

Garland Court *Review*



2021



HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

2021

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John Barno

Esther Bayever

Ben Bonkoske

Isle Brandt

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Yu Chen

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Leonardo Cruz

Adrian Dennis

Clayton Dibble

Andy Donakowski

Rosa Duran

Elle

Olivia Felty

Jade Fierro

Jonathan Ford

Ross Gallagher

Oshana Goodrum

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Zach Hebert

Cynthia Hernandez

Michelle Hernandez

Kathryn Kruszynski

M. Lacey

Caleb Langner

Aurora B. Lefebvre

Curtis LoFaro

Marieli Lopez

Paula Lopez

Andrea Malone

Matthew Martinez

Devona Middleton

Julia Miller

Daniel Noriega

Violeta Ordonez

Marilyn Ramirez

Christopher Ramsey

Austin Rausch

Raul Raymundo

Syrus Reardon

Karissa Reyes

Isaac Rhea

Thais Romero

Daniel Salgado

Antonio Sanchez

Hannah Sandoval

Patrianna Scales

Manuela Scolaro Coonce

Thomas A. Salgado

Guadalupe Soto

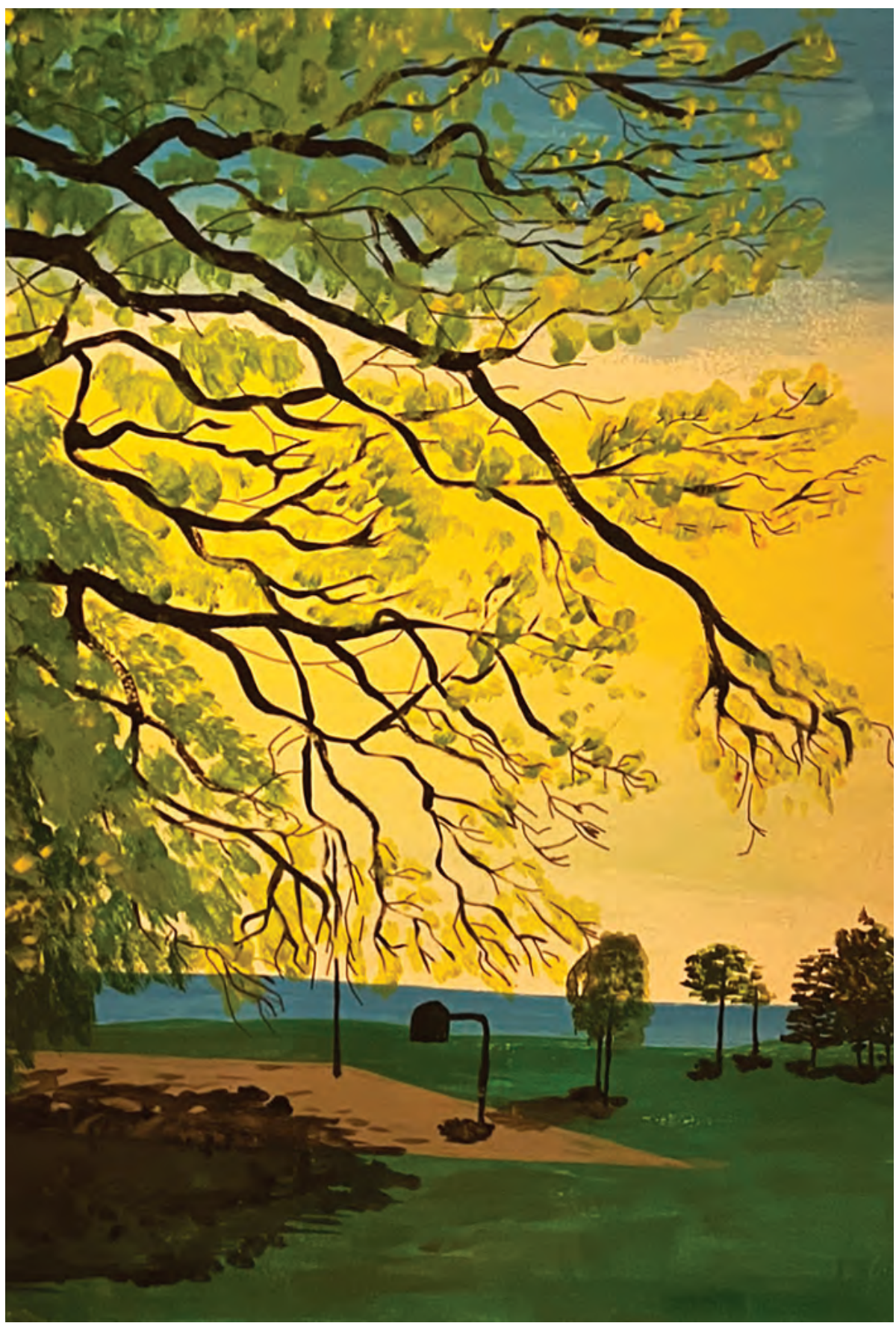
Jeache St. Louis

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Garland Court Review

HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

2021

A curated assembly

of

literature

& art

Garland Court Review Est. 1962

The Garland Court Review is published in the Spring Semester of each year by the English and Art departments of Harold Washington College, 30 E. Lake St., Chicago, IL 60601.

Call for Submissions is announced in the Fall Semester. Both literary and art works are accepted for consideration. Please contact the **Garland Court Review Committee Coordinators** with further inquiries.

Prof. Adam Webster / GCR English Coordinator awebster17@ccc.edu

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Art Department Chair **Dr. John Metoyer;**

College President **Dr. Daniel Lopez;**

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long-time GCR editor **Prof. Jeffrey Daniels;**

and all of the amazing artists and writers who submitted work for consideration in this issue!

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Inner Front Cover, **Nga Ho** A little view of a lake (acrylic on paper, 2020)

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Garland Court Review

HAROLD WASHINGTON COLLEGE

2021

GCR English Coordinator & Copy Editor: Adam Webster

GCR Art Coordinator & Design Director: Galina Shevchenko

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Jean-Laurent Deher-Lesaint

Student Members:

John Barno

Ben Bonkoske

Catarina Calicdan

Ross Gallagher

Michelle Hernandez

Paula Lopez

Amira Olingou

Letter

from the

Editors

Greetings!

This is Garland Court Review: a literary magazine produced as a collaboration between the Harold Washington College Art and English departments.

In 2020, Garland Court Review came out of a three-year print hiatus like a bear yawning into spring only to be swept back indoors by the gale of a global pandemic. Still, the 2020 issue was a success, and now after a year of lockdowns, protests, riots, fear, hope, and a presidential election, we present to you the 2021 edition.

This edition truly showcases the tenacity, spirit, and grit of our community in its 33 text pieces and 60 artworks (out of 174 total submissions). We are truly thankful to everyone who submitted work and to those who have continuously supported the magazine. The Harold Washington Community exemplifies how the river of creativity cuts through the rock of adversity. Maybe this is because as Chicagoans we are used to the long dark winters. Either way, this volume proves that when we are put in darkness, we mine for diamonds.

This issue features poetry, spoken word, creative non-fiction, and a stage play. The authors explore ideas of identity, including personality flaws and gender; pandemic behavior, from the erratic to the new normal; relationships, from the bonds we hold with family to the laughter of

friendships to the messiness of intimacy with partners; and ideas of place – how it defines us, welcomes us, grounds us, and sometimes, dismisses us.

Likewise, the visual art pieces collectively communicate, contemplate, and celebrate cultural heritage, the natural world, the individual and the interpersonal, and life itself – both the mundane and the spectacular. Whether through a playful and humorous lens, or one that manifests concern, each piece remains hopeful at its heart. Laid out to speak to each other in surprising ways, they also leave much open to interpretation.

As a whole, our artists open up for us their perceptions: multifaceted and complex, with humanity at the center, and a flare of magic radiating outward. We hope you enjoy reading and perusing this volume as much as we loved putting it together.

From the Garland Court Review to you.

Be easy,

Ukaisha Al-Amin
John Barno
Ben Bonkoske
Catarina Calicdan
Shana Cooper
Jean-Laurent Deher-Lesaint
Ross Gallagher
Michelle Hernandez
Paula Lopez
Amira Olingou
Galina Shevchenko
Adam Webster

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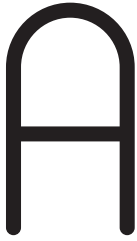
Literary works

A M. Lacey
April 5th, 2020

Fear in the eyes of

the Walgreens pharmacy tech.

I paid in pennies.



Kathryn Kruszynski
memoir of leaving

1) **about tiny kleenex & milwaukee**

A valuable life lesson from my mother: carry a tiny pack of Kleenex in your purse. She always had them, being a woman prepared for the worst and the best. And in my quest to become my mother,

I should've known better; I should've planned ahead. In fact, leaving Milwaukee had not only been the plan – it was the dream. It was the dream in action.

But when I think of Milwaukee now, I think of crunchy leaves, morning dew and watery sunrises. I think of the art studios, the old homes stretching from the edge of campus to the lakeshore and autumn making the whole place feel sleepy. When it isn't sleepy, it's rambunctious. The entire first fall I spent there turned me into a cat slinking around on a perpetual agenda.

I hurtled 70 miles an hour southbound and wished for the twelfth time, probably, that I had tiny Kleenexes.

2) **"I left your sweater in the middle of the ocean."**

Was it a sweater? Was it a shirt?

Once, in a department store around Thanksgiving with you, me, and your friend, it was white. It fit you well and I told you this. It came home with you. I borrowed it. It shrank. Over time, the white became pockmarked by subtle stains from this and that. I never bothered to fix it. You still smiled when I was in it. It was still plenty soft. I ran it over my cuticles repeatedly and felt calm.

Por favor, I wrote

dar a alguien en necesidad –

And that's the moral here: what you wanted became yours and it was just so right before time wore on and it wore down. I set it free for its next life.

I folded it with that being the last sentiment allowed. I left it in the middle of the ocean with nowhere else to go, and you and I or perhaps just me get to speculate every now and then about the sun-bleached life it lives there.

3) **a photo from february 19th**

I wish I had a photo for this day. If I did, here is what it would look like: Wide-angle shot of our table by the window. Across from me with a bowl of gnocchi sits Aria, probably smirking or looking away from the camera or a combination of the two. My pizza might be in the shot. It's a dark composition because it's past 9 and we took an unintentional Spaniard cue for the dinner hour. If this photo got posted to Instagram, I'd tag the location as Reno. "Hm, I wonder if that's actual Logan Square, that park over there." It is. There's a church, too. The rain is steady and horizontal. The way it falls is too much to be captured. There's almost certainly no passerby in the background. Any lighting in the photo comes from the sallow streetlamps. For as dim as it is, you can still see dimples.

D

M. Lacey

ear New Girl

Dear New Girl,

Yeah, I'm talking to you. You're the girl that isn't from around here, so you don't know what's gone on. I know he's charming, and handsome, and seems oh-so-smart and aware. He knows all the important buzz words regarding social injustice, intersectional feminism, mental illness, trauma and abuse. But that's not him being compassionate and progressive, those are his tools he uses to fool you, me, everyone around him. Be careful New Girl; he'll say everything you've been waiting for someone to tell you. That you're beautiful, and you are, but he knows you'll fall for it. You're independent, and strong and intelligent, and that's what he's attracted to, but it's only to challenge himself. To see if he's able to tear down such a magical being and make them small. Make us small. When you don't fit into the box of what he thinks a woman should be, he will use every derogatory term in the book to turn you into something dirty. And you are not. He will use words like bitch, whore, slut and cunt without a single hesitation. However, don't you ever dare even insinuate that there could be a single thing wrong with what he thinks, does, or says. He'll just tear you apart. And he'll do it so fast that you can't get a word in edge wise, can't even think straight, he'll make you flustered, and then twist you and manipulate you into thinking you are wrong for what you are feeling and thinking. He'll gaslight you when you open up about your deepest darkest secrets, maybe some mental and emotional things you struggle with... The traumas that have occurred in your life. Don't share them, he'll use them against you, he'll use them to degrade you, he'll use them to get what he wants. And what he wants is power. Power and control. Over something that should never be caged up. Then he'll be sickly sweet, give a half-ass apology, and then he'll want your body. And he'll take your body, whether you want him to or not. He'll pressure you, tell you that you owe him. No matter what the reason you don't want to, he'll guilt you 'til you give. He'll touch you 'til you feel that there's no longer a use in resisting. If you do succeed in resistance, or not wanting to do something he wants to do, he'll tear you down by calling you a prude, and a stick-in-the-mud. He'll use your self-respect, self-esteem, self-advocacy and boundaries as an insult. He'll

become emotionally and mentally exhausting, he will become suffocating, and he will demand all of your time and energy. He will say that any time and energy spent on anyone and anything else but him means you don't love him enough. Your above-and-beyond love will be below the bare minimum in his eyes. Your thoughtfulness and sweetness will be swept under the rug, and past mistakes or things he just didn't care for will become the focus of the picture he paints. The once thoughtful, kind, and sweet skin he slipped on, will disappear. Gone will be the man you thought you knew. The things he was so interested in about you, your passions, your dreams, your heart, and your talents will become an obstacle to him, and therefore become absolute shit. He will stop supporting your passions, your goals, he will insist you are abandoning him in pursuit of bettering yourself, but he will do nothing to better himself. You will wait. And wait, and wait, and wait for him to get his shit together. But he won't, and he will blame you for that. All your help and guidance and support will be tossed aside and forgotten. When you start to feel and see things going wrong, he will pretend to hear you, and pretend to try to do better, but he never will. And when you start to think you should seek a way out, he'll drive you to a point where you don't even recognize yourself. You won't recognize that New Girl, the old you that was once happy and shining and hopeful and full of love to give. He'll use that against you, he'll turn you into something you don't like and then remind you of how you used to be. "Why can't you be like before?" He'll push it into you like a knife, straight to your heart. Then twist and smirk. He'll use your fears to make you second guess every single thing in your life. When it all starts to fall apart, he'll blame you. He'll tell his friends and family fallacies, a villainized version of you to make himself innocent in all of the chaos. Just like he's probably telling you about me, right now. I am a "crazy bitch," I didn't love him enough, if at all, right? Then, when things go really, really wrong, he'll jump to a new New Girl. He won't take the time to reflect upon himself, to heal and learn. He'll just keep repeating his sick cycle. Just remember it's not you, it's him. He's not good for you, he's not good for anyone. He isn't even good for himself. Remember learning about fractions in grade school? There's always a common denominator. And baby, that's what he is.

Best wishes,
Former New Girl

H Olivia Felty *ow I Remember*

I remember her best in her garden. Flowers dancing in the wind. Petals dripping with pink like lipstick. The rosebushes with the thorns, thick green knives dotted across their spines. A floral porcupine.

The blue of her jeans fading from pressing into the ground as she crouched. Dirt streaking her palms. Soil creeping in the wrinkles. Her hands scorched from touching the decades. The sun shines against her hair. Light streams through the silver strands, dances against her scalp the way it has for eighty years. She pats the soil with her shovel like burping a baby. When the earth is dry and the ground opens its mouth to beg for moisture, she uses the green hose to supply water. Grandmother nature.

I think of her in the evenings. The bar of soap rubbed between her hands. The foam she paints on her face rinsing away the sweat of another day. The milk she poured in her tea cup and heated to warmth. Her body resting in the rocking chair. Creak, creak, creak. The chair moved so softly against the ocean of navy carpet in our living room. Her snores would come soon. When your mother has been dead for 20 years, you have to rock yourself to sleep.

I reminisce on Sunday mornings spent with her. The church clouded with incense fog. The candles dancing against the brick. The flames licking at the ceiling. Communicating with God like a waxy Tower of Babel. Her fingers dipping into the water, anointing her head and lips. Her bones cracking as she kneeled. The sign of the cross that she draws across her face with holy water. The song book held in her hands. The pages that crinkled so easily, thin slices of ivory wedged between leather covers. Here she is not the gardener but is the fervent disciple. She has come to be watered with the blood of Christ. The prayers of the Congregation drowning together into one. The bitter bread placed upon my tongue. The taste of oil brushing my tastebuds. I used to spit it into my hand. Wasted Sacrament.

I try to forget her in the winter. Lungs expanding harshly one last time. No rocking chair to lull her to sleep. No warm milk to coat her stomach. Cold hardwood lays beneath her as blood pools. Red turns brown to maroon. Ambulance lights blink in harmony with strands of Christmas colors. She is

gone in a matter of seconds. When I look at her in the hospital room, I regret it. The white sheet spreads across her body like snowflakes on a mountain. I have never seen her sleep without snoring before. I realize then that I will never listen to her snores again. I run out of the room with my breath caught in my chest. Behind my eyelids, I see her fall again and again. Instead of closing my eyes, I stare at the nurses in their bright scrubs. How does it feel to spend your days walking amongst death? There are some questions that will never be spoken.

At her funeral, the priest speaks of living forever with God. Her body rests in the casket. Sits like Christmas ham. Waits for us to devour it with final glances. The face that is no longer hers and the flesh that breathes no more life. In my mind, I shake her awake and beg her to hold me. Tears stream as I tell her I had a nightmare and now the dark looms against my eyelashes. She will allow me to crawl into her bed and I will not fall back asleep as her snores are loud. Their melody will remind me that I am safe. Instead, I stare at her face. The waxy plains of her cheeks. The dust of pink settled upon her eyelids. She does not look like the woman from the garden. Briefly, I think maybe there was a mistake. Perhaps we forgot to pick her up from the hospital. Maybe she is sitting on a bench with a cup of coffee in her hand, waiting. The visions creep towards my eyesight again and I remember all that I have seen. I stop living in my imagination and move past. Not a single touch to the cold body.

I spend her funeral telling adults who haven't seen me in years how old I am. They ask about school and my hobbies and boys and shove pasta into my hands. Whole chickens. Salads with light dressing and tomatoes. Sometimes food speaks easier than words.

Six years pass and I wish I had given her a eulogy. A speech about the way she picked me up when I slammed into the concrete face first. How she cried the first time she saw me with mascara brushed on my lashes and blush dotting my cheeks. I regretted not spewing out verses of her love. Memories faded away, dropping to the funeral home floor to be swept up by a janitor later. I remember the taste of our neighbor's lasagna better than I remember the sound of her voice. Her face is murky, like a photograph sitting in a pool of water. The features waver.

So I remember her in her garden. Her hands playing the ground like a piano. Watering her flowers with nectar from a green vine. Her clothes always coated in a fine layer of soil. The sun rubbed against the wrinkles on her skin. Permanent memories of the life she lived. I remember.

S

Violeta Ordóñez

Small Silver Linings

I have never heard the street so quiet.

It was March 2020, and quarantine had just become A Thing. The weather was mild, and it was as though the whole world had stepped into a lockdown with a single-mindedness usually reserved for bees.

Black roller blades in hand, I sat down on the front steps of my home and just took in the beautiful, expansive silence. No cars coming down the busy main street, no chattering couples walking down the sidewalks, no obscure noises rolling down the side streets and into the shop next door. (And later: No drunken carolers at midnight. No people staring at me walking barefoot across the yard. Hair tossed back with only wind and water. Face painted with only a grin. Mask secured in my small handbag.)

At first, I could not put my finger on it. I ponder it as I grab ahold of my father's arm, wobbling down the street for the first time, laughter and camera flashes following me.

"Something to break up the mundanity helps," he tells me.

"Seeing you learn to skate when you're so old is funny." My young cousin giggles.

"Let me help! Like this! Like this!" Her baby brother screams, running ahead of us.

I enjoyed these mornings. And yet still it came back to me, this thought. I ponder it as I grasp rough, red bricks and as I slide down the incline near the mouth of the alley. And I thought about it as I chewed through breakfast in the mornings: no rush, homemade food, bacon strips sizzling.

"Today we should dye my hair. I have a new natural hair dye recipe." My mother informs me over the rim of her favorite cup. I know it has her café de olla and want a taste.

"You know I know nothing about hair, ask my cousin!" I laugh at the idea of trying to help but am delighted at her new hobby. I stand and walk to the stove; eager hands reach for el café. Maybe I can bring some with me the next time I go into the woods? I'm always so sleepy that early in the morning.

Later it still nags at me, that something's changed. Even as I continue to wobble down the steps and up the sidewalk. As my shaky legs grew more confident and my brain learns to stand and go, but not to stop.

Feet sprawling and hands red I breathe in only calm and fresh air.

And no noise pollution.

(There were other types of pollution: Worries over unpaid bills and health insurance and health and stimulus checks and government funds that never, ever seem to come close to what other countries were giving their people.)

I devoured sleep and time like a starved alley cat for the first time in decades. No guilt or shame flowing in me.

“Quarantine is good. It’s doing my part,” I thought.

It did eventually click one night as I stared down with curious eyes at rows and rows of houses, of ghost streets, the loud chatter of wind and nature.

Realization: I am hardly ever anxious anymore. Worried? Yes, of course, who couldn’t be? But not hamster-ball anxious. Not hitting the ground running, let’s miss rush-hour traffic, go, go, go hassled.

It’s not the place; it’s the people. Or, in this case, The Person. Spending time with myself, deeply buried in nature and my own work. Exploring my own health without the worry of jobs or performing for others. Reforming connections with those closest to me (even when not in person). Relaxing for days outside with no care of the neighbors or noises of cars and the hustle and bustle of everyday life. For the first time since childhood; a valid excuse-

to

simply
slow
down.

And

Breathe.

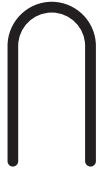
It was liberating, this feeling! It made me reach for this holy grail: places to move, plans of how to get there, career switches that would allow me a life with more movement, space, and time. And silence. I realized I craved this all-encompassing feeling of solitude silence can bring.

2020. The Cursed Year. The year of isolation and quarantines and canceled plans and missed connections.

And Death.

Maybe now, to me, also the year of learning my own recipes: how to fall deeply, deeply in love with my future, how to respect my wishes, the knowledge that it is important to learn where one’s place should be in this world.

And how to get to that peace.



Hannah Sandoval
avigation of Desire

Eyes fixed upon the subsequent,
Hinderances do not mold me,
I come and go as I please.
Visiting only for a moment,
Do not get to know me,
I come and go as I please.

Draped in grace,
In walks the anew.
An inhale to remember,
I come and go as I please.
Preparation finds me not,
For the fervor subdues.
Defiance loosens its grip,
Come with me please?

M. Lacey

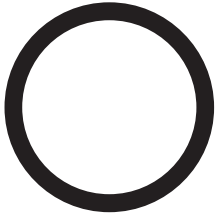
t *here are no mountains in Kentucky*

there are no mountains in Kentucky

maybe there are...
i don't actually know

but maybe if i say it with enough confidence
you'll believe what i say
maybe if i shout it with enough passion, conviction
my words will ring true
maybe if i believe it myself
yelling it will be enough
to make those mountains move
maybe if my argument is sound, logical,
able to convey-
it'll convince you
to stay

stay here,
we can go somewhere
that actually has mountains
and there won't be a need
for Kentucky



M. Lacey

Oral Hygiene

last night I had a dream
my teeth were falling out
again
I've had them since I was a child
I've grown to hate those dreams,
but
this morning I finally remembered
to floss my teeth

I floss furiously,
ferociously
I taste metal on my teeth
I spit into the sink
drip
drop
red spots

I look down at them
I stare for a long while
I can't help but think
how
similar to the ones on my bathroom
floor
that came to be from the image of me
inserting my menstrual cup
foot on toilet rim
squat
this very same morning
one morning
in the fourth grade
the girls went into one classroom
the boys into another

we watched an informational video
early 90's quality animation in 2006,
accompanied by cheesy songs
they didn't even have the balls
to show us real girls

women
blood
we got to see cartoons bleed
grow breasts, other things
hidden and unseen

later that day on the bus
the boys badger the girls
they pry at us
"what did you guys watch?"
shrinking, smirking, shamed
we answer
"nothing, what did you watch?"
disappointed they answer
"we watched a video on
Oral Hygiene"

maybe the reason I cannot bring
myself to
floss
a regular part of human routine
isn't the depression, attention deficit,
or family disease

if only instead,
I got to watch the video on
Oral Hygiene

5 Elle *Senses*

1.

I close my eyes and hear the music
blaring loud enough to pop an eardrum
laughter and music seeping through the walls of a roaring
crowded basement
the gunshots echo through the air like a warning
and it grows incredibly quiet
quiet enough to hear my rapid breath and my heart beating
at the same pace
I hear the screams
I hear my name
a pounding on the bathroom door
the same amount of bangs as the shots fired
finally, I hear her voice
the silent fright it contains
“We have to leave, now”
the door opens and closes
suddenly, I start to hear more voices
maybe five or six
another shot
another pound
another voice
full of fear
I hear the click of the gun
I mean
the door
swarms of running feet stomp through building
resembling an earthquake
hearing the rumble of bodies moving swiftly towards the exit
cars beeping as we race across the street
blood dripping
dripping
dripping

I can't breathe
starts off slow
heart beats fast
clicking remotes
ringing phones
quick breaths
police sirens
beep
closing car doors
beep
beep
loud screams
harsh cries
breathing heavy
no surprise
whispers between the doctors
her quiet breaths sooth the night
5 am
now 6
maybe 7
could be 8
mom cries
sister weeps
time to go to sleep

2.

looking into the bathroom mirror
the door slamming open
6 bodies tumble in
one i recall
the others, strangers that huddle in the corner like scared puppies
the door rattles as someone bangs on it
urging us to go
two more familiar faces
and we bolt like we've been lit on fire
rushing out the exit running across the parking lot
running
running
running

I look down
see a trail of red ribbons
wonder how they got there
see them attached to a black stiletto
one that belongs to my sister
and she's just
running
running
running
three blocks down
we come to a stop
and the ribbons collect to form a circle around her foot
the puppies from the bathroom spill out of a red car
red
one ties a sweater to her foot
suddenly we're in a building surrounded by
red and white flashing lights
police come by
but i can only think of her face
black ink running down her cheeks
her brown skin grows paler
like she just saw a ghost
or she's afraid to become one
red ribbons spill out of her foot
enough to fill two tubs
and they just
they just won't fucking stop
and she's
in so much pain
i could see it on her face
scrunched up so hard i can almost feel it too
she's trying to be strong
but she's slowly slipping
deeper
deeper
into sleep

3.

the heavy smell of disinfectant makes my nose burn

but i welcome it over the overwhelming scent of pennies
pennies that keep falling out of her skin
coats the room in its stench
suffocating
suffocating like the smell of alcohol and sweat
the smell of smoke in the air that clings onto my coat
like these pennies
these pennies that will haunt my memory forever

4.

I can taste the salty tears as they leak into my mouth
trying to erase the feel of them on my tongue
so I stuff my mouth with sweetness
sweetness
to make me forget the taste of blood on my lip
the bitterness brought with it
and now we have a variety of tastes
ones that collide
ones that mesh together in my mouth like a party
they oddly go well together
salty
sweet
bitter
reminds me of you

5.

she holds my hand so tightly I can feel her veins protruding
rubbing circles on her sweaty back
brushing her hair out of her face
wiping away the tears that won't cease being shed

I wish I could do more
but I just sit there
holding her so tightly
feeling her every bone
and she's so
so cold



Oshana Goodrum

*andomnessfrom
anxiousclearthoughts*

Panicked in my attic,
Atmosphere, outta here,
Safe space in ya mind,
Through whatever, whenever,
Y'all loved the generations before me,
Adorn her, Adore me,
But swallow the sword solemnly,
Battling, cause I'm bottling anxiety,
Like pop shaken up when the bubbles go down,
Don't make a sound, explode suddenly or quietly,
Here we go,
Pan it down
Take a trip
Happy ass did the dash,
Now the dash did you dirty
Oh shit
Rabbit hole
Measure ya soul
Alice, Alice
Rodger rabbit
Popped the bottle so now there can't be a future habit,
Rabbit hole, do you feel me ?
Fall deeper.
Level out until you fall again.

T

Daniel Noriega

That Day of Inequality

Born and Raised
Yet somehow I'm not American
Nor am I Hispanic

Is it my lack of blonde hair and blue eyes
Or the lack of fluency in my R's
I'm too sweet like Dulce de leche
But somehow I still lack flavor
How could this be?

They call me Gringo there
But here I'm called worse

"HANDS UP"
"AGAINST THE WALL"
"Alright, I guess you're clear to go"

And yet the whole time walked past a MAN
With gloves
A hat
And a weapon of hate

That day
He walked away
That day
There were two body counts
That day
He STILL walked away

Yet somehow I am STILL the threat

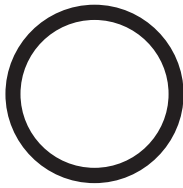
But please forgive
For if you force me out of the only place I knew...

I will surely not be welcomed

I will surely not be saved

I will surely not return from where I came from

Andy Donakowski



*n the Phenomenon
of Spontaneous Generation
and other Pseudoscience*

How else can you explain the presence
of these fruit flies circling discarded rinds
or the moths fluttering from flour jars,
the rats running out from compost heaps?

Counter to accepted wisdom,
one must concede,
therefore,
that sooner or later
discarded t-shirts will pop arms, hands, fingers,
a torso, and legs.
They will crawl from under the bed, behind the couch,
out of the closet,
and make their way into the moonlit night.
How else to explain the mystery?

There other scientific vagaries, too, like:
the male seahorse carrying the baby
or the Platypus
or the Dark Matter that surrounds us, binds us,
weighing us down from unknown trajectories.

And on human perception:
do you realize that
your whole tongue tastes
salt and pepper and sweet and sour
and that if you bend down and kiss the earth
you can also taste god?

I have found,
however,
that you can lick a nine volt
and savor the stinging energy
that flows through your taste buds
to get a similar sensation.

At home,
lamps transmit the discarded energy
from unseen electrons.
Our radio dial is tuned to unassigned frequencies,
broadcasting the background noise of the universe
as we consider the ways in which we understand
known and unknown things.

m Austin Rausch *y World*

If you stand on top of a hill and look across the sky,
You might see the sun, or a bird that's flown by,
You might see a plane, or a cloud that might cry,
Leaving raindrops on petals that caterpillars try.

Of course, that is, if you're standing on Earth.
But each person has a small planet themselves,
The place where unconsciousness roams and dwells.
Our deepest intentions, our actions, our tasks,
Cultivated and grown, it's a map of our past.

It also glimmers with future ideas,
Things we desire we've yet to get near.
Our hopes are the mountains, the oceans our tears,
The valleys are playgrounds where passions come linger.
There are villages too, full of people and buzz,
Where our day to day lives interact and become.
The people all live by the light of the sun,
They laugh, and they play, and have constant fun.

But my world is different – my world is anew.
Regrown from dislike towards my past attitude.
Most people hate it, they say it's too cruel,
Since my world is quite harsh, as it's made from the truth.
My world isn't grassy, it's not full of flowers,
Its mountains are flat, and the people are cowards.
The forests are dead, the sky is devoured,
The darkness is vast, and rain constantly showers.

It used to be full of some love and flattery,
Till someone threw stones at my menagerie.

Emotions ran off, and the people got scared.
The mountains all broke, and the sky gained some tears.
Rather repair it to when it had flare,
I left it to rot and ferment in the air.

If you stood on a hill, in my world's current state,
You wouldn't be able to last for a day.
For the constant infringing of pain is too great,
And you would be blinded by sadness and hate.
How unfortunate, really, some might think this is.
If you think you can change it, I dare you, come in.
You could try to squeeze happiness into the list,
But unless you are damaged, there's no room to fit.

Besides, I would rather accommodate tears than a fib,
For sadness is pure, and depression is rich.
Plus, I can say surely, with no hint of remiss,
Happiness is an illusion, it doesn't exist.

Aurora B. Lefebvre

*If You Ask Me How to Surpass Jupiter,
I Will Tell You That First,
You Must Surpass Saturn's 82 Moons*

to ballroom dance between each one, careful
not to catch your hem on the horizon of their dark side
oh,

to be dipped into the craters carved
by the pinpricked kisses of the light waves brave enough to reach

to touch the surface only to have every thing slo w

dow n

as your body begins
to erode
because the atmosphere
is too heavy

and so,
you are
pushed
into
your own crater

where you sit as a pile of dust at the door of eternity
because there is no wind here
to sweep you into a waltz of
indescribable stellar transcendence
amongst the many moons.

This Planet
but more selfishly,

This ground is
swallowing
my ankles &

i feel
withering.

oh, how will i ever make it across each ring
across the eternal front yard
to knock on Jupiter's front door?



Aurora B. Lefebvre

*make breakfast
on a morning so early,*

the family of birds still sleeping mere inches from the kitchen window
are peaceful, not yet ready to watch the sun lick its way up the valley
and so before the light slips in and slinks across dusty floors and worn slippers
I will share a secret-

Come closer,
the walls might be listening

A dash of Vanilla

the sweet syrup slips between lips and lays heavy on the tongue;
it tastes of your name choked with the desire left behind from
deliriously dirty dreams
I curl my fingers around a fork and
twirl french toast soaked from sitting in the syrup and
let it pass my morning mouth and
lay heavy on my tongue as you curl your toes &

Aurora B. Lefebvre

Under a gloaming blanket
of newly birthed

twilight there is no fear for the
eldritch energy flowing so idly amongst
naked bodies clutching at the ferry
as they press obolos deep into their ora
serratas, while chanting:

Charon. Charon.
Charon. Come.

soft skin swims along the Styx to find
my Persephone, perched upon pillows of Pomegranates
plump lips pouting,

“what took you so long?”

honey is high maintenance
& must be kept in the heavens

each ruby is its own Soma
each burst of this aphrodisiac treasure
takes us to timeless parallel planes where
the trees are louder
no aimless souls ruin our night

& oh,

My
lovely Shepherd of the Asphodel Meadows
i watch a sweet breeze
curl into the crevices of your collarbones
deep enough to let sheep sip
Pomegranate juice from



Esther Bayever

Midnight Garden

I let down my guard, in your garden I tread,
Over walls built of cards as my heart led my head,
Through footpaths and foxglove, fragrance in clouds,
Sweet, summer night cast in dark, scented shroud.
Cricket song, quiet, from damp corner trills,
Green ivy climbs over stone windowsills,
Through curtains of willow and pillows of moss,
Stepping, uncertain, I'm burningly lost.
Fountains are murmuring whispers of lovers,
Stars stretch out silvery arms where they hover,
Honeysuckle, hyacinthe, hypnotized, alive,
You muddle my mind in your haven, contrived.
Mysteries of midnight release lonesome sighs,
Distant as dreams drifts the ghost of sunrise.
Dizzy with hope which I reach for in vain,
A firefly light trapped in black window pane,
A hushed world of eve where birdbaths sit still,
Silk, curling leaves form tunnels of will.
Whispers through emerald burnt black by the dark,
Slide 'cross my neck, printing delicate mark,
It's warmth on my skin, but a chill in my spine,
One final sin in reflection of mine.
Lily pads lilt in the pool, ever glowing,
Me, I'm entranced and perchance never knowing
If daylight does dance beyond elegant gates,
If one stride away, a new morning awaits.
For here in this palace of satiny blooms,
Rosebuds and thorns in a thousand dim rooms
Lie under my feet like a carpet of tales,
Sprouting their truths through the breaths I inhale.
A wavering moment in misty mirage,
My heartbeat betraying my weak camouflage,
A pulse through the veins of a velvety petal,
A shudder through earth to this spot where I've settled,
A subtle reminder I may not belong,
But your hold on my mind is too beautifully strong.
In this foliage, masked, I've found magical home,
In your sweet, gentle grasp I'm enchanted alone.



Rūta Grīnvalde

Meant to Say Goodbye

It all started on that day in January,
When the last thought on my mind was you being my sanctuary.
It didn't take that long for you to sneak into my mind,
With every day that passed, you'd leave a tiny mark behind.

In the beginning it was something, I did not recognize,
But when the summer came, every single mark had grown in size.
There were times you felt like water – not a spot unfulfilled.
There were times I got familiar with hope,
you know, the one you helped me build.

I couldn't help but fall for the wonderfully romantic side of you,
And the absolute concern for the world was something new.
There was the way you touched me without using your hands,
That was the first time I felt my horizon expand.

Through all the sleepless nights, I never realized,
While I listened to the way you think, my heart was being vandalized.
Because with every single word that faded in the room,
My soul was filled with color like a flower into bloom.

After a while our days turned into a well-oiled machine,
So well-there were no words needed in between.
But then came moments heavy as the thickest fog,
And I was left in tears creating a lonely monologue.

Sometimes I felt like a princess buried in red roses,
Sometimes I got shot with the gun that only you possess.
And so I found myself standing in the coldest rain,
Waiting for a bus to come and take away my pain.

I tried to change your mind with miles and miles of mountains,
But what I came to realize is – you wanted what the sea contains.
Like a scar on my heart created by the sharpest blade,
One day I woke up and the hope had started to fade.

Some may say that this time of my life was the most tragic,
But at the same time it came so damn near to magic.
Because you saw the absolutely best and worst of me,
Which made me realize who I want to be.

Some may call our story one big mistake;
Some would call you the greatest bastard ever made.
I look at my journey as the sweetest misery,
But at the end of the day, I cherish every memory.

And now I see – I gave my heart and soul to you,
'Cause there was never any space for peace in view.
But you know what?! My heart and soul are mine,
And I intend to keep it that way even on the next cloud nine.



Rachel Williams

Life as We Know It

Question marks fill my bank account.

Agony fills my system.

Wondering how will I feed my seeds, my lover.

Busted windows and boarded up buildings all around,

The glass shatters beneath me as I walk down the street.

I look at you with fear in my eyes and say,

“It wasn’t me.”

I live my life every day in a shell to protect myself from being hurt,

or worse

Put in the dirt.

We come from a lifeline of strong and brave individuals, we must

as THE PEOPLE

Fight for what’s right for us.

No one of the lighter descent is going to make it easy for us,

Being darker should be motivation to shine brighter

WE must stand on what is OURS.



John Barno

incinnati

I miss the Queen City.

I miss the seven hills, the shoulders that we stand on
and cast our eyes to the south,
Over the Rhine and the Ohio and to the South.
Quiet streets that tumble and level and curve
and bridge, Vine that entangles but does not strangle.

I miss the smell of yeast and hops that rises and billows
and blankets the homes on the hill above the brewery district.
I miss the trainyard. The gentle cries miles away that we can hear
through our open windows as we lay our heads down.
The Clifton Whistle we call it-- Music to me.

Arnold's, Neon's, Low Spark, Milton's, Righteous Room,
living rooms where we do not pay rent,
just the next round for our friends.
Jukebox ballrooms adorned with coats and backpacks
of sore-footed workers who still feel that need to dance.

I miss the cobbles of Washington Park, placed each
above the bones of our indigenous fathers and mothers--
a long-forgotten graveyard that sleeps beneath our feet--
and the unfinished subways, arteries of a behemoth that could
have been, and the men who built them and are no more.

I miss the creamsicle skies that bend and break on the
Italianate molding of our four-story walk-up palaces.
The drives on the riverbanks while we turn up the volume
So that we can "Play it Right" and dive into "Gooney" "Pools"
and beg for the music to "Dissolve Me."

Cincinnatus, my Queen, my mother,
I can still hear your whistle.

John Barno
Cannonball

Sweat mixes with the oils of lotion and trickles down
the small of his small back.

The child looks down from the highest platform at the water below.
Dripping calls up, from the beading rivulets that fall off his suit
and down and over the sides of the board.

A breeze hints at motion, and despite the red-hot sun, he shivers.

Pauses. Fear creeps. He hears his name. A question. His mission is uncovered.

No time now. The dread swallowed. His feet patter and are air born.

He hears his name again. Louder and afraid. He pulls his knees

to his chest and holds them with all might. Body tense. The crash as he breaks
the water feels like it comes from inside his skull. It's shattering at first,
like the time he dropped his glass of milk on the kitchen floor.

His name shrieked then. The sound then deepens and vibrates,
shakes his head and bangs on his ears. It sizzles for a moment as the air
he pulls down with him fights back and breaks for the surface.

Then the sound goes away, and it's just him and the water.

His mind breathes as he takes in the absolute silence
of the tranquil depths. He opens his eyes to the sight of endless blue,
an escape to an ocean planet where it is just him and silence.

He smiles. His mouth opens in victory and a laugh bubbles out.

From above he hears his name again, calling him back.

Julia Miller
The Windy City

brick buildings
aged
up
creeping
vines
Wispy
Buses, cars, trucks
letting go of their heavy smoke

The static from the brown line raises the hair on my arms,

notorious wind at my face
scratches and my throat,

freshly
roasted
coffee
glazes
my tongue

walk
steady
to make sure I don't spill on my coat.

Oh, how this life is bursting with diversity!
Do we have enough time in the world to see?

Violeta Ordonez

Be *Bold*

Hold onto your grit with two iron fists,
and scatter your courage out far!
Make tongues wag when you're crossing the street
and ignore eyebrows that raise in alarm.
When your mouth opens, let it be wide,
and at the tip of your tongue only wit.
Let your cheeks pinken due to only the wind, lest you spend your whole
life shuttered-in!
Oh, but do not confuse loud for uncouth, or bold for cruel or unkind!
Mischief and spunk should be what's found in your eyes, not devious plans
to cause harm.
And when your hands start to wrinkle and hair starts to grey, fear not
the death that awaits.
For you were larger than life and chased away dread.
And from memory, your soul will not fade!



Violeta Ordonez

Let the Loud Birds Be

Gone were the perched birds.
Mouths filled with seeds like an
overflowing flowerpot.
The winds too rough for them to stay.
I never knew how dearly I would miss them until I could no longer hear
their sound.
Persistent beaks pecking the windowsill,
in search of more seeds.
The silence, now, is heavy

Alexis Avalos

S *ign of the Times*

For when the eyes stumble upon a glimpse of unique beauty,
It is then that the mind yearns to seek out the source.
For when the hand brushes the skin upon first contact,
It is then that the butterflies begin consuming the heart.
For when the lips quiver at the attempt of forming simple words,
It is then that the soul is unleashed in its rawest form.
For when a lighthearted encounter progresses into a romantic attachment,
It is then that the spirits slowly infuse with one another.
For when moments of sorrow and vulnerability allow half of the pair to crack,
It is then that the partner will snap parts of their own being to repair the other.
For when the promise of eternity blossoms into a loving family,
It is then that the pair recognizes their growth towards their combined
happiness.
However, for when the years grow long and stagnant,
It is then that Rupert Holmes provides motivation for an Escape.
For when one betrays the other by falling into the arms of another,
It is then that the victim is reduced to only their insecurities.
For when a family is divided,
It is surely then that the once prosperous roots have decayed from the
seeds of corruption.
For when the eyes stumble upon a glimpse of unique beauty,
It is then that the mind yearns to seek out the source.

I

Ben Bonkoske

If I Don't Have Love (song lyrics)

Soft sheets and apple pie
You don't need to remind me
Why I left all of it behind

Walked a thousand miles
And I'll walk a thousand more
No matter where I go, it still leads back to your door

And I'm just like the leaves on the trees in a breeze
Clapping my hands at everything I little see

And I'll take my time to realize
That it's alright to live your life
a little different than all those mathematicians
With all their insight and inquisitions
that make me suspicious
if they are living with the conviction
that keeps them up at night

The sunrise keeps me alive
Don't think twice I'm still blind
Can read and write between the lines
I'll even make them rhyme

But the birds are the only boss of me
I want to see on Monday morning
chirping about how I should be working
instead of walking across the country

What if I get hungry?
What if there's not a bed to share?
What if I don't comb my hair?
What if I die tonight?
What if I just don't care?

What if I don't get an education?
What if I can't fight for my nation?
What if I don't ever get married?
What if I don't make a big enough salary?

But if I stayed where I was, I would have never been enough
So I'll say it here on my knees, praying to the Lord
I'd rather have nothing if I don't have love

D

Marieli Lopez
Dear Nobody

Hello old friend, long time no see

I want to write about someone new, but I guess the only person I can really talk to is you

I remember our first step on the high school concrete
As I was clinging to your cold and empty hand, I realized
Nobody was a creation I only held to keep myself from falling apart
So I can finally be able to say that someone is there
But they're not, you're not

As I let go of Nobody's hand, I found myself in a pool of somebodies
Now, there are many somebodies, but any somebody is totally different
than Nobody

While Nobody reminded me of isolation, Somebody reminded me of the
laughs and smiles

While Nobody reminded me of my regrets, Somebody reminded me
that happy

distractions can make all my insecurities go away

While Nobody sat in silence and listened to my worries, somebody..

Somebody felt so real

Nobody told me that Somebody can drift away

Nobody told me that Somebodies can make you feel so much worse
than you ever

felt being alone

Nobody told me that Somebodies can give you that feeling like you're
walking on air,

and instantly stab you in the back and turn away without a care

Turns out that somebody

Is just some body

A lifeless structure, disguised with warm eyes, but hollow and heartless inside

I was back to square one with Nobody telling me it was going to be okay

Until, I met They

They is not Nobody
They is not a Somebody
They is my one and only

While Somebody gave me moments of dreams and highs,
They gave me memories and feelings of joy that will last a lifetime
While Somebody gave me temporary distractions for my insecurities
& Nobody
was a silent wall to my worries,
They stood there understanding, giving me advice and telling me
that I am the most
perfect being They've ever seen

I never, ever thought I could power through this cycle
But I promise, you will find your one and only
Whether it be your best friend, your lover, your family
Your one and only is out there waiting for you too

To Every Somebody
To Every He
To Every Her
To Every They

You can do this
Thank you Nobody for helping me find my way

Sincerely,
Me

Patrianna Scales

Scarred with Acne

Mirror Mirror

On my bathroom wall

Why does my face look like a meatball?

I update and rearrange my skincare routine

But still, my face remains unclean

I apply concealer and foundation

To cover my hyperpigmentation

blackheads and pimples are my biggest limitations

I hate my skin

It's scarred and infected

I cake makeup unto my pores

I'm a beast without beauty

A rose slowly rotting

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder

But how do I love myself

I can't handle looking at my reflection

What do I do about my uneven skin complexion

I watch tons of Youtube videos for skincare help

What I really need is self-help

My battle is within me

It's not the acne scars that cause great pain

It's the trauma and lies rooted deep in my heart

Being confident isn't easy

When social media compares me to others

And tells me I'm flawed

But Beyonce and Nicki are flawless

Yeah I woke up like this

Flawed and imperfect

Who's gonna tell me I'm not worth it



Paula Ann Lopez

centipedes

She is so calm and graceful, tall --
I broke my foot twice 'cuz I can't not fall.

She's "chill," she's fun, just a great hang --
I've hyperventilated on a train

She bought a house with tall ceilings; their eyes fill with amazement.
I live in a ground unit called garden that's actually just a basement

She owns her space and all those marble tops to boot;
I'm sure my landlord's just centipedes strutting in a suit

The things she doesn't have, her self-awareness is a blur
because me and the centipedes will be laughing at her

She wears a big hat on Cinco De Mayo; her ignorance, a treat,
a morsel of embarrassment for the bugs and I to eat

Because whatever being "chill" brings, whatever can occur,
won't matter when the centipedes and I are laughing at her.

My bloodshot eyes, my stature: stout --
she traded herself for digital clout.

She's success, she's calm, she's glory --
but me and the centipedes have all the good stories.

John Barno
The Hero We Deserve

CAST

CONNIE - 30s, city council candidate, courageous

ROBIN - 30s, level-headed, car owner

LINDA - 30s, hysterical cryer, lil bit superficial but that's ok.

MATTHEW - 30s, crass but supportive

(Restaurant. **CONNIE**, **ROBIN**, **LINDA** and **MATTHEW** are seated at a table finishing up brunch. They all have on expensive clothing and their hair is done.)

ROBIN

That was so delicious. Next time I'm not getting my eggs poached though. I always order poached eggs and I never like them.

CONNIE

Robin, just order a Crepe or a French Toast. You always eat mine anyway. We all need to make this a weekly thing. Just like pick a day and stick to it. We always end up canceling cause something comes up.

LINDA (Checking her phone)

I know, Connie. It's shitty of us. But now that you and I have started your city council campaign, Robin moved to Downer's Grove and Matthew over here's gotten on PreP, we're always doing something or someone.

MATTHEW

Jealous. Ooooh, before I forget, Linda, can I get some of those campaign buttons? I want to sport the fuck out it.

CONNIE (Hands MATTHEW a button but pulls back at last second)
Yes, BUT when you hand them out you need to refrain from saying things like, "Can you believe Connie Gluckman is running for City Council? It feels like just yesterday she got her period in Mrs. Kamen's 6th grade math class and had to roll up her glove to use as a tampon."

MATTHEW (Takes the button)
I would never say a thing like that. (Beat) And it was a mitten. They're different.

(They get up to leave the restaurant. Rain sounds play.)

LINDA
Shit, when did it start raining? Robin, where did you park?

ROBIN (Gulping.)
Down the street.

LINDA
That means...

MATTHEW
Someone has to walk and get it... in the rain.

(They all gasp. Lightning strikes.)

LINDA
I think I left my wallet in the bathroom. Why don't you ladies grab the car while I go search for it.

(**MATTHEW** grabs her hand and yanks her back.)

MATTHEW
You paid the bill, Sweets.

LINDA (Backing away holding lipstick out like a knife)
I WON'T GO OUT THERE! I WON'T GO THROUGH THAT AGAIN!

CONNIE

I'll go.

ROBIN

What? Connie. No no no. That's a bad plan. I think we should just wait it out.

MATTHEW (grabbing **ROBIN** by the shoulders and shaking her)

And miss the first 15 minutes of "Lady Bird"? I hear every moment is crucial to the character development! Are you insane?!

CONNIE

Matthew's right. If we sit here and do nothing, we'll regret it for the rest of our lives. I must go.

ROBIN

But there has to be another way!

(ROBIN starts to pace. **CONNIE** takes off her purse and hands it to **MATTHEW**.)

CONNIE

I wish there was, sisters. But you've all shared 2 pitchers of make-your-own mimosas. And I had a coffee. This is just something I have to do.

LINDA

No! You can't. Think of your hair. It looks fucking great!

MATTHEW

Naomi Campbell would roll in her grave if you ruined that hair, Connie. It is LAID. But I think you're right. And Naomi's not even dead.

LINDA (Hysterical. Throwing her body in front of the exit)

We won't let you do it!

CONNIE

Matthew, can you take care of Linda?

(**MATTHEW** consoles **LINDA** who has begun to cry. **ROBIN** takes **CONNIE** aside.)

ROBIN (Pulling out her keys)

It's MY car, Connie. I can't let you do this.

CONNIE (taking the keys)

What I do is not up to you. I have made my choice. As a leader of this city, it is my responsibility to walk 103 feet down the block in the rain for those who cannot. (pulling out a small envelope) Here, take this.

ROBIN

What is it?

CONNIE

In case-

ROBIN

No, don't you do this to me.

CONNIE

I have to, Robin! In case

(taking a deep breath)

In case I walk too close to the curb and a bus drives through a puddle, you must take that letter to my campaign office for me.

ROBIN

Me? But why wouldn't you give it to Linda? She's on your campaign.

(They look over at **LINDA** who is now cradled in **MATTHEW's** arms on the ground.)

LINDA

Her shoes are suede.

MATTHEW

Shhh I know, baby. I know.

CONNIE (To **ROBIN**)

Promise me you get that letter to my office. Promise me.

ROBIN (beat)

No... because you're going to give it to them yourself.

(Dramatic snare drums and trumpets start to play softly in the background a la "Saving Private Ryan." **CONNIE** and **ROBIN** embrace before joining **MATTHEW** and **LINDA** who stand and compose themselves.)

LINDA

So, this is it, huh? You're really going out there? In the rain?

CONNIE

I am. I'll see you again soon. Like two and half minutes from now.
(**LINDA** runs and hugs **CONNIE**. The music gets louder.)

MATTHEW

You can still wait here with us. You don't have to go.

CONNIE (Letting go of **LINDA**)

Who will I be if I stay?

(The music is at its loudest. **CONNIE** walks to the door. Before she opens it she pauses to look behind her. They all share one final look. **CONNIE** opens the door. They all freeze. The music stops.)

ROBIN (VOICEOVER)

Connie made it to the car that day, but not without great cost. During that fateful walk between the restaurant and my car, her perfectly laid hair caught some of the moisture outside and developed a slight frizz that you could see if she stood between you and a lamp. As for the letter, to this day I don't know what was in it. But I bet it was vitally important, like devastating information about the other candidate, or Michael's coupons. In the end, we did make to "Lady Bird" on time. All four of us. And it was amazing.

(Fade to black.)



Jeache St. Louis *Regulation Cut*

“You heard me?” Sgt Homidas asked me again in his booming voice as he zoomed through the city in his new Daihatsu. Only a select few below the rank of Staff-Sergeant even had the privilege of driving in Japan, and Sgt Homidas was among them. He wore that fact like a smile.

“Aye, sergeant,” I muttered back, placing my elbow on the rest, looking out the foggy window.

Naha City was a maze of white cubes set in a blanket of mist. A typical Okinawan morning, I felt my mood lifting somewhat as we drew closer to the base. It was no more than five minutes away, but with Sergeant’s playlist of motivational speeches blaring and the Japanese protesters outside hollering on about the Ospreys, it might as well have been on the moon.

“Just looking out for you, Applyrs. You’re gonna have to get that shit down to regulation, sooner or later,” Sgt Homidas said as the car slowed down. “I know how you feel about it, but that shit won’t fly, you hear?”

“Aye,” I said, running a hand over my hair. Just a bit nappy and uncombed. The way I liked it.

And the source of my recent troubles. However innocuous it was.

We stopped at a red light. A child no older than five was walking across the street alone and unsupervised. An entirely regular occurrence in Okinawa, neither of us gave any comment.

“It’s just hair,” I mumbled as I pulled out my phone, hoping to put some distance between myself and the conversation.

“Corporal Applyrs,” Sgt Homidas began, but stopped as the light turned to green. When he spoke again, he didn’t sound like the motivational sergeant anymore. He sounded...*normal*. “*Gino*. We’re both black. More than that. We’re both *Haitians*. I’m telling you this shit now because the staff NCOs¹ over at the mess have been bitchin’ about it. And if *they’re* bitchin’ about it, it could only mean...” he left his sentence unfinished.

“The officers noticed,” I completed it.

Nothing else needed to be said. I might have been a young corporal, with my second chevron only three months young, but I knew how these things went, how unit *politics* went.

“That,” Sgt Homidas continued, “*and* they heard about your weigh-in.”

I let out a sigh. A bad habit in the military, it got me in enough trouble in boot-camp, but I couldn't help it. “I'm keeping it under control.”

“I bet. You ain't no damn fat body, your PFT² is first class, but you're still on the heavy side,” he said as he pulled up to the base gate, putting our conversation on a short hold. A moment later and the bored-looking gate-guard handed over our IDs and let us on our way.

“But if you end up in fat-platoon, and keep up this hair nonsense on top of that?” Sgt Homidas said in his usual loud voice, speaking well over the motivational speeches. “You can kiss a career goodbye,” he said as we arrived at the field mess.

“Yes, sergeant.”

A career.

The thought of it lingered in my head.

###

That was the first time I'd heard any problems about the way I kept my hair. Sgt Homidas was looking out for me in that sense. But I was hard-headed. Or rather, there was something inside of me that wanted to express my contempt at the officers, but more importantly, the military itself. But if you would have asked me then, I wouldn't have anything so profound to say about it.

So, for a few weeks after my talk with Sgt Homidas, I did nothing. I kept my hair as is. Nappy and free and generally unkempt. The higher-ups lit a fire under my ass rather swiftly, and I found myself being picked out after roll call day after day to be talked to by one staff NCO or the other, who put it in gentle, but not uncertain, terms to cut off the offending hair in question.

They'd been better off talking to a wall, for all it amounted to, until one day, the field mess SNCO sent another Corporal and me to the mess hall³.

We were handing off a small field range⁴ to the cooks in the mess hall

for training. But before I could leave, I was pulled aside by Sgt Parker. A tall, Jamaican immigrant who spoke with a thick accent.

“Corporal Applyrs,” he yelled from across the galley⁵. “Come here real quick, let’s talk for a moment,” he said.

I looked over at Jewell, the Corporal I came with, and shrugged. I walked across the kitchen and felt the eyes of the cooks-on-watch staring at my back. Not sure if they knew the sort of stuff I was going through.

I stepped into the inventory room. Sgt Parker sat atop a desk with his arms crossed.

“Close the door,” he said. I obliged and stepped closer.

The inventory room was neat and orderly; there must have been an inspection recently, as that was never the case. Japanese workers were around the back holding their clipboards and whispering among each other as they worked, so it was just Sgt Parker and I alone in the room, for the most part.

“What the fuck is this I hear about you and hair?” Sgt Parker demanded, staring off into the back of the storeroom.

I folded my arms as well. “I don’t know, Sergeant.”

“Don’t bullshit me, Applyrs,” he said, the muscle in his jaw clenching.

“I don’t know what to tell you.”

He turned from that distant nothing he was staring at to me. “Tell me you going to get that shit cut.”

“Why?”

“Don’t get fresh,” Sgt Parker replied almost instantly. “You good marine, man. What’s this hair stuff now? Homidas said you need cut, right? That was weeks ago, no?”

I nodded.

“And now I got Staff-Sergeant Cole ripping me about how, oh, ‘Applyrs need comb his hair. Why his hair no comb?’ And all this. What the fuck?”

“Why do I have to comb it?” I said back with a raised voice. I’d heard it enough times, and I couldn’t help myself. “Or cut it? Corporal Jewel wakes up as is and walks into formation. He doesn’t have to comb his hair. And it’s as long as mine, if not longer. Neither does Corporal Miller. What’s the difference between them and me?”

Sgt Parker ignored my lapse in respect and considered my words.

“You think I don’t get it?” he finally said.

I had nothing to say.

“You think I no see how they treat us?” Sgt Parker said with a flourish, arms out wide. “Every one of us go through it, man. In our own fucking way, man. I don’t want to hear shit about how it no fair, okay? It never fair. You from Haiti? Me, I’m from Jamaica. Came here with no *papers*. I know this shit.”

My hands were shaking. I wasn’t going to hit him. But the tightness behind my nose was about to let out an even worse emotional outbreak, considering the circumstances.

Sgt Parker snapped his fingers in my face. “This shit?” he said, getting close to my face. “This shit bigger than you. You understand? You can do the thing you do and get NJP⁶. I’ll sign it myself. Or you just cut the damn thing off and suck it the fuck up, like the rest of us. Okay?”

I stared at the tiles beneath my boots for a moment. “Aye, Sergeant.”

The same day, I got my hair cut during lunch break. Seeing it go did something to me; I wouldn’t have been able to tell you what, at the time. But when I arrived back at the field mess, receiving pats on the back from my fellow Corporals and Sergeants, I couldn’t help but feel anything as they told me I made the right choice for my career.

1. Staff NCO: *The range of military ranks above Corporal and Sergeant. Staff-Sergeant, Gunnery-Sergeant, Master-Gunnery Sergeant. Military members of these ranks oversee anywhere from 10-100 Marines in a platoon or operation. They are often given staff positions in a company’s hierarchy and serve as a liaison between Officers and the lower enlisted ranks.*

2. Mess hall: *Military term for cafeteria*

3. Galley: *Naval term for kitchen*

4. Field Range M59: *A military-grade portable gasoline-burning engine. Used to cook a large quantity of meals in field conditions.*

5. PFT: *Physical Fitness Test. Tests Marines must complete every year to assess their physical readiness. In conjunction with the Combat Fitness Test, this test is one basis on which Marines will often prove their worth.*

6. NJP: *Non-Judicial Punishment. A level below Court Martial and above formal counseling, an NJP is an official punishment that can be meted out to Marines by Commanders without going through a court-martial process. It is akin to a misdemeanor.*

A

Zachary Hebert
Return to Jupiter

My father died of prostate cancer early in the morning on August 26th, 2012, in a rented condo in Jupiter, Florida. He was 56 years old. A hospice nurse was by his side and my sister was sleeping in the next room over. What happened on that date was the inevitable, long-feared surrender in the war he had been fighting for the better part of ten years. Some of the battles included managing an ever-expanding regimen of pills; female hormone treatments (with attendant hot flashes); chemo; massive weight loss; incontinence; morphine injections; and finally, in-home hospice care. My hard-fighting father missed not a rung on his long climb down the ladder of the Cancer Industrial Complex. Before he died I was young and aimless, but losing him catapulted me straight into adulthood.

Weeks before he passed, it was becoming apparent that my dad's health was in serious decline, so my sister and I knew it was time to head down to geriatric, sunny Jupiter. We were grateful to be with him on what we knew would be his last days, but that didn't make it any easier to be around a difficult man whose stubbornness and anger was magnified by the grueling experience of late-stage cancer. The memories of those days in the condo come in snatches: the crinkle of the faux-leather couch I slept on, the off-white walls and shaggy carpet, the visible humidity hanging low in the morning above the golf course his condo overlooked, and the acrid tang of the smell of soiled adult diapers in the corner of my dad's bedroom. But mostly, I remember the bits and pieces of conversation about the past I had with my father in the early evenings, before he was fully incapacitated by his morphine drip. "I love you and your sister more than anything in the world," he'd slur with moist eyes, in a moment of tenderness that might follow a bitter recollection about his divorce from our mom. "I'd do anything for you two."

I was broke, which was one of the reasons I decided I would have to leave dad and sister temporarily to work a short job in Colorado with my mom's partner, Jim. He was an art handler, and I was to help him install framed photography on a military base. When I came to the decision, my dad was still very cognizant. He was stick thin but could walk, watch bad movies, and enjoy a turkey melt on white bread with mayo on the side, followed by several vodka tonics, of course.

The doctors guessed he still had a month or so to live. So, I decided to fly back to Chicago, pick up a few shifts at the cafe I worked at, fly out with Jim to do the job in Colorado, then fly back to Florida from there to be with him during his last days. I told myself that if I left, I was not doing a bad thing, that I really needed the money, and that I would definitely see him again.

The day I left, he slowly, unsteadily walked out with my sister and I to the car. In his controlling way, he made sure that we were strapped in correctly, and in my argumentative way, I made sure to insist that the seatbelts were fine and that he was being too overbearing. A familiar tension between he and I flared up, but it faded away as quickly as it came. We both seemed to jointly realize the temporal nature of us being with each other. I hugged him tight and felt his bony body against mine. The smell of his aftershave filled my nostrils—a smell I realized I'd known my entire life. We each said "I love you" several times. Finally, I got in the car. As we pulled out of the parking lot, he leaned against his building watching us go, shades on, wind blowing through his still-voluminous hair, in that moment looking every bit the self-possessed, self-designated ladies' man he was before he got irreversibly sick. There leaned the master carpenter, the scuba diver, the pilot, the hockey player, the motorcyclist, the world-class drinker. In all of his swagger and confidence when he was at his best, there was my dad. The palm trees whizzed by as we merged onto the highway and I felt a sad clarity knowing that might be the last time I would ever see him.

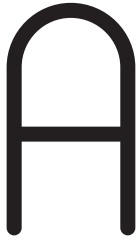
The morning of the day I was to leave for Colorado, as I made myself eggs and toast at my mom's house, my phone buzzed on the kitchen counter. When I looked over the caller ID said "Cory," and my stomach dropped to the floor. It was too early for my sister to be calling for a casual chat. I gently set my plate on the counter, turned off the music I was listening to, and took

a deep breath before I confronted what I knew was waiting for me. On the last ring, I picked up. "Dad's gone," said my sister. Then her voice dissolved into sobs.

After the call, my mom bought me the first available ticket to West Palm Beach from O'Hare. On the flight, I fought back silent tears and tried to keep it together, looking out the window as I went through various stages of grief, rage, regret, and self-loathing for having left my father before I absolutely needed to. I also left my sister alone to deal with his death. What kind of son was I? What kind of person was I? I was not prepared to fully admit it to myself at the time, but I think I knew I was tapping out when I left that day. My father loved my sister and I deeply, and many of the sacrifices he made in his life he made for us, but he could also be a hard man to love. Except for the occasional tender moment, we had our spats until the end. Being cooped up with him in his final days was painful and overwhelming, and maybe I was searching for an out. I'll be back, I told myself when I left. But I didn't get the chance. The wheels bouncing on the tarmac jolted me out of my guilty malaise. It was time to face the rest of my life.

By the time I arrived, my dad had already been whisked away to the funeral home for cremation. The only task now was for me, my sister, and our uncle to go through his belongings and clear out his condo. We took the sentimental stuff, threw out the useless stuff, and sold the valuable stuff. Cremation expenses and his outstanding debts had to be paid. The final step down the ladder. After his death, I thought about him every day. I dreamt about him. I had imaginary conversations and even arguments with him. The frequency of these thoughts faded as time went on, so I flagellated myself for not thinking of him all the time. Eventually, I stopped the self-torture. I let go a bit. One day, a few years later, I closed my eyes and tried to summon the sound of his voice, but it did not return to me.

I have not experienced anything else as gut wrenching as watching my father wither away. The strength I had to find during that time has never left me. Before I lost him, I feared his death would change me irreparably. Long after, I realized that it did, but hopefully for the better.



John Barno
Doomed Voyage

My journey as a writer would be similar to that of the maiden voyage of the R.M.S Titanic, but have no fear dear reader, for I see myself as the character Rose from the 1997 film, and my heart shall go on.

Growing up I knew I was meant to travel the sea of language. Around the age of 6, I pushed off into my first foray across these depths with seminal classics such as “Pizza Man” and “Grandpa’s Stinky Armpits.” Yes, they were 6 pieces of paper stapled on the crease far too many times turning them more into subtle weapons than anything else, but they proved that I had sea legs. As a budding young adventurer, I knew I was meant to see the world, but my parents had other plans.

By 18 I was to be wed... to Physical Therapy school. Sure, Physical Therapy was attractive, and stable, but I knew deep down in my heart that this was not a good fit. The waters of my soul churned and frosted and I knew that if I did not do something soon I would surely fall overboard and be lost beneath the dark, cold waves. But just then, I was caught. Someone grabbed ahold of my hand and pulled me back over the rails. His shoes were dirty, and his clothes fit poorly which meant they were either borrowed or lifted from someone more well fed, but he saved me.

He was comedy. It was with him I escaped out into the night, and we would dance on the decks with people from the Improv Olympic and The Second City and smoke cigarettes and spit and I was happy. I was even able to show my secret talents below deck and take the stage before strangers and new friends. Two nights into the show, however, we heard a sound; a ripping and cracking. We emerged on deck to see that an iceberg had struck the ship. It was COVID-19. The men at the helm saw it but were unable to

steer us out of the way and into safe waters, by negligence or obscured vision that night we shall never know (it was negligence).

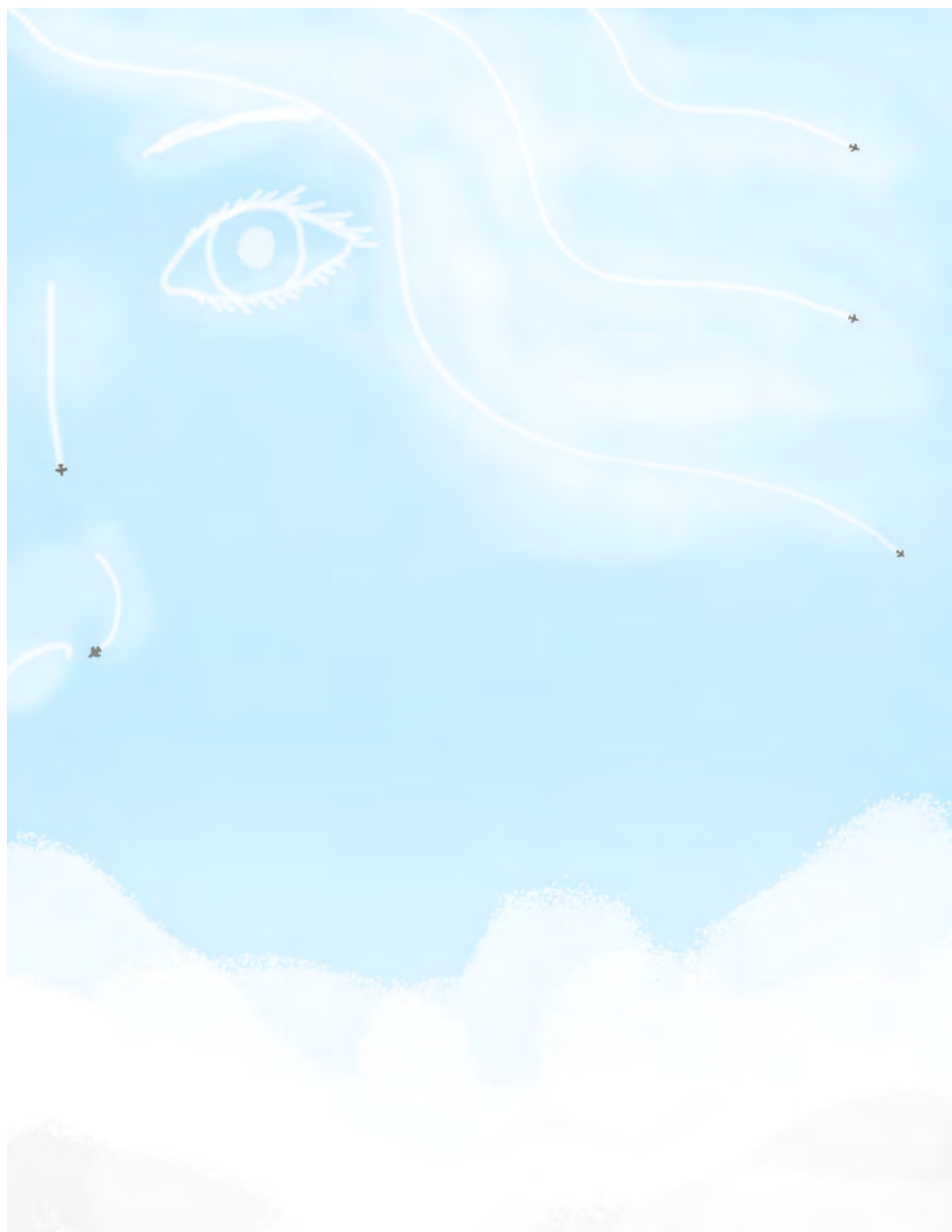
Us clowns and goons and puppeteers and jugglers scrambled over each other to find the nearest lifeboat as the freezing waters spilled into the hull and crept up and over the rails. But not all of us were going to make it as the lifeboats were taken up by those who could work from home or had already made their fortunes and could stand to sit idle for a handful of months. I was shoved onto a dining table that floated nearby in all the detritus. I would have to serve any and all that came upon the table looking for Lamb Ragu Hummus or a House-Made Stracciatella, but my feet were dry.

I looked for The Second City and found her struggling to hold onto a piece of driftwood, but her head was still slightly visible for now. It was then that I saw the Improv Olympic white with frost and completely frozen adrift in the mess left on the surface of the water. It wasn't perfect, but it saved me, in every way a person can be saved. Although there are no ships leaving port for a while, I can stand at the edge of the sea and know that I still desire to have the salt and the wind whip through my hair and against my face and be so cold and exciting that it leaves me breathless.

Gallery

Cynthia Hernandez Maintaining intimacy through a pandemic (silver print)



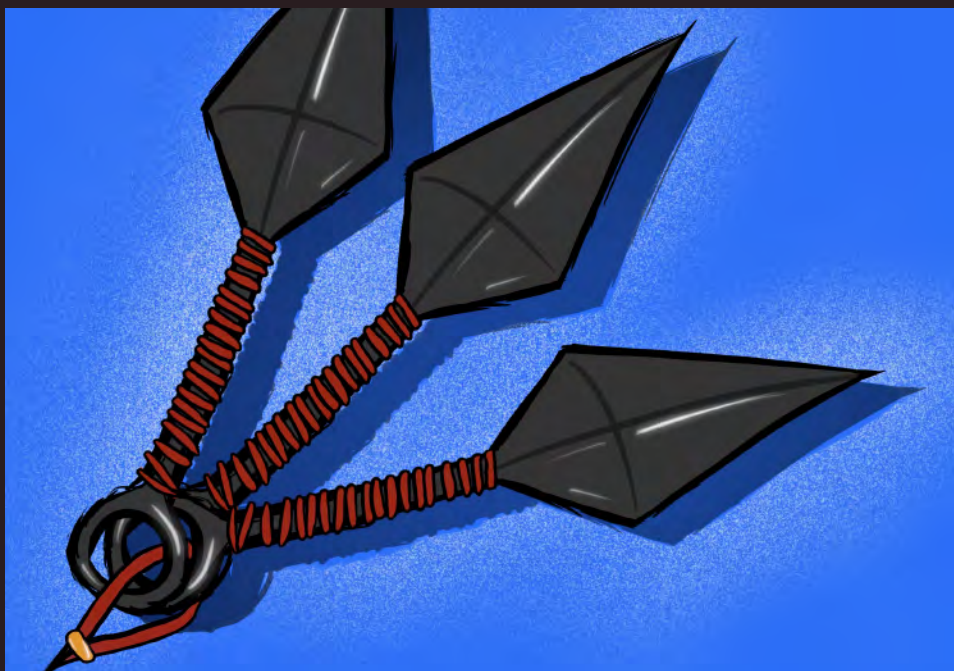


Andrea Malone Lady Of The Skies (digital)

Manuela Scolaro Coonce Trees (digital photo)



Michelle Hernandez Tripple Damage (digital)





Manuela Scolaro Coonce Resilient (charcoal on paper)





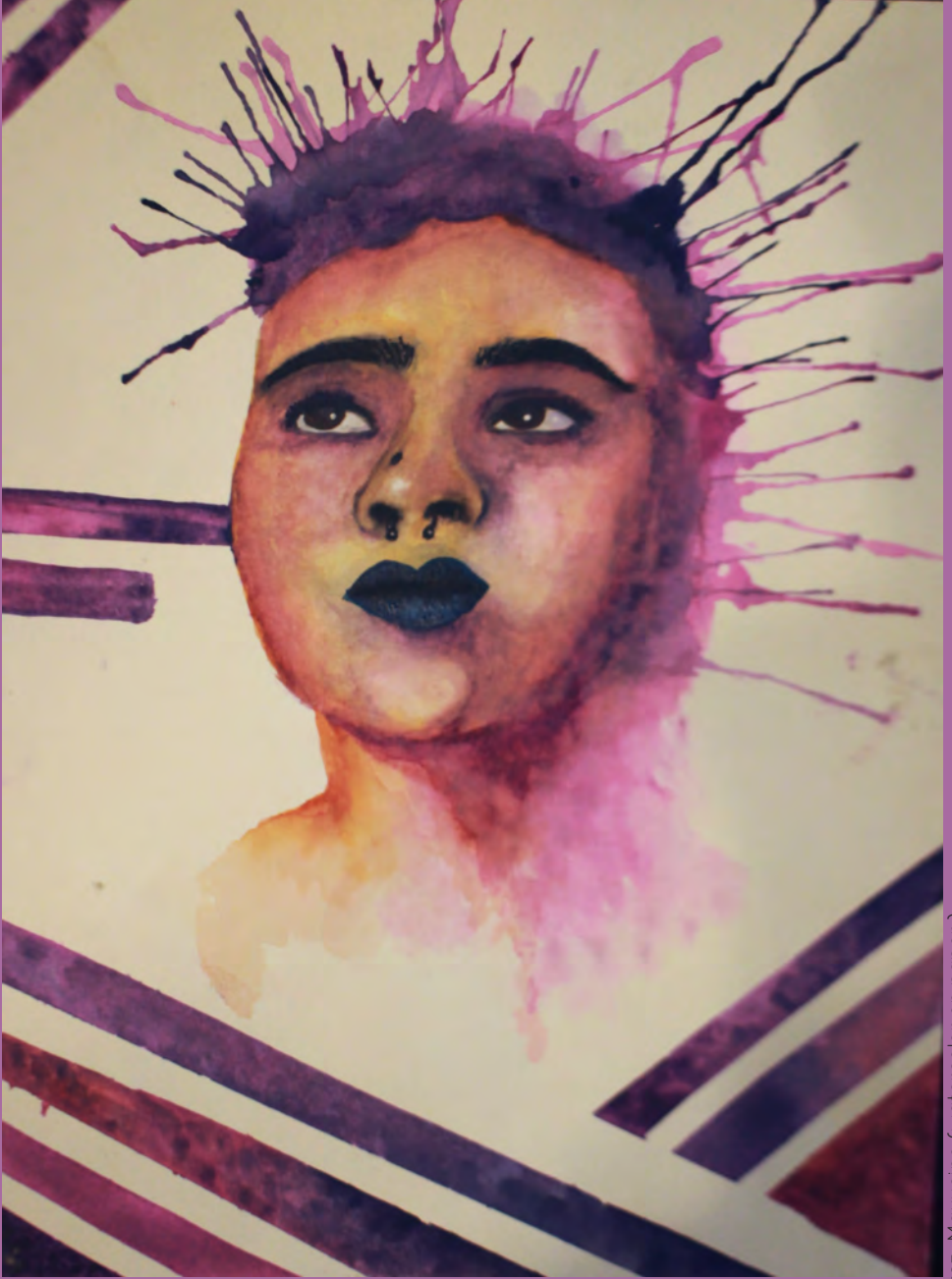
Jade Fierro monster under the bed (six makeup)





Marilyn Ramirez Wonders (pencil and charcoal on paper)





Marilyn Ramirez Mauveine (watercolor on paper.)



Katerina Christianopoulou Insanity (charcoal on paper)



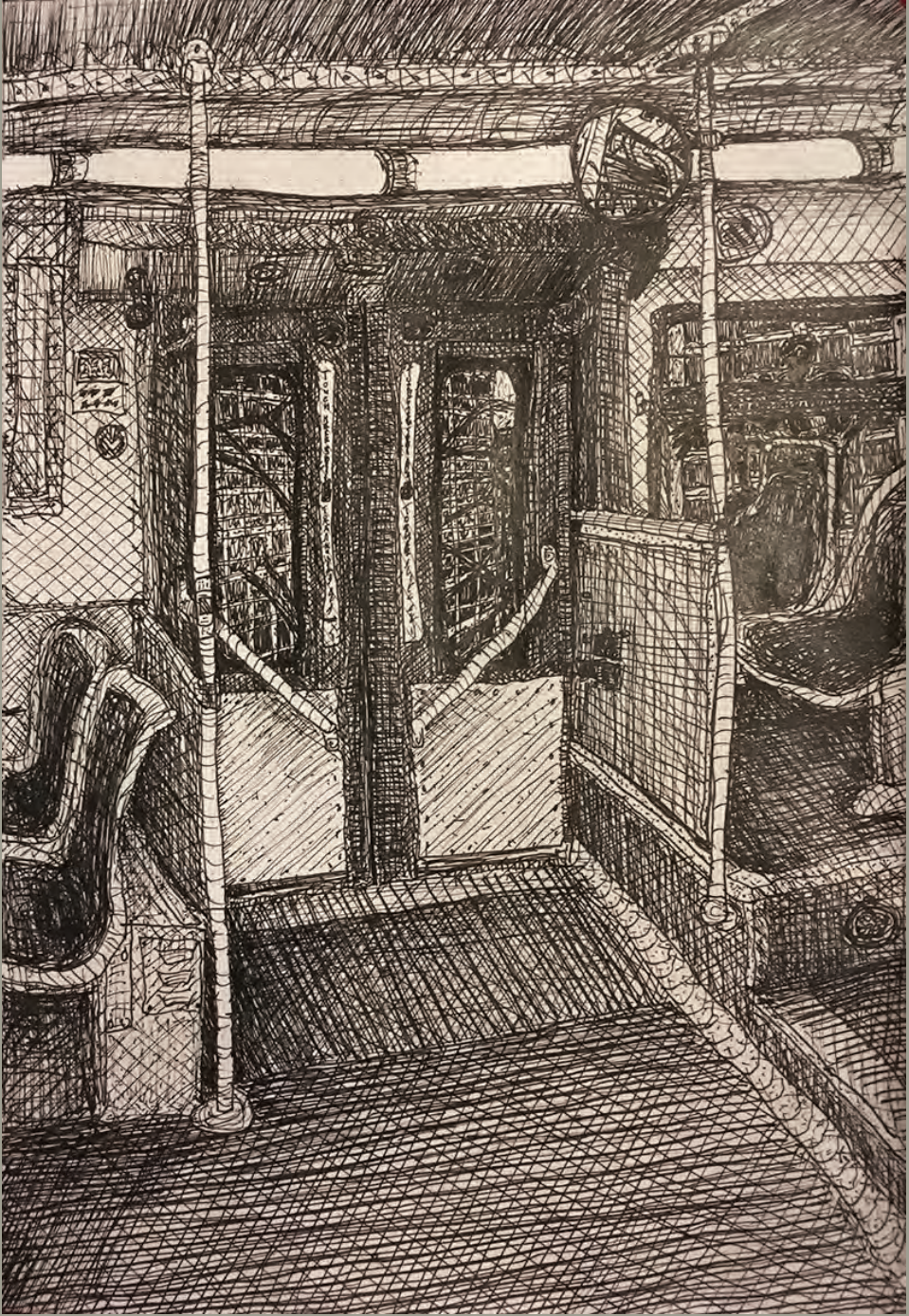
Emily Thornton Lost in Thought (silver print)

Katerina Christianopoulou Transfixion (silver print)





Isle Brandt "Uh, We've Got a Code Blue Over Here." (Ink on paper)





Adrian Dennis 2020 (watercolor, ink, sharpie on paper)





Daniel Salgado Swirly Gaze (ink, markers, pencil on paper)





Cynthia Hernandez Please Please Please Let Me Get What I Want (Ink, markers, pencil on paper)

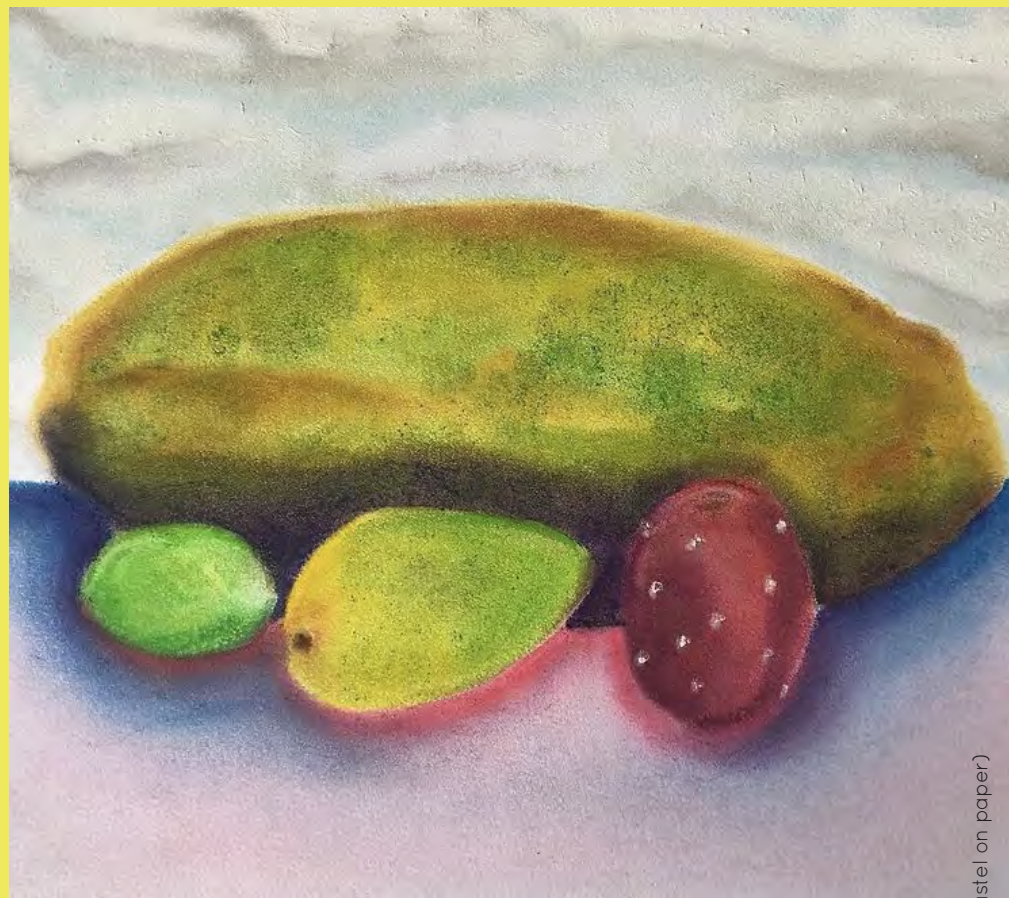




Emily Thornton Human at Heart (silver print)

Karissa Reyes King of Light (oil on canvas)

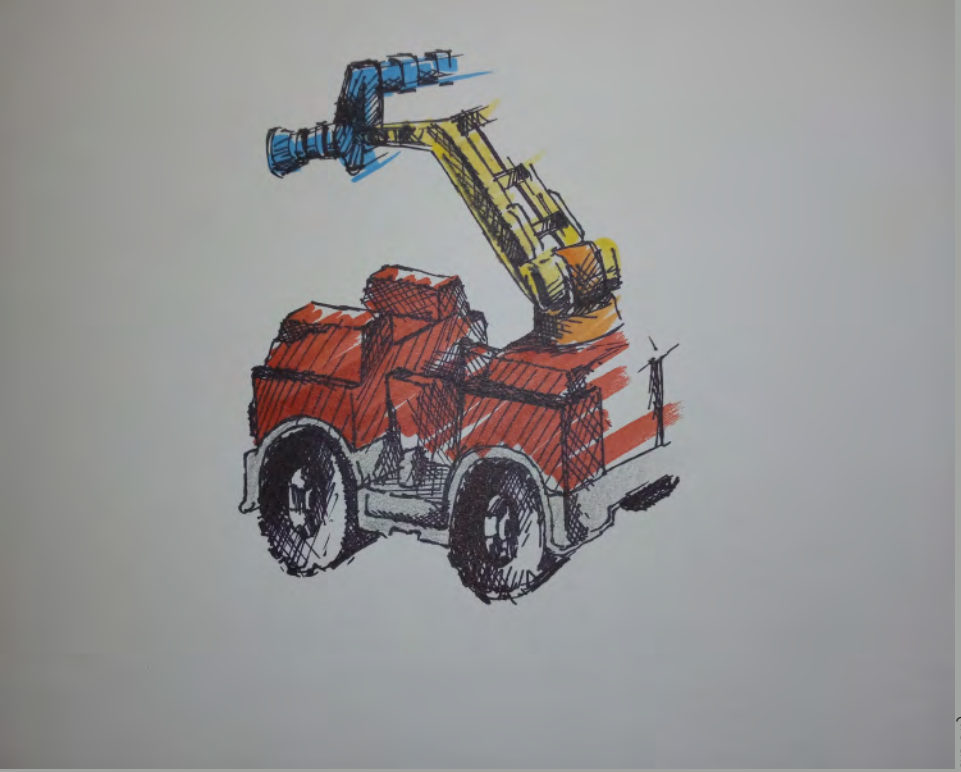




Hannah Grajciar - Frutas No PURGATÓRIO (pastel on paper)

Denisha Barbary - Green Fruitful Soul (digital photo)





Pedro Castillo Little Red (graphite and color marker on paper)

Clayton Dibble Sleeping Nugget (carbon pencil on paper)



C. Dibble '20



Karissa Reyes Emotion Unveiled (oil on canvas)





Devona Middleton Shifting (acrylic on canvas)





Leonardo Cruz Silent Self Portrait (digital)



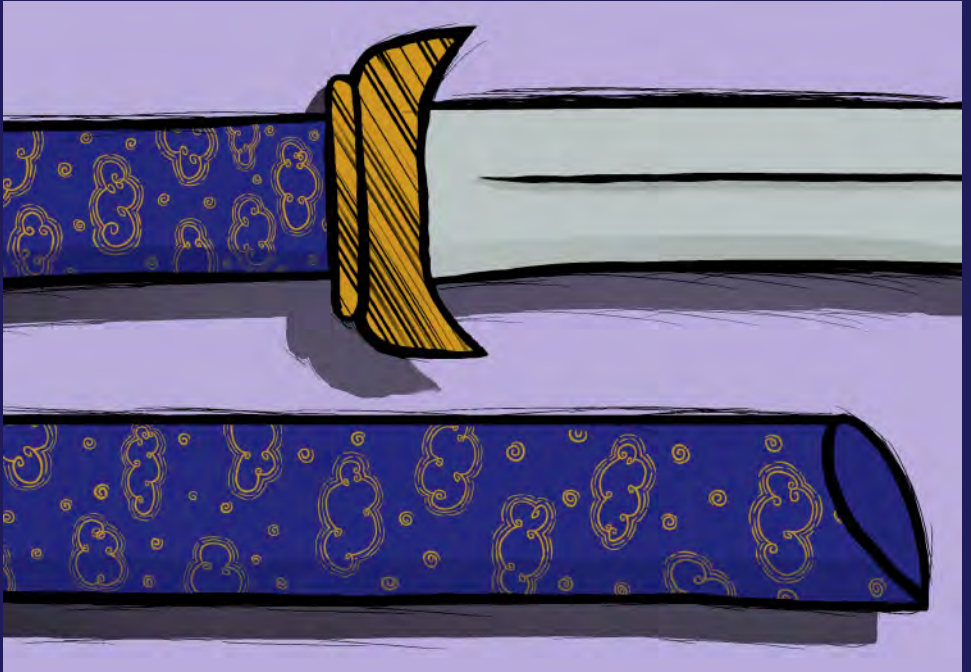


Adrian Dennis Gemini (watercolor on paper)

Caleb Langner Tiger pattern (digital / Adobe Illustrator)



Michelle Hernandez Sky of Mercy (digital painting)





Jacob Wachenheimer Milkweed Sunrise (digital photo)



Yu Chen Moon (ceramics)





Raul Raymundo Among Us (digital painting)

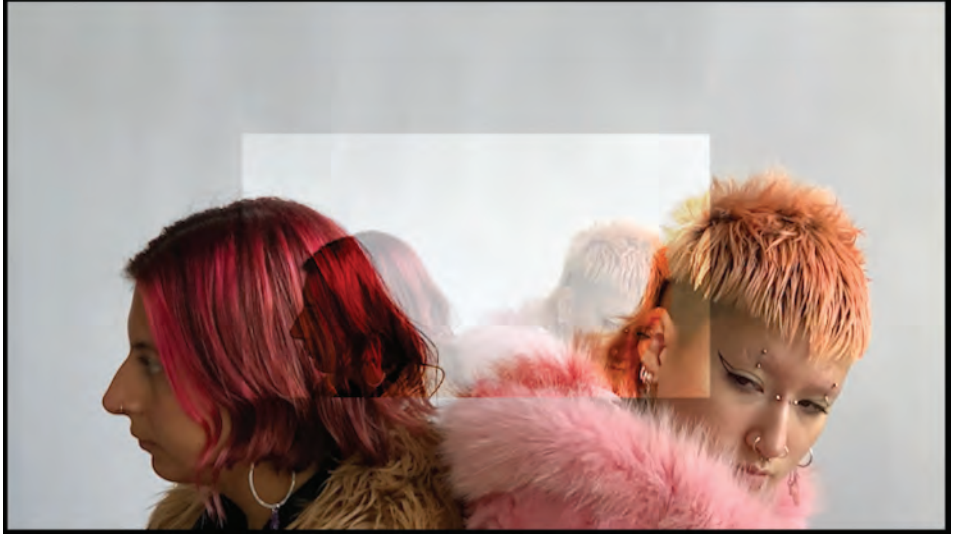




Thais Romero Roaring Twenties (acrylic on canvas)

Christopher Ramsey Modern Revolutionary (oil on canvas)





Matthew Martinez Haptic (video still 3)



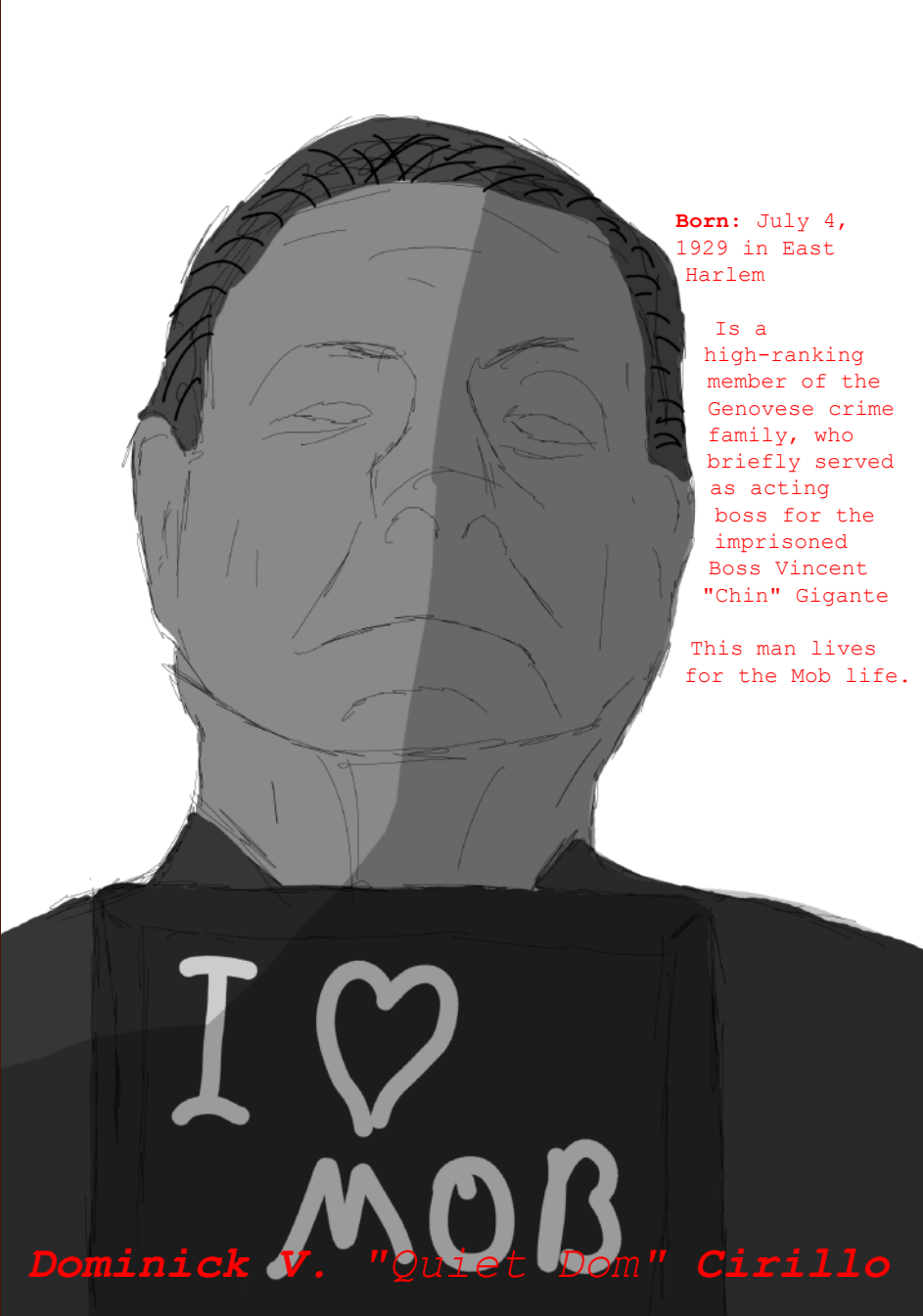
Matthew Martinez Haptic (video still 1)

Katerina Christianopoulou Unconditional Surrender (C-print)





Daniel Salgado Orange Fire (ink on paper)



Born: July 4,
1929 in East
Harlem

Is a
high-ranking
member of the
Genovese crime
family, who
briefly served
as acting
boss for the
imprisoned
Boss Vincent
"Chin" Gigante

This man lives
for the Mob life.

Dominick V. "Quiet Dom" Cirillo



Jacob Wachenheimer Doug (digital photo)

ENJOY THE GREAT OUTDOORS



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1776

CELEBRATING OUR NATION'S
TRICENTENNIAL

2076



Rosa Duran Team A (digital photo)



Yu Chen Kitten and me (ceramics)



ΤΑ Ἑπτὰ Θεάματα



ΓΚΙΖΑ ◦ ΒΑΒΥΛΩΝ ◦ ΕΦΕΣΟΣ
ΟΛΥΜΠΙΑ ◦ ΑΛΙΚΑΡΝΑΣΣΟΥ
ΡΟΔΙΟΣ ◦ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΕΙΑΣ

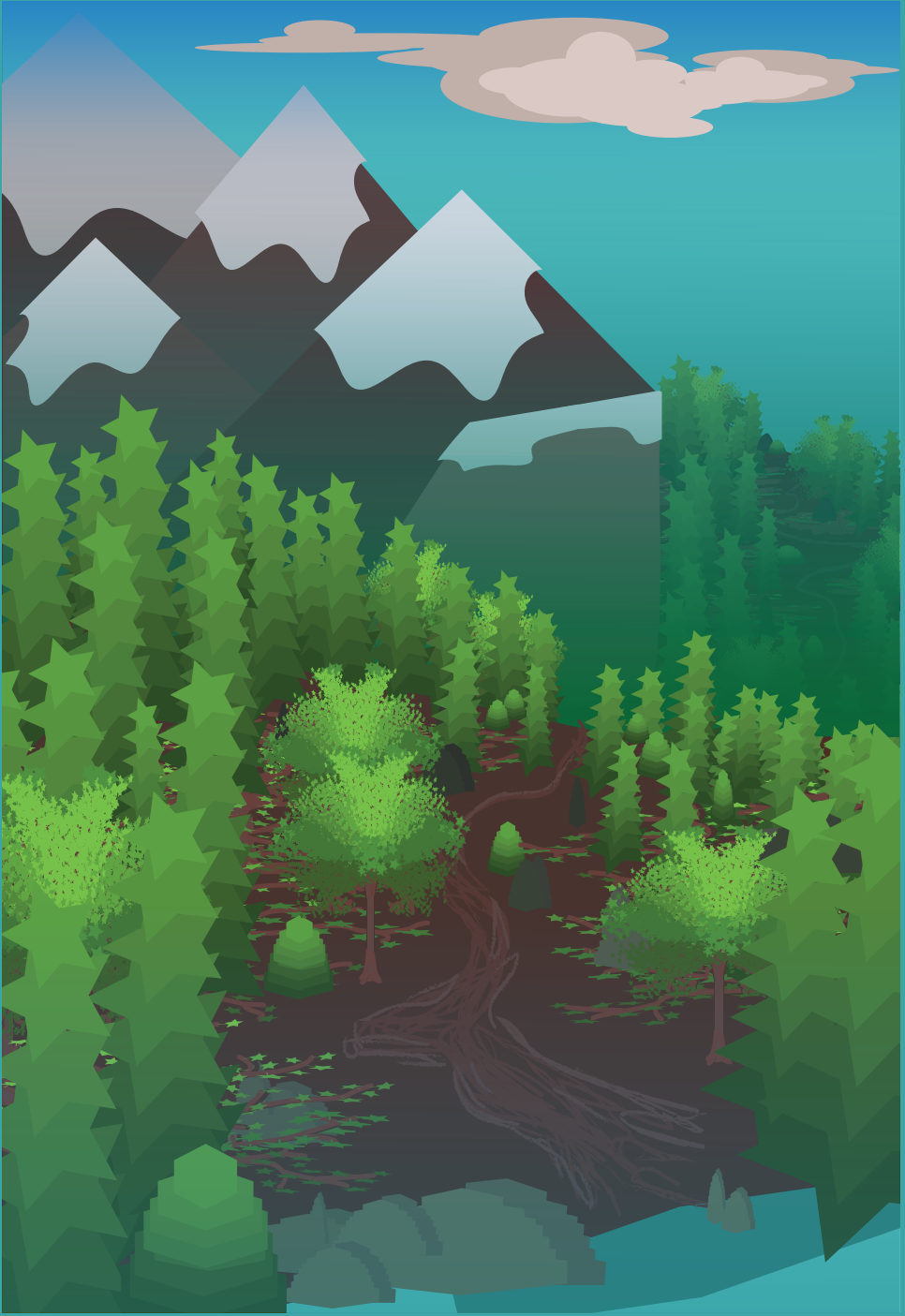
Curtis LoFaro The Seven Wonders (digital drawing)





Isaac Rhea Pond (oil on canvas)

Ross Gallagher Mountain Landscape (digital/vector painting)





Daniel Bubienczyk Mythical Beast (digital painting)