

KALOPSISIA

POETRY | PROSE | VISUAL ART



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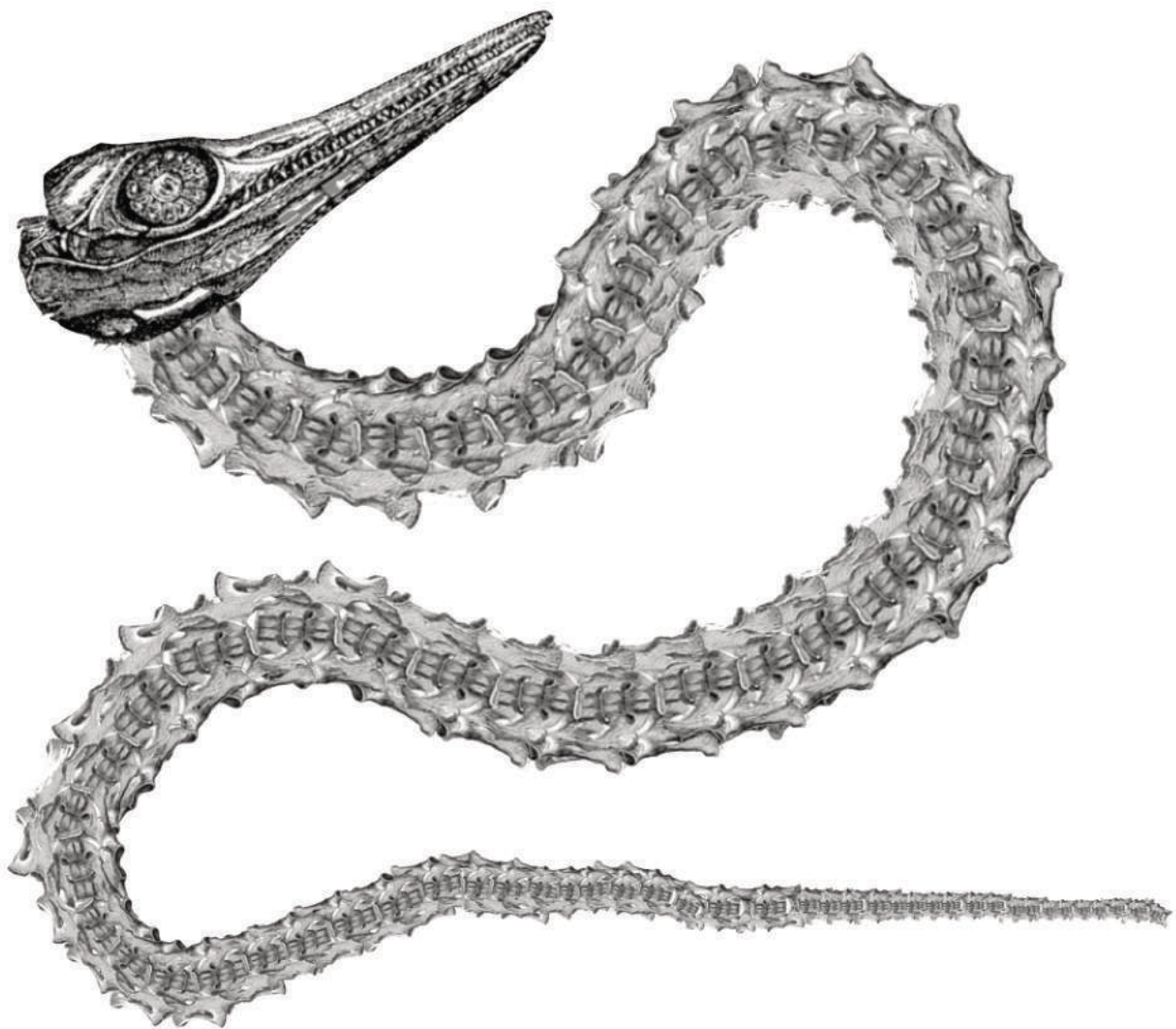
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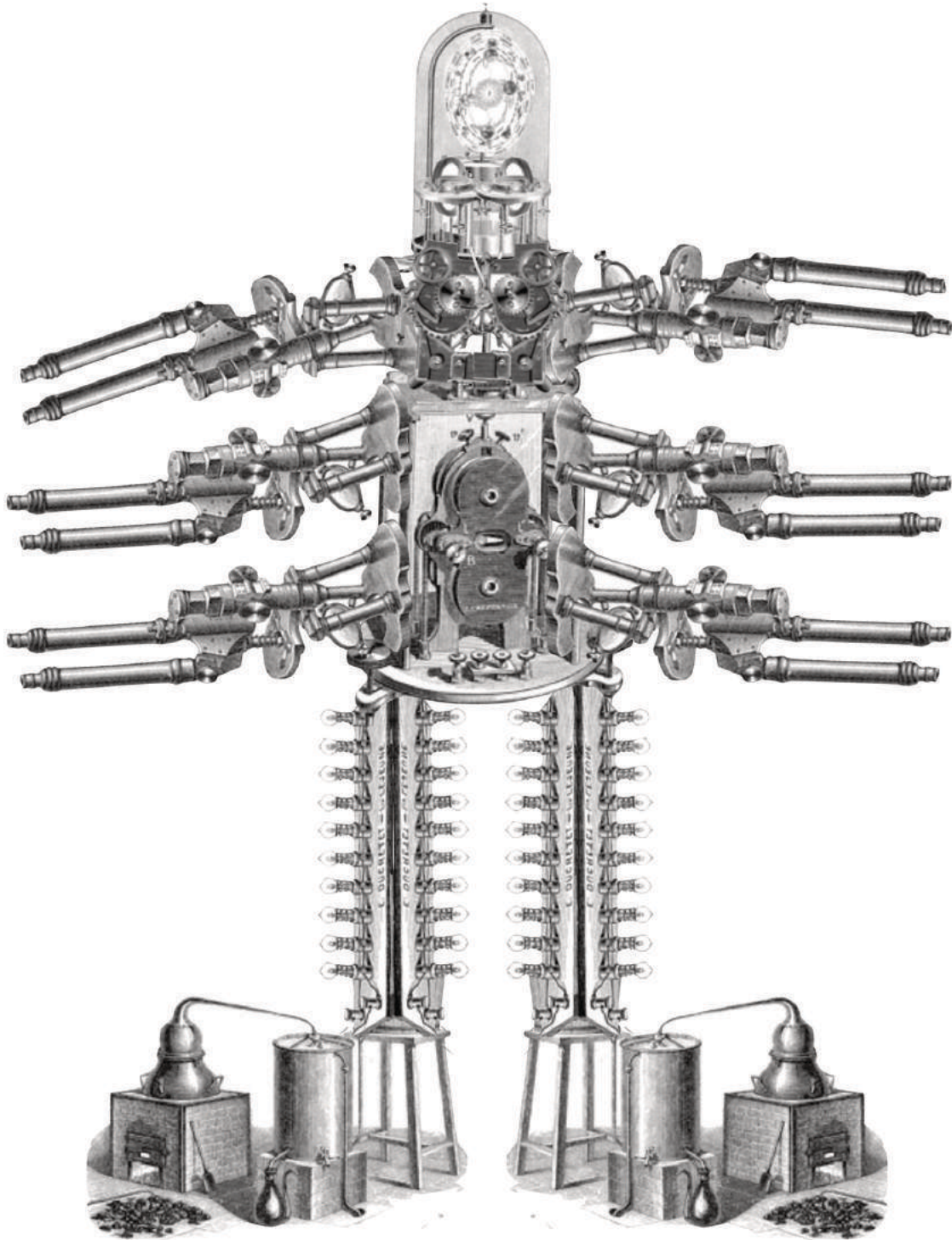
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Artist's Statement: Everywhere we look there are faces staring back at us. Out of the corner of the eye, we spy a wink from a passing shadow or a smile in a gleam of water. We project ourselves outward into the field we experience. These collages record what I have discovered in flowers, hair, and other objects. I make collages out of all kinds of materials. Most are made out of paper engravings. Many collages are digitally generated or enhanced. To begin a piece, I select some sources—either color or black and white. If I'm using magazines or prints or old books, I cut out some images or parts of images that interest me. Then I start working on a background or some other sort of chance construction. Much is left to fleeting insights. These are tiny miracles of inspiration. Depending on whether I'm using scissors and glue or digital images, each collage could take several hours. Sometimes it takes several days or even weeks to know if a collage is finished. Much depends on the kind of collage and the size. My photographs are usually photo collages or, if not, they in some way attempt to represent the figure, usually naked, using an unusual or unexpected approach.



Breathless As a Spark
Bill Wolak
Digital Collage
10" x 9"



Light Always Touches the Scars First
Bill Wolak
Digital Collage
11"x8"

Market Body

By: Olivia Thomakos

Content Warning: sexual and physical violence/abuse

That boy went searching for the produce section
under your skin. He said when you ride
a motorcycle, act like your body is

sacked russet potatoes. You learn
when he kicks you in your menthol mouth,
spit the mint in the sink

& when he pushes you down the stairs
turn your bruised apple chest to cider.
At midnight, your sunken skin swallows

candles that glow from the inside
until they don't. It's called
burn out—the light was never yours

to begin with. Bubble gum chew your tongue
until it resembles raw beef: ground
words for consumption like

carrots skinned & cut thin to snap
like pinkies in your mouth. You're pinker
on the inside. Every stuck needle says

you're undercooked. Lights out
when he closes the oven door, nevermind
it was never turned on. He strokes

the kiwi-fuzz of your head, promises to open you
like a spoon & clean your insides
like a knife. The seeds were never yours

to begin with. You dare him to keep peeling
back the layers, wonder when the tears will come.

About the Author: Olivia Thomakos is a writer and teacher from New Philadelphia, Ohio. She is winner of the Grierson Verse Prize and Poetry Editor-in-Chief of *From Arthur's Seat* volume seven. She has recently completed her MSc in Creative Writing at the University of Edinburgh. You can find her work in *Berfrois*, *Loud Coffee Press*, *Lemon Peel Press*, and *Dreich Magazine* among others.



APEX 2
Aileen Chen
Pencil on paper

Artist's Statement: This piece is called APEX. It is part of a series where I merged human traits with animals that are considered as an apex predator, also known as a top predator in the food chain. I wanted to express the fear I have for my own species, humans, by highlighting a paradox. While an average individual would easily feel overwhelmed with panic in the face of any predatory animals, humans are actually not much different from the violent creatures we are so terrified of. We worry about the wilderness, continue to industrialize our planet, isolate ourselves away from the dangers of nature, and ironically hide ourselves amongst the most dangerous animals. This piece reflects my realization on how often humans are removed from the idea of animals, how fast humans developed for selfish endeavors, and how much peace we've corrupted only to silence the noises with no real solutions. In truth, humans are the most frightening animal, the apex amongst all.



Glass Heart
Ally Chen
Colored Pencil
13"x19"

Not Today, Not Today (It's Valentine's)

By: Mackenzie Melichar

On the rolling hill, God was doing laundry
And we were summoning the Devil in each other;
Red cheeks.
So this is how you want to spend the evening, you said,
And I was coming up with excuses, excuses for my mood but
My point got lost
Like the ships in Bermuda.

Lost in the triangle—and just
When God started to clean up
His shit.
Bad timing, you made a point of telling me,
But we were angels again by the end of the night.

The lesson
Is in the laundry:
Detergent is just something you need to buy,
Again and again.

About the Author: Mackenzie Melichar is a student at the University of Toronto studying philosophy, political science, and creative writing. She is a senior editor at *Kalopsia Literary Journal* and an associate editor at *Goose Fiction* and *The Verity Review*. Her writing has been published in the Ink Movement's Canadian National Anthology and *Acta Victoriana*. She has a website coming soon; in lieu of that, she can be reached on Instagram, @the.river.writes.



Trapped
Jessica Kwandou
Gouache, Ink, and Colored Pencil
11"x11"

Circles and Lines

By: Danielle Sherman

Ida misses the birds that would turn in wheels over the skies of Poland, misses watching flocks make frantic loops whenever post-storm winds bent the poppies in her garden. There is so little sky in New York, and the pigeons only scuttle among the dark, angled buildings that wrap the streets like barbed wire.

From the fourth story of her school building, Ida likes to look out her classroom window and imagine birds flitting by it in wild spirals. Today her third grade teacher, Ms. Bates, is talking about the perimeters of shapes, and as Ida catches recognizable words—*square, triangle, star*—her imaginary flock forms the figures around streetlights. But many of Ms. Bates' words just glide past. Her English is so thick with a city accent that its sound is overpowered by the taste of smog and gasoline.

The very first American Ida met, she remembers, sounded the same way. That immigration officer. And the hall—long and echoing, crowded with writhing people who smelled of fear and seawater. So many languages ricocheting off the walls like the aftermath of gunshots. Between the building and the officer's voice and their own shaky command of English, Ida's parents had to have her translate his questions into Yiddish.

Surname? he had asked, and the word dissolved into the roiling tide of a thousand other words flung from surrounding mouths. Again, Ida pleaded.

"Surname," he said, audible that time. Ida repeated it to her mother, too frightened to answer herself. Her mother said, "Frajzyngier." The officer looked at their entry papers, then at Ida's father, then back at the papers. He scribbled something after a pause.

And so on. For every question answered the officer wrote something on their documents with his long thin pen. What was Ida's birthdate? The names of months evaded her, but the year had been 1905. Ages? Thirty-five, thirty, eight. Country of origin? Poland. Ida kept thinking about the green goddess that had towered over the ferry with its crown of bared fangs. She had never seen something so big in all her life. She thought about the torch in the titan's hand and then the fire in her garden back home, how brightly it burned while those men moved from the backyard to the neighbor's house and her mother told her to start packing.

"Reason for entry?" asked the officer.

This was a phrase Ida's father had prepared for and recognized. "Pogrom," he said. "Refugee."

When the officer was done writing, he handed their papers back and showed them where to sign. Ida's mother went first, and then Ida. Her mother told her, in Yiddish, to sign with a circle. Not the customary X—too much like a cross—but with a circle. *Kikel*, was the word for it. "*Kike*," noted the immigration officer when he checked Ida's signature. His city-voice sounded knowing and a little braced, as if what he spoke of was a kind of bitter dish, often tasted yet sour.

Ida's father, the last to sign, looked at the papers with his brow furrowed and then pointed at the line that said *Surname*. Next to it was *Frazer*. He told the officer it was different.

"I changed it," said the officer. "Sounds more American now." Ida tested the word in her mouth and the sharpness of it cut her gums.

When Ida is done thinking about birds and goddesses and fire, she shifts her eyes from the window and into the classroom. Ms. Bates is still talking from behind her teacher's

desk: the shiny plastic apple, the stack of blue pens, the photograph of her two children with stiff blonde curtains for hair. Ida stares hard at the head of each little girl around the room—all with that glossy, straight hair, parallel sticks on either side of their face. Hers is tightly curled, helixes hanging over each ear, frizzy and tangled like the thickets of bramble she used to have to drag out of her garden to make space for the prettier poppies.

Ida does not notice Ms. Bates register the lack of sharpness in her gaze or hear Ms. Bates ask her to give the class a definition of a circle. Ms. Frazer, the teacher says, but Ida does not recognize the name. Ms. Bates sighs and then raps on Ida's wooden desk with one of her blue pens. Ida starts; the other children giggle, all turned in their chairs. Saliva stretches between their teeth as they laugh.

"A circle," Ms. Bates tells the classroom, "is like a line with no ends."

Ida walks home along the linear, jagged streets, weaving around knots of people. Her apartment building stands across the road from an equally austere apartment building, all gray brick and rusting rain gutters. Both complexes have windows facing out into the city, but not a single one reveals its interior: screens shut, curtains drawn. Ida thinks about her neighbor's house in Poland, its great wooden door that always stood ajar, its warm kitchen where her neighbor would braid bread and sing prayers in ancient, husky Hebrew.

Today is Friday, but Ida's parents have not yet found a synagogue they feel is safe enough, so once again they set out their silver candle holders on the tiny plastic dining table. Ida walks up the stairs to their apartment, sees the candle holders, and turns sharply into the room she shares with her parents. Her mother, who is unlocking a small safe she keeps on the nightstand, asks if Ida would like to try lighting the candles tonight, or at least maybe chant the prayer with them? Ida shakes her head, and her mother does not press further even though Ida used to sing like a nightingale every weekend.

Ida fills the tub, watching as her mother removes two pillars of wax from the safe, locks it, and slips the key into the nightstand drawer. Later, in between the roar of each bucket of water she pours over her head, Ida can hear soft, feathery prayer from the other side of the thin wall. Most nights, she murmurs the song under her breath, but tonight she is silent. She pictures the twin flames flickering in the kitchen, sees them burn brighter and fiercer until they devour the dining table, the creaky cabinets, her parents, her garden back home. Again she throws water over her body.

After her bath, Ida tries a new game: she tugs the strands of her wet hair down from either side of her head until her scalp aches, hoping they will dry straight.

On Monday, clouds edge into the horizon, nervous and solitary, like self-conscious outsiders trying to join a conversation. On Wednesday, the sky is the same soot as the city sidewalks. On Thursday, Ida finds the word *kike* carved into her desk.

She does not know who did it and she does not tell Ms. Bates. She folds her hands neatly on the spot it was etched. Even before the strange, sour feeling leaves her stomach, she decides what to do.

That night, she moves very carefully in the dark of the bedroom. Her parents' deep breathing drifts about and then settles into the blackness. Ida pads across the warped floorboards to crouch quietly beside the nightstand. She averts her gaze from her mother's sleeping face and gently slides out the drawer. It hitches when its frame catches against the nightstand. Ida freezes. Her mother does not stir. The rest is quicker: Ida's palm senses the cool touch of the metal key, turns it within the lock of the safe, and withdraws the documents inside. She takes her father's pen from its place beside the lamp.

Squatting there next to the nightstand, Ida's eyes grapple with the darkness until they adjust enough to read. She scans her entry file, finds the circle on it. Her small hands clench when she sees the ink is blue; her father's pens are only black.

Ida lingers on the letters for a moment, then slowly tucks the papers within the folds of her blankets mounded in the corner. Everything else back to its original position. She lays with the blue circle beneath her head and the clouds amassing far above it, pictures cyclones and lightning bolts as she slips into sleep. She walks to school the next day with the entry papers deep in the pocket of her dress.

When the school day ends, Ida brushes past Ms. Bates' desk and then sits in a stairwell. She waits for students to empty out of it, studying the steps: rows and rows of rectangles in either direction, like a city turned onto its side. Once it is quiet, she removes her papers from one dress pocket and a blue pen from the other.

With the pages open and the pen-tip poised and the circle staring at her like a cruel, impassive eye, she grasps an unexpected dilemma: how to make it look like an X? She has the right color now, but the O suddenly feels so impossible to change. What can she do except scribble it out and draw the X beside it? But then it would not look authentic enough, and more importantly, it would still be there, gaping wide beneath the mess of ink.

As she peers closer at the circle, she notices the slight undulations in its curve, evidence of a trembling hand. The other letters do not have this feature—*1905, Poland, Frazer*—their strokes are bold, confident, directional. Straight as the lines of a cross. These, Ida remembers, were written by the immigration officer. All of it, every necessary detail about her. Her own name. Except for the circle. The *kikel* alone was by her hand.

Ida closes her eyes and breathes. She can feel the ocean tugging her back and forth as she stands inside the ship; she can hear the roar of bathwater dousing her head. She lets the pen fall among the buildings of the sideways city. Outside, it begins to rain.

As she walks home in the lengthening Friday shadows, the drizzle lifts her hair, and the moisture caresses the strands into a hazy halo around her face. She presses her pocket closed so the drops cannot damage the document inside. The sky has mostly cleared by the time she reaches her apartment building, but an unlatched window across the street draws her attention. She wonders why anyone would have opened it during a storm.

Then, through the open curtains, she sees a young woman hold her hands up to a pair of little flames. Two trails of smoke climb out the window and whirl above the rooftops like birds turning wheels in the sky.

A circle, Ida thinks, is something that continues.

About the Author: Danielle Sherman is from Phoenix, Arizona and studies creative writing as a sophomore at Emory University. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Crêpe & Penn Quarterly*, *The Helix*, and *Emory's Alloy*, among other publications. She served as Editor-in-Chief of *Polyphony Lit* and is currently a member of the Emory-based publication *lullwater review*.



Detached
Jessica Kwandou
Acrylic
11"x14"



Enigma
Jessica Kwandou
Acrylic
9"x12"

a list of misrememberings

By: Julianne Cruz

- *you cannot name what you don't recall.*

my older self thinks crimson blends into cerulean or the other way around. i didn't think cerulean would blend into lavender all that easily but here we are. that's what i'm doing, see? renaming them, because i can't recall. because i don't want to recall.

i didn't think i'd put - *lavender* on this list because i thought i'd always have it. i thought i'd always know it like i thought i'd always know everything, but - *i don't know, i don't know*. i've said it so many times now. i say it so many times. i keep saying it.

- *melodrama*. scratch that. i don't even know what to say and - *ha*, there it is again.

focus on something: a cliché, a heartbeat. ba-dum, ba-dum. i won't forget that, will i? how about this: your heartbeat, not mine. i'd never forget yours. even if it stopped, even if i caused it to. - *knives* and - *lighters*. god, am i repeating myself?

- *deja vu* and - *irony*. - *similarity*. in people and not triangles. - *symmetry*. cerulean and crimson are not the same things as emerald and charcoal but they feel like they are. they feel just the same. ba-dum. ba-dum. - *you're no different from me*. us. whatever.

About the Author: Julianne Cruz is a student from the DMV area. She is an Iowa Young Writers Studio alumna and writes both poetry and prose. When not attempting to catch up on sleep, she can be found sketching, listening to music, or lounging with one of her two cats.

Lifeline

By: Kate Meyer-Currey

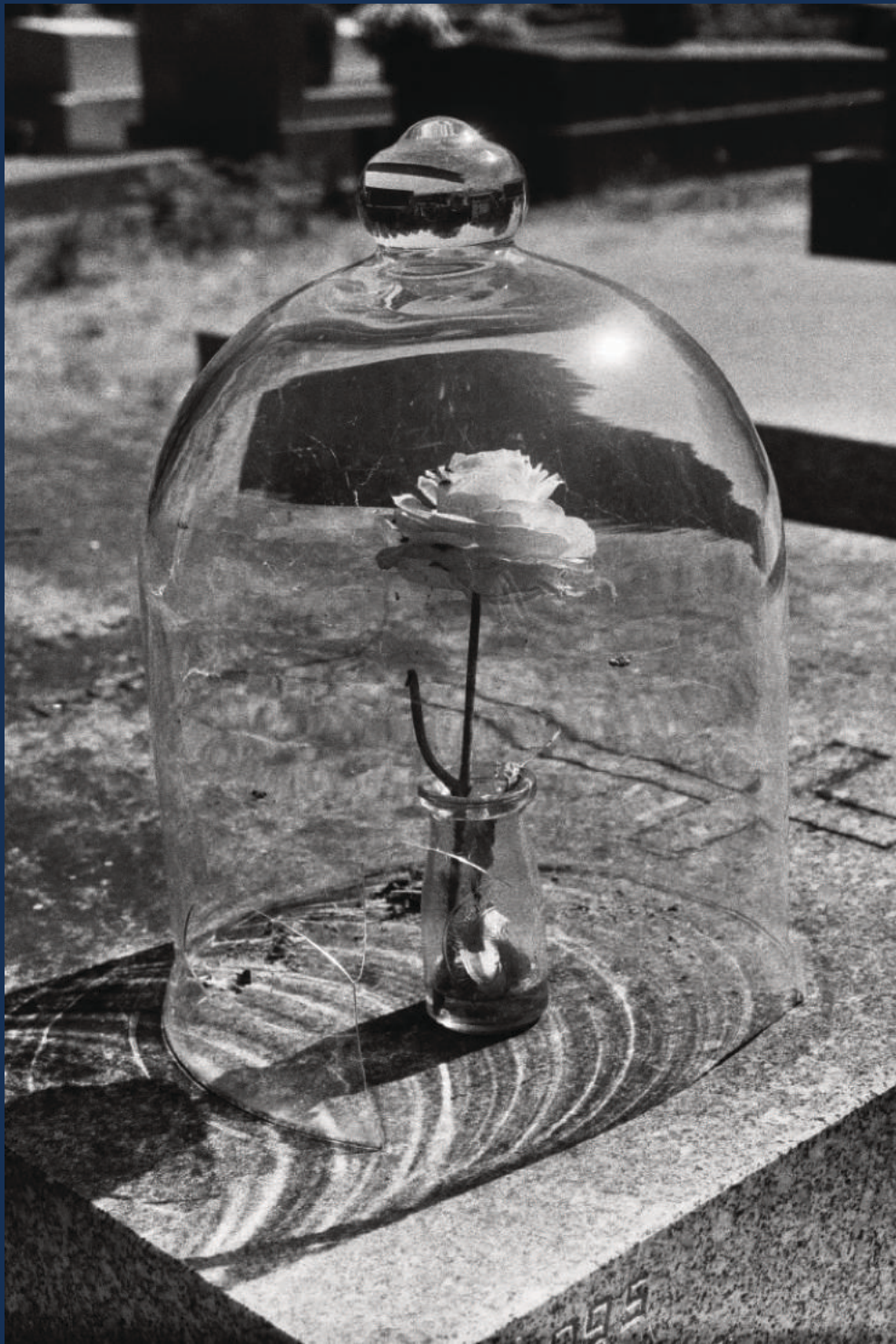
No end in sight: that's how it feels when you're up to your neck and the swamp is winning. You thrash your limbs, but they're a lead suit pulling you under. If your head is still above water and if it hasn't fallen off yet, be grateful to your backbone for stepping up. It has helped your shoulders spread the load: that's teamwork. You can't see how far you've come; you're in a diving helmet bubble misted by labored breaths, pumped by a heavy heart that's plumbed the depths of your weighted boots. So, if you've hit rock bottom, it's not the end because you'll find your feet on solid ground. You'll also find other survivors in this deep trench; not lost, but rather navigators, using sonar's instinct to feel their way and guiding lights to shine a path for others. You'll remember you set out prepared as your training kicks in. You are still anchored by a steel cable of resolution to the vessel that took

you on this voyage of discovery. The crew on the bridge have not lost contact: they take heart as your signaled pulse comes back in range. You're on their radar and they cheering you on as you grasp the knife at your side and saw at each strand holding you down. If you feel you are weak, trust your guts and keep going. Remember: muscle grows from the damage of effort. That's how you cut free from the anchor of self-doubt and find your lifeline. Follow it back to the surface in the wake of jet-stream air bubbles. They are sky-writing your name in Red-Arrow smoke across clearer skies. The shore is a near horizon and gulls' wings applaud you. Time to decompress. Dry land won't trip you up this time if you go with the flow, take it steady on your sea-legs. Surf's up: you're ready to crest the wave and ride it out. It'll be smoother sailing from now on; high tides ebb to calm seas.

About the Author: Kate Meyer-Currey lives in Devon. A varied career in frontline settings has fueled her interest in gritty urbanism, contrasted with a rural upbringing, often with a slipstream twist. She has over a hundred poems published in print and online journals and anthologies in the UK and internationally. Her poem 'Gloves' was in the top 100 of the UK's Poetry for Good competition (2021) and "We got this" was shortlisted for the 2021 Black in White poetry competition. "Boys of Vallance Road" came third in the poetry category of the London Society's "Love Letter to London" competition (March 2022). Her poem "The Wild Bunch" is also a Pushcart and Rhysling Award nominee. She has been selected to partner with Little Toller books as part of LiteratureWorks South West's Talent Development program. Her chapbooks *County Lines* (Dancing Girl) and *Cuckoo's Nest* (Contraband) are due out in 2022.



Central Park Afternoon
Katherine Sedlock-Reiner
Photography



Montparnasse
Katherine Sedlock-Reiner
Photography

apologies to my parents

By: Andrea Li

when i was 7, i learned disappointment in Chinese: the words rolled around like marbles on my tongue before circling down my throat

to drain onto tear-soaked carpet. now, foreign language has become a mangled birthing ritual, my blood spilling from wetted lips as i struggle to say

sorry to my parents and find it simpler to create profanities—*fuck* is a one-syllable word, and it only takes two to drown. even simpler still to swallow

apologies like postpartum pills, your child's gurgling sorry reminiscent of wishing to drag newborn baby down sewage lakes covered in bruises. you can't un-birth a child,

but bleach can remove wine stains from bullet holes, so mother washes her hands and guts my fishbone body:

if i am made holy again, the prayers will slip out nice and smooth and easy, 对不起,我的父母¹。

¹ Mandarin for "I'm sorry, my parents"

About the Author: Andrea Li (she/her) is a sophomore in high school from California. She likes collecting pins, making jewelry, and painting in her free time.

Key Change

By: Thea Calitri-Martin

a cardinal at dusk
sings twilight into black
Inside his clear call, life—

softens lonely memories
reminds me to breathe
inhale the warm scent of cut grass

set free by mower, dissipating
as new leaves rise
from the root—I hear a Bach fugue

tumbling joy through octaves
sonic variations of time
fragmented and reconfigured

life's Great Fugue swirls
through gauntlets of change
my hazel eyes echo my father's

generations of song in my voice
improvised by hands
sticky with possibility

My Squall Erupts

By: Thea Calitri-Martin

as baby feet touch the baptismal font.
Church doors blow open, Sunday bulletins fly
into congregational faces.
Water drips, my screams expel a devil who
shatters the stained-glass window of Saint Francis
and sends pieces of birds and the saintly head
to spatter the crowd with droppings of lead and glass.

Confused by my miracle, the faithful burst
out of church in a babble of tongues, their
unanswered questions fragmented in the wind.
The pig-shaped weathervane on top of the courthouse
spins and squeals as the cyclone blows out of town.
Sudden calm—I breathe in.

Father drives us home
I am swaddled too tight—mother needs soothing.
A devilish rainstorm follows—eases
as an immaculate lightning bolt splits the sky
and the grumbling line of thunder
slowly moves off.

About the Author: Thea Calitri-Martin lives and writes from her home on a dirt road in the hills of Vermont, frequently distracted by three cats and a puppy. She cross pollinates the arts though writing poetry and playing classical and jazz French horn. Thea's poems have been published in *The Ekphrastic Review*, *ZigZagLitMag's* Otter Creek Poet Chapbook and the *MALS Journal* at Dartmouth.



The Magic of Reading

Josephine Florens

Oil on Canvas

40x40cm



Thoughts
Josephine Florens
Oil on Canvas
30x50cm

Crossword

By: Michael Stewart

Broderick enters first. He eases the door of the wooden house back against the inside wall, slowly. Despite his caution, the hinges offer up a mocking, protracted scream that dissipates into the unpainted walls of the cabin. He can feel the grips on his service revolver slipping and sliding against his sweating palm. "Do you ever get used to this stuff?" he wonders. Holding up his hands as if posed in prayer, Broderick begins his search of each and every room, cupboard, crack and cranny large enough to conceal a potential threat. He does so through muscle memory mainly. Door open. Drop hands. Point weapon. Scan room. Call, "Clear!" Return hands to praying posture. Repeat. Standard Operating Procedure... S.O.P. N.Y.P.D. After entering two bedrooms, one bathroom, lounge, and kitchen, Broderick retreats to the front door. His shirt clings to the sweat on his chest and back. "Yeah. No one ever gets used to this stuff," he decides. Holstering his weapon, he exhales and then calls out, "Okay. It's clear. Bring him in."

With a flurry of feet and much shunting, shouting, and shoving, an immaculately tailored little man is pitched into the hallway. He stumbles, fumbles with his tie, mumbles his objections, and grumbles about this unwarranted laying on of hands. He shrugs his lapels straight in an attempt to regain some dignity from his current situation.

"Enough with the tactile shit already!"

He is followed immediately by a much taller, bulkier man whose suit looks like it was formulated and fabricated by a drunken and disgruntled Eastern bloc workers cooperative ... during a power outage. The left lapel is higher than the right which makes the wearer look like he is leaning off to one side. Stabbing his pistol towards the kitchen, "The Suit" hisses, "You get your disagreeable ass in there, sit down and shut up!"

An earlier visit by the Police Security Unit has transformed the kitchen into an airless, nailed-down, virtual cell of a space. The windows have been screwed shut. The patio doors chained and bolted. The curtains closed against prying eyes and nosy neighbors. For the first time in his life, Lorenzo experiences claustrophobia and a foreshadowing of an eternity in prison.

After witnessing yet another confrontation between the pair, a wearisome Broderick reproaches his partner. "Stan, you gotta lighten up. This aint supposed to be personal. It's just another job."

Sweating and shaking due to a combination of barely suppressed fury, undisguised frustration, and justifiable fear, Stan the Suit is breathing hard and fast. His eyes are bulging, and his fingers perform a twitching, jittery beat against the trigger guard on his revolver.

"Little bastard just winds me up, Brod. He just ... gets under my freakin' skin. He's gonna waltz into that courtroom, smile at the judge, testify, then stroll out free. After what he's done? It ain't right... ain't fair, no way. It's like Jefferson said, "When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty."

Broderick realized several months ago that his partner of many years was losing it. "Witness protection" detail did that to some guys. They just can't take to the notion of pampering and protecting every odious criminal shit who's decided to turn on his former colleagues in return for immunity from prosecution, heaps of used cash, and a new, clean-slate life. Broderick, he figures that the best thing for Stan is to take his mind off things. So, he enrolls him in some liberal arts course at a local college. It's mostly correspondence based, some classroom. Stan fits it around his day job. Broderick is

beginning to see bangs for his bucks though.

“Listen. You gotta see the bigger picture, Stan. It’s a means to an end. Sure, Lorenzo here, he like ... spouts off then gets off. OK, it stinks. But we get ten ... maybe fifteen bad guys put away and he spends what’s left of his life checking under his car every morning, sleeping with a light on, and crapping his pants anytime his doorbell rings. Seems like a good-old, fair-trade deal to me, pal.”

Stan ponders. Stan ruminates. Stan decides. “Yeah, yeah. You’re right Brod. Little shit’s a ... whatcha call it ... ‘means to an end’ ... ‘a necessary evil.’

Broderick is impressed by Stan’s use of this latter phrase but is quick to disguise his astonishment with a swiftly delivered, “Yeah, you got it, Stan.”

“We gotta make sure he makes it to court. Make sure he testifies. Put these sons of bitches in The Big House for a long time. Maybe some gonna get The Chair, huh Brod?” Stan is basking in the light of his newly found understanding of their current situation and Broderick is in awe of this judicial monster he has created.

The moment of clarity is shattered by the ringing of a telephone. Brod and Stan each clasp their weapons against their chest reflexively. Lorenzo stands to attention, frozen, motionless. Three rings pause. Another three rings and then another, longer pause. Then a single ring and silence.

As one, the men exhale.

Stan barks orders at Lorenzo. “You! Sit your felonious ass back down on that there couch and don’t move ‘til we tell you.”

Broderick plays good cop. “Listen, Lorenzo. It’s only the signal that the precinct boys have delivered our food outside. Three rings, short pause. Three rings, longer pause, then a single ring. I’ll go get the eats.” Broderick hesitates, gets in real close to Stan and says in a low slow voice: “You watch him. Don’t let him outta your sight, Ok?” Stan nods his agreement. “An’ for Christ’s sake, try not to bite his head off!”

Both men hear an audible gulp from Lorenzo.

Broderick switches all the interior lights off before opening the exterior door. He slithers around the frame, holding his pistol vertically, safety off.

At the far end of the wooden porch sits a wicker basket covered by a checkered cloth. Keeping his back to the wall of the house, Broderick slinks along the rough pine planking, snagging his suit again and again on the coarse façade. “Son of a bitch!” He mutters internally as he inches towards their provisions.

Reaching the basket, Broderick examines the surrounding area. Then the exterior of the hamper. He checks for wires. Looks for anything unusual. Any added extras. Finally, using the barrel of his gun, he flicks back the checkered cloth. There in big, black and bold letters he sees a printed sign. “Boom! You are dead! Best wishes from all the squad room guys at Precinct 21!”

Broderick is so relieved he almost laughs.

Scooping up his prize, he is about to head back into the house when he spots a newspaper on the lawn. Maybe ten feet from the porch. Now he knows the kid will have been told to deliver to the door of the house, so he’s pissed off. Broderick checks left then right steps onto the grass and snatches up the ‘paper. “Lazy little bastard prob’ly didn’t even get his ass off the seat of his bike.”

Back in the house, Stan and Lorenzo appraise the quality of the food provided. “Smoked ham, fresh pasta, ravioli, lasagne, soda bread, coffee, and milk... nice!” Stan is impressed. Lorenzo less so. He kicks off.

“Hey where’s the cheese, man. No mozzarella? No Parmigiano? No gorgonzola neither! And where’s my freakin’ newspaper? I said I need my “Noo Yawk Timez!” Your guys agreed. Said “OK!”

Stan bristles. Tenses up, ready to attack.

Broderick throws a cylindrical object against Lorenzo’s chest. “New York Times, right? Gotta have it every day, right? Crossword guy, right? That your ‘paper?”

Lorenzo bobs and weaves like a pecking chicken as he unfurls the bundle. “Yeah. That’s it, man. That’s what I’m talking about!” He rips through the newspaper, locates the Arts section, and throws himself onto the couch. Broderick and Stan watch as he scrolls down a page, lips moving as he reads.

“Son of a bitch! I knew it! I freakin’ knew it! Those sneaky bastards!”

Broderick’s guess is that Lorenzo is checking the solution to the previous week’s puzzle. He is obviously impressed by the ingenuity of the compiler of this particular one. “Hey, listen to this you guys ... see, the clue is “Country song”, eight letters then six letters. So, I’m thinking like, something by Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, or Dolly Parton, OK? But can’t get nothin’ to fit the numbers. So, whatcha think? Any ideas, huh? You guys got anything?”

Broderick and Stan could not look less interested.

Undaunted, Lorenzo says, “Country song” (8,6) is ... “national anthem! Clever huh! Son of a bitch ...” Lorenzo returns to checking the solutions section and a blissful silence descends upon the house.

After a coupla days Stan corners Broderick after breakfast. Lorenzo is still drinking coffee in the kitchen and concentrating on his latest crossword. “So, what you hear about this guy, Brod? They’re saying he’s some kinda numbers genius. Makes dirty money sparklin’ clean and millions in taxable dollars invisible to the all-seeing eyes of the IRS. Whatcha got?”

Broderick is still chewing on a bagel and cream cheese. He shrugs then swallows. He knows he has to level with Stan. “OK. What I know is Lorenzo was accountant to the syndicate for years. The biggest of the bag men. All the cash was coming in and going out through him. So, he knows who is doing what, when and with who in the organization. He has everyone’s story. He’s bouncing money around the world through dummy corporations and shell companies. There’s an electronic web a mile wide making the actual cash impossible to trace. He’s dealing with corrupt regimes and disreputable governments and shady banks that don’t look too hard at international transfers when a little chunk of change breaks loose and a coupla thousand alms grease the right palms.”

Stan is unimpressed. “Big deal. Nobody likes the IRS.”

“Thing is ... Lorenzo here ... he got kinda creative with the cash. Started to generate extra income by funding arms deals to both sides in a coupla civil wars, also fronted the money for a number of major drug importations to the U.S. and then got himself, and more significantly, his employers, involved in people trafficking. Kids in particular. He’s a real piece of work.”

Stan is now impressed. So impressed Broderick realizes he will have to keep these two apart big time.

“See, his bosses don’t like none of that stuff. It goes against their code. No drugs. No civilians and definitely no juveniles.”

Stan is nodding now. Digesting the information and nodding. Broderick senses Stan’s opinion of Lorenzo is plummeting to even greater depths.

“So, the bosses, they figure this guy has got to go. What with the drugs, the gun running and the people trafficking, it’s making the syndicate look bad ... they lose face. Lorenzo finds out they got a contract out on him. He does a runner. Comes to us. Says he’ll testify in return for immunity.”

Stan considers this. “So much for honor amongst thieves, huh?”

By the end of the first week supplies are running low, and the newspaper is still being delivered to the lawn. Each day, it’s found further and further from the house. While Stan ventures outside to collect the supplies in the hamper, and Lorenzo is locked in the kitchen, Broderick calls the newsagent.

The proprietor of the shop is baffled. “I really don’t understand sir. Billy’s a great kid. Real conscientious. And I told him. Told him myself. ‘Make sure the ‘paper is delivered to the door. Put it right there on the mat.’ I says to him. “Right on the mat.” Broderick doesn’t respond. “So maybe I tell him again when he comes in.” This time Broderick says, “That would be good. Thank you.” He hangs up.

Lorenzo continues to annoy. He bombards Broderick and Stan with crossword clues that are thinly veiled barbs. “So ... hey ... how about his one. “Pessimists ... that’s like guys who only see the bad stuff right ... “pessimists on a waterbed.” Three letters then eight letters. Come on, Whatcha think?”

Broderick and Stan stare at Lorenzo with all the affection of a spider regarding its prey. Incapable of reading the room, Lorenzo answers his own question. “It’s “wet blankets” right? Wet freakin’ blankets!” Fortunately, the ringing of the telephone breaks up this revelry.

Three rings, pause. Another three rings and then another, longer pause. Then a single ring and silence. Broderick says without taking his eyes off Lorenzo, “OK Stan. My turn. I’ll go get the provisions. You watch our wordsmith here.”

Glad to be out of the cabin even for a few minutes, Broderick is infuriated to discover that the newspaper has been delivered to a spot some twenty feet from the porch.

So, after another coupla weeks Broderick is starting to lose patience with this thing with the kid and the newspaper. He confides in his partner. “Maybe it’s just me Stan but it sure seems like this kid I’ve never freakin’ met is trying to provoke me or somethin’. Every freakin’ day it’s another coupla yards further from the house.” Stan says, “Don’t call the newsagent Brod, it’s against protocol.” Broderick is stunned by this sudden widening of Stan’s vocabulary. He calls the newsagent. Same story but with bells on. “Billy’s a good kid ... workin’ to help his mom ... single parent ... sure I’ll tell him, sure thing. Soon as he comes in.”

The newspaper guy gives it to Billy straight. “Listen son. I don’t know how many times I told you about delivering the ‘paper to the old Johnstone farm. Guy there wants it put right there on the mat by the door. He ‘phones me three maybe four times. Tells me the ‘paper is nearer the road that the house now. Laying right there in the yard. I tell you three or four times you got to get your act together. Ain’t happenin’ Billy. Son, I need to let you go.”

“You firin’ me Mr. Jackson?”

“No choice son. Today’s your last day. Gonna pay you ‘til the end of the week tho’ what with your mom’s situation an’ all.”

Billy sits astride his bike as Mr. Jackson shouts from the door of the shop. “Billy! See if you can put the ‘paper on the mat at the Johnstone place, huh son?”

Billy shrugs and rides off. No way is he delivering no more ‘papers for old man Jackson after today. And no way is the Johnstone newspaper going anywhere near that mat. The lop-sided guy who is paying him 25 bucks a day to place it further and further from the

house would be real pissed. 'Sides, after three weeks of this crap, Billy reckons, he got more'n 500 dollars stashed now, enough to get a real big bag'a weed that he can sell to a buncha 8th graders he knows'll buy any kinda shit he shows them. Just as soon as he bulks it up, doubles its size by mixing in a heapa oregano. Just like he was taught. By his mom.

In the cabin, the 'phone rings its coded message and Stan and Broderick debate whose turn it is to collect the basket. "No big deal, man." Says Stan, "But I definitely went yesterday. And the day before that."

"No way Stan. That didn't happen." Broderick is getting angry now. Three weeks of being cooped up with this pair is shredding his nerves.

"Come on you guys! Quit the chatter and collect the goddamned basket an' all. I need to check out a crazy clue that's been bugging my ass all week! Some shit about a coupla donkeys".

Broderick explodes. "Back off, Lorenzo! Just back off! This ain't your concern. This ain't nothin' to do with you or your freakin' newspaper". Broderick is in Lorenzo's face now. Has him by the front of his shirt. Is about to do some serious damage to the guy.

Stan comes into the lounge, steps between them, places a meaty hand on Lorenzo's chest and shoves him into the kitchen, slamming the door in his face.

"Okay Brod. Okay I'll go get the basket. And that son of a bitch's freakin' 'paper. You watch that he don't leave that room."

Broderick sinks down on the couch well aware that losing his cool with that creep Lorenzo is unprofessional. He will apologize to Stan... and Lorenzo later.

In the kitchen Lorenzo notices a slight breeze entering this usually stagnant space. Strangely, the patio doors, which up until now have been chained and bolted shut, are open and the curtains are billowing inwards.

He hears Stan tell Broderick. "You take it easy now Brod. Sit down. Kitchen door is locked." He hears Stan jiggle the key. "That little shit is going nowhere."

Hesitating briefly before exiting through the patio doors, an impatient Lorenzo makes his way to the front of the house. He pounces on the newspaper lying several meters from the house, ripping the binding off and searching for the Arts section.

In the forest beyond the spotter nudges the sniper ... slightly. The sniper squeezes the trigger ... lightly.

Lorenzo locates the crossword solutions page.

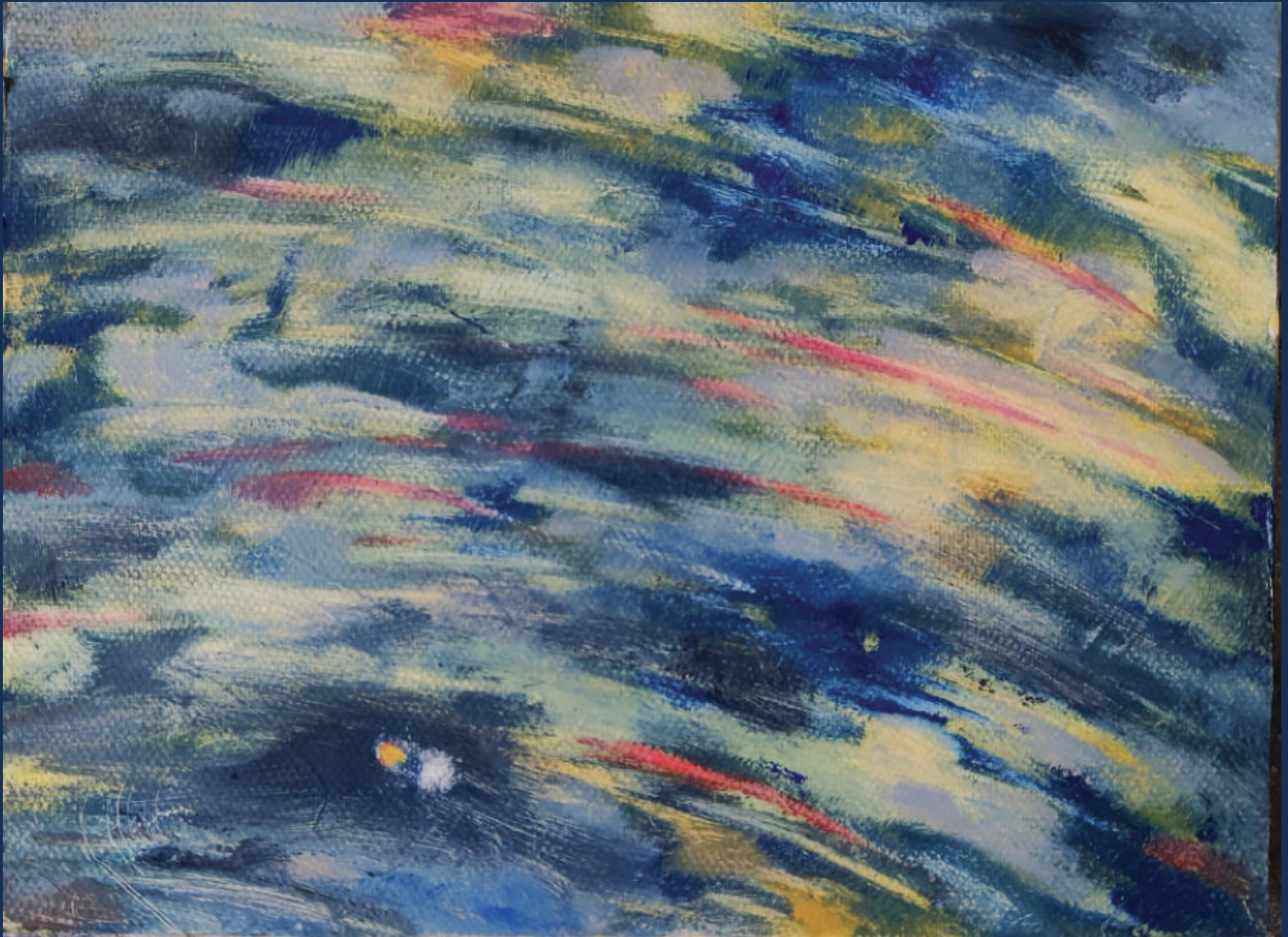
The sniper takes his range from the newspaper that has been in his sights constantly for the last three weeks.

Lorenzo locates the clue, "Visibly pleased. Two donkeys enter, together. He reads the solution aloud. "Smiling assassin". The sniper increases pressure on the trigger and fires. "Son of a bitch!" thinks Lorenzo before the rear of his skull is pitched upon the lawn.

Clutching the basket on the porch Stan watches as Lorenzo's head snaps back, blood pooling like quotation marks. A phrase they discussed in class comes back to him, something about Sherlock Holmes and the author: 'It's every man's business to see justice done.'

Stan ponders the quote. "That newspaper kid was worth every penny." He decides.

About the Author: Michael Stewart was born in Edinburgh, Scotland and now lives in Pattaya, Thailand. After a career in traditional teaching, Michael was founding director of an online education company. While in the post, Michael was a regular contributor to EPALÉ; an initiative of the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture of the European Commission, with articles translated into six European languages. He also contributed to The Writers' Academy at Penguin Random House, where he published seven eBooks on creative writing. In addition, Michael wrote about contemporary business practice for the University of Aberdeen Online MBA (Global) blog. Michael has been writing fiction and poetry since 2019.



Untitled
Elwing Gao
Oil on canvas
4"x6"



the call of other places

Elwing Gao
Oil on canvas
6"x12"

a scene from February of a rose

By: Sichen Li

in the night you can't tell,

"is that noise a cat yelping
or an unborn child?"

she likes to keep it hush to not wake the others.

but i don't know mornings,
and i don't until you've left for work
or to the oncologist's
(i'd imagine his is a light place...)

when the sunlight spoils your flesh
there's some red bud on your chest
& i tell you,

"when my nails grow long and strong,
i'll pinch it off for you."

it'll be scabbed, so let it scab,
the night will kiss it and suck it raw,
with the things it doesn't say.
it is good

but i keep biting them, i'm 5'5" and haven't
grown an inch since 14 because
i listen to the night, not talking

i think you're mad for letting your eyes shut,
for listening to our walls that urge "sleep"
and madder still for not asking about the child
and letting the bud grow bigger, and redder

sometimes, when you slumber,
i curl my fingers around it
& i feel it
syncopate
beat
live
& swell like a
grapefruit

its wet dew on my hand
and i can taste how bitter it must make you.

go to sleep—
we'll know in the morning—

and sometimes i forget your age—
you say

“i want to do to you what
the redbuds do, to the cicadas”

—and you’ve aged so much.
point at the disease and declare:

“this is where i carry my love,
this is why it grows”

where?

you’re back at noon and wake me up

“i love you”

“how’s the cancer?”

“what cancer?”

“that thing you’ve got on your chest, that thing
that takes the dark away from you and you
away from me”

i push your arm out of the way and stare
at the origin of your sickness,
the red spooling
& the little layers that bloomed around it.

About the Author: Sichen Li is currently a high-school senior. In her free time, she enjoys reading literature (magical realism in particular), penning poetry, and exploring the philosophy of language.



Fleeting
Tanya Rastogi
Soft Pastel
9"x12"

Artist's Statement: "Fleeting" aims to express the movement of a note of music. It is brief, barely tangible—yet every phrase requires a degree of coordination and effort that often goes unnoticed by the listener. Each snippet of sound contributes to a greater whole.



In Our Own Worlds
Ally Chen
Paint
18"x24"

Dreamcatcher

By: Dylan Buckser-Schulz

Like two lightning stems erupting
in a blonde weave, you take my hand. We wade
the shore shinningly toward the tempest.

At first, you were a dream.

We revel in the whitecaps. Like infants,
bright thousands froth and drown
beneath the wind's filaments.
The wind—a father—prowls
in his gray overcoat
slipping untraceable questions
in the ridges
of our ears.

*From what friction
do we explode?*

I give a battered answer
like a seed to a storm: *neither here
nor there*, yet here
you and I strike gold,
we two thunderous aspens
curling across the coastline.
The sheer rarity of us!
We two thrusts of light
entwining in the sky.

Then, thunder.

The father—a matchmaker—blows
open my eyelids,
my vivid eyes like dreamcatchers,
and you—a sister—beach
brilliantly in between.

About the Author: Dylan Buckser-Schulz is a senior at Edgemont High School in Westchester, New York. He attends writing workshops at Writopia Lab, where he has worked as an intern. He was selected to attend the 2022 Iowa Young Writers' Studio, where he studied poetry under Gilad Jaffe. His prose and poetry have been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. Dylan is the recipient of a Fine Arts Award in creative writing from Interlochen Center for the Arts, as well as the Catherine Medalia Johannot Literature Prize from his high school. Otherwise, Dylan is a jazz drummer, Nintendo-enthusiast, and philanthropic baker of cookies.

This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine¹

By: Madeleine Freedberg

Bankhill was tired of waiting. He was tired of dry eyes and ragged heartbeats. Tired of his gnawing gut and the sweat building up beneath the rim of his glasses. He was tired of taking them off to wipe the moisture away on his white lapel. Tired of the brief moment of blindness when the laboratory blurred and all he could see was gray. He was tired of uncertainty, tired of anticipation. He was tired of waiting.

The clock was tired too. It had stopped ticking. Bankhill wasn't sure how long ago. One hour? Two? It was yet another uncertainty. And he hated uncertainties. The world was an uncertain place, he knew that, but there was an order to it. And it was that order which he sought like a man hunting for water in the desert. He knew it was there, somewhere, and more often than not, he'd managed to find it, in science and figures, in the laws of the universe, in the complex human brain and the waves that ranged through it. But right now, all he could see was sand.

Bankhill punched the desk. Bad idea. Now his hand hurt. Cursing, he got to his feet and began to pace. Back and forth, back and forth, from one white wall to the other. His shoes squeaked on the polished tile floor.

He was so tired of being tired. Of the sleepless nights that stacked one on top of the other until he had a veritable Everest of them. He knew he should be excited, thrilled, even. That the moment he had been waiting for all his life was right around the corner. But he was tired of waiting.

Nicholas Prosper never waited. He leapt on every opportunity thrown his way, pulled them out from under Bankhill's feet. It wasn't Prosper who had been up all night for the last week, making the final modifications to the device. It wasn't Prosper who'd come up with the idea for a device in the first place. It was Bankhill. Bankhill had done the research, made the plans, and put them into action. It was Bankhill's device. Yet the moment it was finished, Prosper had snatched it out of his hands and run to the hospital. Bankhill hadn't even had a chance to test the device. He had no idea what would happen when Prosper flipped the switch. He couldn't breathe, the what-ifs crashing over him like breakers.

But there was one thing he knew for sure. If the device worked, Prosper would get the glory. If it failed, he would receive the shame. Either way, Bankhill would have nothing. No matter what happened, he would never win. It was Prosper who would be remembered as the man behind the magic. Bankhill would be forgotten.

He shouldn't mind. He knew he shouldn't mind. He'd never craved the spotlight. He didn't thrive under the weight of a thousand eyes. He couldn't try on a new face every time he entered a room. All he'd ever wanted was solitude, quiet in which he could slowly and surely work his way toward the truths of the world.

He didn't like people. All people ever did was pretend. A waste of time, in his opinion, but maybe it was more than that. Maybe he resented them because there was a piece of him that envied them. Envied all the parts they could play while he couldn't be anyone but himself, and he wasn't even quite sure who that was yet. He didn't let his mind linger on that particular question for too long because he wasn't sure he would find an answer. He wasn't sure there was an answer to be found, and that uncertainty scared him most of all.

The door burst open, slamming against the wall and ricocheting back with a clang like a gong.

Bankhill snapped around. "Nicholas?" he spluttered. "What?"

But Prosper wasn't listening to him. The other man had blown through the door with the force of an Indian Ocean cyclone and now he strode into the room past the shocked Bankhill. Kicking the filing cabinet out of his way, he threw his body down into Bankhill's vacated seat. The force of his motion sent the chair skittering backward and slammed it into the desk, the impact tossing all the carefully arranged papers on the tabletop up into the air. They rained down around Prosper, a blizzard of oversized confetti.

But Nicholas Prosper didn't seem to notice. From the moment he'd entered, Bankhill

¹The title, "This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine" is from *The Tempest* Act V Scene I

had known his focus was miles away. Now, Prosper lifted his head and looked at him, but the eyes that met Bankhill's were hazy, unfocused.

"She's dead," said Prosper. He sounded both as if he couldn't believe it and like he'd known it was coming his whole life.

Bankhill opened his mouth to respond, then hesitated. He'd never been very good at telling when someone was lying or pulling his leg, especially when that someone was Prosper. But now, now something in the sag of Prosper's shoulders, the tremor in his hands as they grasped the arms of the chair too tight, told Bankhill that this was no pretense.

So he swallowed the "really" before it could slide out and asked instead, "How?" Prosper delivered his response to a patch of floor three feet to Bankhill's left. "A seizure. She fell and hit her head on the corner of the desk." He closed his eyes and sucked in three quick breaths. "Hard. They took her into surgery but.... It was too late."

Bankhill blinked once. "Wait.... So you didn't use the device?"

But Prosper wasn't listening. "She hit her head only an hour before I got there, Tobias. Just an hour. If I'd left a little bit sooner, I could've saved her. I could've used the device and she would never have had another seizure again...."

"So you didn't use it."

"No."

Their eyes met and Bankhill could see that something was steeling in Prosper's gaze, replacing the vagueness of a moment before. Too late, Bankhill realized that he must have hit a nerve, though he wasn't quite sure how.

"S-so we don't know if it works," he said, stammering slightly under Prosper's razor gaze. "We still haven't tested it."

Prosper nodded, the gesture slow, practiced. Bankhill waited for him to speak. He didn't. There was a lump in his pocket, Bankhill noticed. It was that lump that gave him the courage to say what came next.

"All right," he said, wiping his palms on his lab coat and hoping Prosper didn't see the damp streaks they left behind. "That means I can run some smaller-scale tests to see if it actually works before we try it on a human subject. Now things aren't so urgent." He laughed nervously. Prosper leaned towards him.

"Not so urgent," he said, his lips puckering on the words as if they left a bitter aftertaste. Bankhill nodded.

Prosper shifted his weight, pushing himself up out of the chair and into a standing position. The lump in his pocket shifted. Bankhill couldn't take his eyes off it. "Nick," he said. "Aren't you going to give it to me?"

Prosper's heavy brows furrowed. "What?"

Bankhill ran his tongue over his lips. "The-the-the thing. So I can run tests on it."

Prosper took a step towards him, then another, slowly, taking his time.

Bankhill stumbled back.

"What?" asked Prosper, still advancing. "What thing?"

Bankhill's back was up against the door now, and he could feel the cold from the steel pressing into his shoulder blades. He was tired of Prosper and his games. Tired of being talked down to, and left out, and walked all over. He was done.

"Give me my device!" he shouted. The words ripped themselves from his mouth on a wave of frustration, echoing through the room, dancing up the walls, and reverberating into the ground at their feet.

Prosper went very still. He tilted his head to the side, his eyes narrowing as he surveyed Bankhill, his prey backed into a corner..

"No," he said finally. "I don't think I will."

Bankhill's jaw dropped.

"But... but it's my device!" he gasped. "I made it. It was my research, my calculations, my hours and hours of hard work. You can't just take it! It isn't yours!"

Prosper shrugged. "I think that's a matter of perspective. You would have never made the thing in the first place if I hadn't given you the idea, would you? Besides," he laughed, "what story do you think people would rather hear? The charming young inventor who turned to brain electricity in an attempt to save his sister's life, or the socially awkward lab rat whose only motivation was his own thirst for knowledge? I think we both know the answer to that." His smile twisted. "I'll be their tragic hero, selflessly bringing his new technology to the world. Saving millions of lives to make up for that one time he was too late." He frowned. "Still, I admit I couldn't have done this on my own. It was a team effort, so I'll give you a choice: a place at my side as a collaborator." His mouth twitched. "An

assistant. Be that, or be nothing at all. No one will ever know there even was a Tobias Bankhill. It will be Nicholas Prosper who invented the device that brought salvation to the world. Nicholas Prosper who will be revered. Nicholas Prosper who will be remembered. And Nicholas Prosper,” his lips spread into a thin smile, “works alone.”

With that, Prosper strode forward and threw the door open, shoving Bankhill to the side. He landed hard, his body slamming into the tiles. He tasted blood. He must have bitten his tongue.

“Goodbye, Tobias,” said Prosper from behind him, his voice almost gentle. “Thank you for everything. Humankind will never know how instrumental you were in their salvation.” Then he turned and walked away.

“But it’s my device!” Bankhill cried after him. His voice sounded shrill, almost childish, even to his own ears.

He could hear Prosper’s laugh echo through the dark hallway. “Bankhill, do you really think anyone cares?”

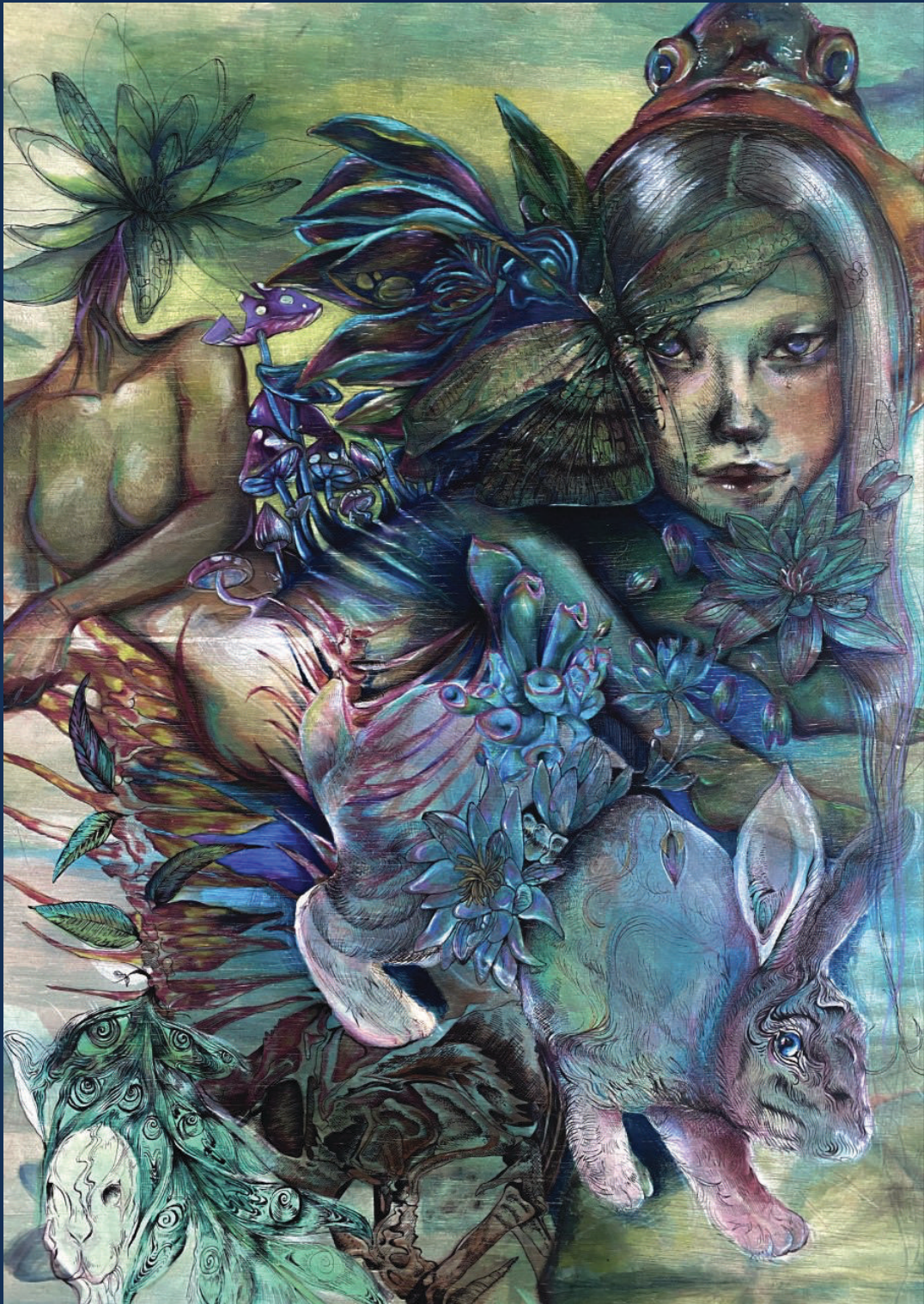
About the Author: Madeleine Freedberg is a high school senior. Her work has been recognized twice by the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and she is a past recipient of the Larry Neal Writers’ Award. She participated in the Kenyon Young Writers Workshop and a novel-writing workshop through GrubStreet in summer 2021. Last summer, she attended the Kenyon Young Writers Summer Residential Workshop and the Yale Young Writers’ Workshop. She has hundreds of pages of drafts of prospective novels and short stories, and she looks forward to seeing her work in print.



Homesick

Angela Xu
Marker and Pen
9"x12"

Artist's Statement: My concept of 'home' is skewed. Distorted. Twisted. The two-story box I find myself cooped up in everyday is not representative of a home. Because soon I will leave it behind for another home. And another. And another. I will constantly be moving, and there will not be a singular, unchanging place that I can call home. This realization has made me feel a bit lost - everyone feels homesick at some point, especially after departing their first home. But what happens when you feel homesick for not just homes, but people, places, experiences? Things that can never be recaptured. Creating this piece was my way of exhibiting the feelings I feel in a visual way.



Prescribed Stupor
Aileen Chen
Water color and colored pencil

A translucent borderline between phraseologies

By: Ha Linh Dang

I. Pressing roughly against the slip of paper, I left a faint ink ray rising above the headline.

crack crack

swish swish

crack crack

The invisible apprehension haunted me, then squished me as a bundle by tossing the ball-point pen in my mouth myself.

Moonlight reflected through the mosaic pieces in the window, soaking the extinguished light lamp with colorful sparkles.

My face was ingrained in the darkness, then swallowed by mist from the far sky.

I thrashed my own body through the pile of papers and walked under any suffering there.

II. From A to B was measured by miles away, drowned out by a disdainful gaze on me.

What did you do for our family?

math, crap, slap

money - tiền

Our conversations were helter-skelter down to some

mix-up: her teeth gritted with indignation, uttering /ʃ/ following with a dot placed under.

Languages traveled through the land tunnel,

blurting english with a dash from the viet alphabet.

I did not know how they belong to either

our family or our country.

III. Who will remember me? *outlandish - conquered by dust.*

My mind was rinsed off

by a basin of english

texas - /tee sac/ - we pronounced it without /s/

My presence is always without s,

sound - shadow - shine: all were manifested by my mother.

Never in my life

have I been lightly touched by sunshine

have I been slowly rooted into darkness?

The silhouette digested me in its hole,

hollow absorbed

all my mind,

left it with a blank:

.....

complete the sentence.

About the Author: Ha Linh Dang is a Vietnamese high schooler. She has been working as an editor, writer and graphic designer for a journal and some non-profit organizations. Her strong desire is to shatter the border between English and Vietnamese by capturing the sensationism of those two languages. In her free time, she enjoys immersing herself in YA fiction, playing crossword puzzles and shaping clay models.



Self Portrait Polaroid
Claire Oh
Acrylic

Sugary Wings

By: Sandra Lin

I swear, her mouth tastes impossibly sweet, like she had eaten
palms of pulled maltose before this, with her jelly-pink lips parted
just barely, as if someone taught her all the ways to drive a girl
crazy. My heart unfurls beneath a single touch and I wonder if
there is something wrong with me—something wrong with this
winged beast in my chest, ramming against its sternum cage. She
said that this—girls kissing girls—is alright and I lied to her face,
told her that women’s anatomy disgusts me. She knows I’m lying
when she put her lips to mine and I don’t move away. I’ve been
told that coveting someone like me is a crime against the heavens,
but I don’t think even they can refuse this pearling of honey
between our mouths so I pull back my ribs and tear open my chest,
whisper to the autumn wind at her ear: this, this is how much I
love you. Do you see? It is so much, I cannot—will not—hide it anymore.

About the Author: Sandra Lin (林诺晨) is a Chinese American from New York who currently attends Bell High School in Florida. She has been recognized by the Alliance for Art and Writing, Rider University, and Hollins University, among others. Her works are published or forthcoming in *Kissing Dynamite*, *Eunoia Review*, and elsewhere. Sandra is working on a platform that aims to empower marginalized voices in literature. She may be contact on Instagram @sandranuochen or her website <https://sandranuochen.carrd.co>



Hayallerime adım adım

Betül Kelez
Photography

Artist's Statement:

"Hayallerime adım adım" is a Turkish saying meaning "Step by step into my dreams." This photo is from my trip to Cairo with my parents. They came all the way to my civil wedding and my husband took them to the pyramids for the first time. The man on the camel is my father. He is riding in the desert into the unknown. Aren't dreams like that, too? We take the steps, but don't know where they will lead us.

The Same Distance, Continuously

By: Marisa Oishi

*we will bear it,
you promise.*

chamomile steam wafts
from the distance between our parallels.
a mirror-image will always touch
her left hand to my right,
so we are bound to run in circles.
we travel laps around the truths
we'll never see, loops around the flowerbuds
seeping through torn tea bags. I hate you
only as an extension of myself; I love you
only as an extension of my hate. we're not strong
enough for forever, so let me run through meadows
along the side of the road,
daisies dripping from my hair,
grasping your hand,
and more often than not,
slipping away.

*I can bear it,
I promise.*

About the Author: Marisa Oishi is a high school student from Washington state who loves to write and to dance. She is a founder and the Chief Editor of her school's literature and art journal, *Figments Magazine*. Her work has also been featured in publications including *Ice Lolly Review*, *The WEIGHT Journal*, and *Cathartic Youth Literary Magazine*.



untitled
Luana Góes
Digital drawing and collage
1500x1920px



starry
Luana C6es
Digital drawing
1500x1500px



lost diary
 Luana Góes
 Mixed media collage
 a4

House of Consciousness

By: Niharika Banerjee

If my family's entire consciousness and memory were a mansion, if big events were rooms and littler ones were closets, then I stand on the steps of the greatest mansion, the House of Consciousness. I am keenly aware that the reader has never seen this mansion known only to me, so I shall endeavor to explain my surroundings to the best of my abilities. The House rests at the top of a green hill, which is in turn surrounded by a wrought-iron fence. The sky above it is always gray, sometimes swirling with the repressed threat of a storm.

The House has one entrance: a set of black marble doors almost two stories high with a great brass knocker on the front, though one need not bother with such formalities as the knocker. The door opens only to me. Stepping through the doors, I always find myself in a large foyer, which is the present moment. The floor is made of white marble and inlaid with gold designs, likely of Turkic or Persian origin. Directly in front of me stretches South Hall. South Hall is easier to explain than the East and West Wings. South Hall is shorter and it is possible for one to walk the length of it and back if one were so inclined, although the journey may still take many months.

The rooms in South Hall closest to the main foyer are cluttered, as they are chronologically closest to the foyer and thereby the easiest to access. They are filled with memories of passing conversations, fleeting glances, afternoon walks: the moments easiest to forget as you reel farther backwards in time. South Hall is just that, a hall. It stretches linearly with a definite beginning and end, with rooms on the left and right side of the hall directly facing each other. The hallway is painted a neutral cream, with white sconces positioned between doors

at even intervals. Some rooms are larger than others. The door labeled 5.5.21, the day I fell in love with my best friend, is bright pink and giant, with red ribbon dancing across the walls in all directions. There are windows in this room too, and although it is impossible to see out of these windows, they always let in a hazy glow, as though one is not quite awake or it is not quite mid-morning. Stand here, in the exact center of the room where the light slants just so... yes! right there. Do you not see the images, hazy yet precise, flickering around you? I could watch the malformed motions for hours. Other rooms have no windows and are largely painted gray. They range in size, but it is not difficult to imagine what rests within these walls.

The farther one strays from the foyer, the more sparse the rooms of South Hall become. Take this door on our left. It opens into a medium sized room with light brown carpeting, sky blue walls, and the sliding doors of a white closet on the left wall. The room is positively empty, no matter which beam of light you stand in, no matter which corner you observe it from. Whether I stood here for minutes or for days, it would change nothing. The room is devoid of memories.

The very end of South Hall is technically indefinite. It does not end in a solid cream wall, but rather a soft, melancholy haze. It calls to me, begs me to reach out and reach through it, begs me to keep walking until I reach the end of the hall. But I cannot, you understand. The moments beyond that haze may be known to others, but never to me.

South Hall holds a special place in my heart, although simple and relatively small compared to the other wings. South Hall is mine.

Follow me back to the foyer as I explain why the next leg of our journey will be difficult and perhaps impossible to explain. The East and West Wings of the House of Consciousness are not technically my own. They belong, respectively, to my parents, the two people who created and raised me, to their families and their families' legacies. If the ending of South Hall seems indefinite, the East and West Wings are infinite. It is possible to walk for years and never explore all the hallways, the maze of rooms and hidden staircases, the narrow passageways lit with no light at all. You will also see that not all

doors in these wings will open for me. Some stories, no matter how tantalizing, are stories I will never know.

Closest to the foyer, closest to the present, in both wings are rooms well lit and spacious, painted in a certain light that only money and comfort can provide. But, as with South Hall, the farther one gets from the foyer, the more they venture into the past. Still, the rooms in this section are generally positive. In the West Wing, there are numerous rooms filled with trophies: dance competitions, debate competitions, art competitions. There are rooms that open onto the beach, with laughing, plaited young girls running on the white sand of Chennai beaches, the sun glinting off their brown skin. There are rooms that open onto the verandah of a two story pink and white house, with steaming sambar and rasam heaped onto stainless steel plates, ready to serve 10 or more guests. In the East Wing, doors open into rooms with grainy TVs playing 80s movies, with grille windows letting in a light breeze and faint noise from the street beyond. There are doors that open onto hot, dusty fields, sweat pooling on the collarbones of young boys as they play cricket. There are even doors that open into Rajasthani schoolrooms, the walls white and the chalkboards green.

Any room that is open to me here is a room that I do not tire of entering. I would even venture to say that I love these rooms more than my own down in South Hall. After a certain point, the hallways in the East and West Wings will branch into two directions: left and right. Left is for mothers, right is for fathers. These halls are as beautiful as they are novel. Every memory housed here belongs to another time and another country. The memories belong to people that I cannot always communicate with, whom language and culture may divide me from. I wish I could paint on the walls of the hallways that I should love to know everything, if only I could. I cling to any room of my grandparents' that I can open. Rooms in the East Wing open onto jangling trains carrying newlywed couples into the city for a movie—20 paise for a ticket and they would save all week. A room in the West Wing opens onto an oppressively hot rooftop terrace, where a young girl uses the faint light of a streetlamp to study in the night, since her house has no electricity. Another room opens onto small boys crouched under tables as air raid sirens wail in the humid night air. I wish I could know more, but—

Ah, the infamous closed doors. Some require a password, a string of numbers that I do not know. Others are stuck closed, and will not budge no matter how hard I jam my shoulder against them. Still others lack any door handles at all. The deeper and deeper I get into the maze of hallways the darker the walls get. There are only so many generations that I have so far visited. I could walk forever and never reach the end of the East or West Wing. But, what would be the purpose of embarking on such a long journey? The hallways would just get increasingly narrower, all doors locked or sealed; the entire length of some hallways lit by only a single candle, others completely dark and taped off. I never dare step into these narrow, pitch black hallways. Some mortal, primal fear tells me that people do not return from such darkness, that one could be forever lost in the unknown if they were not too careful.

The wings and halls of the House of Consciousness are not always so different from one another. For example, deaths are always black. In South Hall, there are two black rooms, one larger and closer to the foyer than the other. But they are nothing compared to the expansive black rooms of East and West Wings. It is difficult to be within the black rooms, but even more difficult to leave them. The suffocating lack of light finds a way to wrap its fingers around you when you least expect it. Take the black room in the West Wing filled with fire; flames devouring hair, head, and belly swollen with child. Take the black room in the East Wing filled with water; water clogging lungs, pulling adolescent bodies to wild depths. Take the cold, isolated room in the East Wing; a scoundrel eloping with a woman only to take from her what is most precious.

Nothing is more precious than life itself. This universal truth is painted clearly on the walls of the House, clearly in the ephemeral memories. Sometimes, I catch glimpses of stories in these halls, winking at me from the ends of hallways and then disappearing around dark corners before I can catch up. Sometimes, I feel as though I am always running to catch these glistening wisps of lost identity. Yet, I know I am blessed to be able to spend all my days wandering these halls and tracing my fingers along these walls, reliving the glories and tragedies of the past, staying forever cocooned in the memories.

Don't feel any hurry to leave! Come with me, let us pick a room and sit within it. The black marble doors of the House only part for me, anyhow, and at present I am much too tired to command them to let us out. If we left the House of Consciousness, where would

we go? There is no world beyond the hill, no world beyond the gate. It is so much easier to stay here, wandering the halls, begging the locked doors to open, reminiscing in South Hall. It is so much easier to stay here, reliving the moments played in sun-filled rooms, dodging the gray rooms until morbid curiosity draws me towards them. It is a lonely life, but a real one. After all, what is more real than the mind?

About the Author: Niharika Banerjee is a high schooler who strongly believes in the power that written word has to express human emotion. She can also never be found without a book in her hand.



Cubist Self Portrait

Kaitlin Kiswojo
Acrylic on canvas
30cm x 40cm

Artist's Statement: "Cubist Self-Portrait" serves as an abstract visual memoir, extending to the facets of my inner self. Despite the use of originally bright hues (like oranges and yellows), this work in particular incorporates shades of gray within the gradation of each segment of the background—as well as the "shadowy" nature of my figure—to acknowledge the existence of despair and misery within my very being.



Skull-Flowers
Kaitlin Kiswojo
Acrylic on canvas
50cm x 55cm

Artist's Statement: "Skull-Flowers" depict the very symbolism of an oxymoron—a self-contradiction, or rather a clash between life (as represented by the sunflowers) and death (as illustrated by the skull). In all, the work serves as a contemplation regarding the beauty and brevity of life as well as death's role in it, exemplified by the clear-cut contrast between the light sunflower petals and the dark, looming silhouette of the skull.

A Bee's Benediction

By: Luna Vallejo

The harlequin marbles are scattered across the front porch as purple kool-aid trickles across bandaged knees and mucky converse / we pick up our battered bicycles, worn out from taking the hits of our unexperienced love, back when puberty began to sting our fragile skin like a hive of violent wasps and we were scared of the strangeness and the unfamiliarity of the lumps that made our hearts accelerate around each other, despite the bandages plastered on our bites, that were all of a sudden heart-shaped

I inhale the familiar scent of mossy lakes and mosquito-bitten legs as we ride through the mellow forest, the sound of cicadas embracing our presence, welcoming us in their loving home / we stumble upon the oozing swamp that we used to push each other in when we were 7, laughing as we shook off the greenish mush that was left behind on our laundered clothes and our scrunched-up hair / we cease our journey to eat the plump, saccharine raspberries from the raspberry bush that nurtured us the week we decided that it was all too much for us and that our love was not meant to be ironed and put away in a wooden cabinet, instead it was meant to make our converse soggy with dirt and our hair scruffy from the midnight baths in the grubby forest lakes that served as the houses for croaking toads and unkempt geese that bathed in our marshy pools of teenage rebellion

But we were only 15 back then and even though we won't admit it to one another, the raspberries tasted much sweeter back then / once we finish our batch of insipid berries, the edges of our mouths remain smeared with flavorless love, and I can feel our heart-shaped bandages returning to their usual monotonous shape, no longer covering our sanguine bruises that suddenly healed overnight just like our undying promised teenage-childhood love for one another

And now all of a sudden, it's midnight, stars beginning to melt swiftly over our exhausted bodies, and we're standing in the middle of the sloshing grass, splattered with the radiance of the fireflies climbing onto our beat-up skin as we stare at each other with blank expressions devoid of love / I'm pleading, reciting our promises as if they were prayers held up to Christ himself so that you don't mention it, so that I don't feel the remains of my heart completely rotting away, left to the brink of sorrow and distaste

You're holding me closer than ever and I can hear the quiet footsteps of the fireflies approaching our bitten arms, climbing gently as if afraid to break us into shards / Did you hear my chants of promises? Did you hear the way the love seeped through the words, making them flourish into heart-shaped prayers? / I know you did and now I'm praying again / praying for our bruises to remain and for our legs to remain plastered with heart-shaped bandages, covering up the saccharine bites the love wasps left behind / I know he'll grant the prayer

What They Don't Know About Angels

By: Luna Vallejo

You're the first face I can recognize while I kneel on the unloving pews at church, your heart-shaped freckles say it all as they burn roseate while you trace my aching figure, knees battered from kneeling in front of a god I don't believe in, calloused hands quivering from the rough purple kisses the incense has imprinted on their gnawed fingertips

The first thing I notice about you besides your heart-shaped freckles is the way your body screams tender rhythms of gospel music that wrap me in a chalky quilt of snugness and bliss, something I've never quite experienced in church or in my unbeating heart made of scorched prayers and ebony crosses decorated with brutal phrases that reek of loneliness and feverish pride

There's something that's sloshing around your honey-hued eyes, and I find that my clothes aren't just smeared with pancake syrup instead there's something more, something that has an enthralling name which doesn't make it easier to say, just like it's not easy when shattered angels land in the mossy pits of the earth, suddenly realizing that they can't use their cotton wings traced with silver linen anymore and that they have to use their now scraped legs that have never felt the unwelcoming concrete before, because they don't really have a choice, do they?

Maybe it's love? You've made words I've never spoken roll smoothly off my tongue, as if I've been weaving poetry of them my entire life, when all I've done is hide away in an obscure hole whose ceiling is covered with glued neon stars only for the sake of pretending that there's an unknown species of light in my life, when I'm just a broken flashlight who has never figured out how lighting the way for others works, who has decided that it's better to hide in the shadowed trash bin along with the stacks of oily batteries, which are just as wasted as my smeared soul

But it's as if you don't know any of this, despite me telling you while we stood in the pungent, acidic cold at the 1,000 year-old gas station, that I kneeled to no god because god was only for the needy, the ones who didn't care about having their foreheads smeared with murky black ashes that symbolized that they fed off of easy affection, holding the fluorescent neon stars in their cupped hands as they drank from the saccharine pile of miracles that 'god' gave them and I'd be lying to you if I told you that I didn't crave even the chipped, pathetic leftovers of the stars that filled their once empty stomachs, because it gets tiring eating from a plastic cup of instant food everyday, with nobody at home to make sure you feed your malnourished stomach but you still looked at me that way, with sloshing honey-hued eyes filled with love and heart-shaped freckles glowing pink as you cupped my cracked cheek that was taped together because I couldn't even afford the glue at the 99 cent store anymore and when you dropped something that was unexpectedly warm and slightly fluorescent into the palm of my hand, I knew that you were one of the shattered angels that landed on the mossy grounds of the earth

They say that angels have golden hair so radiant that it makes your eyes grieve, they claim that angels have the bluest eyes that make you want to dive into the crystalline pools of their orbs, wanting to savor the way their stare isn't sweet nor salty, but in between but what they don't know is that they don't have a clue of what an angel looks like an angel has mellow chestnut locks that spin gracefully across battered fingertips kissed with sin and overcooked pride, but none of that matters to him because of the brimming neon streaks of light that are drawn upon his heart-shaped freckles when those scorched fingertips paint a picture called love all over his roseate lips

An angel has a delicate, scrawny frame with a slender spine that gracefully carries his chalky pair of wings that he reveals only when he's in the arms of a girl with splintered shoulder blades, who has the word pain etched onto her bruised spine
An angel has luminous honey-hued orbs, that slosh with heart-shaped pancake syrup and something more when his eyes are captivated by those crepuscular orbs, that threaten silently to break into dawn when they meet his own

An angel's body screams tender rhythms of gospel music that envelop her body into a letter of adoration, desperately trying to convince her that she is worthy of love, that he loves every crack and crevice that is drawn upon her skin

But most of all, an angel loves what's not good for him, despite encountering the yellow tapes screaming danger wrapped around the walls of the bloody crime scene, which possess the shape of her aching figure while her slaughtered knees kneel in front of a god she doesn't believe in, he'll still peel the tape off and cross the forbidden boundary, already wanting to wrap his arms against her frigid body as she lets out shrill pleads of pain to let her go, to save himself he'll cross the boundary even if his chalky wings become tainted with sin
he always will

About the Author: Luna Vallejo is a rising high school senior from New York who aspires to be a computer animator in the future. She writes poetry, short stories, and occasionally creative nonfiction, sometimes posting her work on her Instagram account @lvallejoarts. When she is not drowning in piles of assignments from her classes, she enjoys rereading her favorite novels, listening to Taylor Swift and Lorde's repertoires, and taking naps under the Eiffel Tower sticker plastered on her bedroom wall while daydreaming about writing.

About the Artists

Jessica Kwandou

Pieces: Detached (14), Enigma (15), Trapped (10)

Jessica Kwandou is a rising sophomore at St. Francis High School. Drawing, dancing, and running are her favorite activities. She has been attending Hongyun Art School since 2017 as a student and since then she has become a teaching assistant as well as a TA director who teaches other art students. She was fortunate to learn from some of the best teachers and peers in her art school who continuously inspire and encourage her to express emotion through her paintings. Edward Hopper once said, "If I could say it in words there would be no reason to paint." To her, art is a universal language that can cross the barrier of language, culture, religion, socio-economic level, and race. It is a way where she can express and share her feelings, ideas, and information freely without judgment; without words and it can never be wrong.

Bill Wolak

Pieces: Breathless As a Spark (4), Light Always Touches the Scars First (5)

Bill Wolak has just published his eighteenth book of poetry entitled *All the Wind's Unfinished Kisses* with Ekstasis Editions. His collages and photographs have appeared as cover art for such magazines as *Phoebe*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Baldhip Magazine*, and *Barfly Poetry Magazine*.

Angela Xu

Piece: Homesick (42)

Angela Xu (@axu_arts on Instagram) is a 17 year old living in New Jersey. She has been making art her whole life, mainly focusing on traditional, self-portrait art that exhibits her life and identity through her own eyes. She has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, the Congressional Art Competition, and various other regional and international art contests. When not in the art studio, she can be found playing tennis on her high school team, reading, listening to music, or watching her favorite TV shows.

Tanya Rastogi

Piece: Fleeting (36)

Tanya Rastogi is a 15-year old artist and writer from Iowa. Her work is forthcoming in *The Lumiere Review* and has been recognized by the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers. She has unfinished work in every genre and a fondness for herbal tea.

Claire Oh

Piece: Self Portrait Polaroid (45)

Claire Seohyun Oh is a junior at Dana Hall School in Massachusetts. She loves to draw and paint for fun. She loves Andy Warhol's work and aspires to study psychology and art in college.

Betül Kelez

Piece: Hayallerime adım adım (47)

Betül Kelez is an author, editor, and journalist in the making from western Germany. Her love for literature and art always made her dream about becoming a writer herself. 2022 is the year she finally started following her dreams. You can find her love for photography on her account @betueltsukino or listen to her ramble about books & journalism @bettymeraki on Instagram.

Ally Chen

Pieces: Glass Heart (8), In Our Own Worlds (37)

Ally Chen is a high school student interested in art, writing, and economics. She is currently exploring the arts by crafting a portfolio while also navigating unique cross sections between the field of arts and economics through research. In her spare time, Ally enjoys discovering underrated artists, tasting foods, and scrolling online.

Katherine Sedlock-Reiner

Pieces: Central Park Afternoon (18), Montparnasse (19)

Katherine Sedlock-Reiner is a high school junior from Brooklyn, New York. Founder of her school's literary club, Katherine enjoys writing prose-poetry, frequenting the Film Forum, and tutoring Ukrainian teenagers in her free time. Her work has been published in *Apprentice Writer* and has been recognized by the Scholastic Art and writing awards. To see more of her art, go to kssrny.com.

Aileen Chen

Pieces: APEX 2 (7), Prescribed Stupor (43)

Aileen Chen (she/her) is a high school student currently attending Seoul Foreign School. She enjoys any creative activities such as photography, songwriting, illustrating, writing, and dancing. She is hoping to explore different mediums and other aspects of art. You can find more of her artwork on instagram @artxaileen.

Josephine Florens

Pieces: The Magic of Reading (23), Thoughts (24)

Josephine Florens is a professional oil painter. Born in Odessa, Ukraine in 1988, she now lives in Bad Grönenbach, Germany, as there is a war going on in Ukraine. She graduated from Odessa National Academy of Law and received a Master's degree in Civil Law, graduated from Odessa International Humanitarian University and received a Master's degree in International Law. She started painting in 2017 and studied individually at the Art-Ra school of painting. Josephine Florens is a member of the National Association of Artists and Sculptors of Ukraine, member of the Odessa Marine Union, Ukraine, and honorary member of the Union of World's Poets and Writers. She creates oil paintings in various genres, such as portrait, landscape, still life, genre painting, animal painting, marina. She calls her painting style "modern vintage." Her website is <https://josephineflorens.com>.

Kaitlin Kiswojo

Pieces: Cubist Self Portrait (55), Skull-Flowers (56)

Kaitlin Kiswojo is a 16-year-old artist and student from Jakarta, Indonesia. She finds fine art to be an essential outlet in faithfully portraying her feelings, thoughts, passions, and experiences. Aside from creating artworks, she enjoys writing poetry and reading about art history. This is her first time having her personal projects included in a literary journal, and she is especially delighted to have her works featured in Kalopsia. You can find her @kaitlinelainaaa on Instagram.

About the Issue

**Layout and
Design by**
Peter Donley

Cover Art:
“tributes to a
bygone year”
Elwing Gao
Ink drawings on
vellum, monotypes
8.5”x11”

Art Director

Peter Donley is a freshman Mechanical Engineering major at the Johns Hopkins University, minoring in Applied Math and Statistics and Robotics. First joining the Kalopsia team in June of 2020 in time to work on their 2nd issue, his role has evolved with the organization, starting as executive editor and transitioning to a role as Art Director. In his free time, Peter makes art, is a pianist in a trio, and builds off-road race cars as part of Hopkins’ Baja SAE team. You can find Peter on instagram @p._eter.

Staff Artists

Elwing Gao is a 19-year-old artist from the San Francisco Bay Area, currently studying in New York. She works mostly in 2D mixed media, and often explores themes of nostalgia, memory, mental health and the documentation of time in her pieces. You can find more of her work and follow her current art studies @waves.and.washes on Instagram.

Luana Góes is a 19-year-old artist from Amapá, Brazil. Her artworks are inspired by various mediums and both traditional and digital art, creating mixed media pieces about her culture, mental health, nature and life in general. Góes also likes to edit videos and music, a topic that can be found in her pieces. You can follow her at @luana.g.m on Instagram.