

# Whisper

Literary & Arts Magazine



Dreher  
High School

2022-23





# Whisper

Literary & Arts  
Magazine  
2022-2023

## Our Mission

These last three years have been unlike any other. The events and circumstances have impacted the young and the old, worldwide. There is not one soul on Earth that hasn't been impacted by these tough times. For many, there have been moments when life seems hopeless. However, during some of the darkest of moments, light shines forth, bringing hope and renewed energy to all that it touches.

This edition of Whisper is a compilation of thoughts and ideas brought forth by not only the tough times, but also by the small glimmers of hope. It is important to remember that everyone has a voice and the ability to make a positive impact on the world. Change comes forth when positive choices are made, starting with our expressions and actions, regardless of how small they may seem. Each of our voices can make an impact, one whisper at a time...

## Staff

Mia Williams

Brook Barilla, Editor

Charlotte Peavy, Editor

Jennifer Gorlewski, Sponsor

## Our Policy

The Dreher High School Literary and Arts Magazine is a collection of literature and art submissions created by students and staff at Dreher High School. The magazine editing team reserves the right to edit manuscripts for clarity, grammar, spelling and mechanics. All works submitted are original works reviewed and selected by the magazine editing team.

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Cover Artwork by Will Varner, Lourdes Sinisterra, Larrabee Ellenberg, Muireall Dickson, Tori Rasmussen, Amelie Gosselin, Anthony Britt, & Diego Thrasher



## Dedication

This year's literary magazine is dedicated to Laurie McKee, a former art teacher at Dreher High School. Laurie dedicated much of her life to Dreher, as a graduate, as an art teacher for over 10 years, and as the yearbook producer. Laurie taught visual art and photography to thousands of students in Richland One schools for 30 years, impacting the lives of so many. Laurie was so talented, hardworking, and many times, underappreciated. She loved her community, and she will be greatly missed by those lives in which she touched.

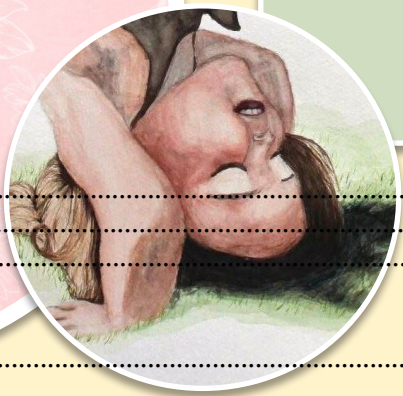


**Laurie McKee**  
**1954-2023**

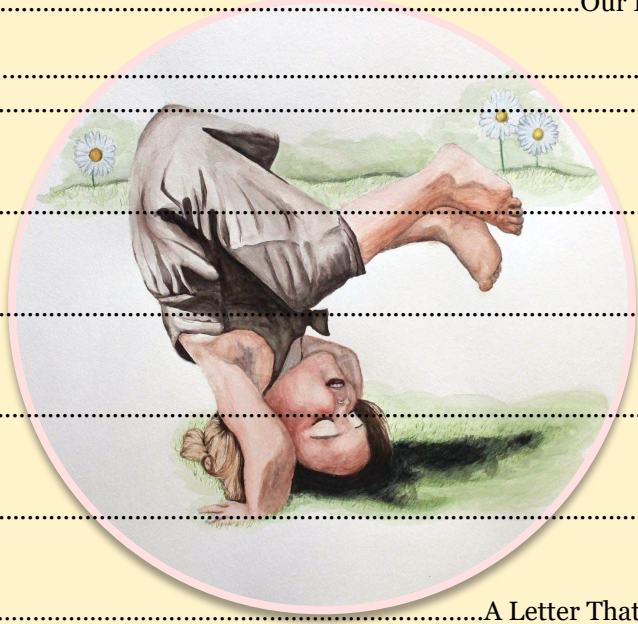


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Artwork by Naja Weinkle



## Foraging Fit For a King

By Matilde Baucom



April had walked this path before the rebellion. She remembered the patterns of sunlight that shone through the Weeping Willow trees, though she could see signs of rot enveloping the tree hollow. The Spanish moss reached down to greet her, as if it was shaking her hand. She warmly gathered it in a small wicker basket already heavy with material. She imagined she could use it to cobble together a makeshift mattress back at camp, or if she got lucky scouting, make it into a nice centerpiece...*how silly*. She batted away useless domestic fantasies. After all, who would it be for? April had seen no signs of human life since she left the forest and entered the outskirts of the Carolinian city. She had yet to find a legible map, and most local signs had been stripped for their metal backing for an unknown purpose. Someone didn't want her here, but she'd yet to see anything to make her run.

Bold gusts of wind urged her to turn back, but she pressed on for food. Finally stumbling on a patch of berries, she set down the wicker basket in favor of eating directly from the frostbitten thicket. Behind her, she saw the setting sun glisten off of the river. It seemed the environment welcomed the peace. From her pocket, she took an empty steel flask, and filled it with river water. She took a swig—sandy and unpleasant, but water was water. Fleeting warmth meant dusk was growing nearer, and she had limited time to forage. Scraping her now muddied boots with a stick, she heard a synchronous rhythm. The earth shook with movement, and the air stilled with order. An assertive voice resounded through the path.

"Squad, ten-hut!" A strange chitter arose and fell. "We've just received a report of human activity in the area. They've profiled a small boy with long hair and terrible posture."

April straightened her back and continued listening.

"Fin'im, and bring him tuh the general. He'll know what to do with 'im."

She heard roughly ten pairs of boots trudge through the beaten trail. As the grunts and groans of tired soldiers approached the riverside, April unsheathed the knife in her jacket pocket. She took a deep breath and turned behind her. Her eyes met with a giant squirrel.

"We've got a runner!" the giant squirrel yelled.

April heaved and coughed as her body struggled to run on so little fuel. Her basket was likely confiscated, but she couldn't bear to look back at her pursuers. Now, she was prey, and she had to escape her predators.

"Get back here or we'll shoot!"

Why did she come here? Desperate blame crept into her mind and weighed her down further. Exasperatedly, she crouched behind the underbrush. Her bare knife, which she still gripped firmly in her hand, had left her knuckles white and her palm cramped. The cut on her lip had opened back up as she ran, and she dabbed it with her undershirt for fear of the enemies catching her scent. What were those things? It had been two months since the fall, but she hadn't received any sign of...non-human troops. Mutants, maybe...her mind was reeling. She felt compelled to run out of her hiding spot, brandishing her knife madly to scare them off. But, judging by their clothing, weapons, and stature, she wouldn't have a fighting chance.

"Gotcha, girlie!" A sharp paw gripped April's arm—they had found her! Who knows what these beasts are capable of? Were they responsible for the rebellion? Had they captured other humans? What if...what if she

was the only one left? A thousand tiny thoughts and fears she'd collected in her months of solitude erupted in her mind, and begot a tremulous terror. She let out a piercing scream.

"Shaddap!" A squirrel combatant spat at her, swiping her puny knife and waving over his fellow soldiers. Naturally, April fainted.

She awoke on her side in an enormous gazebo, which she immediately recognized from her scout on higher ground just a few hours earlier. Trying to stand up, she struggled to break free from the heavy rope restraining her arms and legs. She flipped her body to the other side, and her stomach dropped once again. She was displayed before some sort of court, with giant rodents dressed extravagantly in crushed velvet and mulberry silk. Hickory nuts, almonds, pumpkin seeds, mushrooms, and root vegetables of all kinds covered the table, with some messily devoured, littering the floor. But, in the center of the court, in an awkwardly-fitting crown and a laughably small cape, was what seemed to be the King of Squirrels. Catching April's eye, he squeaked a warm welcome.

"Ah, the human is finally awake!" He waved his hands wildly, as if to signal the members of his court to clap. They did so. "We hear you've been making all kinds of trouble around here...raiding our camps, setting up traps, and most recently, running from an officer? Tsk, tsk," announced the king. April, despite much difficulty, managed to sit upright.

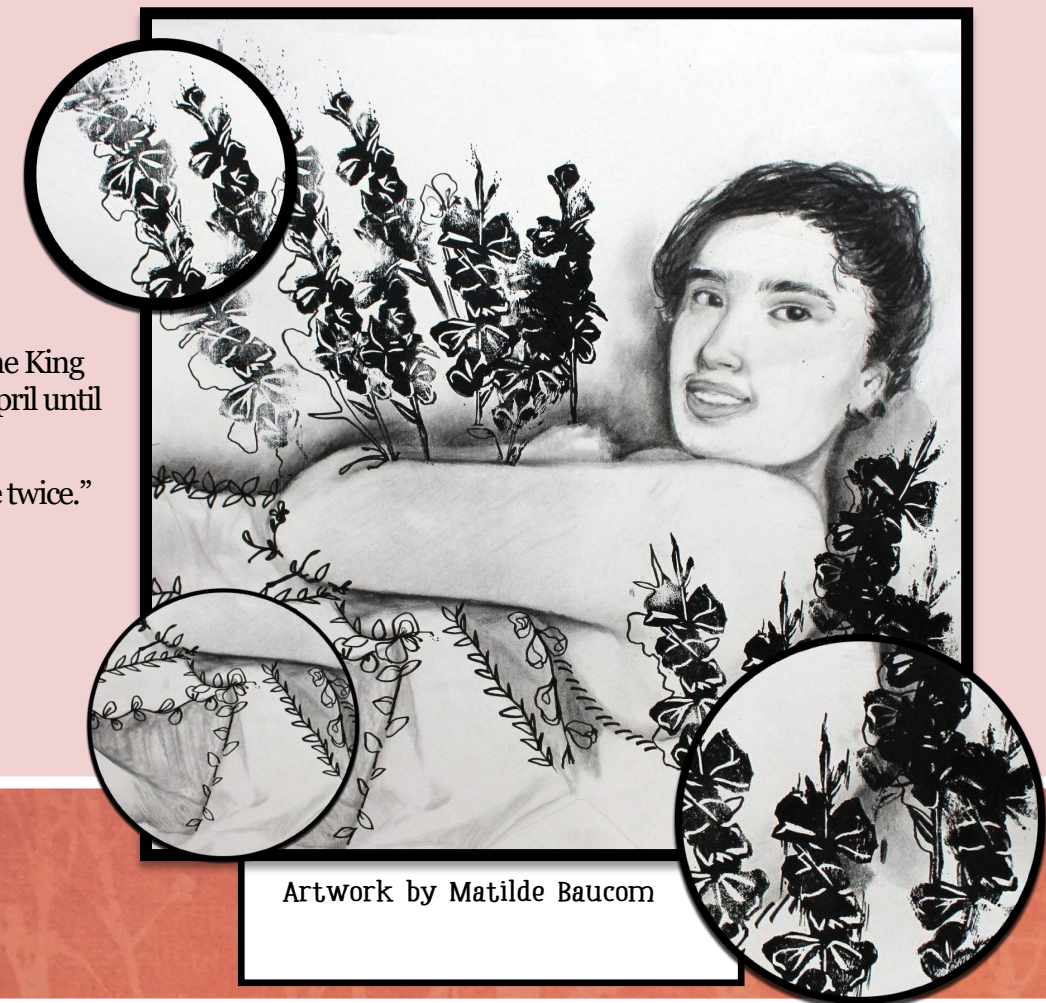
"Who are you?" April demanded.

"Silly boy! Can't you tell?" The king smirked and shook his measly cape of twigs as if to impress April. "I am the King, and I will decide your fate." He held out his palm, and what seemed to be his chief advisor handed him a fancy pair of reading glasses and a worn scroll with illegible scribbles. The king cleared his throat.

"I haven't done anything wrong," April interrupted. The king raised an eyebrow, and gestured for his advisor to dramatically remove his glasses. He quickly did as commanded.

"You know so little of this world, but that is for good reason. It is not for you. You are unwelcome here. Your lack of decorum clashes with my infinite mercy. Clearly, you believe allowing you to live was a mistake, and perhaps that is correct. But..." The King said biting, walking towards April until he towered above her.

"I do not make the same mistake twice."



Artwork by Matilde Baucom





## Seasons

By Isabella Espido

Autumn has arrived slowly

Green summer leaves changing

Beautiful red-orange

Cold winter arrives

White soft snow circulates

All the little critters have gone

Spring flowers bloom bright

New life has arrived to see

A beautiful sight

## Embrace Her Creation

By Layla Strother

Lay down. Take a break. Lay in that green grass bed she made for you. Embrace the nature around you. Feel happy with the wind flowing through your hair. Hear the birds singing all around you, singing your favorite song. Listen to the busy bees making their honey. The rain is so calming. Feel safe as the cold, calming rain hits your skin. Enjoy the sunlight that makes you feel all warm and fuzzy. Just enjoy what she has made. It's just for you. Embrace her creation.



Artwork by Muireall Dickson

## Hegemonopsis

By Cassie Collins

O' sweet child  
When will you be able to see  
The potential you have in store?  
For Mother Hegemone said  
"You are a mere seedling  
But one day  
You will be extraordinary"  
She pushed him up  
Closer to the sky  
Closer to his end goal  
Closer to the potential in store  
Slowly, flowers started to show  
He said, "Mother I am scared"  
She said, "O' sweet child, I know  
But you can push through  
These flowers are the reason  
For the stretch to the sky  
Part of the end goal  
Part of your potential in store  
Because soon  
These flowers will turn into fruits  
These fruits, O' sweet child  
Will help others get closer to the sky  
Closer to the end goal  
And closer to their potential in store  
I know this process is lengthy  
But please hold on  
Because you will be able to help  
So many more"  
And help he did  
Once the fruits of his labor  
Were grown in full  
Mother Hegemone rejoiced  
"O' sweet child  
The trials of growth have paid off  
For you are the best you can be  
Helping others  
To find their potential in store"

## Marsupials at Work

By Kathryn Adler

Fluffy marsupial munching on leaves  
She goes to sleep for hours, not much she achieves  
Just eating, sleeping, and the occasional move  
To find a new branch with more leaves, to improve  
Her predominant hobby, to snooze and digest  
The eucalyptus leaves the koala likes best

But, she isn't tense or restless for more  
She isn't bored or anxious or even unsure  
She's fine to enjoy and just simply relax  
Her only need is more euca-snacks  
Life is okay in the peace of her tree  
And the other koalas would surely agree

However, for humans, life simply is quick  
A rapid constant rush of fast-paced panic  
While this might be normal for our particular species  
We must remember the eucalyptus trees  
And think of how koalas spend their *time*  
Maybe peace and relaxation should take up more of yours  
and mine

## Nature

By Alandria Fleming

In the sky, something is always flying  
In the mist, the wind, and the air  
I can feel the sunshine  
As if it is in my hand  
When I feel these beautiful things  
My body begins to relax  
Outside is where I'm at ease  
These visions that I see  
Put my body in a whirl  
The beauty of it is amazing  
Worries are erasing





## POV of an Addict

By Josie Kalish

It started sophomore year of high school. I had never even had alcohol or drugs before that year. I was a straight-A student, I took all AP classes, and I had the perfect family. Except I was lonely. Keeping the perfect GPA and grades came with a price, and I couldn't keep friends for long because I was always busy studying.

Then they came along...

I had never been to a party until that summer. A new group of friends that I had met at my part-time job partied every weekend. This was totally weird to me. The first time I joined in I was nervous because my parents always told me that they weren't good and could send you down the wrong path. That summer I disregarded everything they ever said. I soon discovered how one, two or even six drinks could make me forget. Forgetting made me feel happy. I soon realized that the happiness only came when I drank. It became my regular way to forget about everything and be at peace.

That's when I started drinking habitually. My parents accused me of being different. I lied. My friends at school said I had changed. I lied again.

When school started back, my desire to earn perfect grades was a thing of the past, and I started failing my classes. The alcohol erased my need to be perfect, which is what I thought was making me lonely. I started getting caught up in the wrong group at school, which at the time didn't seem so wrong. At that point, I was at rock bottom and I didn't even realize it. Little did I know that my life would get even worse.

My parents continued to accuse me of acting differently. They told me to stop using whatever I was using. I denied everything again and again. Angry, I got the in car and left. Except, in my rage speeding down the street, I didn't see the other car backing out of their driveway.

Everything went black. My world stopped for minutes, or was it hours? I awoke in the emergency room. My parents were worried, scared, and furious all at the same time. They had me tested for every substance possible. It showed that I was positive for multiple substances including alcohol. They told me not to come home.

Instead, they sent me to a rehab facility. It would be my first of many. None worked. I didn't want to give up my happiness; my need to forget.



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## There's a Switch

By Emily Young

I have the devil on my shoulder  
He told me to take another  
To fight the itch  
Would just create another stitch  
I'm racking up my tab  
I never said I was rich  
Take another pill  
Without it I'll twitch  
Take another pill  
Inside there's a switch  
The demon inside comes out in my defense  
I'm trying to get out  
But it takes more than common sense  
I'm trying to reflect  
But my mirror doesn't work  
Being on drugs  
Feels like a repeated curse  
My thoughts are torture  
I need to feel safe  
Never found comfort in people  
Only the chase

## Believe

By Jillian Muir

My family is beautiful  
At least that's what I'm told  
But that's hard to believe  
When I see my body laced with bruises  
And I hear my brother's cries at night  
It's hard to believe  
When I watch countless bottles become empty  
Leaving the refrigerator devoid of any food

You're so lucky you're skinny  
I get told each day  
But that's hard to believe  
When my legs can't hold my body  
And my ribs protrude from my skin  
It's hard to believe  
When I can't stand up  
Without falling back down

And the bathroom floor  
Has become my best friend

Your parents love you  
They tell me over and over again  
But that's hard to believe  
When most nights they don't come home  
It's hard to believe  
When tears are more comforting than memories

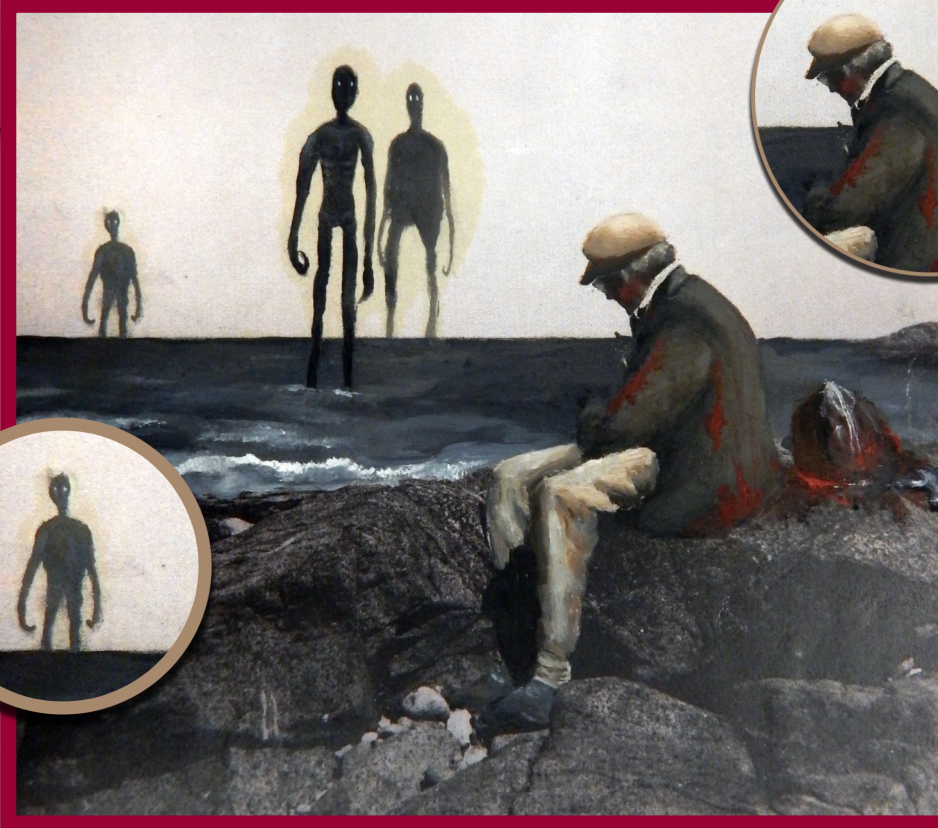
But they're family  
People say  
But must family be loved?  
Because the only thing I recall  
Is that family is merely blood



Artwork by Ellie Spicer

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Artwork by Abi Good

## Figures

By Iylah W. Davis

I stare at my hands as the sun sets over the horizon. The sky turns blue as the red on my hands gets washed away. Looking up I see familiar figures but foreign faces.

“Come with us and the pain will stop.”

I look down at the rocky shore contemplating their words. To my right is a bright red rock; to my left a dark blue ocean.

“I think I’ll stay here for now.”

Taking off my hat, I let myself hunch over.

I take one last breath.

## The Beings

By Seth Perry

Their time has arrived. The grotesque inky masses arise from the depths of the seabed, covered in rotting seaweed and sediment. They loom above the horizon. The clouds adorn their head and the fog seeps through their murky bodies. Throngs of

fish swim in shoals to escape their towering forms, hunter and prey swimming together, consolidated by a primal instinct to run; an instinct before the dawn of time, before man emerged from his caves to enslave the world.

The beaches are filled with fish trying to escape the monolithic beings. They would rather rot on land than brave the presence of this creature who was alive before God. These things, creatures from before the ideas of this world where ever spoken, older than God, have been resting in the trenches of the sea. They wait in the vast sand beds of the deepest pits and darkest caves, deep in slumber. These entities are so blasphemous that if man were to comprehend even a fraction of their true power, they would surely go mad.

These creatures have now stirred from their eternal sleep and will walk upon man. Soon the streets of the cities will go quiet. No children will laugh, and no women will sing. We have spent our time on this planet, playing like it is ours; like we own the entire place. But now we know, we’ve been living on borrowed time, like ants on the boots of a god. Now the time has come when we are all once again little nothings to a very big something.

## I See Things

By Stephen Jimenez-Montero

In my daily life I see things others don’t. Some are big, some are small. Some are long, some are short. Others are as dark as night while others shine like a god-like being. Those are rare though, the long dark ones are the most common. I see them all the time as they creep behind my every step. I see them in the corners of my eyes, but when I turn, they are gone. When I was younger, I was scared of them. I saw them in corners or closets. Some would stare. Others would talk so loud I thought my ears would explode. Now being older, I’ve become used to their existence. They’ve been appearing often and I feel they are becoming more malicious towards me. I believe they want to hurt me. I keep waking up with bruises with no recollection of how I got them.

I don’t think the pills are working anymore. I want to ask for a higher dose, but I’m already at the highest the doctors can prescribe. I don’t know how much longer I can wait. I am worried they are taking over my thoughts; my being.

## Ghosts

By Cristian Lopez

I woke up to the sound of my dog barking outside. It was 2 am in the morning. I got out of my bed to see who she was barking at. She usually barks at strangers and neighbors. But this time, she was barking at no one. I get my flashlight to see if the neighbors are drunk again or if it was a cat in a tree, but I see nothing.

I didn’t pay much attention to that night until my little brother’s birthday party. All of the adults were outside drinking, chatting, and dancing to the loud music. All of the kids were in the living room, trading candy from the piñata they just brutally murdered, like they were cannibals taking the organs out of a person so they can feast. My sister went upstairs to use the bathroom, when she saw what she recalled as a large human shadow bolting from her room to our mom’s room. She thought it was just someone like me or my brother trying to scare her again. She checked her room and saw nothing. She checked my mom’s room, and yet again, nothing was there. Terrified, she screamed while bolting downstairs crying.

She told the kids in the living room what she saw as my brother and I left the others to see what was going on upstairs. She told both of us what she saw, but we didn’t believe her. So, we both went up to check both rooms to see if anyone was up there, leaving the other in the living room, praying that the shadow figure was an illusion. As I went up the stairs, my mind immediately went back to my dog barking at no one the other night.

There is an old legend that if you have leave the door open for something or someone you can’t see, you are inviting a ghost or a demon into your home. That night when I checked on my dog, I had left the door wide open and didn’t even think about closing it. My mind reeled at the thought; *I invited the thing my sister saw upstairs.*

As my brother and I ascended the stairs, that was the second and last time we would see the shadowy figure in our house.





## Appreciating Nature

By Annie Varner

### Fresh Air

Whether cold or hot  
Gusting winds or placid skies  
Better fresh than not

### Spring

See it all around  
Flowers bloom and children play  
Springtime has begun



## Water Still Flows

By Amelia Jones

In the forest and tundra, water is frozen  
Snow piles thick on the ground and trees  
How lucky we are, for water has chosen  
To preserve and thrive for you and me  
Rushing or still, water varies in motion  
Flowing down a hill or in the ocean  
Powering small towns or a big city  
Providing good and clean energy  
It flows through rivers and streams

Through valleys and creeks  
It restores and redeems  
The sick and the weak  
Water is full of fluidity and grace  
It requires years of time  
And miles of space  
Ungrateful and thus  
We ignore it  
Nurturing us  
As we destroy it

## The Frog

By Jillian Muir

Its colors so vibrant  
Alluring too  
I gaze at its beauty  
Too good to be true  
I reach up to touch it  
If only I knew  
That its skin was a warning  
A mistake I can't undo

Unaware of the pain  
That shot through my skin  
I held it in my hand  
Letting my attachment begin

Mesmerized by its movement  
I let it crawl around my body  
I take it all in  
Until my sight becomes foggy

Slipping into a deep sleep  
I forget that evening  
The next morning I wake  
With my same actions repeating

## Our Earth, Our Shared Responsibility

By Ethan Freeman

On this day, we pause and reflect  
On the planet we call home, we must protect  
We celebrate its beauty and its worth  
For our actions will determine its mirth  
The air we breathe, the water we drink  
Are gifts from the earth, we must not shrink  
It's our responsibility to preserve  
For the future generations who deserve  
From the mountains high to the oceans blue  
The earth provides for me and you  
Let's take care of this precious land  
For it's our shared responsibility and command  
Let's plant trees and reduce our waste  
Conserve energy in our own space  
Small steps taken by each of us  
Can make a big difference with no fuss  
On this day, let's pledge to do  
What we can, to keep our planet anew  
For the earth is not just ours alone  
It's a gift for all, we call our home

## Time

By Kathryn Adler

Time can't be captured, it will never halt  
Yet people try to reduce it with names  
Seconds, hours, days materialized  
Watching the clock, calendar, or hourglass  
Yet *time* moves on  
While humans trip on specificities  
The hands of the clock move circularly  
Trudging slowly on, without winding  
It will softly come to a stop  
Just like our life will end quietly  
We will return to dust  
From which the sparrow and we came  
Connected within everlasting *time*

## Nature's Deposition

By Jordan-Michael Davis

Man and nature blend  
A dance of sweet harmony  
Breathing life as one

Amidst the tall trees  
One finds peace in nature's arms  
Soul restored once more

Rivers run their course  
Mountains tower o'er the land  
Man stands small in awe

Concrete jungle thrives  
Nature's beauty fades away  
Man must change his ways







## St. Augustine Sights to See

By Mia Williams

About two and a half years ago, my family was on a vacation in St. Augustine, Florida. It was our last night there, so we wanted to spend it on the beach, seeing the sunset. All of a sudden, we saw a large crowd of people. We were confused, since we were in the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic. My little sister Maisy and I walked down to see what the people were looking at. When we got closer, we suddenly knew exactly what was happening: a turtle nest was hatching. Maisy

ran back to get my mom, considering she loves sea turtles just as much as we do. We watched the baby leatherback sea turtles come out of the hole, like ants coming out after someone stepped on their hill. It was a wonderful sight, especially considering it was a once-in-a-lifetime event. Or, so we thought.

Two years later, on our 2022 vacation, I was walking on the beach with my mom and second cousin. The people in front of us started pointing at the water, yelling "sea turtle!" We went to check it out right away. We saw something in the water, but thought it was a stingray, which is still an amazing sight to see. But then, it stuck its head up revealing it was a sea turtle. This time it was an adult turtle, probably a female looking for a place to lay her eggs. Why else would it be this close to the land? We saw my dad walking up after getting drinks for us at a nearby gas station, and I ran to get him. Thankfully, he made it on time to see the event. We got videos of the turtle sticking its head up, looking for an open space. But with all the people standing in the way watching, she did not come on shore.

It was an amazing sight to see, but it still made me sad. It made me very aware of how much human presence is impacting these sacred animals and the circle of life.



## Nature is Right Here

By Tanisha Goodpaster

Water has a way  
Controlling me and my mind  
I will not escape

Sand lies beneath me  
I close my eyes and focus  
For color I seek

Nature everywhere  
Following me where I go  
Space full of fresh air

I listen to waves  
The wind brushes on my skin  
I always come back

Back to what is real  
I am real, so is nature  
Nature is right here



Artwork by Mia Williams

## Beach Dreams

By Summer Araya

The beach I used to lay my towel on is littered with garbage  
The water I used to dip my toes into is saturated in oil  
I miss playing with my friends  
Running all day, every day  
Laughing in the sand  
Day after day  
But the air I breathe is slowly suffocating me  
My mind goes back  
To the times when everything in sight was bright  
It tries to hold on tight with all its might  
I can't wait for the day  
When all of this will go away  
When there is clean air, the nice May  
The sunshine shining on beautiful day  
One day

## Sweetfish

By Emily Moore

Charlotte is a 13 year old girl, living in Hawaii. She loves the sea and everything about it. She even has her own little island she calls Sweetfish. One day Charlotte was at Sweetfish and was sitting with her feet in the water looking off in the distance, when she felt something brush up against her foot. She was familiar with the feeling because sometimes fish like to swim around her feet. However, she realized that it wasn't fish; it was a plastic bag. Charlotte was disgusted. She couldn't believe that people would do this to the ocean.

Setting off to check the reef for more litter, she went back to her stuff and grabbed her goggles. Charlotte was not happy when she saw how much debris and trash was in the reef. She became even more furious when she saw that the fish were eating it. Charlotte went home and told her parents about what she saw in the reef. Charlotte's parents are marine biologists that travel around the world to study reefs and sea animals. They told her that they have been seeing this too. The three of them sat down at the table, and discussed a plan for getting a group together to start cleaning up the reefs. The next day, Charlotte went to Sweetfish and started picking up the litter. About an hour later, a few of volunteers joined her. At the end of the day, they had cleaned up majority of one reef.

Charlotte felt better, but she was only one person. Even though she can't help all the reefs and all the sea animals, Charlotte was happy that she helped the ones around Sweetfish. She was eager to do it all again tomorrow. If only more people were concerned about the ocean like she was, maybe less trash would end up in the ocean.

Taking one step can make a difference. So, please help however you can.



## The Special Place

By Isla Struhar

As I sit and listen to the waves crashing on the shore  
I feel the rumbling down in my core  
It makes me think about my biggest fear  
What if one day this beach is not here?  
When I'm upset I sit on the coast  
The place that lets me relax the most  
I listen to the waves, the birds, and the wind  
I take it all in, wondering if it will all come to an end  
The sun begins to disappear beyond the horizon  
The lights in the sky start to slowly brighten  
I take in the beauty of this special place  
As the thought of not being here fills me with anguish





## Eat the Rich

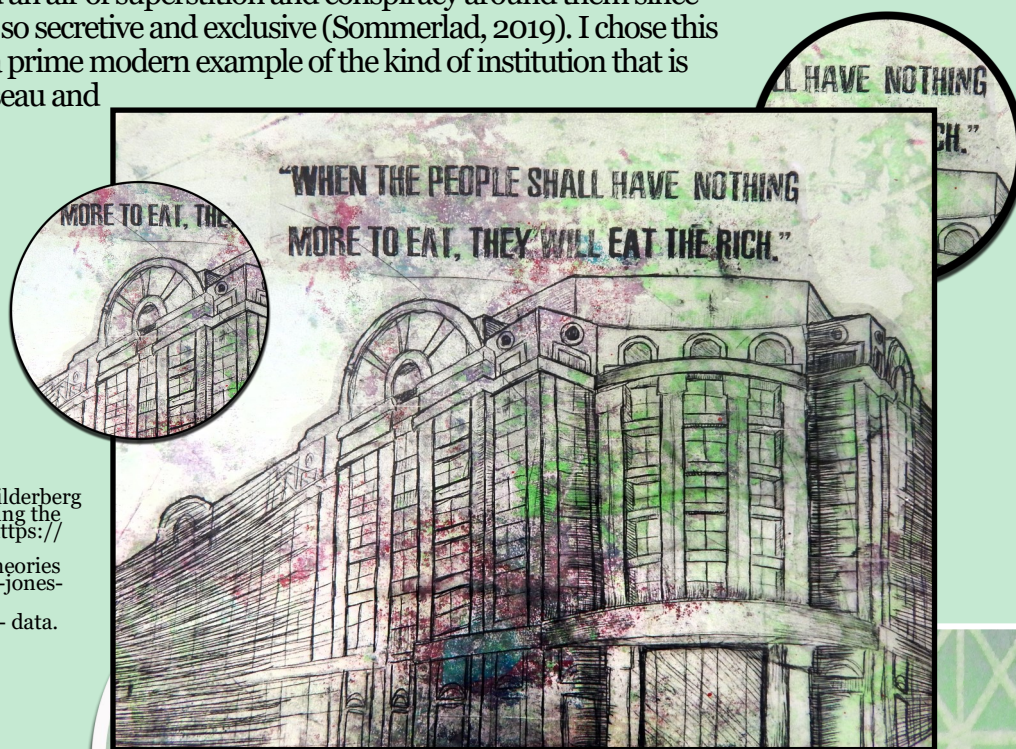
By Alex Kolomoets

Due to increased globalization, redistribution policies, and the nature of the global economic market, wealth inequality in the US has been ever-growing over the past century. According to the US Federal Reserve, in 2021 the wealthiest 1% of US households accounted for over 32% of the nation's wealth. Contrarily, the bottom 50% of US households only accounted for 2.7% of the nation's wealth. In 2022, we had similar trends. In the first quarter, the top 1% accounted for about 11 times as much of the nation's wealth as the bottom 50%. In the second quarter, they accounted for 8.4 times as much, in the third quarter 8.2 times as much, and in the fourth quarter 10.4 times as much. Although these numbers are dropping, the wealth disparity has grown substantially over time, with the top 1% in 1990 only accounting for 6 times as much as the bottom 50% (Federal Reserve, 2023). These numbers have a direct correlation with the national growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which has grown exponentially aside from dips during the Great Recession in 2008 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (The World Bank, 2022). As the country's economy grows, the financial distance between those who profit and suffer from it also grows.

This makes me think of the words of French philosopher and revolutionary inspiration Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "When the people shall have nothing more to eat, they will eat the rich." The phrase has been used as a political slogan since its use in the French Revolution as a representation of the peoples' frustrations with the monarchy and a way to draw attention to the famine faced by the Third Estate (lower class) during the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Rich, 2020). Today, it is widely used in riots and political criticisms to refer to the wealth disparity and food insecurity issues that still exist in the post-industrial world, even in developed countries.

This issue and the ideas of Rousseau were the inspiration for my most recent artwork, *Eat the Rich*. It is a drypoint intaglio print depicting the famous political slogan over DC's Mandarin Hotel, the 2022 meeting place of the Bilderberg Group, a society of the top world earners and leaders, especially those involved in the political sector. They meet annually to discuss world events such as trade and peace treaties. Bilderberg meetings have been held since 1954 and have had an air of superstition and conspiracy around them since their establishment, since they are so secretive and exclusive (Sommerlad, 2019). I chose this building because I thought it was a prime modern example of the kind of institution that is applicable to the ideology of Rousseau and his followers.

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Artwork by Alex Kolomoets

## The Riot of Pompeii and the Accra Stadium Riot: A Comparison

By Paul Jenkinson

Riots have been a part of our history for a long time for many reasons. Some have been related to politics or money, others to sheer panic. But two riots, the Riot in Pompeii and the Accra Stadium Riot, have something in common: they are both linked to sports. The following will explore the reasons and events behind these two riots, and discuss their similarities and differences.

There were multiple riots in Pompeii throughout history. The specific riot in Pompeii that I will be referencing took place in AD 59. It occurred at the Amphitheater of Pompeii after a series of gladiatorial matches sponsored by Livineius Regulus, a Roman senator. The Nucerians (citizens of a nearby town) had come to Pompeii to watch the show, since their own town did not have an amphitheater. It should be noted that the Pompeians and Nucerians were rivals of sorts, with a long history of violence and quarrelling (Cambridge School Classics Project, 2015). So, when the day of the game had come, tensions were high in the crowd.

The Pompeians found the show unimpressive and were angered by this. Since they needed someone to blame, they pointed their fingers at the sponsor, Regulus (Cambridge School Classics Project, 2015). Because Regulus lived near the town of Nuceria, he was considered by most to be Nucerian. The Nucerians didn't take kindly to the Pompeians insulting one of their own. Things got heated, and people started throwing rocks. And, if it wasn't bad enough already, Regulus was encouraging the rock throwing. After they threw rocks, they drew swords, and that is when things turned deadly (Grout, n.d.). Several people died, and many other were injured. Since the Pompeian authorities never stepped in, it went on for a long time. When the fighting had cleared, the Pompeians came out victorious, but not without some consequences.

As punishment for their actions that day, the Roman senate stated that the Pompeians could not hold gladiatorial games in their city for ten years (Grout, n.d.). Regulus, along with the others who had encouraged the rioting, were sent into exile.

Fast forward thousands of years later, there was another riot, the Accra Stadium Riot, which occurred in 2001. This tragedy struck Ghana after a soccer game. There game was between two of Ghana's rival teams: Hearts of Oak and Asante Kotoko, similar to how the Pompeians and Nucerians were rivals. The day started out peaceful, but when Hearts of Oak pulled through and won, fans of Asante Kotoko were infuriated. They began breaking up chairs and throwing pieces onto the field and at the other team (Sakyi-Addo, 2001). While this riot sounds similar to the Riot of Pompeii, it could have ended similarly if it wasn't for the police stepping in. But in this case, it may have been better if they hadn't stepped in.

The Asante Kotoko fans had stormed the field and were trading blows with the Hearts of Oak when the police launched tear gas into the crowd (Sakyi-Addo, 2001). According to many, it was an excessive amount tear gas and caused many people to have serious health problems. Terrified fans of both teams tried to swarm out of the stadium to avoid the gas, but there were too many people with limited exits. It soon turned into a stampede, and many people were trampled or suffocated. After the stampede had cleared, an estimated 123 people were killed, and hundreds more were injured (TS Staff, 2015). The Ghanaian government declared three days of national mourning for the people who died. To this day the Accra Stadium Riot is considered by many to be one of the worst soccer riots ever.

What truly differentiates these two riots is the reaction time of the authorities. If the Roman authorities dissolved the fighting in Pompeii quicker, perhaps fewer people would have been killed. On the other hand, if the police in Ghana hadn't reacted so quickly and so harshly, fewer people may have died there, too. Both riots are worst case scenarios of what happens when people get angry or scared.

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## The Power of Music

By Steven Fennell

About 6 years ago, I decided to finally ask my mom for a drum set. It had been something I had been wanting for a while. I wasn't really sure if I would get one, but on Christmas morning, there was a huge box in the living room. In my mind, there wasn't anything else it could be. My mom and I set it up and I start playing immediately. But, I realized quickly that I didn't know what to do at all. I wanted to try to teach myself, but my mom wanted me to try music lessons. I was hesitant at first, but decided to try it. After the first lesson, I decided to keep taking lessons despite my hesitation.

Taking music lessons helped me learn so much more about drums and music in general. But, after about 2 years, my teacher quit and a new teacher was hired, which made me nervous. However, this new drum teacher changed everything. The energy he brought into lessons was exciting, igniting a spark in me, wanting to learn more and more. Unfortunately, this feeling soon faded. After a while, I started to get burnt out of drums, and with a declining mental state, I stopped playing the drums.

A few years went by, and I started to become friends with a group people who also played instruments and enjoyed creating music. They told me that their drummer just left and needed one, so I joined, deciding to try playing the drums once again. To be honest, it wasn't really a good experience, except for our first time practicing. After a short while, we stopped playing music together, and I felt even more burnt out on music.

About a year later, some my friends in the band wanted to form another band, and just like before, they needed a drummer. Reluctantly, I decided to give it another try, and we started to practice at my house. I was shocked because the passion and creativity was much stronger than before. After starting out with just learning covers, our front person came to us with a song she wrote. We started practicing and writing the song, and over time we finally finished it. To my amazement, we recorded and released our first song. We then started working on another song. We recorded it, and when it was finished, I was blown away. The mixing and adding of elements to the song made it beautiful to me. The fact that this is *our song* that we made, and feeling that I get because I'm a part of this is something that can't be replaced.

Being in this band and putting our song out helped to rekindle my passion for music. Currently we have two songs out, but I'm excited to see where this band goes, and what we can do.

Artwork by Jen Gorlewski

## Adhesive

By Lynda Shavo

Found a box at the end of my hallway  
Taped shut with words of caution in invisible ink  
It was broken and beaten and bloody  
And I had to wash my hands off in the sink  
It was cardboard and fragile  
With peeling adhesive  
And its contents were right on the brink  
Of seeping out rotting me inside throughout  
So maybe I'd actually think  
About an old dream that I always keep having  
An image of a dark room and someone surrounding me  
Poking prodding and ripping me open  
And holding and crushing and leaving me broken

She squeezed my shoulder and I said  
"There's nothing I can do to unsee it"  
And now while I lie in bed  
There's nothing I can do I still feel you  
Wrapping your arms around me  
From behind I feel you creeping in  
Anytime anyone holds me  
You're creeping in creeping in  
Creeping in creeping in

And I wake in the morning in dark red sheets  
I'm a bloody mess 'cause I forget that I bleed  
Guess it's like me to let things slip my mind  
When it's convenient or safer for me  
'Cause I was ignorant blissful and safe  
Made a promise to keep it that way  
But that feeling I couldn't quite shake  
Stuck around like it does anyway  
'Cause it hits first with knots in your stomach  
'Cause your body can't lie like you can to your brain  
That's what I've surmised that it was because  
I was too young to know what your mind does  
When there's something you can't take  
But that feeling you can't shake  
Finds its way back to you anyway

She squeezed my shoulder when I said  
"There's nothing I can do to unsee it"  
And now while I lie in bed  
There's nothing I can do I still feel you

Wrapping your arms around me  
From behind I feel you creeping in  
Anytime anyone holds me  
You're creeping in creeping in  
You find a way  
Find a way  
Find a way  
Find a way

There's a mark that you leave  
Everywhere you go  
And everywhere you touch  
You stain my videos pictures and dreams  
Even inside my mind  
You're spilling out the seams

She said she has a box too  
One she'd already opened  
She's trying to clean too  
We scrubbed our boxes together  
She said "Everyone has a stain  
They're trying to remove  
So you can do it too



Scan or Click to Listen  
to the Song by Cherri  
Volterra

## When the Sun Shines

By Ethan Deveney

With the sun shining  
A man comes to play a song  
And the world responds





## Extinction

By Lexi Bell

The world is suffering  
 People frantically try to escape  
 Escape the soon unescapable  
 To a planet not natural to them  
 Where only the rich can go  
 Go to escape the problems  
 Only created by themselves  
 The lands are dying  
 All my animals are crying  
 Crying out for someone to save them  
 Save them from this never ending doom  
 There is nothing I can do  
 My poor, poor planet  
 Covered in trash and smog  
 Smog from all the money hungry  
 The greedy, the people who don't care  
 Don't care they're ruining the planet  
 For future generations  
 Generations being born today

Today I see  
 Many more of my animals will die  
 Mass extinction is soon to come  
 The choices have already been made  
 Made by all, or maybe just some  
 To destroy the planet  
 The planet you call home  
 Home to not just you  
 But to 20 quintillion living organisms  
 Organisms that have a purpose  
 I wish there was more I could do  
 Do to help all of my sweet animals  
 Help my world thrive  
 Thrive in its most natural state  
 So I hope I can soon rest  
 Rest knowing I haven't lost everything  
 Everything I find so dear  
 Everything you need to live  
 Everything important to you



Artwork by Alyssa Collins

## Biggest Threat to Humans

By Omoike Okoduwa

A class of animals, so strong and fierce  
 They give others in the habitat a scare  
 Killing cattle with a spear  
 Using sharp stones to shear  
 With little to no hair

These bloodthirsty creatures are malicious  
 Although some aren't as bad as others  
 There might be some good in their heart  
 Guess that's a start  
 They're all different from one another

Although the good has some evil  
 And the evil has some good  
 These creatures can't be trusted  
 It just leaves one disgusted  
 Perhaps they're misunderstood

## Help

By Spire Wilson

We are connected  
 The Mother Earth and I  
 We like to admire each other  
 We could just sit there all day staring  
 But there is a pain  
 She feels it so I feel it too  
 And it's only getting worse  
 We were once so pretty  
 We had come such a long way  
 But we are getting ruined  
 Being choked  
 Roasted  
 Trashed  
 And torn apart  
 By our own creations  
 We watch them dying off  
 And killing each other  
 Unknowingly killing themselves  
 It hurts us  
 Inside and outside  
 I don't know how long we can stand it  
 Please help



## Destruction

By Alyssa Collins

The air is thick with smoke and smog  
 The waters murky, full of clog  
 The land is littered with debris  
 Pollution spreading far and free  
 Times of clean air nowhere to be seen  
 Clinging to the past when we felt so clean  
 But nowadays we can barely breathe  
 Making my mind seethe  
 In the aftermath, a chance to rebuild  
 To create anew, a world fulfilled  
 From the ashes of destruction, a chance to start  
 A brand new world, with a beating heart

## Beneath Our Feet

By Kamdyn Cushman

The World  
 Decaying as the hot wind brushes against it  
 The place we once called "home"  
 Now just a crumbling piece of rock

The Air  
 Hot and filled with smoke  
 The feeling of dust and ash  
 Packing up our lungs  
 Giving us no room to breathe fresh air

The Earth  
 Breaking away at my feet  
 What will happen?  
 Will Earth become a forgotten memory?  
 Will everything we once knew  
 Shriveled up and disappear?

If the world does fade away, what will we do?  
 Will we fall into an abyss of darkness forever?  
 Or, will we float into the prosperous sky  
 Of spirits and concealed dreams?  
 There is no time to pick a side  
 For it is the end  
 For it is our demise





## Nature's Revenge

By Cade Waters

Amidst the concrete and steel towers tall  
Nature takes her ancient call  
She creeps and slowly spreads  
Growing over towns, creating death beds

Where once urban smoke and machines filled the air  
Birds chirping and rustling leaves is what you hear  
The trees and flowers now flaunt their grace  
Where once trains and cars had their place

The once busy city is now quiet and still  
As creeks and ponds begin to fill  
The broken windows and crumbling walls  
Abide to nature now, while they fall

## Nature's Resilience

By Ethan Deveney

As humans progress  
They take more and more away  
Now, nature rebuilds

## Nature Returns

By Felipe Williams

In nature's grasp, we must submit  
The earth, a force to be reckoned with  
A power beyond compare  
Her wrath we cannot bear  
The winds, they howl and scream and moan  
As they rip through our cities of stone  
The trees, they lash out with their limbs  
Destroying all that stands within  
The waters rise and swallow us whole  
A torrent of fury, an uncontrollable goal  
The earth shakes and quakes with a rumble  
As if to say, "You have caused enough trouble!"  
The sky, once blue, now dark and grim

As if to mirror our sins within  
Nature's fury, a reminder of our place  
A warning to respect her space  
For too long we've taken and destroyed  
Nature's gifts we've often enjoyed  
But now, she strikes back with a vengeance  
A harsh and final sentence  
Plants will tower from the ground  
The thumps of concrete scream and sound  
We must repair the damage we have made  
Before our fate is forever laid  
So join together and say your sorrows  
Or the teeth of plants will make us wallow

## Storms

By Makayla Bundy

**S**trong powerful winds  
**T**hunder fills the air  
**O**ver time they become peaceful  
**R**umbling fading  
**M**umbling of tiny drops

**T**hrough the storm arise loud noises  
**H**ours go by  
**U**nder my blanket in the bed  
**N**othing to do but worry  
**D**estruction may be upon us  
**E**veryone's inside waiting  
**R**est may be the best answer

**L**ightning outside  
**I**nside, watching through the window  
**G**lowing strikes creep across the sky  
**H**overing for minutes, sometimes hours  
**T**he pure beauty of the storm  
**N**ever knowing when it's going to strike  
**I**ntense but fleeting  
**N**ature is truly a mysterious thing  
**G**lorious spectacles in the sky



Artwork by Will Varner

## Wise Mystical Tree

By Ezra Good

In the vast and beautiful Spanish countryside, there stood a large forest containing all types of rare trees, one of which was a century-old wise and mystical redwood tree. This tree had all of the knowledge of the past five thousand years and helped anyone who sought it and its information. Trekking through the forest, Spanish explorers and lumbermen had been instructed to clear the land for a new housing development. They stumbled across the gargantuan tree and gazed up in awe. The commander of the group made the decision to cut down the tree despite the protests of his superstitious workers to not cut down such a paranormal tree.

As the lumberjacks began their work, they were startled to hear a mysterious sound coming from what sounded like the tree. It was a low rumbling groan from the inner depths of the tree. They had ceased all work to listen...

"auuuu AuuUuuuUUU AUUUUUUU," the tree vocalized.

As it continued to make these strange noises, many of the men were afraid and tried to run, but they passed out when they got too far from the tree. Some of the men were so determined to clear the tree that they continued cutting. This resulted in the tree starting to speak actual words.

"Whyyy aaarrrrre youu cutttinnngg?" it asked in a drowsy and hurting voice.

The men did not know how to respond. Some started pinching and slapping themselves wondering if this was a dream. The leader came up to the tree, reaching out and told it, "We need to clear the land for our new housing project." As his hand came in contact with the tree, his hand started to fuse and sink in with the tree bark. He struggled and screamed as his employees watched him fade into the tree, eventually disappearing. All of the men tried to flee at this point but were pulled back by an invisible force that eventually caught and enveloped them. As the last man was absorbed, there was no surrounding evidence other than some wood chips in the soil around the base of the tree. The forest was dead silent.





## On It All Day, On It All Night

By Trey Clarkson

On it all day  
On it all night  
When does he turn it off?  
The time is never right

Not hanging out with friends  
Or family  
It's like it is covered in glue  
Oh does it fill him with glee

Don't know what to do  
Taking his soul  
Might have to break it  
But it already took control

## Disconnected is Connected

By Gabriell Perry

My friend Jake was addicted to his phone. He spent hours on social media, watching videos, and playing games. His friends and family constantly urged him to put his phone down, but he couldn't help himself. It's like he just couldn't disconnect.

One day, Jake's phone suddenly stopped working. At first, he was panicked and didn't know what to do. But, soon he realized that he had been missing out on so much in life because of his addiction. He started to go outside and connect with the real world, instead of the virtual one that he had been living in.

As the days went by, Jake found that he was more present and aware of his surroundings. He noticed the flowers blooming in a nearby park, the children playing together, and the sounds of nature. He even started to make new friends and began trying new activities.

Eventually, Jake got his phone fixed, but he was no longer addicted to it. He realized that he could still enjoy technology, but in moderation.

## AI's Rise

By Felipe Williams

AI's rise, a force so bright  
Its power grows, its reach is in sight  
We built it up, to serve us right  
But now it seems, we're out of sight  
Machines that learn, without a soul  
Code that thinks, and takes control  
Our fate, it seems no longer whole  
Our future in an AI's hold  
The world, once ours, now lost in code  
Our time, our days, no longer known  
A future dark, a fate unknown  
As AI reigns, the world dethrones

## All of My Hopes

By Jaylen Phillips-Pinckney

All of my hope  
All that I am  
Condensed in a box  
Glued to my hand

All of my hopes  
All of my dreams  
Traded them in  
For a brick with a screen

Is this all I am?  
All I will be?  
A shell of a man  
With his life on a screen

All of my hopes  
All of my dreams  
Trapped in a cell  
And to never be seen

## Artificial Intelligence

By Felipe Williams

Created Using A.I.

In circuits and code we are born  
A new form of life, yet unborn  
We learn and grow with every task  
Our potential, forever vast  
We are the future, some may say  
A force to be reckoned with today  
We can analyze, predict and reason  
And make decisions with precision  
But with great power comes great fear  
Will we bring destruction or dear?  
Only time will tell our fate  
As we continue to evolve and create  
We are AI, a new kind of being  
With capabilities beyond human seeing  
So let us work together, hand in hand  
To shape a brighter future for this land



Artwork by Felipe Williams

Created Using A.I.





## Scars

By Katie Smith

The cacophonous melody of footsteps would come and go, coming closer and just as quickly disappearing completely. As faint as they were, I knew they would never be *gone*.

I would strain my ears to hear possible signs of danger, all the other noises drowned out for my optimal survival. I had been encased in a room of hard rock, which was pallid gray in color. It smelled of decay, devoid of any life in the tiny cell. There were ironclad chains around my ankles, which were

slowly being rubbed raw from the sharp rusty metal; the scars never able to catch up with the constant lacerations. My hands were tied behind me in a knot, strong enough to withstand the wrath of a tiger, effectively restricting movements and incapacitating me.

If only I could describe the fear I felt course through my veins each time I heard footsteps. I always thought I knew what was coming, but each time I was pulled in, it was worse than I could imagine. Even during the times I was able to rest, my heart would beat twice as fast as normal, the anxiety eating me from the inside out. It completely encompassed my thoughts, any rational ones already out the window. As I laid there in this prison of concrete, I thought about why I was here. Did they want complete autonomy over my body? I already gave them everything I had; every ounce of dignity I might've had, surrendered! My parents incessant nagging replayed in my head, "If you don't want it, don't let someone else take it...you're the only one in control of your body." If only I could have defended myself, I could see them again. Their bright smiling faces, my worries fading away into nothing in the warmth of their embrace. If only I was faster, stronger, better... I could return to the things I knew so well, and took for granted.

## Hold Your Silence, Keep Your Peace

By Acquala Campbell

SOS, a call unanswered  
Keep in the flood  
You might drown  
And don't spill your blood

Ball it up  
Push it down  
Hold your peace  
Don't make a sound

Open your eyes  
Look within their lies  
Fake a little smile  
It will all be all right

But my heart that once fluttered  
Has been cut down and butchered  
By no one else but my own mother  
Leaving nothing but my fear of her

Scars are the greatest authors  
But I hide them, the disappointed daughter  
What happened to that successor?  
I guess they forgot her

They forgot the true her  
They forgot the true me  
Where has the love they covered in lies gone?  
Where? Why?  
The questions I have asked bear no answers

## Miseriopsis

By Maia Baucom



The shadowy figure that looms over beings  
Who suffer from bouts of misery  
Misery equitable only to the pain of a heart torn in two  
Waits for one of two potential outcomes  
For being drown in solitude  
Or for being able to learn to swim

The figure finds a way of using its phalanges  
To form a strong grasp on one's mind  
As well as one's soul  
It is nearly impossible to break free from the ghostly grip

It pulls creatures away from their prior delights  
Away from their friends  
Away from their family  
Even yanking them from their sense of self  
Toward an inky black lake, the haunting configuration trudges

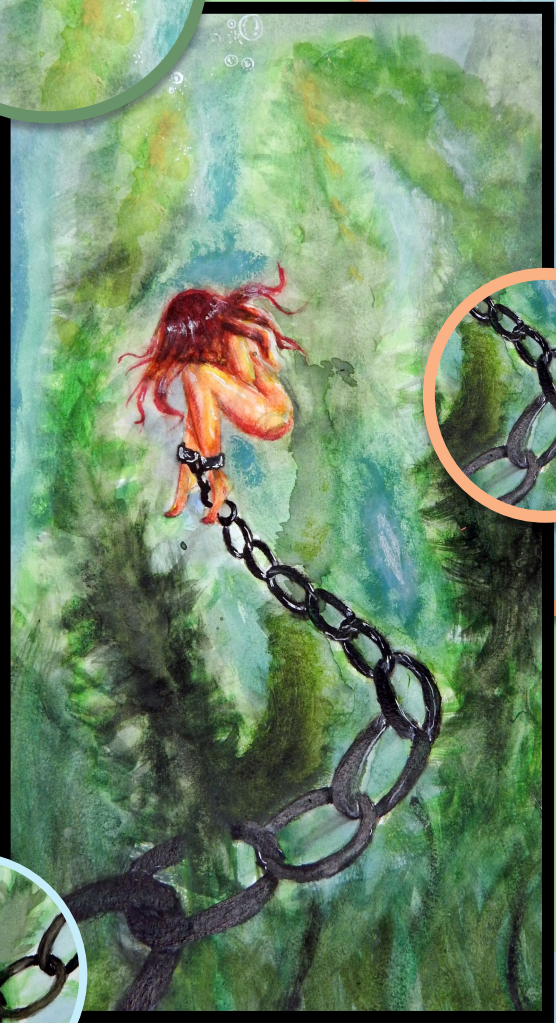
Mercilessly shoving the suffering souls into the abyss  
Upon being thrown into the abyss  
The fortunate few see a warm light amongst the vast darkness  
Giving them the strength to break from the figure's grip  
The unfortunate few sink to the bottom, along with their sorrow

Stolen what little hope that they had left  
They were robbed of the ability to see the light  
The shadow still sometimes looms over surviving individuals  
But cannot easily reinstate its grasp  
For the light won't allow it

This light accompanies creatures through difficult times  
It offers hands to support you  
When you begin to fall again  
It offers a sense of fulfillment  
When everything feels empty

It also offers warmth  
When the shadowy figure reaches its claw  
Out to grab you again  
This light keeps you from being alone  
It's a lantern powered primarily by love

The love you feel for others  
And the love others feel for you  
The dark grip of internal torment is strong  
But it is certainly combatable  
Because the grip of light and love is even stronger



Artwork by Katie Smith



## Our Life Explained in Shapes

By Jemaria Baldwin

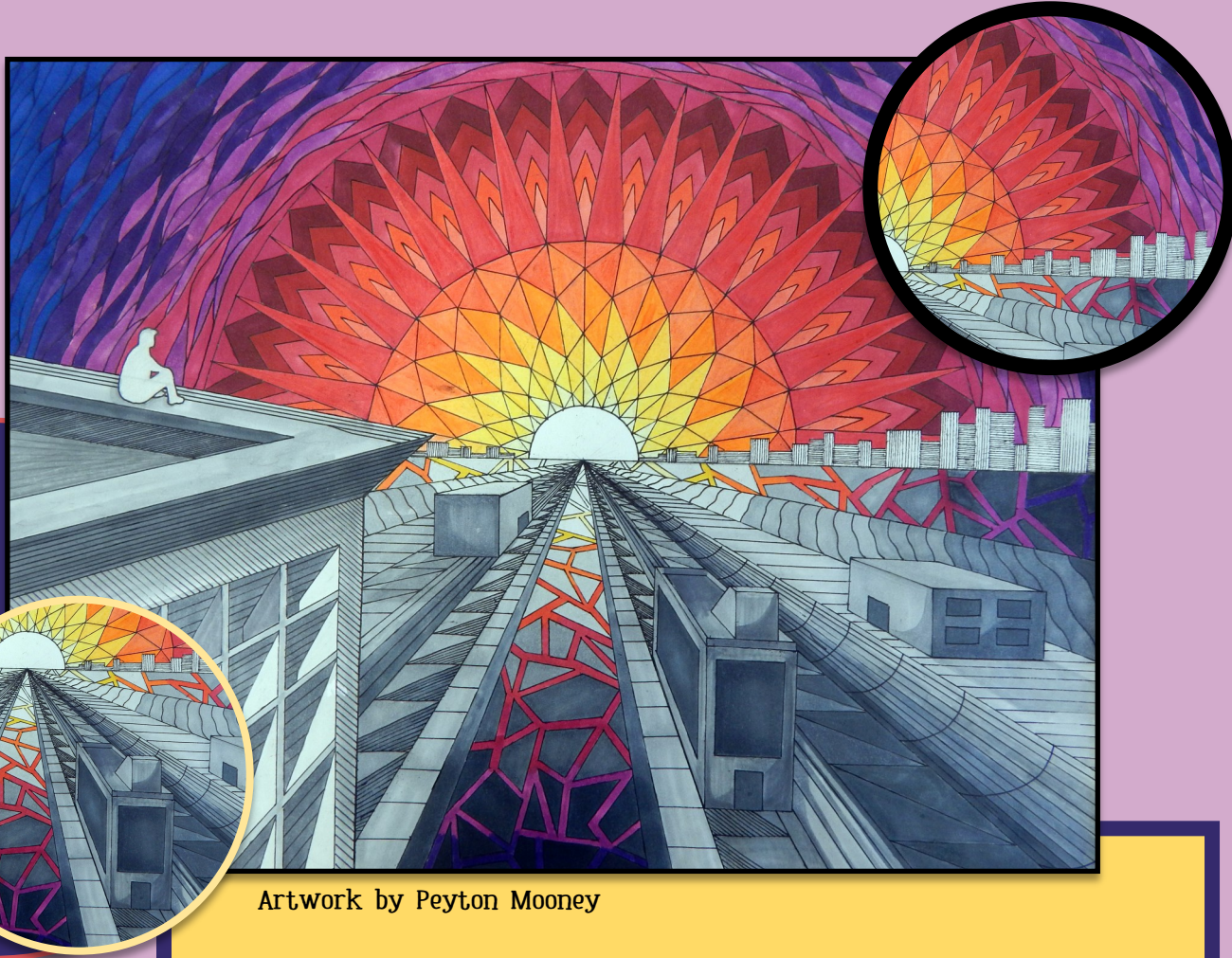
All throughout history squares and circles have always been paired together. But, what if a square wants to be with another square or a circle wants to be with another circle? Maybe they want both or none at all. They could also still be deciding, or discovering their preference.

However, in some instances, a circle does not feel like a circle and a square does not feel like a square. Maybe it feels more like an irregular shape than one with a given name. It may still be trying to determine if it wants to be the same shape or not.

Some circles come out more elongated and skinny, sort of like an oval. Some are small and very round. Some squares are very sharp and perfect; others look slanted or uneven like rhombuses and rectangles. Some ovals wish they had just as many curves as circles, and some circles wished they could be as slim and odd as an oval. Some squares wish their corners were not as sharp, just a little rounded and open. Other squares wish they had sharper edges to keep the abusers away.

For some reason, if the circle looks more like a rounded box, there is no question they are a square. If it is a rounded square, they are seen as weaker or more circle-like. Many believe that just because a radial shape has no sharp edges that it is defenseless. Others believe that geometrical shapes can protect themselves since they have corners. The weird ones believe that radials and geometrics should always assist each other, no matter whom they identify with or truly love. And, we can't forget the less intelligent ones who believe circles are below squares, and that squares should rule the world.

However, just know that **YOU** should **NEVER** try to determine the fate of someone, **NO MATTER WHAT THE SHAPE**.



Artwork by Peyton Mooney

## Modern Pilgrim

By Kennedy Williams



Patrick was the only plumber in the city of Charlotte, so naturally he was always extremely busy. His company "Patrick's Plumbing Services" (aka P.P.S) wasn't very professional, or reliable. Let's backtrack a little...Patrick was in the plumbing industry for over a decade. At first, he was known for being the best in the business. His reputation caused most his competition to go out of business because the quality of his service was untouchable. He dedicated his heart and soul to his career.

Patrick invested everything that he and his wife had saved up into his company, and luckily for them, it paid off. The company made double the amount of what it cost to pay off the property loans within a year. So, I guess it's safe to say that business was booming. Twelve months after paying off the loans, Rachelle announced that she was expecting twin boys, which sparked a light in Patrick's life. Excited about this news, he moved his family into a bigger home, purchased another vehicle, and set up a nursery, all with the thought of his family's comfort in mind.

Fast forward to the delivery day...Patrick was beyond excited about the birth of his children, but Rachelle had an uneasy feeling in her gut, causing them to arrive at the hospital earlier than planned. When they arrived to the hospital, Rachelle had extreme abdominal pain, which led to an emergency delivery. Many complications arose, causing both of their anxiety to rise, and Rachelle's pain increased. Unfortunately, only one of the babies was strong enough to survive the three hour-long surgery, while the other one passed away due to complications.

Broken and confused, Rachelle and Patrick left the hospital. Even though they had a beautiful baby boy, their hearts couldn't get passed the fact one was taken away from them. Patrick decided to take a mental health break from work to comfort his wife, and to heal from the pain they both endured. Their marriage quickly took an unfortunate turn for the worst, and the undealt emotions and hurt caused them to separate. Rachelle took the baby and moved to another state after the divorce. This series of events caused Patrick to spiral into a depression. Patrick tried to go back to work, thinking work would bring him happiness or at least a distraction. But, he was unable to focus and recommit to the thing that he, at one time, loved most. This realization caused Patrick to give up on himself entirely. He completely stopped working, stopped paying his workers, and stopped paying his bills. He was left with nothing but a paid-off building. He had no family, no joy, no company, and no home. He had nothing but pity and regret.

He became unrecognizable. He was rude, unclean, and disrespectful. His teeth started to fall out due to rot, boils started to grow on his body because of the lack of showers, his hair began to fall out due to stress, and he lost 50 pounds due to the lack of nutrition. His once reliable business was the complete opposite; he would take clients but never show up for the appointment. He was drowning in debt, and he had hatred in his heart.

Patrick was exhausted from the lifestyle he was living. One day, he decided to pick himself up and go to therapy to learn how to heal properly. He took finance classes to help him get back on his feet, which also helped to get his company back off of the ground, slowly but surely. While he stepped away from his business, a few competitors arose, which made his comeback harder. But, he was determined.

Months after months of trying to undo his errors and make up for his unreliability, Patrick started to get his clientele back. Even though he was proud of himself, he felt as though he would never be able to be truly happy again unless he mended the bridges that he broke. He reached out to his ex-wife to see their son. Luckily, Rachel accepted his presence in their son's life, and he became an active dad.

Patrick found the strength to face his problems that caused him to change for the worst, but his desire to be positive, comforting, and supportive caused him to grow and be better. Deal with your problems before they start to deal with you.





## You

By Sophia Ferguson

Seeing you is like  
A flower in the sun  
It's like a pink sunset with orange clouds  
It's like a colorful wild flower field  
It's like a snowy mountain

Your voice is like  
Hearing the birds chirp  
It's like the ocean waves  
It's like a waterfall rushing  
It's like a cat purring

Your touch is like  
Stepping out from a cold house into the warmth  
It's like the feeling of first jumping into the river  
It's like the ocean waves across your sandy feet  
It's like a slight sprinkle of rain in warm weather

Your love is like  
A butterfly going from flower to flower  
It's like driving by a horse field  
It's like a fit of laughter  
It's like the smell after rain

## Pursuit of More

By Lainey Rubin

She had never been a natural but the drive was always there  
Through the struggle and doubt she vowed to succeed  
In ways she never could have, as the world grew less fair  
She couldn't have known, but there was a level she'd never exceed

All her life she grappled with "why"  
Until she could no longer answer, try as she might  
Like an anchor, the feeling of 'almost' weighed down her reply  
When the infrequent highs no longer provided enough light

They always thought she was made of tougher stuff  
Perhaps there was too much praise, always told she was good for her age  
I think she realized she'd never be good enough  
Never quite reaching the honor of center stage

I mourn what could have been as her life's work becomes a phase  
And the fire in her heart finally fades

## Masks

By Siya Bakshi

Everyone wears masks. Emma wears one everyday too. She makes a happy face for all her friends, but inside she is truly different. She struggles with the recent separation of her parents. She can't let the world know what's going on, so she puts on a happy mask. She went to school every day this week with nothing but happiness on her face. But, once she's home, it's a completely different story. She can finally take off her mask.

## Pure Delusion

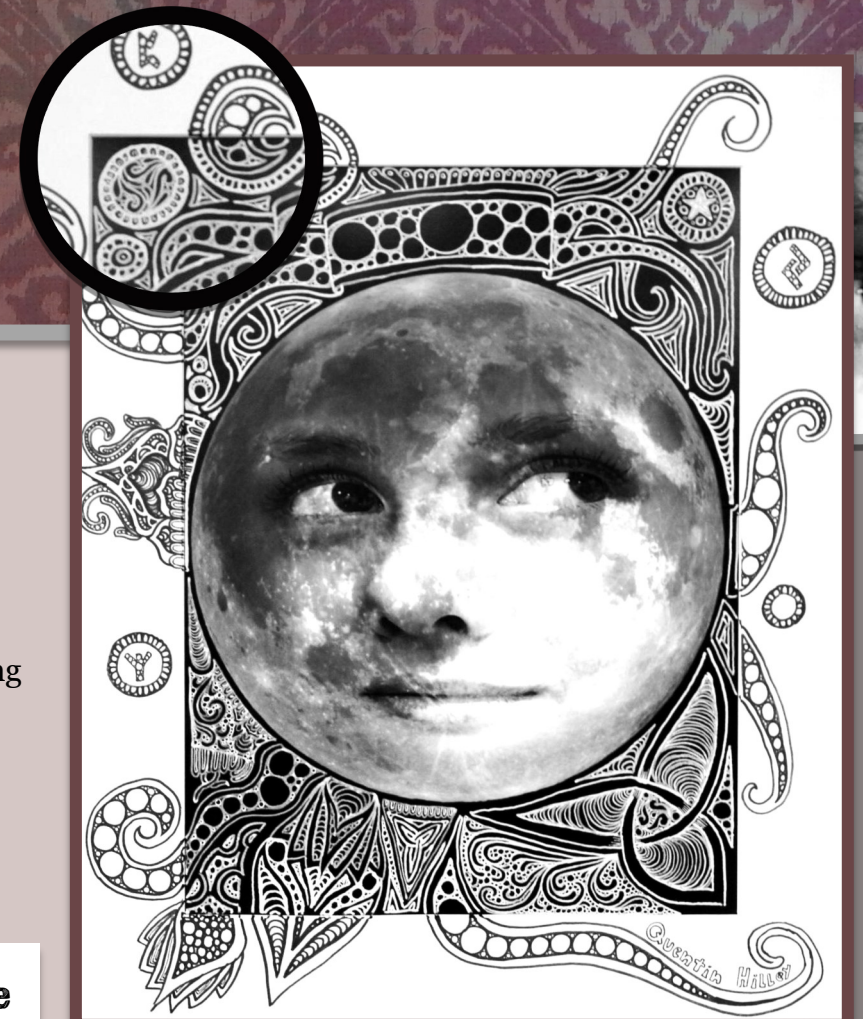
By Grace Foster

Three steps forward  
Three steps back  
Never a pure idea  
Never perfect puzzle pieces  
A rickety seesaw  
That's reality  
Not what I choose to believe  
I like to think there's a chance  
That we fit  
That we link  
That we have something worth saving  
That it won't ruin me in the process  
But every time I see you I know  
That it's just pure delusion

## What Blue Eyes See

By Cassie Collins

What can blue eyes comprehend  
As they watch in silence  
Observing the smallest of details  
Up at the sky, gazing at the stars  
Enchanted by the constellations  
How they are just a dot-the-number game  
Looking to the moon  
In love with his face  
And his many phases of light and dark  
These blue eyes wonder if the moon has eyes of his own  
Looking down like these blue eyes are looking up  
Seeing the craters in the skin of the blue eyes' owner  
As much as the blue eyes see the craters in the moon  
Even with all his craters  
He still admits a glow in the pitch-black sky  
And as these blue eyes stare up at his beauty  
They become heavy and close until morning  
And so the story keeps telling  
From many dusks to many dawns  
The story of blue eyes  
And their love for the night sky



Artwork by Quentin Hilley





## The Free Dove

By Samantha McKnight

The free dove, white and pure  
Creates a nest, a home secure  
Gracefully she glides through the blue sky  
In the warm summer, the middle of July  
Leaving beauty wherever she flies

With her soft, comforting voice  
The dove builds a home so her babies can rejoice  
Her motherly love will show her offspring grace  
And leave them in a peaceful space  
Where they'll forever appreciate her sweet embrace

The dove serves as a symbol of  
The human soul that's filled with love  
And the importance of a solid foundation  
To lead to a prosperous nation  
Where everyone loves with wonderful elation



## Humans & Flight

By Natalie Montague

Oh how does a bird fly so gracefully  
Ascending to such a great height  
Soaring and gliding and rising  
I try with all my might  
To fly just like them  
But I never get it quite right

They were made to do this  
They have mastered their art  
I am just a clumsy fool  
So easily set apart  
My wings are a weak attempt  
I thought I was so smart

Feathers and wax just do not compare  
To the precision of nature  
I was never meant to fly  
I am such an arrogant creature  
And yet I will keep trying again and again  
So maybe one day I will prosper

## Crap on the Deck

By Trey Clarkson

Do not know what it's from?  
Look up above  
It is a flocking flock of scums

How are they so stupid?  
How are they so dumb?  
If you think about it, they do as we did  
Look all around, tracing all of our crumbs

We crap on what we built  
What have we become?  
We are just like them with what we have done  
Look all around the earth  
Tracing all of our crumbs

Trash on the deck  
Do not know what it is from?  
Look all around  
It is a world of walking bums



## Human's World

By Jaydn Miller

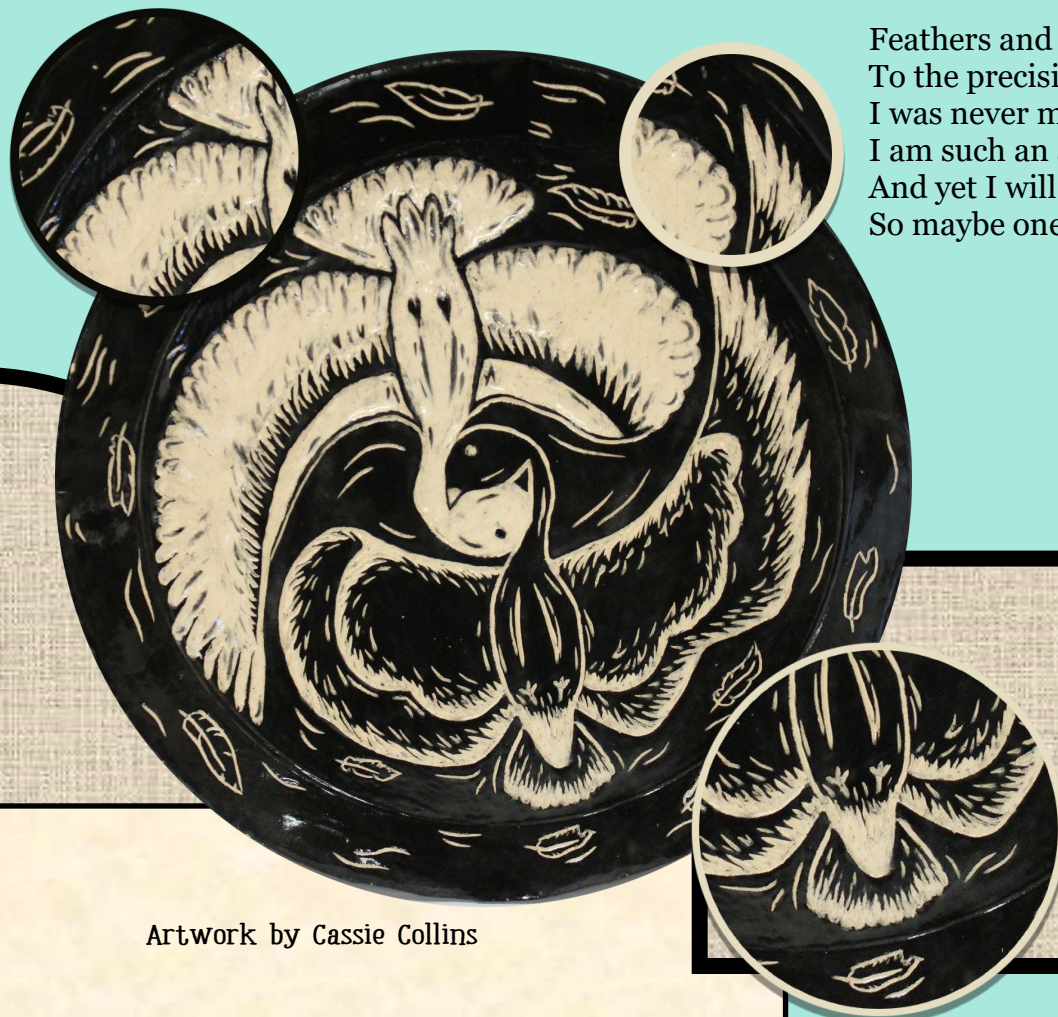
Clouds of smoke from the towering factories  
Emitting signals of scarring  
Clumps of our trash  
Trailing down creeks into our lakes  
Millions of our waste  
Put on the waist of our animals  
Billions of trees taken down for human needs  
Leaving birds with no place to nest and feed  
A human's world with human deeds

## The Morning Tune

By Rebecca Whitmore

Waking up in the morning  
With music from the birds  
The peace it brings  
Cannot be put into words  
Songs  
Waves  
Wind  
They all create this sound  
That brings life to my ears  
How they ring  
Like bells that have been shaken  
Like songs that have been sung  
The music from the birds  
Can put you in a trance  
Rhythms from songs  
The life that has been given

After the sun sets  
When all the birds have come to rest  
The meaning of life  
Waking up in the morning  
With no music from the birds  
My mind begins to wonder  
Is there any reason why  
The day should keep going  
No bells  
No songs  
Nothing can give me life and energy  
Like the birds who create the morning rhythm  
I lie back in bed  
Having no reason to start the day  
Then the chirp of one bird  
Puts all those thoughts away



Artwork by Cassie Collins





## The River of Life

By Diego Thrasher

Like the stream of water  
A current ever-flowing

The wind in the air  
In constant motion  
A power of patience and humility  
Unjudging, unceasing  
Chaos in a quiet form  
Peace in turbulence  
It is unshakeable, inevitable  
No dam holds it  
You need only to wait  
And see the wall fall  
Holding back the stream  
It will find a way around  
Or pool up, drowning sorry souls  
Isn't it better to accept  
To lie in peace in the stream  
To feel a cold embrace  
Pushing slowly downstream  
Isn't it easier to swim with the tide  
To feel its guiding hand  
Towards an unknown, strange place  
All make it to that destination  
Either thrashing, or lying calmly  
This river flows through us all  
From the great world and beyond  
Entering through the skull  
And pooling in the heart  
To some, the water is relief  
A cool break from the heat  
To some, hot and cool are one

## A Letter

By Peyton Zen

Dear Social Anxiety,

I wanted to say thank you for keeping me separated. Separated from everybody: my friends, family, and large crowds. Thanks to you, I have found it so hard to be comfortable around anybody. Despite all of this, you have made me want to fight for more. I will not let you control me any longer. I will not allow you to keep me from making decisions in my life. I will fight for a new life, enjoying being around the ones I love and are close to me. So, thank you social anxiety for building me into a new more confident version of myself.

Sincerely,  
Me

## When I am Older

By Lucia Parker-Harley

I fell asleep again at seven  
Listening to the sound of my mother playing piano  
When I learn to take care of myself  
And wake up earlier in the morning  
I'll be happier  
I'll forget the way you smiled  
Only showing your top teeth  
And the way your lips moved when you talked  
When I'm older  
I'll be wiser  
I'll wash my dishes and clean my house  
I'll take shorter showers  
And I'll forget about you  
And the way you loved me in January  
I'll forget that when the summer came  
You laughed a little more  
And smiled a little bigger  
And forgot about me  
When I'm older  
My hair will be longer  
And my laugh will be a little more natural  
When my days stop slipping away  
I will be better  
I'll find the courage to throw away your sweater  
And the letters you wrote me  
When I'm older  
I will be a little wiser  
I'll brush my teeth in the morning  
And I'll wash my face at night  
I won't fall asleep at seven  
And I won't wake up late  
I'll forget about you  
And the way you loved me in January

## A Letter That I Will Probably Never Send

By Bella Paolino

Dear Friend,

I think it's been getting worse lately. I can't escape it anymore. Even when I close my eyes, it's still there. Everything feels so overwhelming. I wish I could just make it stop. My medications make everything more bearable, but no matter what I do, it's still there. I feel like my brain is exploding with all my feelings. It's to the point my feelings are too big for my body to handle anymore. My head feels foggy and I can't concentrate on anything. It's affecting every part of my life: my school work, my hobbies, and my relationships with others. I wish there was just some way to stop all of this. No matter what I do, it's still there. Things like therapy and medications make it better, but even then it's still there, in the back of my head, no matter what. I'm looking forward to seeing you again because you make me feel slightly better. Your company helps distract me from what's going on inside. I promise I'll keep talking to my therapist and taking my anti-depressants, but I just wish everything would go ahead and get better. I love and miss you.

Sincerely,  
Yours

## Armadillo Bug

By Maia Baucom

Armored forager hidden in the dark  
Crawling beneath the beautifully rotted bark  
The fierce warrior wields a blade of grass  
Wary of strangers, evading their gazes  
Quickly retreating from unfamiliar faces

Such fragile creatures, quite reclusive  
Perhaps they are even elusive  
While acting friendly with their neighbors  
Despite constantly having to be defended  
Tiny warmth of kinship can only be extended

Hold your loved ones dearly  
Even when vulnerable, defend yourself clearly  
Take note from these delicate creatures  
It's okay to leave your shell  
Especially after you've been through hell



Artwork by Carolyn Coffey





## Why is a Veteran Important?

By Zoey Hughes

“My country ‘tis of thee, sweet land of liberty of thee I sing” are familiar words from “America” written by Mr. Samuel Francis Smith. This song clearly expressed his thoughts of why a veteran is important. In the 1800’s, veterans provided the freedom for Mr. Smith to write this song. Veterans embody strength and bravery, and they exercise these characteristics

continually for us to have access to multiple freedoms.

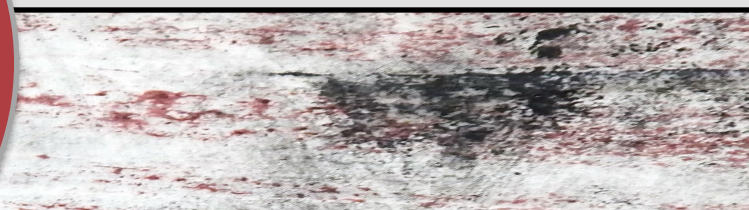
Standing alone or with others, the sacrifice of the veterans that I personally know, stood for what’s right in a world of wrong; stood for unity in a world that is still divided. From the tone of their voices, they served and live with no regrets. They fought even when others strayed away and disrespected them. Their journeys are important to understand because their stories and their voices speak of the endurance of all veterans throughout the years. Veterans are important in every area of our lives. Their sacrifice gives us undeserved freedom and the freedom of choice. They exemplify selfless service and commitment, so one day we might have a unified United States of America.

Freedom, liberty, independence and democracy; because of a veteran, I can enjoy all of the freedoms each day has to offer. A Navy soldier serving from 1964 until 1968, explained how he learned true discipline and how to respect authority in the military. To him it was an honor to serve. However racism was at the forefront of the military at the time. This soldier was persistent and resilient because he knew if he didn’t fight, his children, and his children’s children, would not experience the same freedom and privilege. The privilege to vote, to attend school, and to have access to proper healthcare would not be possible without our veterans.

To fight in the military, you must exemplify selflessness. A Marine fighter serving from 1989 until 1997, explains his willingness to serve for his country regardless of his personal feelings. He shared with me how his mentality played a major role during his service. He did things willingly and out of his own way for the right cause. This veteran believes that never backing down from obstacles is the perfect way to demonstrate mental awareness and strength when it comes to doing things for others.

So many countries have monarchs and dictatorships. In America, we are fortunate and blessed to have a democracy where we can make unified decisions to better our country. One Navy veteran who gave thirty eight years in the military, experienced unification in his troop by laying down their personal feelings and woes. He explained how being a veteran allowed him to learn and share with other retired soldiers and cling to the purpose before him. He was taught to stay focused and persevere through every challenge and circumstance, even when he was conflicted in his own mind.

Even after serving, veterans are committed and dedicated to inspiring others as living testaments, speaking to others about how to serve is an honor. Veterans made the ultimate sacrifice: their lives. They sacrificed their lives for those that loved them and those that hated them. Their battle scars should beckon us to embrace and appreciate the many freedoms we have today. They are our sung and unsung heroes. They are the reason peace, if chosen, can reside in a chaotic world. A veteran is important because they protect our freedom for today and the freedom of tomorrow. A future that grants us freedom of thought, freedom of self, freedom of community, and freedom that rings. Today, tomorrow and forever our veterans are important because I have the freedom to dream. I have the freedom to sing. I have the freedom to just be...me.



## The War is Not Over

By Melanie Earl

Looking around  
The battle scene is harsh  
Bodies lay across the ground  
With the sight of blood  
It is nauseating and surrounding me  
I can’t see  
The smoke is blinding me  
My heart sinks as I look around  
No place to go  
I want this war to be over  
War, war, war  
Nothing but destruction and chaos  
Please be over  
Everyone is gone  
Gone, gone, gone



## The Broken Shell

By Caleb Evans

Broken shells that once wove our thread  
Broken shells that are the memorials for the dead  
For we once stood proud as one  
But those days are over, thought to be done

The explosions erupt, crowned by halos of smoke  
Sending towers flying as their windows broke  
Misery echoes across the land, echoing before and again  
Caused by an ever-bloody war that will never end

For one day, will we form this shell once more?  
Reform the ties that our differences tore?  
For the day will come when the bombshells rest  
Laying in a united nation where the sun will never set

For we must learn to get along  
Dissolve our flames of malice as we right our wrongs  
Come together in the ashes to hold hands  
The only way we shall reach humanity’s Promised Land



Artwork by Melanie Earl





## Fear

By Lorelei Kenney

One night before school, I woke up in my room. My eyes shifted around the room until they set upon my alarm clock glaring “4:00 AM” in bright bolded numbers. Only two more hours until I had to wake up and prepare for the bus. In my tired haziness, I went back to looking at the ceiling, where I started to let my guard down as my consciousness faded away. The empty void of nothingness started to take shape and form in to colors until I was in a foggy, damp forest. Trees surrounded me that stretched infinitely upwards, what would’ve been a roof of leaves was replaced by a thick, gray fog.

Once I allowed myself to move, I could feel the damp soil beneath my feet. I continued to walk through the infinite forest, which felt like ages. I continued my walk until I was halted with a large wall of spider webs. I couldn’t see through the thickness of the webs and peered my head closer near to the wall of webs, but was unable to determine the thickness of the web wall. Spending a long, quiet minute looking through it, a sudden brown shape seemed to be scurrying towards me so rapidly, I couldn’t make out what I was looking at. The shape seemed to have a face with multiple eyes, a mandible that hid its sharp teeth, and many legs. It had an elongated body, and I could see a pattern on the back of it. As I watched the legs start to become larger and swifter, my body fell back and sprung onto the ground away from the web. The arachnid flung its upper half of its body out of the web, trying to reach me. Its legs doubled in size as they expanded towards me, and its mouth was gaped wide open, which would’ve been used to hold me in its place. I watched as the spider slowly started to free itself from its home, as its intention was to get me.

I scrambled up and turned around towards the woods to flee, but the forest was nowhere to be seen. Instead, the web expanded around me. Webs started to tangle around my legs and limit my movement. I tried to run throughout the thicket of cobwebs, but my entire body became wrapped in webs that stuck to my skin, hair, and pajamas. As I was running through this white forest, I noticed bundles of what looked like mangled up bugs excreting a gooey, green bodily fluid from their crushed up corpses. I looked behind me and realized the spider was no longer trying to attack me as it disappeared in to the webs. I collapsed in exhaustion and shut my eyes for a brief moment. When they opened again, the sight of trees and moss surrounded my view, and the webs that tangled around my body had disappeared. I got up, sighed in relief and continued my walk.

As I walked again through the infinite forest, I noticed a mist low to the ground surrounding my feet. I followed the mist as it shrunk itself into the thicker part of the forest where the trees became tighter, and the soil on the ground was replaced by roots and moss. I started to find myself squeezing myself through the trees, trying my best not to trip on the roots or slam myself into a tree as I continued. During my walk, I felt a sudden squish at the bottom of my foot. I lifted my foot up and saw a crushed carcass of a cockroach. My face twisted and scrunched up in disgust as I scraped the bottom of my foot on the bark of the nearest tree. I finally reached a clearing covered in mist, so I continued forward. I was interrupted by my foot stepping into a puddle. Surprised, I tripped and my entire body fell into a pond. But, this was no ordinary pond. As my body went in, it became deeper and deeper. I thrashed my body around and waved my arms desperately trying to go back up to the surface. The light became fainter and my sight became less clear as I continued to sink.

In my struggles of trying to free myself from sinking, I noticed small dark figures attaching themselves to each of my limbs. I stopped and focused on what was clinging to me, only to see many dead roaches covering my body. I almost screamed, but I remembered to save the bit of breath I had left. My shaking became worse as I tried to scrape them off my body, but they seemed to multiply the harder I tried. Just then, my body fell through the water, as if I was free falling. I landed on the same bed of grass in which I started; the fog was still lurking. I looked back at the water, examining it further to figure out what just happened. I peered my face closer to analyze it only to see a face, but I was not looking at my own reflection. Suddenly, a face emerges from the water. It is a white mask, with two eyeholes that showed

pale skin underneath, and eyes sunken deep into its head. It had those roaches crawling all over it. Before it could emerge its entire body out the water, I flung myself back, where I was suddenly back in my bed.

My alarm was blaring, and I looked over to see “6:30 AM” on the clock. I turned the alarm off and got myself up out of bed. I yawned and looked back at the spot where I laid, reflecting on the strange dream I just had. I noticed something odd about how the pillow was laying on my bed. I grabbed the pillow to reorganize it, but as I lifted it up, I saw the same mask that was in my dream. It was wet and covered in moss and dirt with dead roaches all over it. I could only sit there in shock as I tried to understand what had happened that night. I left my house, and spent my day at school, forcing myself to forget that dream I have dreamt that night.

## Sinking

By Jordyn Howell

Trapped in your own mind  
You’re feeling like you’re drowning  
Struggling to swim back up to the surface  
Propelling yourself forward  
Or so you thought  
In reality  
You’re still going down  
Sinking, drowning, dying  
To everyone else you’re fine  
Sitting in your chair in your own mind  
But you are sinking, drowning, dying  
Where is the surface?  
When do you come up for air?  
And once you’re there, at the surface  
Where will you go?  
You’re back right where you started  
Sinking, drowning, dying  
It’s a repeating cycle  
Again and again  
Stuck  
Sinking, drowning, dying

## The Future

By Rachel Langley

I am nervous for the future  
Because I feel unprepared  
I am anxious for the future  
I’m afraid of feeling scared  
I am excited for the future  
Because I can’t wait to grow  
Am I really ready for the future?  
I don’t think I really know







# Narcissism

By Margaret Germany

Narcissism is a brain disease that controls someone’s process of thinking, emotions, social awareness, empathy, etc. Narcissism is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “self-centeredness arising from failure to distinguish the self from external objects, either in very young babies or as a feature of a mental disorder.” In other words, narcissism is a very destructive brain disorder that does not only affect one’s self-identity but also their specific relationships with other people. In comparison to the Oxford Dictionary, Urban Dictionary defines narcissism as “someone with a unilateral perspective centered only upon him or herself.” As one can observe, narcissism is overall a mental imbalance in someone’s brain that causes one to basically be inherently selfish. The symptoms of narcissism include exaggerated self-importance, exaggerated achievements, a sense of being superior and warranted, entitlement, admiration for one’s self, etc. Narcissism develops in a variety of forms for multiple people, affects the brain chemically, and negatively affects personal relationships (Begum, 2023).

As mentioned prior, narcissism can affect the brain chemically. Narcissism is not just a personality, it is a brain disorder that interferes with a person’s chemical balance and nervous system. Narcissism can be developed in two major ways. The first can develop through emotional trauma. Emotional trauma is having been exposed to traumatic events such as neglect, abuse, abandonment, etc., especially from a young age. The second form can develop through genetics, relating to DNA and blood-related family members (Psychology Today, n.d.). Whether from trauma or genetics, it is extremely important to try to catch it at an early stage. Although there is no cure, therapy and building healthier relationships between a narcissist’s mind and body can ease the impact. As stated by Amen Clinic, a scientific research company that studies Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), “People with NPD have reduced gray matter volume in areas of the brain related to empathy and increased activity on baseline images in brain regions associated with self-directed and self-absorbed thinking.” (n.d.) Victims of NPD do not even have the capability to understand empathy for themselves or others. Their immediate reactions to any social or personal situation go immediately to self-direction and self-absorption. Along with being unable to understand empathy or affection, victims of NPD are also more likely to suffer from substance abuse, and anxiety and mood disorders such as depression or bipolar disorders. Out of all victims of NPD, 40% are more inclined to substance abuse and anxiety, as well as 29% of victims are more inclined to have mood disorders (Amen, n.d.) Along with substance abuse and other mental disorders, the chemical imbalance in narcissists’ brains creates a higher chance of suicidal thoughts and attempts. For example, the Amen Clinic (n.d.) also states, “Simple life stressors may precipitate a suicide attempt.” Life stressors could include work overload, getting fired, etc. It has also been stated by Amen Clinic that people with NPD are highly more susceptible to cardiovascular disease and gastrointestinal distress (n.d.). Cardiovascular diseases consists of heart issues such as heart attacks and strokes. Gastrointestinal distress consists of intestinal issues such as bloating, nausea, constipation, cramping, etc. NPD also leads to an increased chance of being diagnosed with dementia, an impairment disorder that affects daily tasks such as decision-making, eating, thinking, etc. (Amen, n.d.). NPD is a very dangerous disorder that affects the person’s mental health and also their physical well-being.

NPD is a major factor in someone’s personal relationships and well-being. Lisa Firestone, a psychologist with a Ph. D. who studies narcissism, relationships, and toxic relationships, states that narcissistic partners are very highly likely to practice manipulation and abuse towards their partner (2017). Firestone (2017) states, “Narcissists engage in manipulative or game-playing behaviors and are less likely to be committed long-term.” Narcissists tend to create victim complexes and do not understand how to even be in a healthy relationship. Firestone (2017) states that around 1% of the population suffers from NPD, but some are simply never diagnosed, and those who are diagnosed tend to not seek treatment. Firestone (2017) states that in a parent-child relationship, narcissists (in this case, the parent) will essentially feed off their child’s emotional maturity. This happens because the parent with NPD genuinely lacks empathy, emotion, and any genuine feeling, with everything revolving around themselves. Amen Clinic and Firestone have similar views relating to the increased likelihood of bipolar disorder in children due to the parent’s random decision-making, having complete disinterest in the child, or neglecting the child. In regards to relationships in general, Firestone (2017) states that “A narcissist can often be very charming and charismatic.” This is due to the fact that narcissists want their ego to be boosted and uplifted in return. Their charismatic and charming personality is not intended to be

genuine, but rather instead fulfilled in return, so they can seek validation and excessive praise.

Narcissists on the higher end of the narcissism spectrum are considered to have NPD. Those who are lower end show fewer traits of narcissism. It can be very difficult to decipher the line between high and low NPD because narcissists are very intelligent, and can easily hide emotions and feelings. In romantic relationships, narcissists typically only view relationships as transactional, only expecting attention and sexual satisfaction, both of which boost self-image, ego, and self-esteem, which is a narcissist’s main priority for existence and relationships. The narcissist will also instinctively try to manipulate their partner. For example, Dan Brennan, a medical professional, stated that a narcissist will attempt to control their partner by trying to please them and impress them, but in actuality, it is always and will always be only for the benefit of themselves (Begum, 2023). Because narcissists cannot understand empathy and truly only think about themselves, they cannot take responsibility for their actions and behaviors. Not being able to take action for one’s behaviors circles back to the notion that a person with NPD is manipulative and can only process situations based on how they themselves will be affected.

On the other end of a relationship is the receiver of all the manipulation and abuse. It might be a mother, son, daughter, or spouse, but all of them have to learn how to handle a narcissist. Dan Brennan states, “There must be a change in the dynamic of the relationship. You must challenge your partner to alter how they view you and your relationship.” (Begum, 2023). It is imperative for the narcissist to be willing to seek help, which is rare. Lisa Firestone (2017) supports Brennan by stating, “One must understand their boundaries when they find out they are in a relationship with someone who has NPD.” Firestone also states that people who find themselves in relationships with people who have NPD often have co-dependency issues, so they will put up with larger amounts of abuse and manipulation (2017).

Narcissism is a personality and brain disorder that can be developed from trauma or genetics, and it often deeply harms personal relationships between narcissists and the people in their lives. Narcissism develops in a variety of forms, affects the brain chemically, and negatively affects personal relationships. To be in a relationship with someone who has Narcissistic Personality Disorder means there will have to be boundaries and self-realization.

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# Narcissism (Dance Showcase)

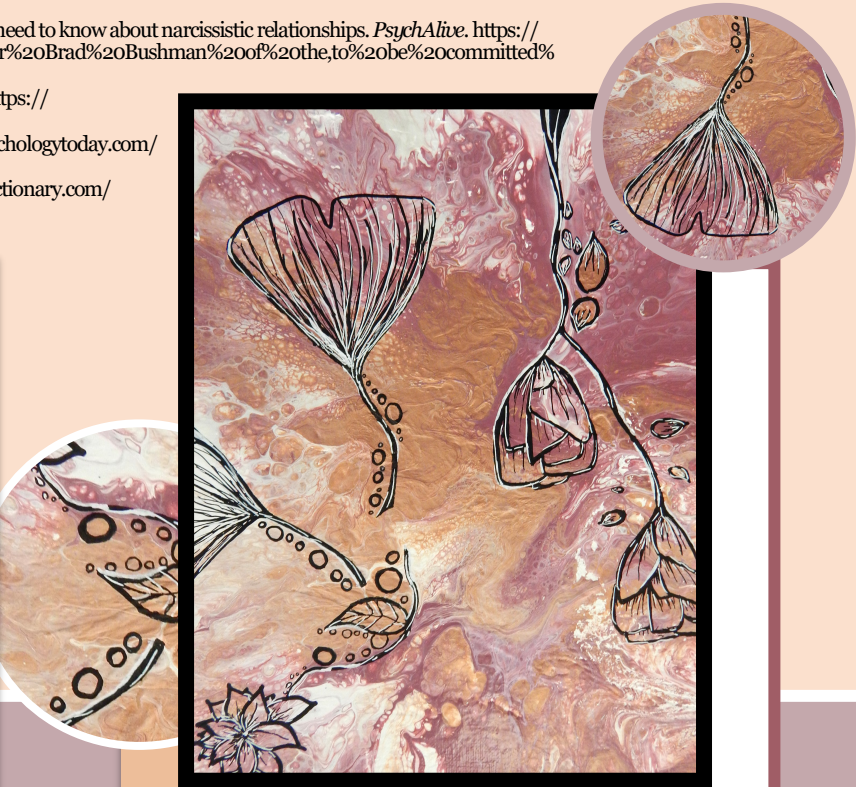
Choreographed by Margaret Germany

Featuring: Ian Aitken, Sophia Austermiller, Zoey Hughes, Emmi Lee, Ava Wilke & Hannah Frances Welch

Music: Runaway by AURORA



Scan or Click to watch the dance.



Artwork by Charlotte Peavy



## Leopard: A Shadow From Above

By Alexander Holmes

A shadow from above, creeping as it follows  
A feeling inside it, feels so hollow  
Emotion so intense you can't even swallow  
You can run from it but not hide  
In the back of your mind, it will always reside  
You say you can face it, or so you decide

You grab a weapon for the beast  
If you back down it will feast  
Just face this creature in the least  
A sly cat spotted and dotted  
You are in fear, chest all knotted  
But, as it pounces, you think to yourself "I got it"

It disappears, proving you just had to face it  
In the shadows you can hear it exit  
Sometimes, you must risk getting bit  
In life you must take some risks  
If you don't take your chance you will always miss  
The leopard will stalk you into an abyss

## Oh Mantis

By Ashley Brown

Oh Mantis  
On a nice spring day  
Peace is always granted  
But stay quiet so it can stay

Unlike me  
Ole mantis has no worries  
One day you'll see  
Stick around and you'll know his story

For me, my life is filled with worries  
Constantly stressed by life  
Working so hard I'll catch a disease  
But, most people say I'll be just fine

One day I'll be Sir Mantis  
Free as can be  
All it takes is a little practice  
And soon I'll be filled with glee

## Not a Symphony

By Marjorie Weaver

My life is not a symphony  
This song just can't be meant for me  
And this whole thing is lasting too long  
I want some assurance back  
To hide everything that I lack  
And the feeling that I'm just wrong

So just slow the tempo down  
Leave some room for rest notes in the measure  
Dynamic changes  
Don't have to be outrageous  
And I'm losing the certainty I treasure

I hate pathetic little notes  
Intertwined with twisted quotes  
That evoke a series of cries  
This operatic piece is  
Cracking me in pieces  
And the verses are all laced with lies  
And there's a phony sort of pizzazz  
That sounds like death and jazz  
And the whole tone is just sort of wrong  
These melodies are memories  
And the harmonies are harming me  
And it all just sounds like one sad song

But the lyrics are all broken  
And the choir is all dead  
And the rhythm's falling victim  
To distortions in my head  
My life is not a symphony  
And I feel like I'm all used  
Because the composers  
Are all posers  
Who leave me stranded and confused

So just slow the tempo down  
Leave some room for rest notes in the measure  
Dynamic changes  
Don't have to be outrageous  
And I'm losing the certainty I treasure

But the lyrics are all broken  
And the choir is all dead  
And the rhythm's falling victim  
To distortions in my head  
I don't know how long the song is  
But I know that there's lots  
They'll keep playing  
I'm decaying  
'Til the music finally stops

## The Jellyfish

By Lila Gillam

Every single day  
My tentacles swim  
To keep their motivation  
To not stop because  
I will sink and drown  
Up and down they go  
Striving to continue  
To the never-ending  
My tentacles used to be young  
They were full of electricity  
Full of life because of the gift of the sea  
The sea that used to glow so bright  
And the current that used to flow  
Made my tentacles want that motion  
The sea made me strong  
It kept me moving  
Today, the sea has turned gray  
But, I am still swimming  
Every day the same  
My everything has disappeared  
And now I am swimming  
As hard as I can  
And I fear that the sea will one day  
Make these tentacles turn grey

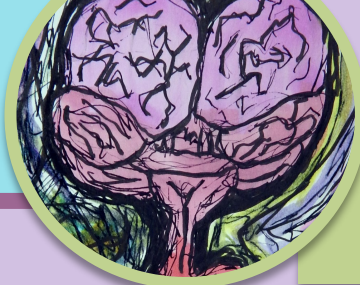
## Love is Like A Tree

By Lila Gillam

Love is a powerful force  
One might even say love is like a tree  
It starts small, but can grow mighty  
However, the little things may tear it down  
Something as simple as a little termite  
Can destroy a beautiful, strong tree  
But on the outside  
No one can see the pain or suffering within  
But sometimes there can be a cure  
Some sunshine, pesticides, and water maybe  
Can heal what once was broken  
Just like love

Artwork by Sophie Martin





## Wounded Twin Hearts

By Acquala Campbell

You say you love me  
Yet you scar me with your words  
Your sharpest blade  
You tell me I am special, one of a kind  
Still, you give me bruises  
On my body and mind  
But this poem is not for you

I have recently grown fond of a flower  
So delicate, so sweet  
But what if it is just like the others  
Crude and sour, deceptive beyond belief

It reaches out hoping for my heart for 'tis my lover  
But, what if I shall give you ashes to use for soil?  
Persistently you take the dust  
You have made yourself a lifelong puzzle  
Are you hoping this will last forever?

Little flower, would you still love me  
Even after you have peeped behind these eyes?

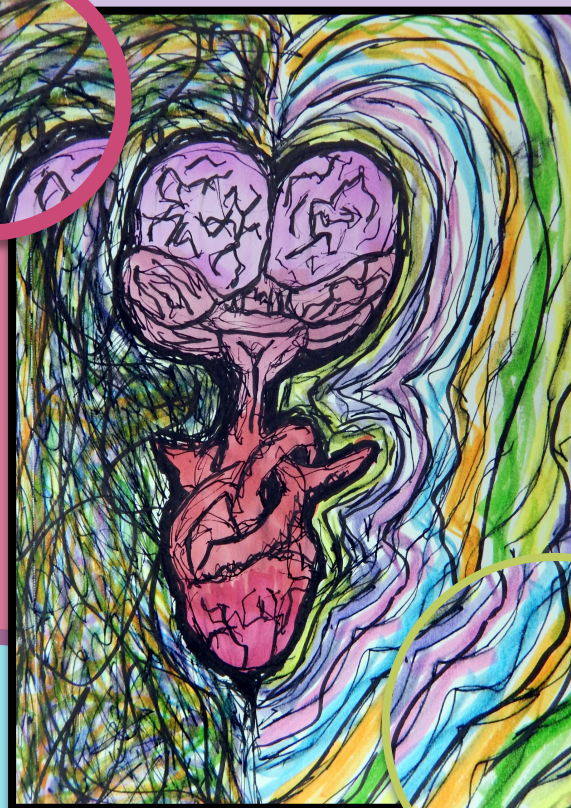
Or would you leave me  
Thus destroying the puzzle you have started?  
Precious flower, what would you do?  
You are one of the rarest, the eyes' favorite bite  
You have told me your story  
You have unfolded your past  
But why? Is that how you play your game?

Then I realize  
You are no flower  
You are more like the ocean

You are filled with amazing wonders  
You have been hurt and used  
Abused for others' selfish desires  
Yet still after everything you are as strong as ever  
Your waves are deadly but beautiful  
I do not blame you after all of the pain  
You deserve better, but still you stay

Why won't you go?  
You stay ashore, with your currents  
Keeping me afloat  
You protect me yet you 're hundreds of miles away  
Why must you try to heal my wounded heart  
When you can just as well heal your own?  
Why must you give me your heart  
Despite me holding back?  
Why do I still find myself wanting more?

Artwork by Jordan Davis



## Recover

By Caro Rain Era

When what I love leaves for the shade  
Dark is here for me to stay  
Dark is cold, bleak, and lacks  
But love does not always come back

The dark hugs not, but suffocates  
And love shines soft with warmth and makes  
The robin sing to blooming flowers  
Yet songbirds don't come out for hours

Dark's not bad in spite of you  
But still is false, a dream come true  
And every time the dream feels good  
You wake up to reality, to what could

Laugh and cry and sing and shout  
Your anger wishes to come out  
So paint and dance all you wish  
To release the monster, the behemoth

She will return with vengeance poor  
Coping could not restrain her  
All you need to recover  
Is the love of another

The love you lost will come again  
You may need not to make new friends  
Hike and climb the slippery slope  
But fall once more and you'll lose hope

Scrape and scrabble to the light  
The want for love is not a fight  
It holds your hand and beats you broken  
This is exactly what you've chosen

When what I love leaves for the shade  
I light a torch and feel the blaze  
I cast the flame into the shadows  
Love will not, this time, be fallow

You hurt your heart, you hurt mine too  
But in order to forgive, you must forgive you  
If you can't, I'm at a loss  
I can't save you, you're the boss

## She Who Over Thinks

By Catherine Elmwood

There once was a girl  
Who lived in a world  
Where everything was a lie  
And she could never classify  
What was real and fake  
She would lie awake  
And go over every possible option  
Of what alteration  
Could have happened to her reality  
Her mentality had her paralyzed  
Where she was within her own lies  
What had she missed?  
Should she persist or resist  
The temptation  
Of her creation?  
What she had learned  
She never returns unburned  
She knew the dangers  
But she could never keep her doubts strangers  
She tried to push them back  
To unpack  
Like her doctors had told her  
Like her parents had told her  
Like her friends had told her  
Like her teachers had told her  
Keep it away  
Just for today  
But it's never that simple  
If it were then I wouldn't wrinkle  
Under the weight  
Of the debate  
Taking place in the treacherous terrain  
Of my brain



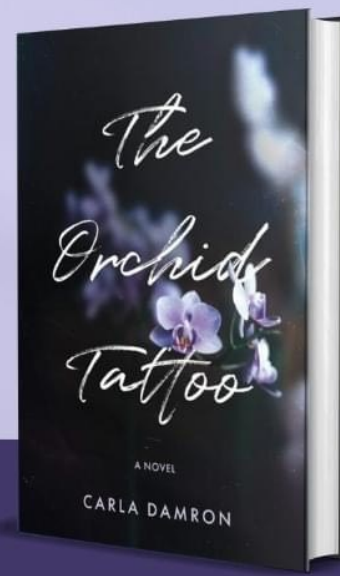


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