



# Spectre Art and Literary Magazine 2020

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**Edition 100**

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Marcelo Koga



## **An Ocean of Faces**

***Madison Hughes***

A quiet city does not exist

The speech of its inhabitants like seagulls in the streets

Steps bound over cracks like waves

Feet crashing on the ground

To what end?

When do the streets subdue?

The people content at last?

Noise turned fulfilment

And what if the noise becomes too much?

The waves become a riptide and

You are cast into sea

Struggling in the salted feeling of hopelessness

How do you return to the sand?

How do you find peace beside the rushing cars?

Next to the men and women and children

Who wish for the same thing?

The only option among the people

Is to keep moving

And to drift where

The waves wish for you to go



Donovan Thompson



## Calmer Waters

*Madi Harpel*

The way the sun hits her  
Pronouncing the blue and green  
Giving light to everything below the surface  
All of her secrets, exposed  
Suddenly in a spotlight  
All the creatures run  
In darkness, her creatures return  
Sailors become afraid and stay away  
Fearing her strength during storms,  
During the gray days, when tears fall  
But every time a storm comes,  
She overcomes it  
And returns to calm waters

Kelly Downs



## Core of Pollination

*Erika Forsstrom*

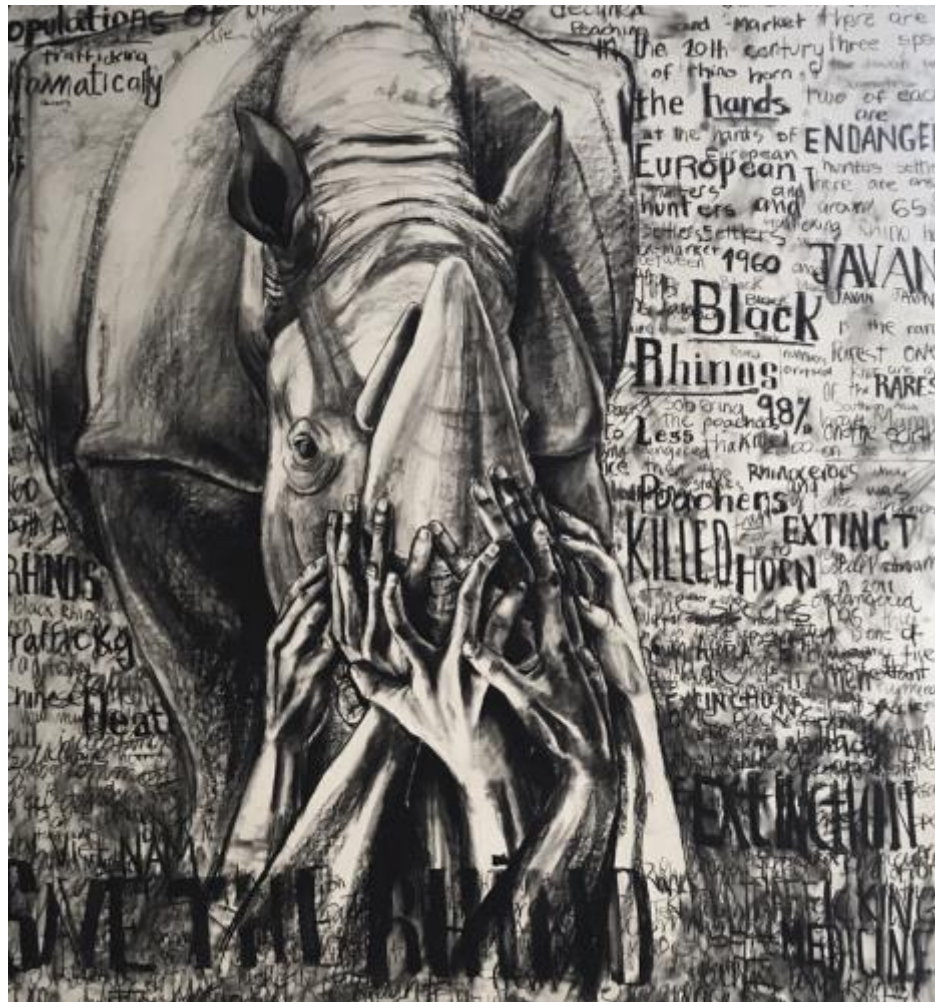
The violets bloom in patches of summertime  
Their petals hold close to a core of pollination  
But picked off one by one, their stems dangle into a space of nothing  
They're nothing more than just a display.  
What happens to those petals that are ripped from the center?  
Do they fall to the floor and slowly shrivel?  
Are they swept away and hidden for no purpose?  
With little meaning after being a flower into being a petal of nothing.  
But those petals don't have to be picked for the sole meaning of being picked  
Their vibrance and beauty can be shared to the world  
A violet can just be a violet  
A violet can live on after it's been rooted from it's simple place.  
Held in the hands of someone who appreciates it's value  
And given to another of similar gentle ways  
A flower is admired by all  
But a flower is not admired by all.  
Stomped and stepped and treated like a weed  
It's no different than any other flower  
Giving kindness and defying the uprooters is how a violet can stay strong  
From a core of pollination, a violet still spreads no matter what.



Maya Townsend



Marcelo Koga



## Just a Man on the Sidewalk

**Max Kronstadt**

The streets, he lives

But the music, his home

Family, he hasn't got

Money, he need not

His fingers curve to the notes of the song

Only in the tune, his body belongs

He smiles with joy

He's been playing the guitar ever since he was a boy

He weeps in sadness  
His artistic dreams were labelled madness  
While his eyes are closed, just now he sees  
When all had left  
Just one remained  
Her skin was brown  
Her body was curved  
Happiness, she knew he deserved  
She sits in his arms for one last night  
His lingering sickness, he knows he cannot fight  
As he goes to sleep  
He says his goodbyes to his beautiful wife  
And thanks her for the gift of life.

Madeline Fordham



## Trapped

*Miriam Sall*

I'm stuck,

In a world open, wild and free, I'm stuck.



Inside of myself,

I am surrounded by people,

But I am stuck.

I choke

On my own thoughts, which I can't even get out.

Alone with my thoughts,

Though surrounded by my friends.

I can't speak.

Drowning,

I can't reach the surface, only my fingertips break.

Breathing faster, yet

I take no air, only my thoughts.

My head spins.

Reaching,

I brush the air above me, searching for help.

I grasp, but slip out,

My friends gape, baffled as I sink.

Trapped.

Grace Bauder



## Hello, Stranger

***Ebreez Elbashir***

Lily slowly pulled open the glass door. The aroma of burnt coffee and cigarettes wafted through the air. It stung her nostrils, and she coughed.

It was the first time in a decade she'd seen him and he invited her here...of all places? It figured - probably the nicest place he knows...and cheap enough for him to pick up the tab.

The only other people in the diner were an elderly couple quietly enjoying their breakfast at a booth and a middle-aged waitress wiping down the counter. Lily sighed at the desperate sight. The diner was around before she'd left town, and it somehow managed to get worse over the years. The few booths in the place were more exposed foam than upholstery; Lily guessed they hadn't replaced those benches since they got them. The electric blue walls screamed for a paint job, and none of the seats at the counter felt stable enough to sit on.

*Feels like home.*

The waitress' bright voice snapped Lily out of her sorrow. "Good mornin', hun. Grab a seat anywhere you like, I'll be right with ya."

Lily gave her a smile and a slight nod, and then sat in the least disgusting booth she could find. She was going to wait to order anything until he arrived but, of course, she was here before him, and she would probably be waiting for a while. She took a deep breath and stared out the large window beside her. The dawn casted an orange light through the window as the sun painted the sky in hues of gold and pink. The sun rise was the only thing better here.

She reached in her purse for her phone. Did he message? Did he cancel? She knew that this was important for both of them, but this town was bad for her, and he was a significant part of the reason why. She glanced down at the screen. 7:06 a.m.. No messages. Lily sank into the uneven seat. The waitress came around, and she ordered a single cup of black coffee. She returned quickly with a yellowing mug, filled with black sludge, and a gas-like rainbow slick swirling in the middle. She took a long sip. It felt like acid burning down her throat, but she knew she was going to need it.

7:30 rolled around, and the glass door opened for the second time within the hour: there he was. He barely fit through the doorway with his towering frame; he had always been larger than life. Lily was surprised at how put-together he looked. He wore blue jeans and a plaid shirt with minimal stains. His formerly chestnut hair was now almost entirely white, as was his scratchy beard. His bright blue eyes had become gray and watery and they sank into the bags beneath them.

"Hi, Dad." Lily stood to greet him. He mustered a weak smile and sauntered over to her. He threw his arms around her. She wasn't sure how to react. "Nice to see you too," she laughed uncomfortably. Her father stepped back to look at her face and grabbed her shoulders tight.

"God, it's been so long, Lily. You're finally back home... where you belong."

Lily grimaced at those words. She knew that seeing him would bring back memories, but his presence was like a rearview mirror. All that he reminded her of was where she'd been and where she



never wanted to be ever again. When she left town, he cursed her for thinking that she's better than her own folk, but she knew that she wouldn't get anywhere staying in that broken house. She thought about her parents every day and night. She always thought that the problem was him not letting her go, but she started to realize that maybe she was the one holding on.

Lily's father plopped into the booth seat. "Sorry I'm late," he said breathlessly. "I was drivin' late last night and I passed out as soon as I got home without settin' no alarm or nothin'. I was never good with time," he chuckled. "Your mama was always the one who..." he trailed off and looked up at her.

Lily was silent, her eyebrows furrowed. She'd never seen her father like this before. He seemed helpless; she almost felt bad for him. She handed him what was left of her now-cold coffee. He smiled gratefully and took a sip. He made a face, and they both laughed understandingly.

"You're probably wondering why I asked you to meet me," he blurted out after a moment. "I mean, we both know that it's been a year since, well, you know." He struggled to get the words out.

Lily nodded and looked down at the scratched-up wooden table. The anniversary had just passed a day ago. She missed her mom more than anything, and she could tell that her father felt the same, which surprised her, considering how he treated her. Lily had never even known her mom was sick until two weeks before she'd died. Her absence in her mother's time of need was her only regret about leaving.

Her father cleared his throat. "Look, Lily. I don't know much, and I won't pretend that I do. But I do know that I have been an idiot. I was never there for your mother until it was too late. I-I made her not love me anymore," he choked. "And then she was gone. I was drivin' trucks and chasin' dreams that were long dead, even though I had two live dreams right in front of my face. Lily, honey, you're all I have left." At this point, he was full-on crying, not even trying to wipe his tears.

Lily wept silently, too. She was too shocked by her father's emotion to make any kind of noise. The diner was quiet besides the country man's catharsis. The waitress had disappeared into the kitchen, and the elderly couple had finished their breakfast. It seemed like Lily and her father existed alone in the diner, the south, the country, the universe. He broke the silence.

"I don't even know what I'm doin' here. I guess I just wanted to say that, for what it matters, I am so, so sorry. For everythin'. I love you, Lily Rose, and I always have, and I always will." He smiled, "You're stuck with me for a dad, so I guess I better start actin' like one."

Lily chuckled through her tears and handed her dad a napkin. "I love you too, dad." She couldn't manage to say anything more; she feared saying too much. She knew that they could never start fresh, but they would just be what they were, all they could be. He was all she had left, too. She'd tried to grow away, but she was rooted in what was left of her family.

They sat, chatting lightly about Lily's life in the city. Then her father had to leave for work at 9. They hugged good-bye and Lily stepped out into the morning light. There were no clouds in the sky; the sun shone brightly. It was a perfect day. *The sunshine feels better here, too.*

Roenick Goldman



## Untitled

***Zachary Plunkett***

You must live your life  
You may have ventured through jungles of thoughts  
Chopping and dicing through every vine that gets in your way  
Spotting and sighting out possibilities and options  
Possibly thinking of the future  
Learning from the past  
And using knowledge for days to come  
You must know what you want to achieve  
It could be a teacher  
It could be a preacher  
It could be with the military  
Or in the medical field  
But whatever it is  
You must choose swiftly  
Because options may fade in the air like dust  
In the end, choose, you must

Marie Lynskey



## War

*Myles Winegrad*

Millions Dead, billions in debt

All for what? Nothing has changed

Young men eager, wise men know  
Once they join, they wish they hadn't  
Invading beaches, naval battles  
What does it matter? There is nothing to gain  
Only death and destruction for mourning families  
Many people in too much pain  
Children look up in wonder  
What do they see? It doesn't matter  
The parents see it, run inside and shriek  
Two cities destroyed, in under a week  
None of it really matters  
What do you gain?  
Only death, destruction, and pain  
In the end we all still walk  
On the same divided ball of rock



Andy Schureman



## Stopwatch

*Sarah McArdle*

That mercury tongue got

Three years out of me.

Called me “Princess”

And dressed me up

I was yours.

(Not mine

Never mine)

Everything about you screamed “free”

And I was looking for an escape.

I asked for a crown and you gave me a collar;

Told me to sit up straight and smile.  
(Prettyprettypretty, you always said  
Mine, you always said)  
I'd given you more of myself than I had left,  
More than I'd ever had.  
Your hands felt so nice  
I could almost ignore the blood on them  
(Mine  
Always mine)

Ava Schwartz



## The Fear of Fear

*Aidan Hecker*

the fear of fear

a cycle

my life's motif

expectation is my deprecation  
thoughts become harsh reality  
habits shatter my chance of normalcy  
but the feelings are not real  
i fabricate them  
plagued by  
deranged by  
the fear of fear  
a cycle  
my life's motif

Giana Sellecchia



## An Alien in New York

*Sofiya Lysenko*

They stayed in a bunker. It was all his eyes could remember. They couldn't leave, she said, because then if they came back they would not know if they were taken or had escaped. If they had escaped, where had they gone?

If they could come home, that is. But of course they would, he thought. They would. He read about it in his books, in the soft books he carried quickly and over his head as he peered into the dark rustle of trees, his footsteps marking empty mud. There were other wars, the books said, and those had ended. People had died before those were over, but they were over. Wars can not go on forever. They must be coming back. And once they did come back, he could point out what he learned about the sky - the stars he could sometimes glimpse if they needed to leave, right in between the loud blasts that kept them in the bunker. One nicked his eye as he glanced by - his book said that might be Jupiter. He stared intently at the bright spot - maybe he could distinguish its rings. *Blast* - crumbles of dirt and splotches of mud smacked him in his face from some shell dropped from afar.

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Before resolving to sleep, he turned his face to the mirror to conduct his usual inspection of his face. As the school years passed, he noticed more distinctly how much his classmates cared about their appearance. He'd imagined them spending hours in the morning trying to escape the linear design. That night, however, he saw a smudge on one of his cheeks. He wiped it with his hand. Must've been a splotch of mud from the rainstorm he'd run through on his way home from school. He hadn't given it much thought...there were other matters that demanded his thoughts--the homework, ..... He simply wiped it away with a moistened tissue. He turned prone and gazed at the book's spine by the side of his bed, contemplating finishing another chapter, but decided he'd do it in the morning. He slept soundly in his quiet top floor apartment.

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"Danylo - close the door!" his grandmother yelled as the mud dirtied the bunker walls.

He smacked the door closed and twisted the latch as much as he could, just as another shell was heard in the distance. They didn't usually bomb at night, and almost never in Donetsk, a city he saw with his own eyes, when he could, as completely decimated - what use was it to reduce rubble to rubble? They were forgotten. He climbed down from his stead, wordlessly entered his bed, and fell asleep to the ricochet of bombs outside of his home.

His mother was a tactician - his grandmother had described to him only a year ago, as they sat at their chess board on their single circular table, what that meant.

*Click.* With a surge of giddy pride he smacked his knight on the white square forking her king and queen.

"Good tactic."



With a quick glance up he had seen her mouth squirm to the side with surprise as her eyes had widened slightly with anger at her lapse in acuity. *Now just trade. Eliminating counterplay, I'll win.*

She had moved her king aside, and he had taken the queen.

"You know, your mother devises these kind of tactics in the battle - the small bouts of energy that keep them away. It's why we can stay here now - they call it a security zone. By Minsk II no one can enter."

She had taken the knight back with her rook.

"What does my dad do?"

"He leads a regiment - they follow those tactics to determine how they are going to keep us safe."

She had taken the open c-file - should he contest it? He had slid his rook over to c1.

"Why did they leave us?"

"Because they love their country. I asked them right as you were born and they left. We still lived outside. That's what they told me."

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As his fingers released the pawn just as his eyes flicked to the unprotected square he had left in his position. He glanced at his opponent and he only saw the clean length of his hair drooping forward as he stared over the board, chin propped on his arm. *Would he see?*

His opponent glanced over the unfortunate square. He lost his queen within a few moves, and within a few more he only had his king against his opponent's two queens. On the fourth or fifth shuffle of his king, his opponent gleefully constricted his king once more, preparing a checkmate within one move. Considering his options, he realized he had none - Stalemate! His opponent groaned as his own glee exacerbated his pain - a win slipped from his fingers and an eternal battle left to be uncontested on the board.

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The days trailed as they always did - his grandmother called them "ceasefire violations"; he couldn't distinguish them from the rain. He read and reread his books - the ones on astronomy reminded him of the other ones that described schools. Kids would go to school and they would make friends and learn. They seemed to be just like him. He couldn't wait for his parents to return so he could go to school. Why didn't they want him to go to school? On many days, lying amongst his books, he thought of running. They were starving as it was, and he longed for an astronomy teacher and some friends. These thoughts had usually dimmed quickly, especially when he had voiced them once.

"Look at yourself, boy," his grandmother had exclaimed, "look inside yourself as in a rear-view mirror."

What was a rear-view mirror? He hadn't and still didn't know; he didn't even know how to look at himself. What did he look like anyway?

“Do you see yourself if a shell hits you? What if it is a sniper or a bullet? Our time to flee has passed. We are forgotten, just as your mother and father are. The only way we can stay is by digging our heels in and waiting.”

And so he waited. And starved. He was almost certain he could wait no longer. That night, the TV sputtered another ceasefire violation - this one his grandmother said would be more stringent. What use was a proclamation of peace if nobody listened anyway? Every night *he* listened as she cursed the President, the separatists, the judges in the courts, the other President who supplied the humanitarian aid he heard distantly popping...

Their only source of food were granaries abandoned from the camps of regiments. He could almost feel the pain of deference - a knife slowly digging into his belly, sharper than the one left by hunger.

One morning, as he opened the latch on the dark night, he was relieved by a note lightly attached to the end of their bunker door. He saw the wisps at the ends torn - paper pre-cut for a purpose. Scratches obliterated the paper in ink, but he had never seen such curly and fancy writing. As a boy of 5, learning from books set in printed writing, he had no way of evaluating this unbroken script. His grandmother rose from bed and almost blindly reached for the paper in his hand; he wasn't sure if she could really see it. As her eyes darted among the page, she let out a short cry, threw the letter on their small central table, and barked at him,

“Gather your clothes. We are leaving tomorrow.”

He was sure this meant they were coming back - why else could they leave. He almost breathed euphoria. His mind had a path to take. From his closet, to his satchel, to his books his hands went. He sprawled onto the floor of his room, listening to faint cries - he was not sure - and rigorously reviewed a book on space-time he had read several times. He felt no hunger - the deeper pain had left him, and he felt almost alive. They would leave. He did not know how, but he knew that place would certainly have better views of those planets he wanted to see more closely. That night, before lightly letting the door fall and diving to his bed, he had looked a bit longer.

In the morning, it cost him his ears. He awoke from wetness on his pillows as a deafening sound reverberated in his head. He touched his ears and lifted himself from his bed. He viewed a small space ship whistle slowly through the air, green just like the little green men that he had glimpsed for five full years running among the woods hundreds of miles away. Had he appeared on Jupiter? Pumping his legs across the floor to open the door to his grandmother, he pried at the lock until something loosened his grasp.

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He awoke on his usual cotton bed, discomfort creeping into his spine. Probably from the way he sometimes slept on his stomach, he thought. He swept himself off his crumpled sheets, then reached blindly for the quantum physics book half opened and teetering on the edge of the mattress. He must have fallen asleep and dropped it. Gingerly holding the spine, he left the pages unruffled as he glanced over the page he had stopped at. A sentence at the bottom of the right page caught his eye and he carefully read,

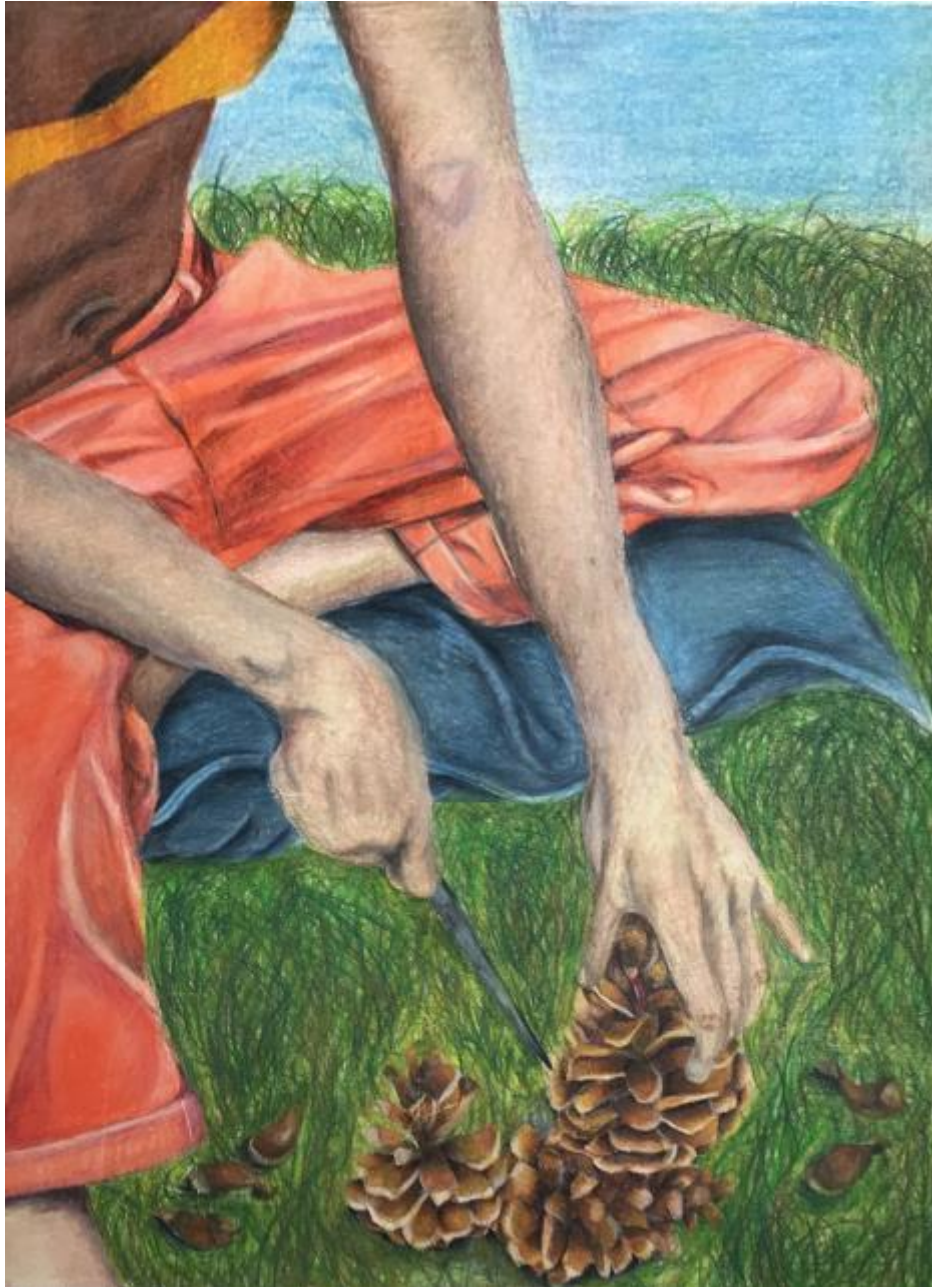
*We create our own reality, and we are responsible for the reality that we create.*

He dropped the book back onto sunlit sheets, gathered his briefcase, and as he shuffled his lesson plans for this morning's lecture, he concentrated. The physics he lectured was what we perceived and confirmed everyday as reality - could there really be anything but? It must be on... He grabbed the collar of his suit. For the life of him, he did not know.

Giana Capriotti



Molly Melissen



## Hidden Beauty

*Claire Van Buren*

I would say I had a pretty average childhood. I never really got in any trouble the only time I got lectured was when adults would tell me and every child the same three things: “Don’t judge others.”, “Remember to always be kind”, “Never ever go a day without taking your medication.” I would be lying if I said that I never wondered what would happen if I stopped taking my meds, but who hasn’t right?

The adults would always tell us stories about far away lands where you could “see” bright colors and beautiful things. I was the only one that took it seriously. I would talk to my friends about it, but they would tell me that it was only a story and to stop thinking that far into it. Not Matt though he always day dreamed with me. We would say how it seemed too real though. How could someone make something like that up with so much detail? We stopped thinking about it for a couple years after constantly hearing everyone shut us down. This community is pretty small. It’s all I know though. Generations of families have lived here for hundreds of years. Matt and I would always talk about the adventures we would take to the land of colors.

Today I was in class sitting next to Matt. I always can’t pay attention when I sit with him, because he’s always talking to me making stupid jokes. I’ll admit it though he is quite funny. After class Matt and I always go for a walk. This time we take route B; we usually take A because we like the sound of the tiles better. We walk with our canes in front of us because we don’t know this path as well. I’ve been down this path before, but something is off. The tiles should be making an A note, but it sounds like an F. I brush it off until Matt says something about it. We pause and notice that nobody else is walking on this path. I tug Matt’s arm and say, “We should head back.”

“Head back? I’m sure we are fine; we have been down every path here there’s nothing to worry about,” He assures me.

We keep walking and talk about useless things. It’s obvious he’s not as worried as I am. He is right though, I shouldn’t be worried we’ve been here before. The only thing that set me off is the fact that the F route is across the other side of town. Matt is still talking and doesn’t even notice I’m barely listening. I stop walking.

“What now Finn?” This time Matt sounds a little irritated.

“The tiles stopped making sounds.” I lean down and feel the ground. It’s not tiled like the rest of the community. It’s rough and crumbly. “Matt we need to go back. Feel the ground.” I say sternly

“Finnnn will you sto-” Matt pauses, “Yeah let’s go.” He says quickly. We started to speed walk back. Where were we? Why haven’t we been there yet? An F notes starts to play in rhythm of our feet until we find ourselves back at B.

“Finn, what just happened?” Matt asks me.

“Why haven’t we been there before?” I sound scared so I clear my throat.

“Beats me.”

One of the head adults comes up to us. They tend to have a strong presence. I’m not sure how to explain it, but you can just tell that they are there.

“What are you boys doing?” she says with a plain voice.

“Uh- um nothing Ma’am.” Matt stutters. I can tell he’s thinking the same thing I am. How did she know that it was us? It could have been girls. The adults are something else I swear.

“It was an accident we got lost.” I say



“Mhm. Just don’t let it happen again.” She says as she continues to walk on.

“Um. Ma’am if you don’t mind me asking, what’s back there?” Matt says. He sounds like he’s 12 again.

“Don’t worry about it boys. Just forget it happened. Okay?”

“Yes Ma’am” we say in unison.

For the rest of the walk home we both don’t say a word, but my head is loud with so many questions. The main one being, what just happened? We reach our houses and just about as I’m about to walk in for the night, Matt says something.

“Um. Ma’am if you don’t mind me asking, what’s back there?” Matt says. He sounds like he’s 12 again.

“Don’t worry about it boys. Just forget it happened. Okay?”

“Yes Ma’am” we say in unison.

For the rest of the walk home we both don’t say a word, but my head is loud with so many questions. The main one being, what just happened? We reach our houses and just about as I’m about to walk in for the night, Matt says something.

“Hey Finn, Do you trust me?”

“Of course Matt, why do you ask?”

“I think we should skip our meds for a couple days. See what they are hiding. You know?”

“Matt... We can’t do that.”

“Just for a day and if you don’t feel good you can go back.”

I think of all those years that I had always thought about skipping my meds and all the stories about the colors. “Okay.”

The next day I “take my meds” in the shower where there are no cameras. I watch as the blue liquid goes down the drain. I get through half of my day feeling pretty average. Until around lunch time my head was pounding and I started to get light headed. I rush to the bathroom and I hear someone in here as well. “Hello?”

“Finn? Is that you?” Matt says quietly.

“Matt? Dude my head has never hurt more in my entire life.”

“Me too, just keep it together so nobody questions us”

A couple days passed without the meds and the pain pretty much stopped. My head still felt a little woozy. I walk to Matt’s house which is a couple tiles down from mine. Things were getting weird. I felt like I was dying, but I also thought I was starting to live. I could see. If you count little orbs as seeing. Was this what the colors were? Something interrupted the orbs. It got close to me and I started to back up.

“Hello?” I say

"Finn. It's Matt. Is that you?"

I saw an oddly shaped figure in front of me but there was no color to him.

"What time is it?" I ask

"Almost 12pm."

"Tomorrow let's go back."

"Done."

By tomorrow my sight is better. I can see figures with colors, but I can't tell what they were unless they were right in front of me. Around 9pm I waited for Matt outside of the school. Matt said that his vision was basically clear. We try to find our way back to the crumby floor, but I can't remember where we went last time. I follow Matt because he seems to know where he is going. We walk for a while. I don't remember walking this far, but soon enough we stop at a border. Matt fiddles with some sort of lock for a couple minutes. Once we get through we walk for about 2 minutes then Matt says something.

"Do you see that?" he whispers so quietly I can barely hear.

Everything is still blurry. "No not really. What is it?"

"It's- It's a cliff."

"What?"

I squint and suddenly I see it. Over the edge is color for miles. It's a mixture of different ones on top.

"It's just like the stories Finn."

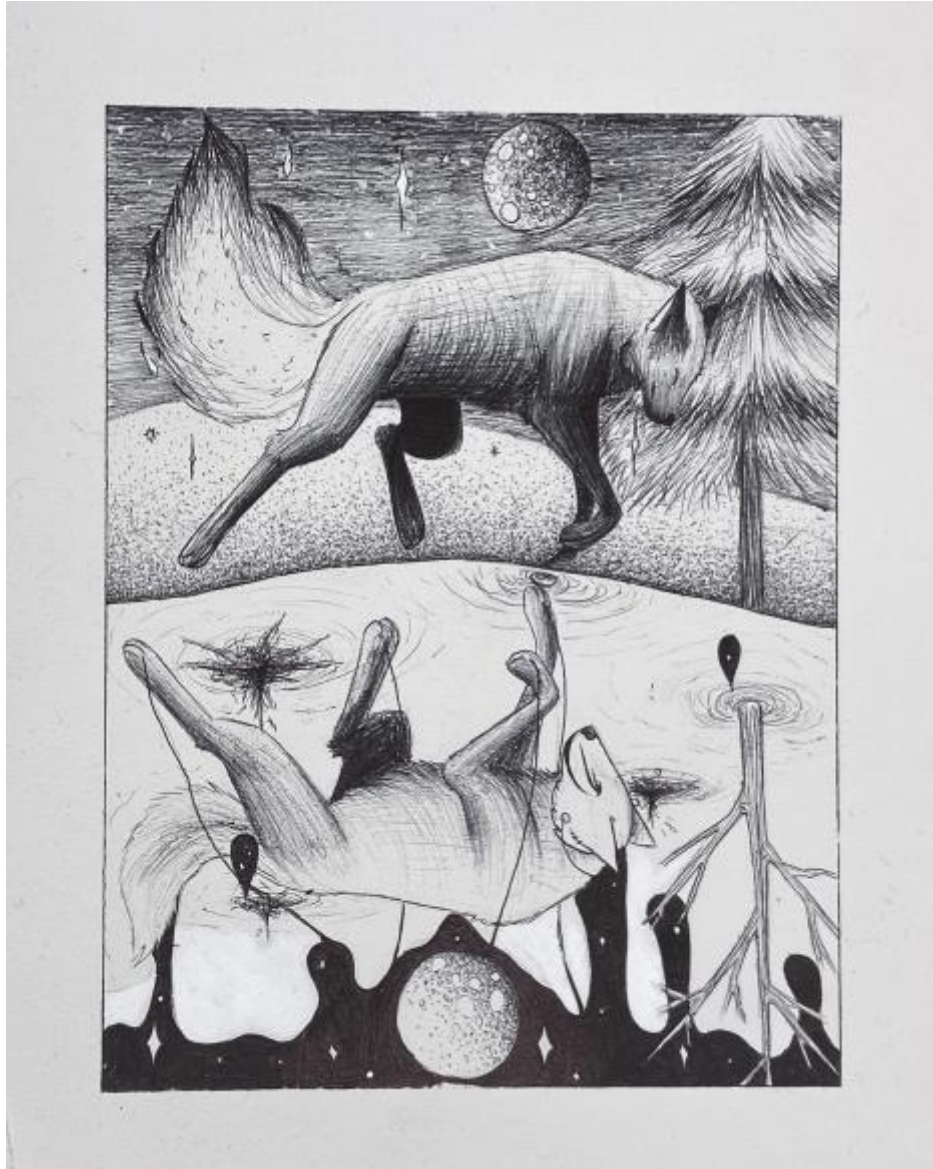
I stand there and take in the breeze that hits my face. It smells salty and fresh.

"There's more than just this. We can leave."

Piper Kull



Isabella Smith



## See Me

***Marcus Gonzalez***

She watched from the stands as the four young men vigorously swung their rackets to hit the tennis ball, passing it back and forth along the length of the sun-dried clay court. Her head oscillated back and forth, following the speedy little green ball as if it were taking her eyes along for the ride, with its perfectly round shape and seemingly-soft texture. After several more fierce exchanges, the scrimmage ended, and the girl continued to watch as the players exchanged their congratulations. One of the players, a young man, waved and smiled brightly in her direction, and she gulped in surprise. Did he see her? Her concerns were quickly dismissed by the shouts and cheers of another girl several rows

behind her on the bleachers, sitting with some friends. The girl swiftly walked away, disappointed that nothing had changed.

...

The ear-piercing ring of the final bell reverberated through the empty hallways of the school. A flood of teenagers soon flocked out of their classrooms and to the exits. The girl watched them from beside the exit as they strolled through the narrow hallway. She recognized some of the faces. Every day of every year, the girl watched these faces as they passed her in the hallway, the only difference being that they would grow older as the years went by. The older ones always left after a few years, and new ones would come to replace them. These new ones sometimes resembled the older ones, supporting her notion that this was a tightly-knit community she found herself a permanent resident of. As much as these faces changed, the girl's reaction to them did not. 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM every weekday, nothing but kids following the same routine, going the same routes, sometimes even wearing the same clothes, every day. The weekends gave her time to herself, time to roam the dark hallways, but after so many years, even that becomes more boring than just lying still. Some days, there would be snow and no students would come to school. These days she would stand on the roof and watch as the flakes fell to the ground, settling silently among their fellow flakes to wait until the sun melted them with its warm light, welcoming the students back to ruin her brief moment of fun.

It was what she could do after school that brought her some feeling. She missed this during the snow days. There were many clubs that didn't surround general school subjects like the debate club, chess club, and anime club. She surveyed these meetings often, noticing how these students were capable of being more than just the mindless drones they were during their classes. The one activity that kept her from really going insane, though, was the after-school sports.

Every day, after the rest of the students left the school, she searched for the sporty kids, knowing exactly what to look for: jerseys, tracksuits, duffel bags, etc. For some reason unknown to her, they were much more appealing than the other students in the school, and she found herself watching them much more closely. They seemed more... lively and... attractive? Although not entirely sure, she concluded a long time ago that this is why she seemed unable to resist the opportunity to watch them play.

It was raining today, so practices were canceled. Despite the weather, she decided to take a walk around the building. Although she was already very familiar with what she'd find, she still enjoyed the feeling of the rain falling on her head. After a few hours, she found the door that was always unlocked and walked into the school, welcomed by the familiar shadow-stained walls of the dark hallways. They asked her how she was doing. She told them that she was fine as usual. She kept her eyes on the floor as she trekked briskly toward the stairs leading to the rooftop.

...

It was the smell of gas in the air that awoke her to see students crawling out of their school buses. She rose from her makeshift bed of towels and felt erasers to stretch. Eeney-meeneey-miney no choice, she walked to the same homeroom she usually did. It was the only one with an uninhabited desk. She snuck glances at students as she passed by them to claim her throne. If only it looked like a throne, but at least she could imagine that it did. The teacher took attendance as the girl stared out the window. After a few familiar names, one caught her attention: a new one. Elliot King? It piqued her curiosity just



briefly. She didn't hear a voice, so she surveyed the room for a moment but didn't notice a hand in the air. Elliot must be absent. The teacher was about to put away her attendance sheet when a female student burst through the door, trying to catch her breath as if she ran the whole way here. The girl presumed that this was Elliot King, and her presumption was confirmed when the teacher said,

"Miss. King! You're rather late."

"I'm so sorry! I slept through my alarm! I had to rush to make my lunch and then I had to take a shower and I never skip breakfast so that took a while..." Elliot gasped. "And then I got in my car but I forgot my duffel bag in my house so--"

"It's alright!" The teacher sighed. "Just... go sit at that desk in the back". She documented Elliot's tardiness on the attendance sheet and pointed toward the desk in which the girl sat. The girl rose from her seat, mildly annoyed at the fact that she lost her only available seat this hour. She'd now have to sit on the floor or some...

"But... there's someone sitting there already."

Elliot proceeded to stare in the girl's direction, and the girl stared back, dumbfounded. Elliot pointed at the desk, glanced away from the girl to the teacher, then eventually at the students. They were all eyeing her suspiciously. Elliot eventually seemed to notice this.

"Why are you all looking at me like that?"

The girl shook her head in disbelief, but the cascade of emotions that overtook her, a sickening amalgamation of confusion and fear, refused to leave. This was unbelievable, how was Elliot able to see her?! The teacher timidly piped up.

"Miss King, perhaps you should go get some water... there's no one sitting there."

...

Her fingers slid along the surface of a beaten tennis ball she found under the bleachers. It was not as soft as it looked. But she was unable to muster the energy to be disappointed because she couldn't stop thinking about Elliot. How did she see her in that classroom? No one else could. It'd been a few days, and she still couldn't help but wonder. Ever since then, she watched Elliot from a distance. She certainly made an odd first impression, but that was just in her homeroom. She made friends rather quickly over those few days and sat with them during lunch, which was the only time other than in the hallway that the girl felt it was safe to watch Elliot. She was not accustomed to hiding from people, however, and so Elliot spotted her frequently, based on how often the girl noticed her glancing in her direction.

Her continuous spying eventually led her to the tennis courts. She followed Elliot who stumbled hurriedly from the locker room, hopping on one foot to put her shoe on the other. The girl sat on the bleachers for the boys' court instead of the girls' court, for fear of catching Elliot's eye and, now that no one was around, having nowhere to hide.

But, after a while, she grew more and more curious, and eventually gave in to her curiosity. Sitting on the bleachers for the girls' court now, the girl focused all of her attention on Elliot. After a few serves, she realized that Elliot was not the best player. Despite that, she noticed that even though she missed

many swings and hit the net for many of her serves, she smiled and laughed every time, unfazed by her mistakes. It was refreshing to see, and it made the girl feel ... warm? It was difficult for her to describe.

At the end of practice, Elliot didn't follow her teammates back into the school. Instead, she waved goodbye to them, slung her duffel bag over her shoulder and began walking straight toward the school parking lot, dirty clothes and all. The girl trailed behind her, making sure to keep a good distance between them. Elliot stopped once she reached her car, with her hand clasped around the mildly scratched, glossy handle of her car door. She slowly turned her head to the left, then back toward her car.

"You're behind me, aren't you?"

The girl suddenly felt the overwhelming urge to run, as if those five words were enough to reset her brain to the most primitive state of fight-or-flight. Her breathing became quick and shallow, and her heart began to gallop as she pivoted on her heel in preparation to dash away.

"Wait! Please, stop!"

But, just as suddenly, the girl stopped, as if just three more words were enough to satiate her desire to run. Her energy collapsed, and she felt exhausted.

"I knew I wasn't crazy... You're real, right?"

The girl slowly turned to face Elliot, but she found it impossible to look at her directly. She settled for the asphalt instead. She managed to coax out of herself a small nod, although she almost didn't believe her own answer.

"I knew it! Those kids were looking at me like I was crazy! I've been seeing you a lot, I was starting to think you were just in my imagination!"

The girl wished that she was. "I'm sorry, am I coming on too strong? Let's start over. My name is Elliot King. What's yours?"

The girl began to fidget with her tennis ball. Her name? She didn't know.

"Um... Oh! You like tennis, too?"

The girl nodded weakly, feeling extremely uncomfortable, but she did not want to leave. At that moment, she heard voices in the distance. All of the tennis players finished changing and were walking to the parking lot. They waved to Elliot and she waved back. Once the group was close, one of the boys asked, "El, why are you just standing here? We thought you had left by now."

The girl recognized the boy as one of the students in Elliot's homeroom. It seemed that Elliot's weird first impression had a more positive impact than the girl had initially thought.

Elliot stammered a little and was about to speak before a girl in the group said, "Well, I was going to text you but since you're here, do you wanna hang out with us at my house tonight? You can follow us there."

"Of course!" Elliot replied. She took out her phone from her duffel bag, "But I have to tell my mom first. Text me your address and I'll catch up!"

They walked further, out of earshot, and with the phone up to her ear, Elliot asked,

“Can no one see you?!”

Another weak nod.

Elliot cupped her hand over her mouth in shock. After a moment, she looked back to see all of the tennis players looking back at her. She opened the door of her car and asked the girl to get in as well so she wouldn't look crazy. The girl obliged, her brain seemingly on auto-pilot. Elliot questioned her more from the driver's seat. The girl didn't speak nor make eye contact. Instead, she continued to nod, shrug, or fidget with her tennis ball.

She asked if the girl was a ghost, which was the first question she shook her head at. Despite no one being able to see her, she still felt very much alive. The only difference was her ... tangibility.

“Are there others like you?”

She shook her head, but how could she be sure? If there were others like her, she probably wouldn't be able to see them, either. Her head started to hurt, and she grew even more exhausted. She leaned onto the headrest of the back seat. The pounding pain slowly faded away along with her vision as she drifted asleep. She awoke to a bright light shining within the car and a duffel bag under her head. Her vision adjusted and she saw Elliot, wearing glasses and reading a book. She then looked up and out the window and noticed that the sky was inky black, speckled with hundreds of bright white stars. She scanned the area and saw the school building towering over them. They were still in the parking lot. The girl rose and stretched, but for some reason, she felt like she was missing something and began to look around.

Elliot showed the girl her tennis ball, “Looking for this?” She tossed it back to her. “You know, my old school used completely different tennis balls than here. Maybe that's why I wasn't doing so well today!” She chuckled.

“It's only been a few days, but I love this place. My teammates didn't even care that I made so many mistakes. They're so nice and encouraging. Reminds me of a friend I had at my old school. My only friend, actually...” Elliot placed the arm of her glasses in between the pages and gently closed the book. “She played tennis with me, she cared about me, she sat with me during lunch ... she let me stay at her place when my parents fought... even let me copy her homework on the bad days...” Tears began to trickle down her cheeks. She gave the girl a small smile as she sniffed and wiped them away with her arm.

“Her name was Pernelle. She was really pretty, just like you, and a great listener ... I miss her so much...”

The girl sat in silence, staring out the window. Pretty? She turned to peek at the rearview mirror, and she met the reflection of Elliot's eyes. They were a strikingly beautiful blue. She smiled as a familiar feeling of warmth hugged her back to sleep.

Maya Townsend



Samantha Beil



## A Home Inside Your Heart

***Colleen Rath***

All of my life I've been looking for home  
For a place that feels safe and warm  
For somewhere that I can stop thinking and just  
Be.

Exist.

All of my life I've been looking for home



But it turns out, home isn't a place  
Home isn't a single location that I can find and never leave  
Home is a feeling  
A person  
A love  
A million different moments in time  
Home is holding hands  
And hearing you sing in my car  
It's saying things to make you laugh  
And kissing your cheek to make you smile  
Home is in your voice  
The way your hair falls over your eyes  
Jeans and tank tops and flannels  
Freckles and combat boots  
I feel safe when I am home  
Home inside your heart

## Eternity

***Colleen Rath***

I am okay with leaving this world  
Because I know that I'll never truly be gone  
I have an eternity in my humanity  
In my art  
In every love I've ever loved  
Every life I've ever touched  
Every word I've ever spoken

I am okay with leaving this world  
Because I know how in this world I've been

I made myself so small  
That I ceased to exist  
And began to expand into an infinity  
I engulfed the world  
In order to learn it  
Then let it engulf me

I am not okay with leaving this world  
I will fight to stay in it  
Because eternity could be so much bigger  
Because I feel a love  
Brighter than the brightest star  
Because my eternity borders on hers

I am not okay with leaving this world  
And this world isn't done with me yet  
Forever is so much more infinite  
With two hearts instead of one  
And it hides in the tiniest moments  
In touching hands  
Exchanging grins

I am not okay with leaving this world  
So long as she is in it  
And we'll spend the eternity after  
Filling it with our love

Giana Capriotti



## Of Mind and Foot

*Yevhenii Shyshko*

- 1 You walk amidst these hollow halls,  
You ponder not upon their calls.  
Above you, move I, a quiet judge,
- 4 Whose silent voice speaks not  
Of what thou is - a drudge.  
For what take I must,  
If I've nought to give?
- 8 But mind that steers this horrid plot.  
I speak then forth,  
For that I see your walk'st wrong.  
I judge thy footfalls

12 And thy imfair step,  
Thy unspoken speech  
And give the best command I can,  
For know not the mind, that foot speaks same of 'im.

16 Yet thou must retaliate,  
For how can mind speak  
Of your job unset straight,  
As if its had ever been so great.

20 A fool! you quoth,  
You'd not be here,  
If it'd not be for this peasant's worth,  
Yet none your words the lord must choose to hear.

24 Quoth he, not I,  
A man of refined affair,  
Why listen must I to thy likewise foolish cry?  
Where would thou have been, had it been not for my

28 And so it goes,  
From mind to foot,  
From worker to his boss,  
And lord to his good peasant.

32 And so it goes,  
As it had went,  
From one century  
To then another.

36 For both they know  
That one must be,

So prosper may the other.

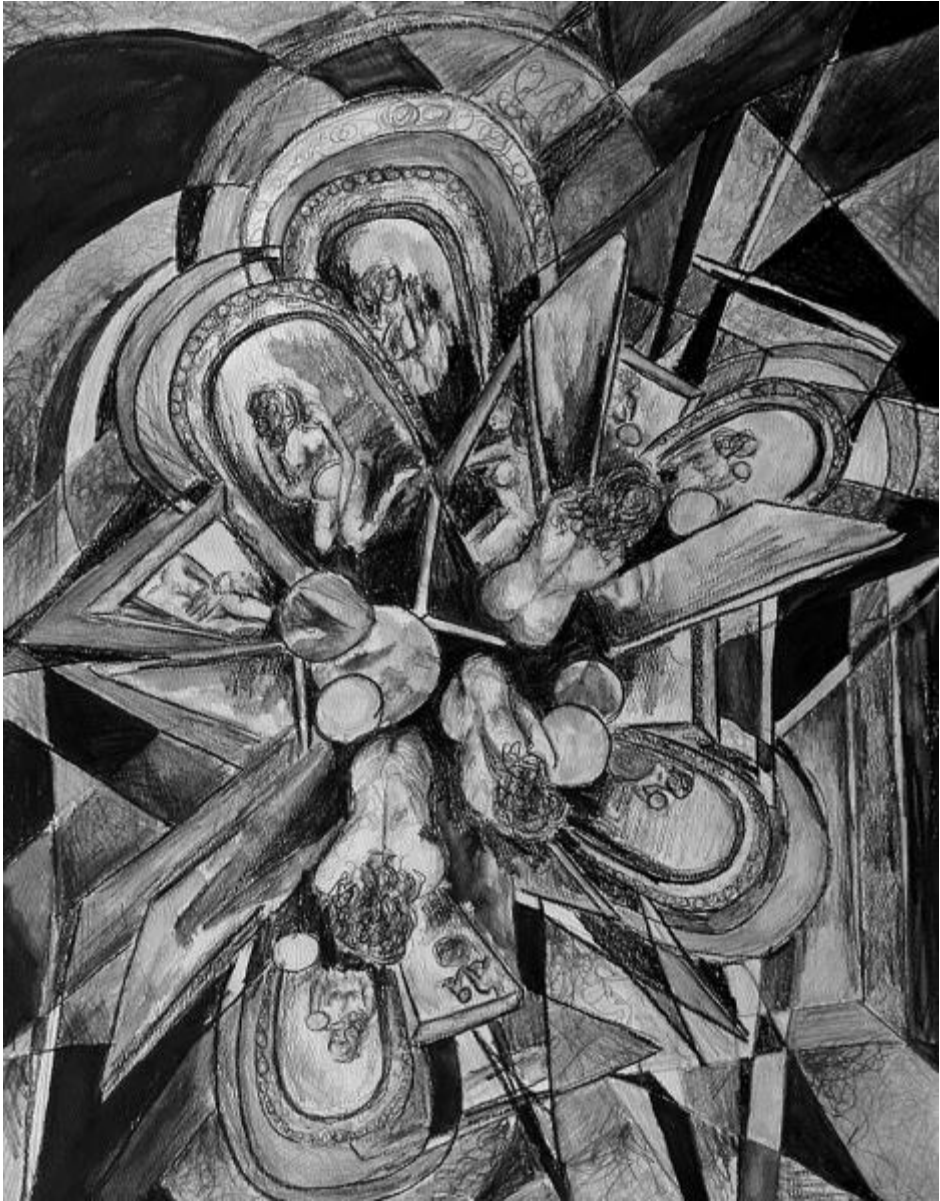
And so, in wrathful tension they do still live.

Marcelo Koga





Maya Townsend



Samantha Beil



## Untitled

*Xochitl Rojas Huertas*

Lifes light shines into your eyes and you awake

Another day of miserable work and dealing with those you don't like

It's starting to feel like you're suffocating

It feels like barbed wire getting tighter each day

It's making it harder to breathe  
It makes it harder for you to swallow the lies  
You know you're miserable yet continue to add to it everyday  
You want to enjoy life  
Yet stop yourself because you're afraid of what others will say  
But that doesn't stop your inner self from wanting more  
You want that better part of life  
Life wants you to see the better  
The good life slowly slithered up from your ankle  
It then wraps around your body  
You're finally letting go  
Doing what you love most  
Enjoy life and do what makes you happy  
Don't wait until you can't do it  
You'll never be happy if you stay where you are  
You cut your hair  
You went on that vacation  
You got with that guy  
You've finally accepted that life offers more  
You'll never get another chance  
So go explore life  
Go live it and be happy

Ansharaye Williams



## Kind

*Selena Marrero*

Understand that you can't treat people like jewelry  
You can't try them on and then change your mind  
You must realize just how mean you can be  
You can't purposely not put in quarters in people's parking meters and watch it run out of time  
Because you'll feel sorry when you have to pay the ticket  
And you'll wish you had just put in some change  
And when you ask for help all you'll hear is the loud chirping of crickets  
And you will be the only one to blame



So listen carefully when I tell you to be nice  
Don't be so quick to push others away  
Because when the right people come into your life  
The soft orange light they emit will cancel out your grey  
So make them a cup of coffee with the right amount of sugar and cream  
And gently kiss their pretty little head hello  
Listen to them when they tell you about their dreams  
Do not react with what you feel, but rather with what you know

Brielle Black





## Untitled

### *Sebastian Paredes*

That rejuvenating attitude to try something new  
To bury your head in the ground in hopes of finding some worms  
Instead finding a mole picking on your nose  
You travel to the cold every weekend hoping it will bring you some hope  
The freezing breeze stabs your brain and you feel reborn  
Almost as if you could remember how it felt to leave your mother's womb  
"There is no point in hibernating", you exclaim  
The bears and wolves would disagree with that statement, I say  
You do not care for what I say, and that is okay  
Your creativity is rather illuminating  
But that illumination will never light the way  
I would love to gerrymander your brain  
Separate your ideas to make you more like myself,  
Make you more like everyone else.  
But you would not appreciate your new brain  
You would feel trapped and lonely,  
As you ask yourself, why?  
Why am I acting like this?  
The world rejects your current disposition  
They would be much happier if you acted like the rest of us  
If you just participated in what you were made for, and would not complain  
If when confronted with the question of life intention  
You would just say "Marry a hot girl, and live in the plains"  
But you will never change your ways  
And that is okay

Malayna Diplacido



## Later

*Mykhailo Zaporozhets*

The light of the sun will make you blind

But your heart won't care

It will be full

Full of happiness and joy

You will find the meaning of this

But later

Not tomorrow, not in a month, not in a year

Later...

For now just keep your eyes open

How would you see it otherwise?

The clouds will be there, too

But keep looking

And in the desert of nothing you will find water

Just keep going

Like a hungry eagle in the sky

Look

Like a mussel

Hold your pearl

Like a wolf

Wait for the prey

Never look back

And you will find it

Later

Not in a year, not in a decade

Later...

Kathryn Mulvihill



## Untitled

*Mya Rollerson*

Gray skies.

Crying clouds.

You have seen better times than this.

The sign of the time coming through these hard times.

My advice is to not look into the future but focus on yourself.

Standing alone can be a safer, loneliness can be hard to handle.

Are you really sure, you are ready for the pressures of life?

You have to be prepared for what is to come, but not sure if you are ready.

Been walking alone for years.

Not a friend or family seen in a long time.

Have they gone?

Will they ever come back?

Will you ever come back ?

Finally, the sun returns.

The tears dry.

Flowers blooming, spring finally begins.

My problems are gone with the times.

The emotions changes with the sky

You'll be in a better place, and feeling now.

Free at last.

Free from Anger

Hope

A Depression.

Are you ready to pay the price for living?

It's going to be a big cost that you not turn down or get rid of.

"This is the cost of being free?"

"You'll have to stay to stay a little longer"

If you'll refuse. You will return to earth and take the pain of that world.

Do you want that cause an/or effect?

"Fine"

I have returned to the earth

You have awaken with Anger

Hopelessness



A Depression.

Maybe this was the price for happiness.

Having to feel real emotional right to live.

You are stuck this way forever

A Time Warp

Forever the pain

Suffering

And the people that hurt.

Pain and Suffering is real , and it's never going away again.

*Roenick Goldman*



## **Everyone**

*Alyson MacDougall*

You are allowed to be happy

You are allowed to matter

Everyone deserves to matter and be happy

No one deserves to be sad or think they're worthless

That's why you are here

You are here to make everyone feel like they matter

You are here to make those who are invisible be seen

You are here to find those who are friendless

And be their friend and make them matter

Be the hidden pearl they find

After searching through hundreds of mussels.

Find someone who sits alone

Sit with them, you don't have to talk

But just be there, don't let them be alone

Everyone, even you, deserves to have a friend

Someone to stand up for them

Someone to talk to, to share experiences with

You can make someone's life better

Just by talking to them

Or sitting with them.

You can be the sun in someone's life

You can make other people feel special,

Make them happy, make them feel loved

You don't know what happens to them at home

They could have a great life

A loving family.

They could be abused and unloved

Forced to hide in their room

You don't know

Treat everyone like a movie star

Make them feel special

Everyone deserves to be treated like a human being

No one deserves to be treated like dirt

Or like trash littering the streets.

You have the power to change a life

You can make someone's life better just by being their friend

Notice everyone, don't leave others out

Make friends, change lives,

Be the friend that everyone needs.

You can be poor and dressed in rags

You can be rich and dressed in the finest clothes

You can be a normal person

You can be weird or unique

You can be an outcast

A loner, quiet, shy, abused,

You have the power to make someone's life better.

You'll be the light in someone's dark world

You'll be the one star they have in their night sky

You'll be the hero in their story.

Everyone deserves kindness

As do you,

If you treat everyone with kindness,

Kindness will come right back at you.

If you are troubled

Don't be afraid to talk to someone,

They can help you with your problems

And you can be happy again

Once again,

Spreading the kindness

To everyone.

*Aryanna Antuna*



## **The Carousel of Death**

***Aiden Wolf***

Time is ever marching

Leading you to an inevitable death

Like a horse would be lead to water

But in that fact, you can't force the horse to drink

From the waters that represent everything that is

Everything that is, exists within time

And time is what gives your life meaning

The horse may look upon the waters and only see nothing

But you may look upon the waters and see balance

You may see Peace and serenity

And while you gaze upon the water

You may see hatred and malice...

Imbedded into the death and destruction

Fueling all the pain and suffering

Negating all the peace and serenity

But you take a deeper look into the murky depths below

And behind all of the untamed danger of the water

You see life and beauty, and contentedness

Hidden and overshadowed by the goliath that is death

Happiness and balance, unseen and unheard, unless searched for

And as you know, our time is limited

Time is our enemy, yet it is our friend

Stoking the fire that is fear and death

granting you with a gift you cannot repay

Make it worth the while.



*Donovan Thompson*



## Jagger Mackenzie



## Bright Eyes

**Lauryn Jones**

A streak lingered up in the sky. Planes I imagine. There's always something left behind. Up in the drifting clouds, down in the turning earth. It doesn't matter when or how or even why people come into your life, a short ride in case you hadn't noticed. Just know that most people are passerbys, not passengers. So they come and go and you better make sure you hold on to every smile and every other word. That's my advice anyway.

I say this because I knew someone once, a friend of sorts. Seventeen summers ago was when we first met. I was working in a musty little store. A cash register and calculator with the 1 and 7 keys missing decorated my cardboard box of a workspace. And how could I forget my pen? I had this pen, blue or red ink, one color or another. All I remember is that feeling of satisfaction when writing with it. The point was so smooth as it danced in between the lines and creases of torn out paper. I gave out my first phone number with that pen. (602) 526-1948. *He never called back, I might add. Oh well.*

Early one morning late in the summer, the bell towards the front of the store kept ringing. Usually it was one ring in and one going out. But the bell must've knocked back and forth at least four times. At first there was no one in the doorway. Standing on my toes to get a better look, I saw the faint outline of a woman. I walked out from my desk, taking slow, meticulous strides the way a child does when it thinks it hears a noise off in the distance. Once I reached the woman I cleared my throat. For some reason my voice had slipped away. I stomped my foot once to get her attention.

“Killer kicks.” she whispered before settling her eyes upon me.

In that moment I could find neither the energy nor the reason to react. I simply stood there like a wet dog in my own pool of silence. The phrase “killer kicks” ran a few laps around my head before falling into the dusty ruins of confusion.

“Where did you get them, those boots?” she began again. “I’ve been looking for a pair like that for a while now. No luck, where I’m from at least.”

I wondered what they did have where she was from, and more importantly where that was. Perhaps nowhere?

I figured the woman was cold-blooded or caught off guard because she seemed unfazed by the heat, and aack then I was practically living in the desert. The sun would play hide and seek on the horizon at dawn, fiddling its fingers in the slits of blinds and holes of fences. The child's play didn't end there, however. By noon the sun would shake and rattle anything or anyone it could get its blossoming hands on. Only after the moon called it in for bed would the sun let up and lie down.

Underneath it all she was probably slicked with sweat. A dress white and delicate as chalk fell to her ankles without a care. She had white wedge boots that looked as though they'd seen some rough nights and rainy days. Zippers ran up the sides, resembling clenched silver caps. Her shoulders were lined with rows of sparkles that spread to the edge of the sleeves. Crescents hung from both of her ears, casting rainbow streaks when catching the light just right.

I hadn't seen anyone dressed that nice since my mother's second wedding.

The woman started to walk around the shop, touching a lamp here and some tapestry there. I wanted to ask if she needed any assistance, but she seemed to know what she was doing. Seesawing on the thought of whether I felt relieved or useless pulled me back to my work. Every so often my eyes would sneak a quick peek at the woman. She looked trustworthy enough, but still a strange feeling poked at me mercilessly. For hours the woman walked everywhere, never really going anywhere all the same.

It was a Sunday, and Sundays were the best days. Church kept the congregation away, gruelling nine-to-fives six days a week kept the workers at home, while sitcoms and soaps took care of everyone else.

“Excuse me,” I shouted across the store, “It’s almost closing time. Sunday, you see, the day that the Lord made and the one my boss cut short.”

She obliged with a smile and waved goodbye. I hastily straightened out my desk and grabbed the keys to lock up. The lights were off, the blinds were closed, and the rusty fan stood still. As I stepped outside, a small piece of something rolled in a crevice of my sole. I kicked my leg up behind me and used my pinky to brush the small something free. Without trouble a crescent fell to the floor— the earring, the one that the woman had on. Maybe I could catch her.

I quickly locked the front door of the store behind me and barrelled down the cracked and uneven pavement. Angels started to spit and the wind began to tumble about the street. That town had been no stranger to dust storms and droughts, but rain? Rain was that one gift under the tree that you waited and waited for.

Suddenly the sky went from gray to black and the rain picked up. Ahead in the distance, I saw a figure standing beneath the ad-plastered canopy of the bus stop. My feet began to move with a purpose, going from one-two-three-four, to one-two-one-two, to one, one, one...

My arms moved like cheap pinwheels, spinning and spinning against all odds. I swiped at the fog and then the figure had a face. The woman.

"This is yours, I think," I said, extending my open hand with the crescent flat on the palm.

I didn't *think*, I *knew*.

She took the earring off of my hand, dimples spiralling into her cheeks as she did so.

Nudged by an awkward quiet and lack of any place to be, I stepped closer to the woman. I rubbed my hands together and blew into them. I could feel the temperature drop while cold pins and needles prodded and pricked at the sides of my body.

"Headed anywhere in particular?" I asked.

She turned to me, her smile dropping to the ground.

"You know," she said, "I never thought you'd ask. Never expected anyone to, in truth. Here is actually where I am headed. Well, I was, until I found what I was looking for. An answer. I was born here in this town, and I left several years back. I suppose I wasn't satisfied, I wanted, *no needed*, to break free. I've been floating around the Southwest ever since..."

And though this is what she told me, I couldn't help but notice that her *face said freedom with a little fear*. A bolt of lightning shortly made a mess of the sky before scattering into a far away treeline and the woman continued talking.

"But you never can really outrun your disappointment, let alone away from it. At a certain point *it all comes down to you*. Whatever you want, goodness I guess, you just have to grab at it when it's there. *Goodness strikes maybe once, maybe twice then..*"

BOOM

A second bolt jumped out into the evening. I could tell at that point the woman just spilling words. She did not seem to notice that I still stood by her side. Then a bus strolled up to the curb and sighed.

"This is me," the woman said, inching closer to the bus doors.

"And who is that?" I squeaked like a whiny mouse.

"Just a friend," she replied, strutting up the steps of the bus like a cat.

As the bus pulled off, I caught her fiery eyes gazing longingly at nothingness. I held one hand up as the bus and my friend faded into one of the millions of specks on the borderline of sight.

To this day, in the memories and starry nights, I *still see her bright eyes*.

*Maya Townsend*



**A Very Bad Day**

*Isabella Lucente*

I had woken up that morning to the voice of my mom yelling, "SOPHIA GET UP YOUR GONNA BE LATE FOR SCHOOL!" my eyes slowly fluttered open and shut as my mother opened up my blinds. The bright sun gleamed onto my bed as my hands and feet reached each corner of the mattress. My body clenched and stretched. I reached over to my nightstand and grabbed onto my phone. The time read eight o'clock. I had slept through all of my alarms. Today was not the day to sleep in, my class presentation would start any minute. I had no time to get ready for school so I grabbed my shoes and car keys and rushed out the door. As I placed the keys in ignition and let the engine start up I pulled down the car mirror. I knew I had no control over it by this point. I knew I was going to be embarrassed but I couldn't miss this presentation especially for this class. Moments later I slammed the mirror up and began my commute to school.

The rest of that morning was a blur until I found myself in my first period class. I sat towards the back of the room with multiple windows facing my back. As the class presentations began my head felt heavier and heavier. My arm propped up my head as I sat hunched over in my very uncomfortable desk. It took all my will to keep my eyes open, every second my eyelids would be heavier than before. The voices of my classmates became more and more muffled until my ears had concealed all noise. My hand had become weak as my body slowly shut down until I had startled myself with a loud bang. As I gained consciousness, silence filled the room, everyone had turned around. Their eyes beating down on me, they focused on every inch of me. I felt my face getting red as my body began to sweat. They stared for what felt like hours, I was completely frozen.

"Ahh well good morning to you too Sophia, would you like to share your presentation with the class?"

Their eyes followed as I made my way up to the front of the room. As I looked around everyone had been dressed in their best suit and tie. Each girl had their hair perfectly combed through with classy skirts and dresses. My face began to fill with red, my mind drew a blank. All the information I had intensely studied and prepared the night before disappeared.

"We're waiting," one of my classmates said.

I don't really remember much of what I said during my presentation. I tried my best to finish as fast as possible, I couldn't bear another minute up there. As I finished not one of my classmates clapped, their eyes once again followed me to my seat until the bell eventually rang. Each student flowed throughout the doorway into the hall. I was making my way to the door until something was brought to my attention.

"Uh excuse me, Sophia can I talk to you."

Inch by inch she came closer to me until I needed to move my head up to look her directly in the eye. "I am very disappointed in your performance today. First you come to class late, next you fall asleep in my class. Your attire went against requirements and your material was completely rushed through."

"Uh.. I am really sorry Mrs. Green, everything this morning just seems to be going wrong, it's like the universe is against me or something. I stayed up very late to perfect my work, I put in so much effort, is there any way I can present again or complete extra credit work."



"I'm sure we can work something out Sophia. Don't get down on yourself, I am sure your classmates can agree that we all make mistakes on assignments. Messing up once in a while is fine but do not make it a routine, understand?"

"Uh yes.. I won't do it ever again, thank you." I was so surprised that she was so understanding. I started to gain hope, maybe today won't be bad after all. I rushed through the halls and tried to blend in with the others, concealing my bedhead and pajamas from last night. I picked up speed every inch, trying my best to make it to my next class on time. As I turned around a corner my head turned away from me, distracted by a noise in the distance. My head soon spun back to my front view as a huge crash had emerged. Cups and cups of coffee spilled onto the ground. Ice covered the floor. Large Brown puddles converged on the ground.

"I am so sorry.. I completely didn't see you." I immediately grabbed tissues from my bag and started to clean up the mess. She stood there hovering overtop of me, coffee stains on her clothes. Her hair drenched with the smell of a caramel latte.

"Watch where you're going!" You ruined my clothes and my hair, you can clean this mess up yourself." she then proceeded with a rude stare and continued her way down the hallway. I pulled out more tissues from my bag as I kneeled down. I sat there cleaning the mess for what had felt like hours since tissues aren't very absorbent.

After my attempt to clean the floor, I aimlessly roamed the halls, contemplating if I should go to class or not. I felt as though as much as I tried to make the most of my mistakes nothing good could come out of it. Every minute this day got increasingly worse, and to think that for one moment I truly believed today could be a good day.

Grace Bauder



*Bennett Vradelis*



*Leslie Lim*



## **That's My Story**

***Aileen Ruch***

My father had always been the light of the family. He would make us laugh, to the point where we were on the floor crying. That was until he went off to war. He had been away for about a year, and that was far too long without him. But today marked his homecoming. He would walk through the door, and everything would go back to normal. We would be a family again.

My mother and I sat on the wood stairs and waited on his arrival. We could hear the grandfather clock tick faster as the minutes went by. I never really had the best relationship with my mom. We had



been fighting a lot this past year, and a week ago was especially bad. Long story short, she told me she didn't enjoy having me as a daughter. I'm not gonna sit here and tell stories about my mom, this was about my dad. This was his day.

The memory of the fight between my mom and I had left my mind after I heard a car pull up in front of the driveway. I felt my heart stop as I knew this was the moment I had rehearsed over and over again in my head for weeks. He lugged his bags up the stairs, still dressed in uniform. As the front door slowly opened, and embraced him. I stepped back so he could hug my mom. When the excitement had settled down, I tried talking to him.

"Dad, I missed you so much, and I'm so glad you're here."

He smiled as I said this, but it seemed forced.

As we sat down in the living room, my mother and I began asking him questions about what his time had been like. He didn't say much, for that matter he didn't say anything at all. His eyes gazed around the room like he had just entered a parallel universe.

"Honey, are you feeling ok? You seem a little off," my mom said this in a more patient and caring tone than she had ever talked to me.

"I don't wanna talk. I'm glad I'm home but I just... I don't wanna talk."

I knew something was wrong as he stormed away into his bedroom. My mom and I looked at each other as if we didn't know the man who we had just talked to. He used to be so bright and happy, but now dullness filled him.

"Maybe we should just let him be for a bit. He probably needs time since he hasn't been here in a year."

I nodded my head in agreement, thinking it was the best option. My footsteps were heavy as I walked upstairs. I thought the arrival of my dad would make this family whole again, but I guess I was wrong.

A week had gone by, and my mom and I still hadn't heard much from my father. The only conversation that we had at the dinner table was small talk, and then dad would flee to his room after munching down his food. Was it something I had done wrong? Why was he feeling this way? Thoughts like these were what kept me up at night. I knew something was wrong, and being the curious teenage girl I was, I needed to get to the bottom of it.

That morning, my mom had left in a hurry, going on her normal Saturday grocery shopping trip. I knew this was the perfect time. My dad and I had always had a special bond, so I had to ask him how he was doing.

"Good morning dad, I was just gonna make eggs. Did you want anything?"

His response was a mumble that sounded like a "no", but I couldn't live like this anymore, him acting like a total stranger. My head was pounding with all the thoughts that kept me up at night, so I asked him.

“Dad, what’s really going on here? It’s been a week, and the only two words I’ve heard from you was “I’m fine.” You used to be such a happy soul, and I just wanna know what I can do to bring that back.”

“Look kid, war’s hard. It takes a toll on you mentally and psychically. I wasn’t gonna tell you and your mother this, but I can’t have you thinking me being sad is your fault.”

“What is it dad?” I asked this with hesitation because I knew what he was gonna tell me wasn’t going to be easy for him.

“While I was away, I met this guy. His name was Charlie. Charlie treated me like a brother, and I loved him. I had to watch him die on the battlefield. The feeling is just so indescribable, and I was numb for days. That’s why I had to stop fighting. The violence was too much for me. Innocent people getting killed day in and day out. The world needs to realize that something needs to change, but I can’t do anything. So I just sit here, thinking about Charlie.”

I hovered over the edge of his bed, his arms intertwined with mine. I didn’t know how to make him happy again.

My mom and I tried our best to make him feel at home. Constantly surrounding him with love and joy, but it never really seemed to “fix him.” That’s what’s so sad about humans. We don’t realize what this hate that we bring to the earth does to people until we experience it first hand. My father has never and will never go back to his normal, fully-happy ways. But, something has to change, and knowing what my father went through, I was going to make the change.



*Aryanna Antuna*



## Something New

***Elianna Perez***

Laying face down on the floor  
Salty tears sliding down my cheeks  
Dripping from my nose  
Hitting the wood  
Eroding it slowly  
Not quickly chipping away  
But pushing down  
Little bits of pressure  
One drop at a time

That all together break it down  
Misshape it  
Mold it into something else  
Something it wasn't meant to be  
But nonetheless,

Something new.

Lee Levandoski



1 - "Swamp Clog"