someone else  
Someday this will be the norm; teens can come out in a college dorm

All ages can be free to be who they want to be  
Girls can like girls around the world  
Old ideas will fade away, and people will accept "gay"

Anxiety was building up inside of me  
Until high school, I was straight and did not contemplate  
Guys were trying to get me to admit that I was lying  
Under pressure I will not break, it is not a choice I had to make  
Senior year I learned about how to come out  
Today, it is easy to say that **I AM GAY.**

## A New Day

Loni Strach

The water wraps me in warmth

Hiding my secrets

Carrying away regrets.

From head to toe

It conceals the tears hiding

Deep in my soul.

It washes me clean

Offering me a peaceful start

to a new day.



## A Pocket for Everything

### A Sonnet

Loni Strach

She is the keeper of things great and small  
Giggles and hugs, she keeps them all.  
The good times and tough times cannot hide  
For deep in her heart is where they reside.  
The kisses you placed all over her cheeks  
And the ones blown from your hand, she was sure to keep.  
She grabbed them for later and hid them away  
To warm her heart, on every rainy day.  
Her memories are tucked safe in their place  
And bring her immense joy, upon seeing the face;  
Of the one she gave life and unconditional love  
That is her blessing, sent from above.  
Yes, she is the keeper, an angel with wings  
For your mother has a pocket, for everything.

## Anxiety I'm Panicking

Kat Losacco

I-Cant-Breathe

You're speaking too fast and I cant understand-  
Maybe I'll get better  
I'm-

trying-  
to stable—  
my breath

but my hands

Keep

Shaking.

They keep shaking.

I'm feeling dizzy

-Why do my legs feel heavy?

I'll be right back I have to release what I just ate.

I'm so tired-exhausted...please go away.

I don't want to continue to feel-

and shake-  
and cry.

Hug Me and tell me I'm fine.



## Best Friend

Ruby David

He was my best friend  
He was supposed to live until the end  
His death was hard for me for to comprehend  
He was my best friend

They were supposed to grow old  
Least that's what I was told  
His personality was so bold  
But his love was pure gold

Now you're gone  
Don't know how I'll move on  
The process is too long  
But I have to be strong

It was hard on my dad  
He was so sad  
I saw he was hurting bad  
The love of that man was all that he had

He was my best friend  
Why did you give up at the end?  
This broken heart I need to mend  
At age 16, I lost my best friend

## Broken Glass

Allegra Harper

What am I meant to be  
but the poster girl for inevitable endings?  
With my ever fading hair and spirit  
With my seasons like car-crashes  
Look around  
I am shrouded by death.



## Broken Memories

N.R.

x

Daddy is getting ready to leave again.  
This time I know I can make him stay.  
I won't let him leave.  
I stand in front of the door with my thin arms outstretched;  
a meager attempt to block his way out.  
"I'll be back shortly, Lala."  
I know what happens when he says that.  
He always comes back late, talks funny and smells bad.

xx

It's 10pm and we find him slumped over in the corner at the New England Inn.  
This time, instead of dragging him out the door like we usually do,  
we sit down next to him and order food.  
It seemed out of place in our usual routine.  
We were out searching for him all day and didn't have time to eat.  
Dad speaks straight at me, but his eyes,  
droopy and glazed are fixated on some other spot in the room.  
"This cook's the best. He's Czech, like your Wujek Radek<sup>1</sup>."  
I order the chicken, at restaurants I always order the chicken.  
It comes on a large plate, in a sticky sweet mango sauce with white rice.

---

<sup>1</sup> Uncle Radek

xxx

We arrive at my parent's house.  
Or rather, the current place in which they inhabit.  
Until the bank finally decides to kick them out on foreclosure.  
"On dzwoni<sup>2</sup>," my mom says.  
"Lala, I don't know where I am. I can't see. No one can help me."  
This time, I actually feel sorry for him. This time I'm scared.  
"Ask someone where you are."  
"Gas station, intersection of BLANK and BLANK...HURRY! PLEASE!"  
We find him stumbling, gasping, collapsing.  
I stopped praying to god to make him sober a long time ago.  
But I think this time, I pray.  
I pray it's finally the last time.

It's not.

---

<sup>2</sup> He's calling



## Café Gerund

Nicole F. Anderson

Sitting in a shitty coffee shop in Chicago  
Listening to the women converse about radical ideas.  
Ignoring the men talk about their favorite European poets.  
Watching their faux-pas and their beards sway in the wind.  
Rolling my eyes.  
Wishing you were here.  
Missing you, your laugh, your smile.  
Wishing you never left.  
Holding back tears while my chest decides to tighten with an iron grip.  
Pleading with any higher power that will listen.  
Being reminded to "stop dwelling on it".  
Trying to stop thinking is hard.  
Crying constantly on the inside, occasionally on the outside.  
Trying to write my pain away.  
Hoping that I can get this poisonous feeling out with every stroke of a key.  
Sipping my terrible five-dollar coffee.  
Feeling like a stranger in my own city.  
Knowing the streets but not my heart.



Untitled - N.R.



## Candles

Jenn Lee

We celebrate firsts

first step, first word, first day of school  
first pet, first friend, first big kid bed  
first food, first drink, first hangover  
first dance, first date, first kiss  
first job, first car, first apartment  
first crush, first kiss, first love.

We celebrate firsts,  
and we should.  
And we should  
celebrate lasts and  
nevers.

But how do we know when  
a first becomes  
an often becomes  
a sometimes becomes  
a last becomes  
a never?

Wake up one day and it  
dawns  
all the never agains already missed  
I will never play baseball again  
I will never ride a bike again  
I will never do a cartwheel again  
I will never go to a Rocky Horror show again  
I will never drive a car again  
I will never dance on a bar again  
I will never leave this country again  
I will never hug my mother again  
I will never see you again  
I will never  
I will never  
I will never  
never again.

## Chicago

Nicole F. Anderson

Cold weather. Warm hearts.

Flash a smile— do you part.

Be a good human.

What does that entail?

To be patient, to be kind

...to those who are frail

and for those who are not.

Be kind. Be gentle.

It's cold outside...

but it doesn't mean your heart needs to be.



## Danger Zone

Bayley Schendel

There is danger in darkness  
and darkness in danger  
a fine line between  
morality and mortality  
I like to walk the line  
I like to take the risk  
of bursting into flames  
I'd rather drown in ignorant bliss  
than live my life with what ifs?  
If by chance you let me down  
again  
I will think of you darkly  
There is danger in the darkness  
and darkness in danger  
so much is lost  
when you play it safe

## Dnt Wanna B Ur Grl

Bayley Schendel

### **Fucking to Modest Mouse**

is the most depressing thing in the world

...

The same songs playing over and over  
While you run your fingers  
Against my breasts  
And down my legs

*Those same melodies stuck in my head  
That Same touch that lingers too long  
All because of some damn song*

### **I'm sick of this**

### **And sick of you**

I wonder if you can tell  
That this is my own fucking hell

### **Fucking to Modest Mouse**

is the most depressing thing in the world

...

Honestly...

I'm just tired of being your girl.



## Drunkards

Bayley Schendel

Home is a broken beer bottle,  
Cutting my family into pieces.  
I am merely an observer.  
When the booze hits,  
I begin looking out at unfamiliar faces.  
When the booze hits; everyone becomes a stranger  
No longer acknowledged as 'adults'.

Home is not a safe place after dark,  
My childhood room becomes my bunker  
Four walls protect me from danger.  
The unfamiliar faces leave and my parents are alone.  
Screams sound like World War III,  
Alcohol becomes the scent of anxiety.

I dive into my stories,  
I dream of being anywhere else.  
As I escape I begin to cry,  
Solitude takes over.

Home is a broken beer bottle  
I am empty  
and jagged  
by the end of the party.

## Getting Over a Bad Break Up: Day 1

Nicole F. Anderson

Bittersweet memories, fresh urine and bleach –  
swirl through the air  
Alone for the first time  
I don't mind though  
Tonight, is different.  
I'll do anything to forget about you  
Just for a little while.  
Won't be thinking of you  
I'll be drunk tonight







## Hand Work

Jenn Lee

"Why, you know, in all those old movies, like  
Jane Austen  
or whatever, are  
all the girls  
always doing crafts and shit?"

Because  
knitting needles are lightning rods,  
drawing electric  
strikes of emotion  
a safe distance from the  
heart.

Because  
crochet hooks are tweezers,  
pulling slivers  
of resentment out of  
skin.

Because  
embroidery needles are knives,  
stabbing rage  
stabbing pain  
stabbing disgust,  
up down  
in out,  
rainbow silk thread  
glittering in the sun like tears.

Because  
seeing the Wickhams the Frank Churchills the Willoughbys  
resting heads on pillows stitched full of  
hate  
wearing shirts mended with  
venom  
buttons attached with  
revulsion —  
a small allowable victory —  
the only attainable release is  
cathartic  
as  
fuck.

## Hymns of America

Ruby David

*I once was lost but now I am found*  
I am still lost  
Lost in the madness we call home

*America the Beautiful*  
America, you are ugly  
America, you are stained red by the blood of the unrest

*Joy to the World*  
The world is a chaotic place  
Cries are loud enough to wake the dead

*Down to the River to Pray*  
River will not wash away your sins  
The sins will be just as unholy and cruel

*O Come All Ye Faithful*  
Come? Come where?  
You will take us back to where justice will never be sought

*Silent Night*  
Silence is Not Golden. Silence will be Broken.  
The sound of silence will be shattered by cries of injustice



## I am a culture

Kathryn Hudson

of casseroles and Friday night PTA meetings,  
of suburban swings over watered grass  
and lightening bugs in glass jars,  
opening to the dog's bark.

I am white fences and white bread  
and years of layered yellow cake  
that remembers to sort its history  
into party dresses and wooden horses.

I am Saturday morning pancakes and  
phones on the wall and the whirring blur of  
lessons that came slow but sure, bending  
on cranky knees and the calling of dinner,  
thick scented lilacs dripping secrets.

I am a culture of beige, posing queer,  
with glittered pink and wild wetness,  
a sun turned strawberry blonde.

I am a locker for the bully  
and all the terrible beauty absorbing  
neat rows of words in your garden.

I am broken bits of the organ strung with  
ribbons of pink leather and soft throats that  
slowly swallow your future.

I am beautiful compost becoming

## I'm Awake

Nicole F. Anderson

I've seen you before

I know you.

You're the main character from my nightmares

I'm run around; clueless and confused

Can't escape the terror of you

But who are you?

Where am I?

I think I found hell.

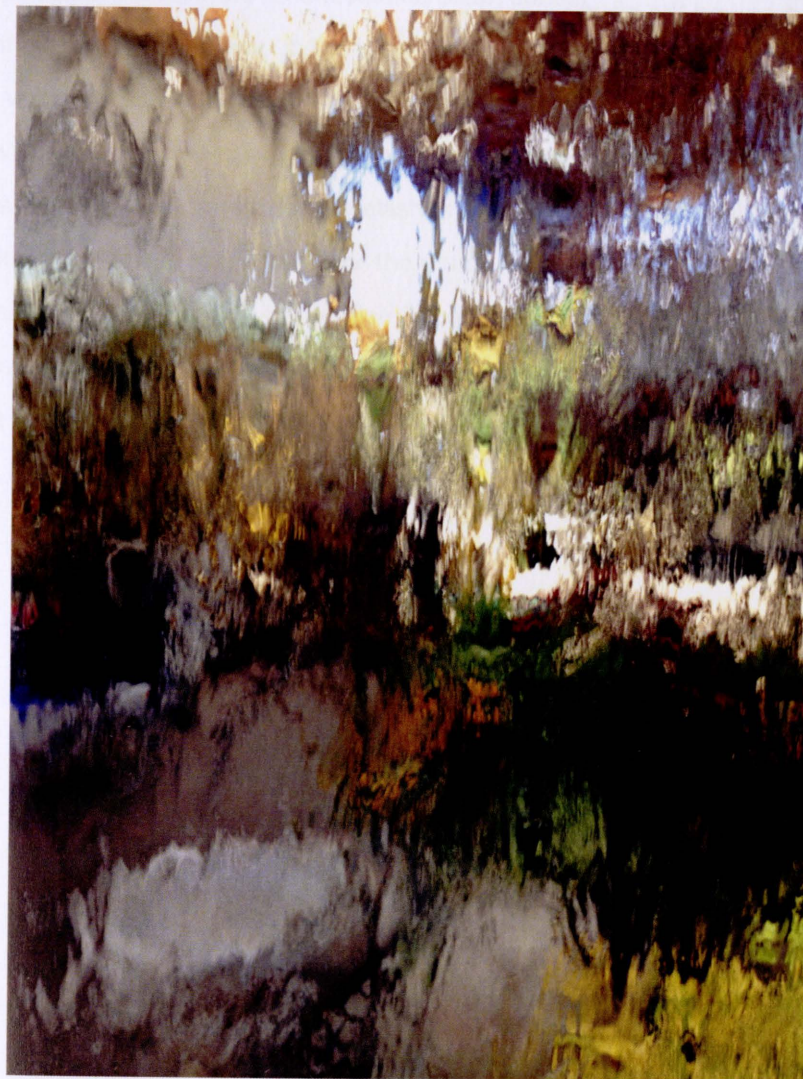


## I'm Not Sorry

N.R.

I've tried      searching for      poetic  
inspirations  
beyond      personal paradoxes  
until I've grown      conflicted.  
But these feelings persistently  
continue to fester      inside me,      like a painful  
ever-growing,  
oozing  
infected boil  
needing to be  
popped  
so I can heal.

—The more I write, the better I feel.



Deluge - Jennifer Kling



Allegra Harper

Dialing Deadbeats

Gathered around the phone

The ashtray lit like a candle by

Three cigarettes

Serious as a séance

## Iniquitous Suits and the Dead Brother

Joris Soeding

he reads 'Farewell, My Lovely' on the train

English countryside before smokestacks, soup, sunset

finishing tea, he straightens up the lapel

while watching screws swivel into his brother's casket

yellow-beige sofa, muted orange drapery, wallpaper that matches pillows

he sits next to a brunette with long eyelashes and a white, silk shirt, half-unbuttoned

after knowing who is responsible for the murder

he mails a manila envelope to the Vice Squad in London

next is the gentleman, a classmate another life ago

drives a burgundy Cadillac and is reminded about losing all horse races



## It Hurts to Stay

Loni Strach

It's agonizing to stay when your will is  
gone

and you dig

deep,

to remember what you

LOVED

about him...ONCE.

"F O R E V E R"

was a promise made; but cannot be kept.

It no longer holds true for the

two of you.

You hesitate to go but for the innocents you  
created together.

The weight of their sorrow

crushes your soul

irreparably.

Silence

in the house becomes

deafening

to your heart.

So, you remain. For them.

A family of four...

Never of ONE.

## Keep your Distance

Bayley Schendel

Leather jacket,

like a shield of protection

red plaid flannel,

wrapped tight around Her waist.

Legs for days,

so porcelain they may break.

Face that kills,

She has cheekbones for days.

Green diamond eyes,

you just can't look away.

you don't just peak once...

you break

your neck,

your back,

your heart,

to get a glimpse

of Her.

She isn't looking to hold hands,

or looking at you,

She just wants to

Sway and dance.

Don't grab Her,

or

Call Her baby.

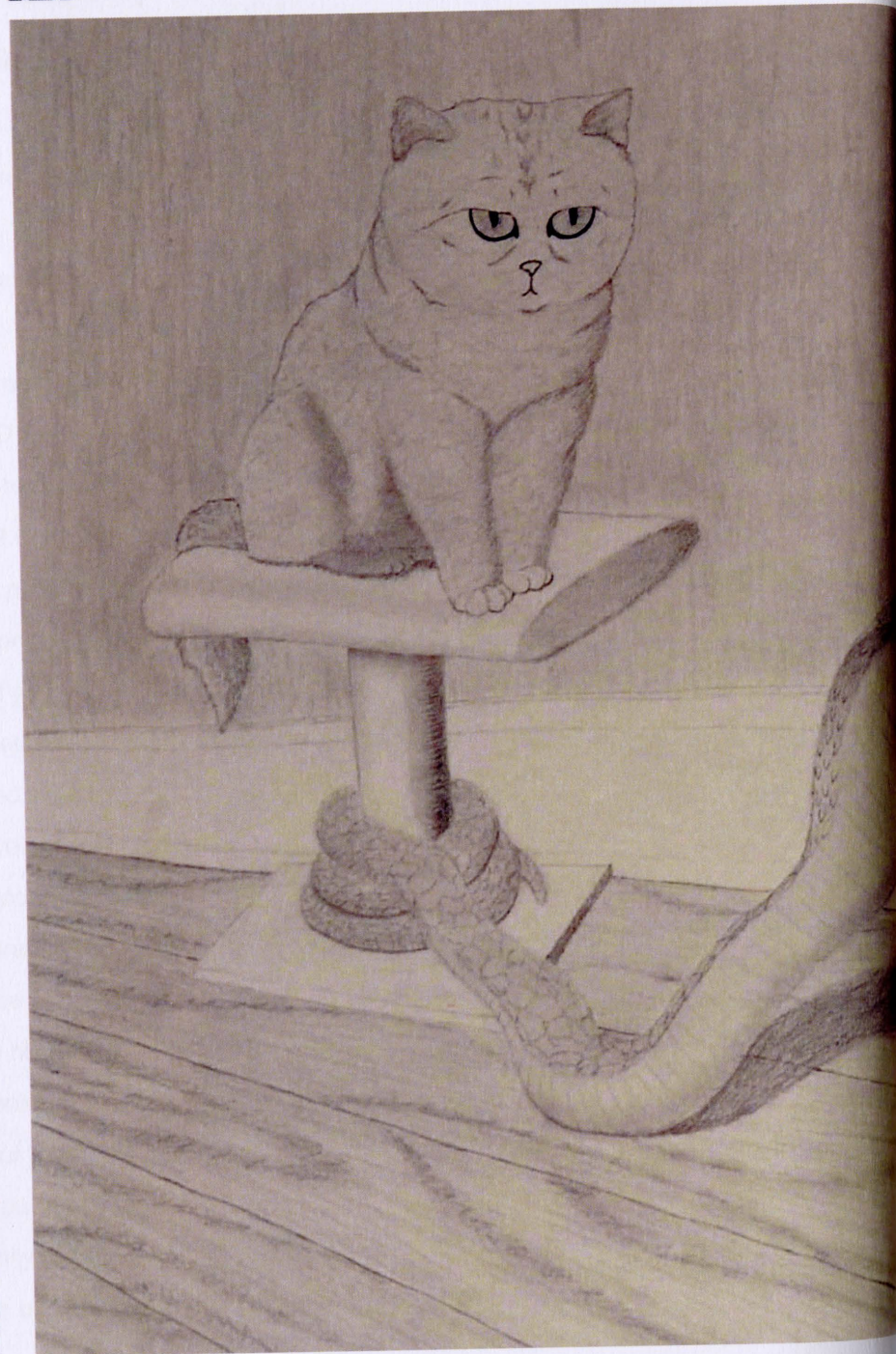
you ain't close to bein' Her man.

Take your hand,

and

Give it to someone who wants it.







## Lake Charles, Louisiana: The Dirty South

Bayley Schendel

### 5 years old:

Wake up to the smell of freshly baked donuts,  
Take a tumble down the cluttered carpeted stairs,  
Gigantic, yellow mosaic wall fluttered with holy Jesus crosses,  
Take a drive to the illuminated building.

Kneel, sit, kneel, sit, leave.

Sunburst mansion, with a little get-a-way balcony,  
Pebbled path leads up to sunflowers ripe with humming birds,  
Lizards scaling up the side of the wall,  
To meet up with Mother Mary in the backyard.

Waltz inside for a dip in the whirlpool,

Refuse to eat nothin' but ice-chips

**Time to go home. Goodbye Miss Bayley.**

...

### 12 years old:

Roof looks like the insides of an alligator's gizzard,  
Sprawled across the mushy grass.

Feel the uniqueness of a slow hello,

The accent creeping into my ears,

Tossing in did you hear about so and so's

Followed by more southern drama.

Escape to the swampy bayou to collect Spanish moss,

And

Go crabbin' at 4 in the morning,

**Time to go home. Goodbye Miss.**

...

### 18 years old:

Arrive with over rehearsed princess smile,  
Correlating with over-the-top debutante gown,  
Roll eyes at do-things-my-way Grandma,  
Close bathroom door, lock, breathe,  
Secretly sneak anti-anxiety pills,

Straggle my limbs across expensive panda rug;  
sigh.

Strut my stuff on stage,

Present myself to high society,

Turn on fake charm.

Dance the 'Umbrella dance',

**Time to go home.**

...

### 25 years old:

Seven years has passed,

Nothing has changed.

The lizards still speak to Mother Mary,

And

The southern drama has gotten juicer,

Everyone is still ripe with arrogance,

I'm no longer shiny,

Or

Full of youthful potential,

But

Rubbed raw

And

Struggling to adapt; to age,

Sneak up on Papa while he spikes his drink,

My uncovering of many secrets has just begun.

**Time to go.**



## Let's Sit & Talk

Kat Losacco

I never really thought about how I grew up.  
My therapist says *I repress the memories*.  
Sometimes I'll sit and think about what my mom used to make for dinner,  
And then it all goes blank.

My therapist says *I have trust issues...*  
**I don't believe her.**

I've never really had any friends  
There were times that I thought I did,  
But then I realized I didn't.

### Who needs them?

*My therapist says it's healthy to have friends,*  
I say she's the most expensive friend that I have,  
One hundred fifty dollars an hour...she must be the real thing.  
She says *she is not my friend*,

**I believe her this time.**

I know I need to get out more, trust the world as I see it.  
The other day a girl gave me her number.  
I think I lost it on purpose.

My therapist says *I'm not who I was growing up...*

I say  
**I wish you were right.**

## Lilly-Lipped Liar

Cristina Chaidez

There are "almosts" dancing inside of my throat,  
And they only breathe in the letters to you that I wrote.  
You- always with your hands, in your pockets.  
I-in love- had never felt anything like it.

A film over your eyes, my darling, what do you see?  
The canker of romance, alone, I know not how to be.  
Tell me goodbye with paper cuts in your anatomy,  
I'll wallow in recklessness and leftover reverie.

Tea stains under your eyes, my love, do you even sleep?  
Don't be in a haste for night, like moments meant to weep.  
You speak of love, always romantic, so bold, always so true  
But I am your lover, this I know, when you thought I never knew.

It's toxic this dance, so I'll stuff flowers into my eyes,  
Hopefully then, sunflowers and yellow, will mask all of your lies.  
Lilly-lipped liar, I love you so, that I can't seem to let it be.  
Torn up tulip, I'll bloom somewhere else, but please always remember me.



## Montilla Four for Four

Jenn Lee

### 1st Movement

Soles slap at  
shivering streets  
pavement pushing back  
against dizzy feet  
pear-shaped ballast  
pulling  
hips swaying  
looks like staggering  
feels like sashaying  
Horn blasts yank  
at a mind gone blind  
in a purring fog  
Wandering  
meandering  
winding winded  
wound up ass up  
on the front step  
face planted in concrete

### 2nd Movement

Light yellows  
inside of eyes  
rank reek  
of sour sweat  
and unwashed teeth  
furred tongue  
in a bitten cheek  
pushing  
plumbing  
a shallow wound and a galaxy of scars  
Mind stays behind dancing  
laughing calling  
slurring  
back at the bar

### 3rd Movement

Thoughts blur  
slur and slow  
That bearded guy  
with the hockey jersey and  
shining eyes  
claiming a round  
arguing a shot  
Marked him before  
he caught the sparkle  
Of wit  
the low dip  
of a neckline  
the vanilla citrus scent  
that lingers  
where blood flushes skin

### 4th Movement

Heard her in the kitchen  
Found her slid down  
slumped over  
sagging on sticky linoleum  
Fridge door open  
gas burner on  
eggs and bits of shell scorching in a  
stockpot  
Another hashmark added to the tally in  
your head  
Steered her to bed  
removed her shoes  
tucked in  
smoothed  
her hair back off her forehead  
another day x'd off the calendar  
a day closer to gone  
a night  
a morning closer to moved on

## New Mexico

Joris Soeding

they make love on a round, bright yellow bed  
bank owner's secretary and the robber  
facing two egg-like chairs  
flowers in a vase  
untucked cream sheets  
the owner  
framed and on a nightstand  
he tells her about his late wife's wedding ring  
now on his pinky  
well after black powder near the pines  
gloves on the steering wheel of a white van



## Obsession

N.R.

I'm obsessed  
with doing my best  
but I must  
confess I'm still  
a fucking mess

What defines obsession?

my thoughts spiral  
down  
like a whirl  
wind  
like a vortex  
a never-ending  
pit  
of impending doom  
one

thought

leads to another

thought

leads to another

thought

the singular thoughts in my head  
have planted thousands of seeds  
of worst case scenarios  
I've attended more funerals  
inside my head



Undressed in Moonlight - Joseph Tinaglia



## Parallel World

Ruby David

I never pictured a life like this  
This is a life I never pictured

Words cannot describe how I am feeling  
How I am feeling only words can describe it

My mind is at ease with myself  
I am at ease with myself and my mind

People know about me and support me  
Supported by people who know about me

I am living a life and am happy  
I am happy and living my life

What comes next only God knows  
Only God knows what comes next

A new chapter is beginning  
Beginning of a new chapter

Time to settle down with the person I love  
I love this person, and it is time to settle down

## Post it Note Poem

Cristina Chaidez

The heat curled his hair  
And his ghosts were always there.  
Wipe away the morning fog now,  
And learn to try again.

Sunset's yoke on her lips tonight  
Suited man says, "He loves you alright?"  
Turn off your wild imagination,  
And learn to exist again.

Patron saint around his neck,  
Collarbones and don't forget-  
Medicine is only syrup  
So swirl it on your tongue.

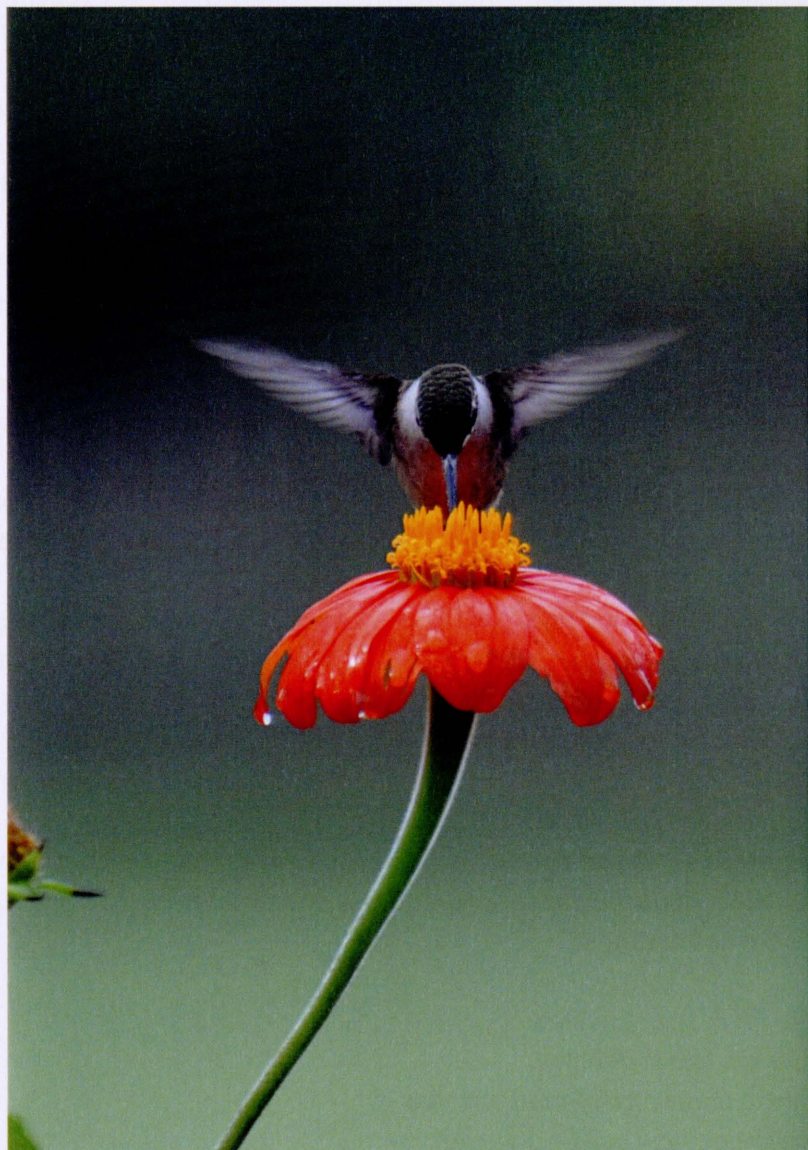
California is a liar, she learned,  
Still so dead-eyed she returned.  
Venus is a sham, but she's a  
Birthday stone under a sap's moon.

In the morning they awoke to  
Lumps in throats that had grew  
Into the canker of poetic professions,  
So suck out all the venom.

Lavender for all your troubles.  
Drink and see him in doubles.  
He's singing about a twin-sized mattress-  
This November baby born in summer.

Yet, they seem to have forgotten  
That both their roots are quite rotten  
So compost all your worries now,  
And learn to love again.





Untitled - Darka Powers

Rester, c'est exister. Mais voyager, c'est vivre. <sup>1</sup>

Vanessa Macias

In a desk, I have been confined  
All my life  
It is where I watched the world  
Go by[e]  
In an instant Deserted the narrow  
Bureau  
That hid my malnourished right  
To venture.  
It was time to exploit my birthright  
Freedom

The tether of a cultural bloodline can be  
Strength or the Achilles heel.  
Limitations are then dire for the liberty to be.  
Disturb the bridle life to fulfill  
The exhilarating venturesome traveler.  
Dearest deep-rooted will fathom the  
Traveler within.

Amenity mistaken for angst of the world that lies ahead  
Hinder those that do not evade the perpetual trap.  
Those afraid to vacate the comfort will be filled with dread.  
All the missed escapades claimed by another, crap.  
Another failed journey while others' maps spread,  
Discern the exertion of amenity as a trap  
That will detain your worldly grasp and keep you awake in bed.

<sup>1</sup> Georges Brassens



## Running from Death

Scene from *Ghost*

Ruby David

He was running down the street, gun in hand  
A car came and knocked him down  
He was no longer alive  
He got up, no scratches on him  
He thought he didn't get hit  
But then, he looked down  
All the colors on him vanished  
Stood still, looking at himself  
"You're dead Willy", Sam said  
Then, from the ground, they rose  
No faces, they were groaning  
There were two of them  
Like football players, they forced Willy away  
Black figures, nighttime, and a dark street  
Just like Sam, Willy was a GHOST.

## Session

Kat Losacco

I sit here and talk to you.  
Why are you writing things down?  
Your walls frighten me.  
They say the color yellow is supposed to calm you  
I don't feel calm.  
Your pictures are wrapped in a white frame  
I can see you have a degree in psychology.  
HELP ME!  
You start to write again  
Your notepad looks worn out  
This room smells like cinnamon.  
Why did they put fluorescent lights in your office Dr?  
Am I under interrogation?  
I like this room.  
Your desk has a cup of black pens swimming inside of it.  
I bet the ink is blue.  
The carpet is a muddy brown, it looks uncomfortable  
I don't want to lay on it.  
Don't make me...  
I'm Anxious,  
I'm Tired,  
No I don't do drugs  
No I don't drink  
I'm lying...  
Can you please help me?  
I thought this session would make me better.  
Dr. I am an addict  
An emotional junkie  
I need your guidance...  
PLEASE HELP...  
Your Session is Over.



## Sleep, Then

Cristina Chaidez

So sleep in my words then,  
They are always about you.  
So sleep in my words then,  
We were always broken shades of blue.

Devour them, grotesque hunger of the flesh.  
Down it with salt and bourbon;  
Maybe if you learn to leave me,  
The rib I arose from won't hurt then.

Let syllables dissolve smoothly on your tongue,  
Like candied cotton and the Eucharist you reject.  
The popping of ears at this altitude,  
Masks all the truth we knew to neglect.

No witnesses, no crime, I suppose.  
I'll just leave those vowels and poems behind.  
Stir them in your morning coffee, now,  
When we fall out of love, let the taste remind.

So sleep in my words then,  
I fear, my love, I'll be wide-awake,  
Thinking of the tenderness of your existence  
And how we gave it all up for sanity's sake.

## Sorry to Interrupt

Cristina Chaidez

Honey- California is on fire,  
And darling- I was a liar.  
Tell them to mind their step,  
Dreams were void, but you overslept.

I think I'll disappear for a while,  
And if I have to, fake a smile.  
Sunflowers in your backseat,  
Why did you waste them on me?

It's alive this heartbeat,  
Always in winter, no summer heat.  
Do with it what you will,  
But don't waste your time dreaming of me still.

Dearest, baptized in rose water.  
"She really is her mother's daughter."  
Sorry to interrupt,  
Didn't mean to be so abrupt.

Easily frightened are the weary hearted.  
Saw the ending before we started.  
So have a good night my sweet,  
And exile me from your heartbeat.

Can't get drunk off cheap champagne,  
But dearest we lost it either way.  
You're ruining me with your silence,  
Don't you blame this on your shyness.

"Take care" last words said to me.  
I'll let this go, alone for you to be.  
Dried flowers on my wall-  
To mount the break and press the fall.



## Spit don't Swallow

Bayley Schendel

You love when *he*  
Swallows you whole

You love when *he*  
Engulfs your entire being...

for a  
moment in time;  
You have *his* lips  
Biting yours crimson  
and

You are kissing *his* bony chest.

Hands all over one another.

Touch is the closest feeling to happiness  
that you know.

You understand you are:  
self-destructing,  
a ticking time bomb;  
Fucking crazy.

Naked  
and  
Vulnerable;  
with *him*.

You lose yourself;  
You want to please *him*.  
You love when he engulfs you

He loves when you swallow *him* whole.



Bountiful Harvest - Joseph Tinaglia





Naked Lady - Kathryn Hudson

## The Love Poems

Kathryn Hudson

Cautious words of blue rise and  
stick to the hot sweat of peeling plaster

They hang, tremulously, tangling my thoughts  
on color and stone and flesh you planted:

a rhizome extending to the empty apartment  
next door—the way you pour your coffee traces cracks in the dam

The bank breaks and a heavy fills my mouth while  
your fingers dig and reach edges of space I thought hidden

Your blue beginning to rust gives a green edge,  
like moss covering metal, an intrusion of light

And image reveal the yellowed curtains I never wash and so  
I come back to bones that greet the morning of sparse notes

A throat gags and trills with an uncomplicated, yet

tired complacency, shocking the blade,  
willing the room to settle.



## The Math Exam

Nicole F. Anderson

You said to me that if someone wrote something about you or for you,  
That you would die inside. But what you do not realize is that your smile gives  
me such a high.

That it makes me comfortable, I do not have to hide who I really am;  
But you also make me more nervous than a math exam.

It took me five times to pass math 99.

It's neither of our first times. My hands are sweaty. Clear headed but foggy is my  
mind

It's because of you.

You're so sweet, so funny, and so kind. And all these thoughts come out of my  
mouth in a spew,

I'm acting as if this is my debut, but it's not and I can't think straight. No pun  
intended.

But it's true and you aren't even aware

I'm serious, I swear. That I can't seem to get enough of your smile.

It makes me feel so juvenile.

I hold my breath every time you lick your lips,

I'm so sorry, but it makes my heart dip; Tell me everything, I want to know it all.

Start from the beginning; everything you can recall.

I want you to keep coming through my front door, the want is stronger than an  
addict looking to score. I swear to God, that this is true.

I hope this goes somewhere, I really do.

But you don't have an idea, no, you do not really have a clue--

All I know is that I'm so screwed, so please, oh, please, stay here for a while.

Your smile is so beautiful, I can't resist, and it feels like time does not exist;  
the clock spins by and with each and every glance, I try to contain the butterflies.

And with every touch, my heart rate goes through the roof, I swear this is true, I  
can show you proof. Put your hand to my chest

And please do not try to tell me, that you don't feel my heart's beats and drums,  
that you don't see when I fidget my thumbs.

Do not try to tell me that you don't hear when my tongue ties, or notice that I look  
away

after the lock of our eyes, or when I stutter my words; a nervous habit that I can  
never manage.

But maybe that's my advantage. Everything I expel from my lips are facts, and  
genuine are my acts, I swear to God, your laugh is sweeter than a bird's song.

Maybe I feel too much, and too soon, but you and I just seem to get along.

I think you're the sweetest and most beautiful girl that I've known. My tough girl  
facade is obviously blown, but you do not know any of this, and I can tell you why,  
Because you make me nervous like that exam and I never passed math on the  
first try

but I am praying that I am passing with you.

## The Moon Says, Me Too

N.R.

the Moon

declared

she

was

angry

she had

suffered dreadful things

but you

are

threatening her

inflicting tortures

and laughing



## Untitled

Nicole F. Anderson

Speaking your name is like swallowing poison.  
It tastes so sweet — but it burns,  
sweet lord, it burns something so fierce.  
Hearing your name is like hearing the saddest of songs.  
It sounds so beautiful — but it's haunting,  
my God, it chills my spine.  
Seeing your face is like seeing an eclipse.  
A work of art — but it's blinding...  
leaving my senses never the same again.

## Wait to be Erased

Allegra Harper

This is not even totally complete

This here is a fragmented flesh

A Massacred mentality

Waiting for sweet relief

release

like falling into bed

at the end of a

long

long

long

night.



## War of Peace

Trudy Leong

Tepid doldrums of war and peace  
Align mismatched at par  
Alight, attach, assign, and tease  
Forsaken, touched  
Near...far...  
Pendulum laughs and cries.  
A heartbeat, soft, pounding  
Feverish and wise  
Sanity not sounding.

## War On My Mind

Bayley Schendel

I close my eyes,  
But I'm still here.  
In this cold room full of fear.

I can run; I can hide,  
But all my life I'll be inside-  
Of this one structure,  
This one-track mind

My remains will forever  
Exude the pain  
I once felt for days.  
But at rest; I pray,  
I will die in peace,  
And finally get release.

For now I relish,  
The days I don't  
Dream of death.  
I close my eyes,  
And there you are.  
In this beautiful room,  
Full of serenity  
and  
Obsolete of apprehension.





Sad Truth - Alexandra Galvan

## Watch Me Explode

Bayley Schendel

My body is like a coke bottle  
But lacking its curves  
Red on white, written in cursive  
Shake me and I'll fizzle to the top  
Pop the cap and I'll explode  
Pouring out more than caffeine and high fructose corn syrup  
Compacted within my body are dozens of emotions  
Failing to address them as they compose  
I'm not made of fake aluminum  
I'm glazed in a clear authentic glass  
Throw me on the ground  
And my emotions are multiplied,  
Compiled into microscopic, piercing pieces  
Drink me dry, and I'm filled with emptiness  
My body is like a coke bottle  
Yearning to be more than Polyethylene Terephthalate



## When Tucson Came for Amanda

Joris Soeding

You must have bathed five or six times to calm the ache in bones  
that night at the Marriott on Michigan Avenue  
without a pinch for the weekend  
by noon curls still damp and you're sitting on the bed with a cigarette  
drapes open, left breast braced by the white bathrobe  
we walk for soup in one of the old restaurants  
I tell you we're close over and over again

half the girls this Passover are reminiscent of you  
yet curls have been cut, straightened, nearly bobbed

you talk of blood and glass next door  
noises throughout the night  
soon its summer at Red Roof Inn  
vacancy, welcome home

a child on the train tells grandma he can count to 100  
skipping from 39 to 90 to his reflection in the tunnel

somewhere on Grand the sun sinks  
Tribune Tower boasting the flag from its gothic tip  
traffic loops into the pier  
all those heads and I can't listen

your luck once came when the maid found you  
legs stiff, thinned, hair sprawled on the carpet in morning  
but there was a breath  
and for months a cane, television, classic novels with a blue throw

I talk to Christa in the parking lot of a Monday night meeting  
another chair is empty  
sobbing I ask into the phone, "Where are these people going?"  
I am the last to leave

October begins with a 5-year-old explaining the arrival of unicorns  
she tells me, "I live in another future"

somehow your father has found me  
says it's about you, is brief  
I told you I told you I love you I told you I told you  
never such messages of you like Meghan  
so I walk back and forth with his throat  
want to slip into that lake  
let muck sift in the ears of Tucson and a noose  
yet the refrain on concrete, together we choke

*(no stanza break)*

he asks for photographs and a eulogy  
I had forgotten that your father calls you Mandy

the marching band keeps its distance  
playing 'Centerfold' in strapped red hats

meanwhile the dreams begin  
I find you near a dock on some boat  
love yous, miss yous, and we're holding hands  
over seven months will pass until we're sitting in a psych ward  
you're pointing to things that aren't there  
I'm telling you they aren't there  
the young woman in the next bed hints at pretending to see the objects  
I do  
your eyes have become different, face longer, perspiration  
our glances don't meet but I'm with you

the last time not in dreams was a limousine ride  
diner, Walgreens, photograph with your eyes closed  
onto Glenwood Avenue behind tinted windows back to Detroit in January

a couch, Kleenex, snapshots of a family on vacation, even your former piano  
teacher  
gone two months to that city  
I vowed to you of not being hurt



I stand at the podium with all those heads  
now I can hear them, quiet  
gaze at your parents and brother in the front row  
previous to Streisand and you must be laughing at all of it

eighteen days from now I'll hang my black suit  
if I could have held up your feet, gripped your thighs  
then touched your neck for air  
I would have cut that fucking rope  
each twine with dust unsprung into one ignored and unforgettable moment  
wait for a gasp  
carry you from the porch into a desert morning

I park at your mother's after the funeral  
one by one they land on the windshield  
walking from the car, up the driveway, ladybugs cover my suit  
others notice, try to brush them off  
I know what you meant  
I know that you've arrived safely

## You came

Kathryn Hudson

on a boulder in a sea of wine and fathers  
with rubber tires and a laugh that caught this color,  
with visions of Norway and chocolate and rivers of sex,  
with a 1BR, a galley kitchen, a shepherd mix

You came with covered parking

You came  
with insurance  
and a 401K  
and a promise that your shade of green would root  
with spokes and pink martinis and soccer cleats

You are  
one way  
and a lost way  
and my way or  
no

You are  
desire resisting and a denial  
that sheds my skin

You are  
stretched across every plate of my bones  
and the list I am always writing



## You Raise Me Up

Ruby David

If I die young, would you still care?  
All I know is they don't care about us  
Even in this crowded populate world I feel so alone

You are not alone anymore  
You don't have to stand alone  
I will stand by you through night and day

The world is a cruel place  
We have laws that nobody wants to abide by  
Why should one group not have the same love as another?  
Why does it have to be so black or white?

You can knock us down, but that won't stop us  
Haven't you heard? I am a comeback kid  
I came back to life and I will live forever

We sing the anthems the slaves have sung  
We feel the pain they have felt  
I sing this fight song in order to be sane

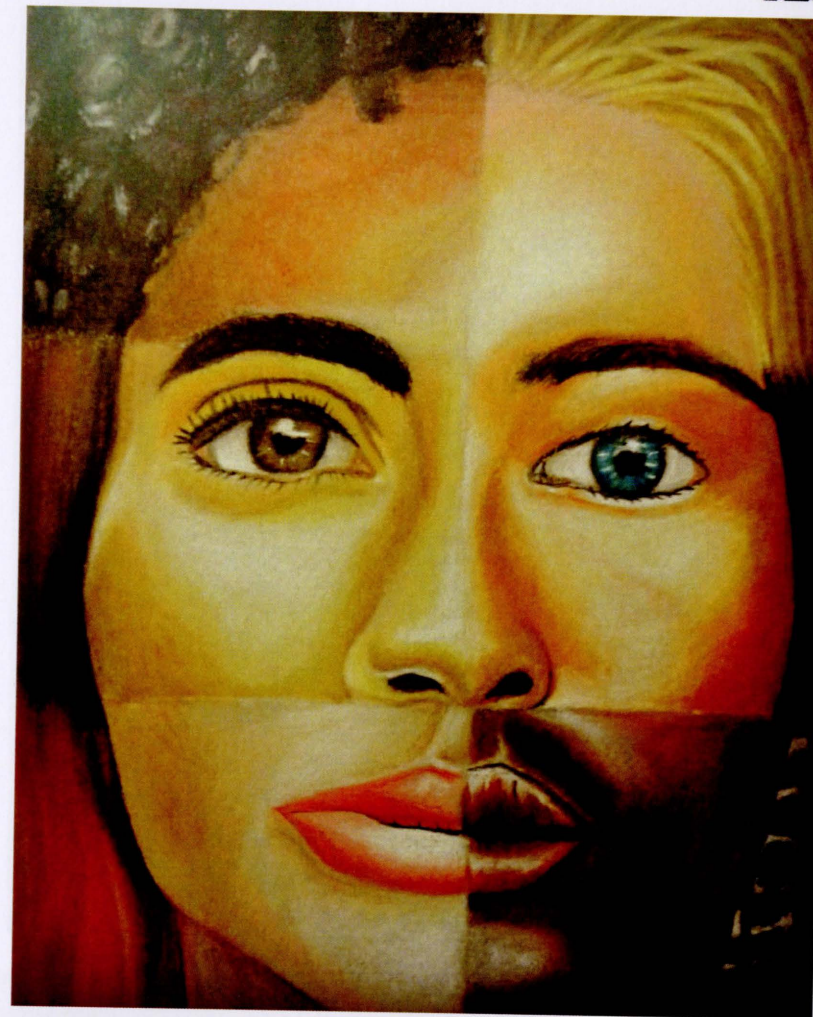


Untitled - Darka Powers



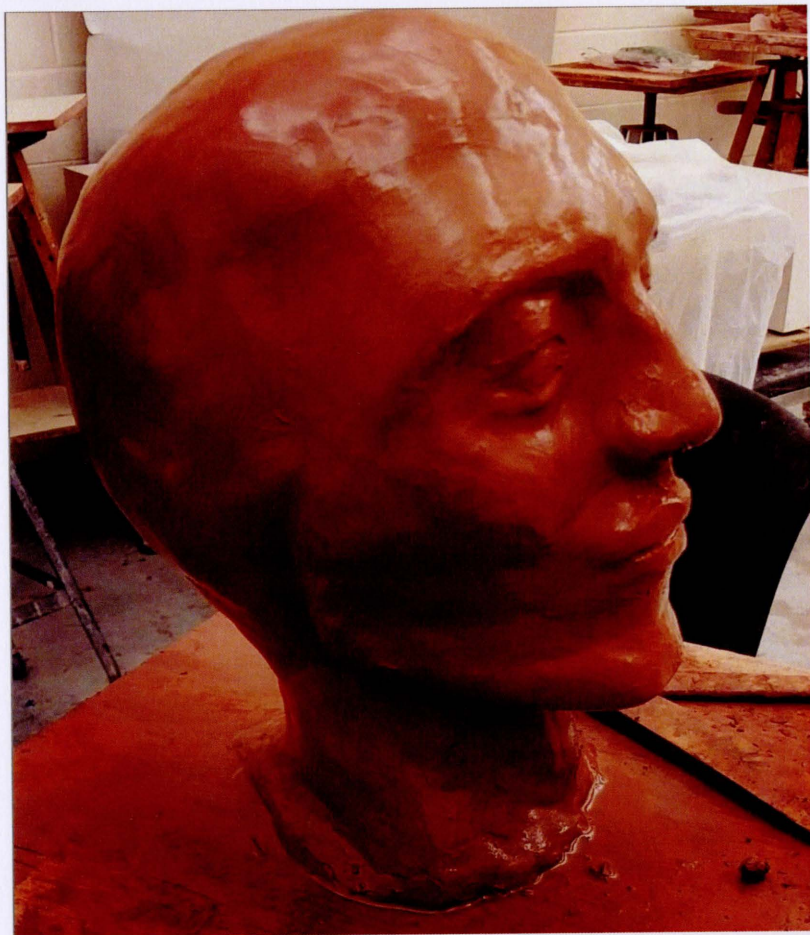


The Way - Alfredo Miranda

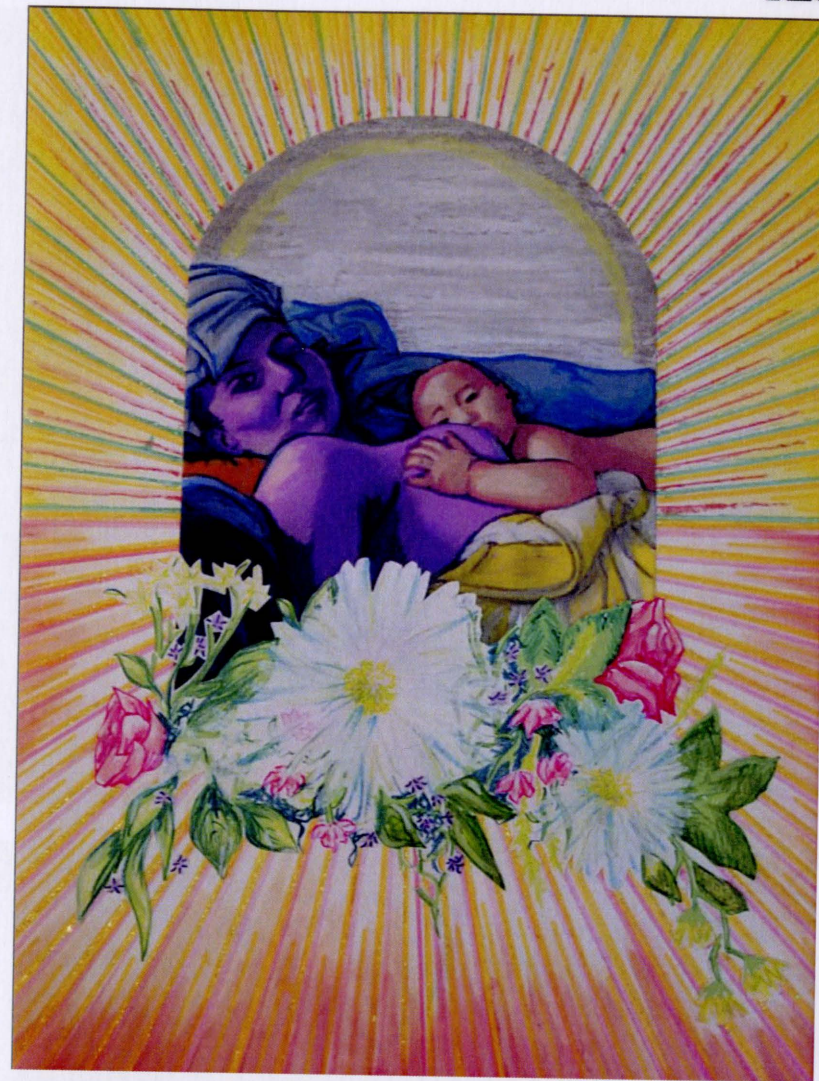


Latina - Alfredo Miranda



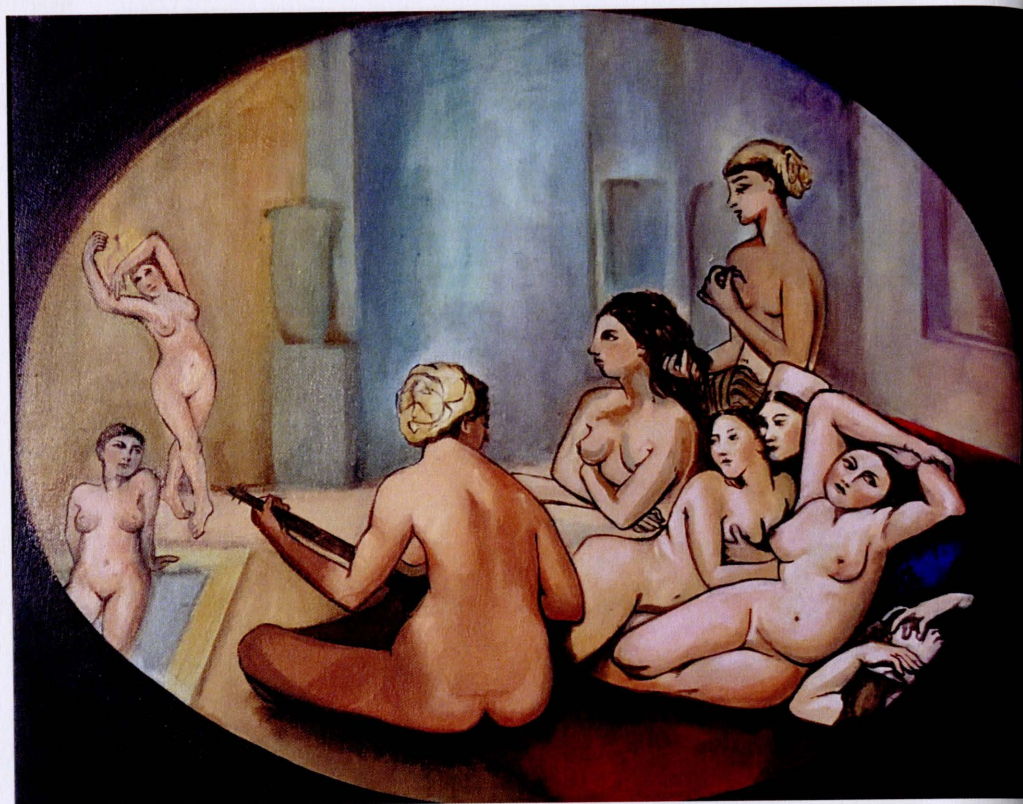


Explorer - Alfredo Miranda

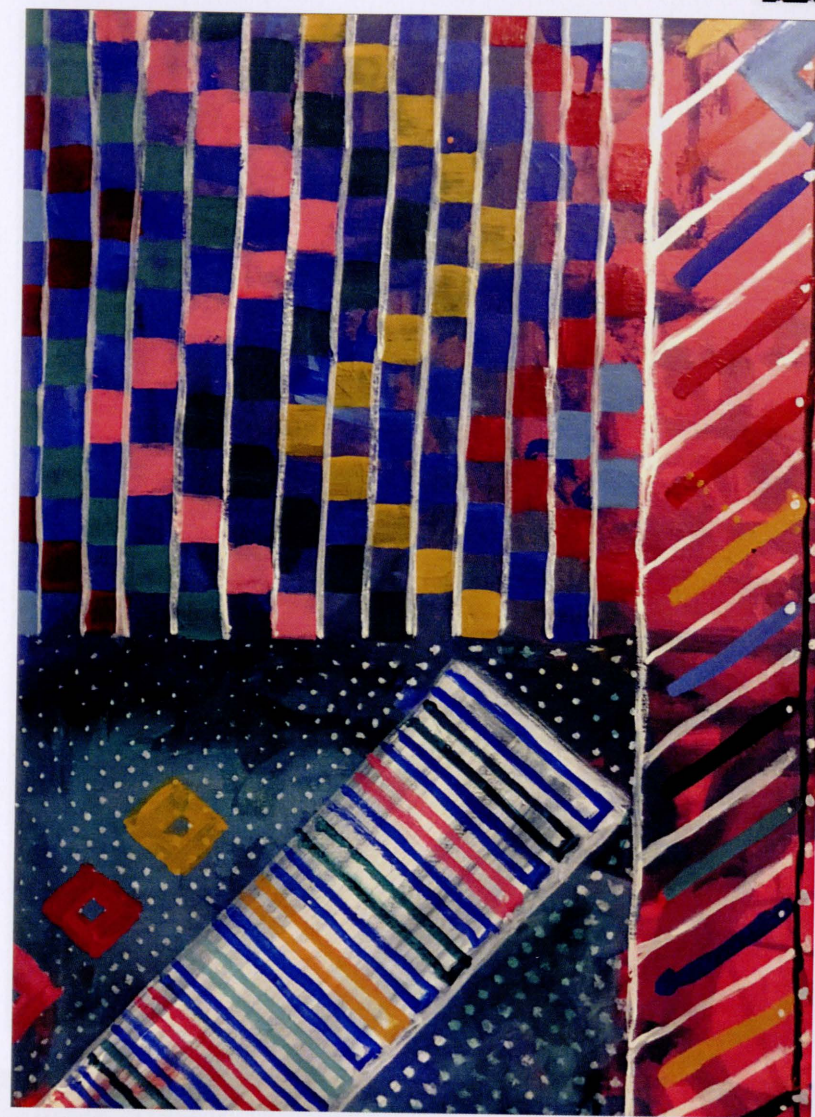


Mama Moderna - Rocío Urbano





Bathhouse - Rocio Urbano



Bad Painting - Rocio Urbano





Suspended Animation - Veronica Cerdá



H - Veronica Cerdá





N - Veronica Cerda



Flowers? - Veronica Cerda



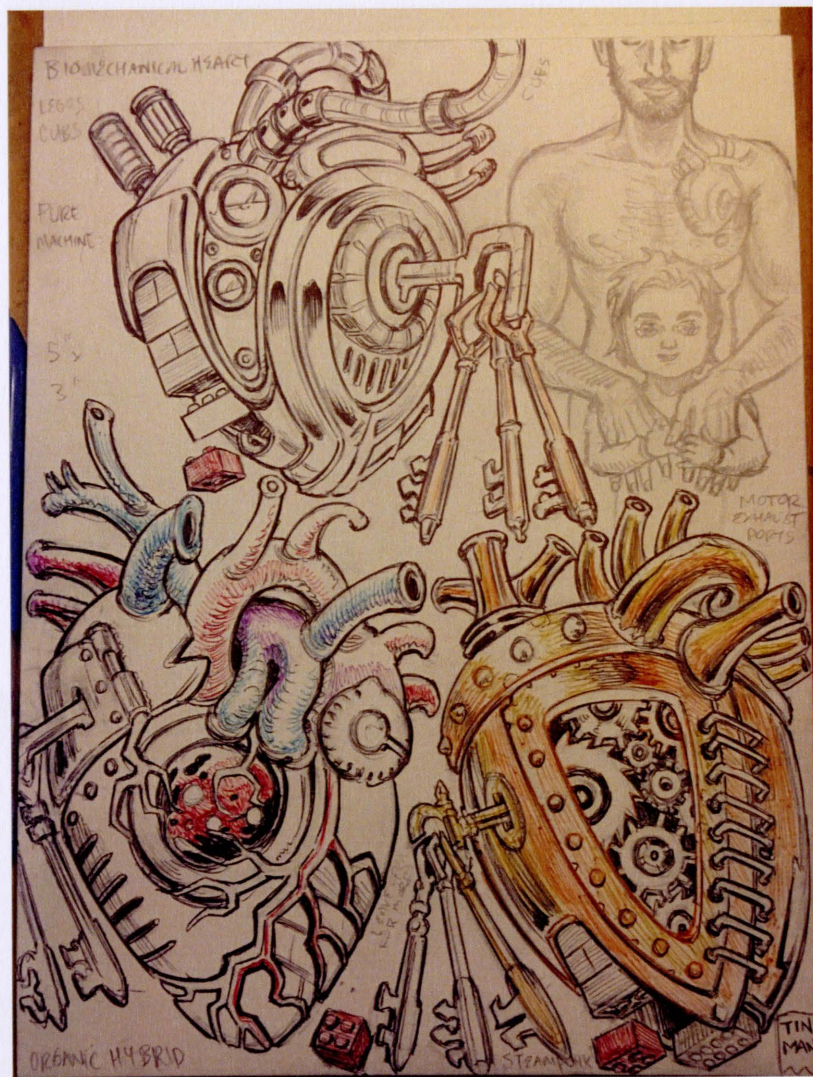


Egg Ice Cream - Brandi Nevarez



Acorn Hedgehog - Brandi Nevarez





Beat my Heart Skipped - Joseph Tinaglia



IDGAF - Joseph Tinaglia





Future Flapper - Joseph Tinaglia



Muse of Logan Square - Joseph Tinaglia





Lumos - Jenn Lee



Glow - Jenn Lee





Jules - Jenn Lee



Snow - Jenn Lee





Soft - Jenn Lee



Sunspot - Jenn Lee



## STAFF BIOGRAPHIES



**Airam Velasquez** is an English Literature major and a Creative Writing minor. She is due to graduate in December 2018. She writes poetry, prose and has recently dabbled in hybrid writing.

Airam has been a part of Seeds for the past two years and will continue to be involved in NEIU's media community for the long run.



**Jenn Lee** loves baseball, Godzilla, knitting, dinosaurs, Sondheim musicals, World War II history, chocolate, superheroes, space, and reverb-heavy guitar. Also writing. She has thoroughly enjoyed her tenure as Managing Editor at Seeds and looks forward to hanging around the office and staff long past the point of acceptability.



**Grant Spathis** loves hip hop, comic books, the Bulls, and the Cubs. He is currently studying Secondary English Education.



**Marcos Garcia** will be graduating in May, 2018 with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting and will be pursuing a Master of Science in Accounting beginning in Fall 2018 here at NEIU.



**Allegra Harper** is a poet who specializes in erasure, and is graduating from NEIU with a Bachelors in English and minors in Creative Writing and TESOL this May. She hopes to continue working as a member of SEEDS as she pursues her Master's degree in TESOL here in the Fall.

**Natalia Rokita** is an undergraduate student majoring in English Secondary Education. When she is not busy with school, writing, or working in the English Department, she enjoys leisurely bike rides, exploring the city with her seven year old son, and watching re-runs of "The Office" with her husband.



**Daniel Manganti** initial literary influences were comic books and various things within pop-culture. Later, it was the Harlem Renaissance and the literature that arose from that period. Lately, he's been more interested in excavating his own cultural identity, becoming more interested in Filipino and Asian-American literature (specifically, Carlos Bulosan). He think it's important to be aware of the elements that composes as a person and a writer. From this awareness, he think that people learn how to craft their our own voice.



**Rich Xue** enjoys creating and merging a variety of artistic creations and styles. He is currently on a secret mission with Po, the main character of Kung Fu Panda.



**Travis Truitt**, Northeastern's director of student media, advises students from Seeds, the Independent newspaper, WZRD radio, and Que Ondee Sola magazine and currently teaches a CMT course.



**Ryan Poll** is an Assistant Professor in the English Department at NEIU. His scholarship focuses on the intersection of literature, popular culture, and economics. His first book, Main Street and Empire: The Fictional Small Town in the Age of Globalization, examines how the fictional small town is used to frame and stage normative US narratives throughout the 19th-, 20th- and into the 21st century. Other publications include essays on detective fiction, Bruce Springsteen, and heroes in the age of neoliberalism. He is also a staff writer at PopMatters. If he could write in the first-person, he would say, "It's been an honor and privilege to work with and learn from the incredible creative writers at NEIU and the incredible editorial staff that has allowed al this magic to happen."

