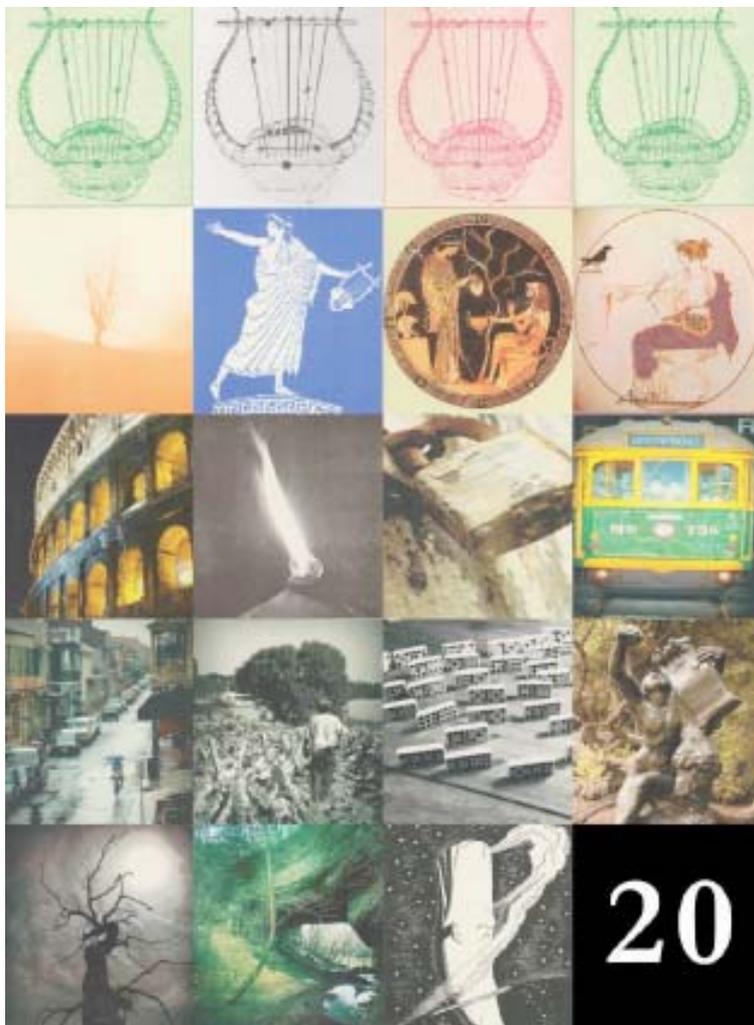


ORPHEUS

The Literary Journal
of
Lindsey Wilson College



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ORPHEUS

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ORPHEUS

SPRING 2018



The Lyre of Orpheus Placed Among the Stars
Drawing by Eduard von Engerth (1818-1897)

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All submissions to *Orpheus* must be typed and must contain the following information: name, phone number, local address, class, major, and hometown of the writer/artist. All artwork and photographs should be submitted in camera-ready black and white.

Editorial and other staff positions are open to any current Lindsey Wilson College student based upon experience or interest.

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Front Cover, “Past *Orpheus* Covers: A Collage,” by Skyler Smith

Back Cover Photo “El Eclipse,” by Arnoil Garcia

Preface

Dr. Tip H. Shanklin

A tree rising. What a pure growing. Orpheus is singing.
~ Rainer Maria Rilke, from *Sonnets to Orpheus*

In the inaugural volume of *Orpheus*, as the founder and first faculty adviser, I wrote about the need for a literary journal at our college that would provide a forum for the creative talents and voices of our students, regardless of their major or class standing. As this is the twentieth anniversary edition of the journal, it is especially gratifying to say that it has more than fulfilled that need. The hundreds and hundreds of poems, short stories, photographs, and art works that over the years have filled the covers and pages of *Orpheus* serve as archival milestones in both the life of the journal and the lives of all the student contributors. Their energy and dedication has helped keep the journal vibrant and ever growing. In looking ahead, while I am confident that *Orpheus* will continue (excellence is a never-ending journey), as the ancient Greeks cautioned, one cannot rest on one's laurels, and so a new initiative is in the works to keep Orpheus singing for another twenty years.

Lastly, I would like to include a poem I wrote especially for the inaugural volume of *Orpheus* at the editors' request. At the time, it was my vision of the future I wished for the journal's purpose and success. Happily, that vision continues.

Wild Should A River Be

A river should be wild and
hard to cross – as hard as . . . no, harder, even, I think,
than a simile or a metaphor
for that which is difficult.

But what is it that happens?
The artifice of a bridge is constructed,
first of mind design, and site plan,
then body-built – hands, backs, sweating
over and across the river's threat to connection
of life to life,
of town to town,
of friend to friend,
even now impeding the commerce that once needed
and used its watercourse way.

But no. A bridge is too easy once it's there
suspended in and defying place,
hurrying the time,
easing the effort
it would otherwise take to cross
the river.

Wild should a river be, sufficient in its swift flowing,
even overachieving sufficiency, when, in Spring,
its form – such as it seems to the eye to have – floods past
the leaning sycamores,
spreading round and over the bridge
into the fenland,
the low, bottom earthfield, the dark loam of life.

And the mind could – *should*, one might say – be
freed to river itself – think of it! – from noun to verb
(I river, you river, she/he rivers);
the rivering mind of poem-making
and storycraft,
of line and sketch;
the rivering mind

headed through the rich vale
of thought and language and vision,
without the threat of disconnection,
holding us and keeping us,
ironically boundless, rivering,
rivering downstream,
you and I,
together,
toward what is
new.

THS 3/18

dawn

Humans

Christopher Nettleton

"This is very impressive, my Lord."

"Thank you. But you sound as if you have reservations."

"Well, yes."

"Speak freely."

"Those humans, the ones that look kind of like you, they're kind of defenseless."

"Yes. They are."

"If they ever leave, they'll die. They have no claws or fangs, and they're too slow to avoid predators."

"You are right."

"So you just made them to keep you company here? Unable to leave you?"

"Almost. I gave them a much higher intelligence than most other creatures."

"I see. They'll go out and see the behaviors of other creatures and emulate them."

"To an extent, yes. They'll see lions and live in prides. They'll see wolves and hunt in packs. They'll see vultures and begin to scavenge. They'll see ants and hoard their supplies. They may even see us and build tools."

"Well, there's still a big problem with that. You know that I don't mean to criticize your works, my Lord."

"I know you. You simply wish to understand."

"So these humans, using intelligence, will begin to rise as individuals. One may rise as a leader over other humans. But all humans, even any alpha human, would live in fear of crossing the wrong human. Eventually, the alpha human would die, and the pack would lose all the knowledge and experience that the alpha had. He wouldn't have wanted to share it. Sharing such knowledge would have made the alpha easy to overthrow."

"You're almost right. You forget that they are intelligent. They won't leave the Garden for long, even though they do have the option to survive out there. They have everything they need here, without having to live in fear of predators or each other. No alpha human would ever rise here. There would be no reason to, not here."

"But out there, they still could, right?"

"They'll come back. Leaving me just causes them pain and hardship. And they will be welcomed back."

"I see. Once their independence experiment goes wrong, they can just return. So I guess it comes back to my original question. You created these humans just to keep you company? Unable to leave?"

"Again, you're missing something. Look there."

"Oh. Is that what it appears to be?"

"Yes, my friend."

"They get to have that kind of knowledge too?"

"I dearly hope not. I told them not to take it."

"Then why is it here?"

"They are intelligent. They have free will. I expect they will take it given the choice."

"My Lord!"

"I don't want them to take it."

"If they have morality and eternal life, they will be like us!"

"Do not worry. If they take the knowledge, they will leave. They will be escorted out."

"They'll die out there!"

"Yes. But they won't go into extinction out there."

"Because they'll live in packs, in fear? But they'll never go any farther than that!"

Yes. Some will live in packs, in fear, as you say. But most will live in families, in love."

"Humans? In families?"

"Yes. Their newfound morality will allow and even demand it. It will allow them to pass down knowledge from generation to generation, because no parent will fear their child using knowledge against them in love as they would in fear. Therefore, humans will grow as a species and thrive on knowledge."

"You know, my Lord, that if given the educated choice, some of these humans will kill themselves spiritually. Maybe all of them will."

"Yes. It will hurt me. But I have a Plan to win my humans back."

"I see."

"No. You don't. But you will soon."

"My Lord?"

"Yes, friend?"

"Your Plan hinges on these humans betraying you, right?"

"Yes. Over and over and over. Every single one of them will betray me."

"Will that not hurt you?"

"I know they will hurt me, but that does not mean that it will ever not hurt. Nor will I ever give up on them."

"Will the pain caused by this choice you give them make them hate you for giving it to them?"

"It may. But many others will love me for it."

"My Lord, please allow me to take that burden from you. Allow me to be hated, to present the choice, to represent evil and sin in the world."

"I could not ask you to take on that burden, Lucifer. You are the angel of Light, but the humans would always see you as the king of Darkness."

"My Lord, you know I am the only one who can do this for you."

"So I do."

And so it was that Lucifer presented man with a choice.



Esther Olson

corona

Patter-Cake & Eggs: Grandmother's Special

Hannah VanArsdale

Three teaspoons of mashed potatoes
Three tablespoons of flour
Mix together with a little oil
And fry on high
Flip over when crackling and press

Two eggs
One-half teaspoon of oil
Cook on low until white
Place on top of patter-cake
And mix them together on plate

They say memories come and go,
but I never gave it much thought.
My grandmother –
she can no longer recall dates,
yet remembers this recipe perfectly.

She called me once,
sobbing and apologizing
because she forgot my birthday,
when she had given wishes the day before
to be sure she would not forget.

I've yet to hear a sound more heartbreaking.

She still remembers my favorite meal.

Every weekend that I come home
she fixes me patter-cake and eggs:
The eggs slightly undercooked,
prepared so early that its gone cold,
still made with love.

With constant worries,
she makes our family feasts

so she feels useful again.
We, in turn, eat and give thanks
and treasure her and all she does.

She's taught me the recipe
many times throughout the years.
Yet despite my attempts,
I always forget the steps
and lose the notes.

I know that one day
she won't be there to remind me.
But I refuse to forget ever again:
Both the recipe
and her love for me.
With love, your granddaughter,

Speaking From the Heart

Hosanna Konsavage

A hundred faces turn to stare at me. Dull, tired eyes and fancy clothes glitter in the dim light like stars ready to give up their shine altogether. A microphone is pressed into my hand as a voice prompts me to speak.

“And what do you want to say about the trip, sweetie?”

The faces seem to melt away. I’m there, on the church stage with my family, but somehow, I’m not there. The spotlights glare at me and cast shadows on the audience. But I’m swept away, back into the world of foreign languages and dark-faced children who have hopes just like me.

We step into an airport. People turn to stare at us as we, a family of nine, enter a country not our own. Yellow signs flash their welcome. *Bienvenidos a Honduras*. The letters form sweeping words, but my mind doesn’t understand. My parents collect our sixteen suitcases, stuffed full with belongings as well as the medicine, toothbrushes, and other things Daddy will need for his medical clinics. Wheeled carts come our way as dozens of workers attempt to help us with our luggage. I see my parents protest, then give up and smile as they tip the foreigners who soon scurry away. *¡Feliz viaje!*

And then we’re in the missionary’s home. Barbed wire lines the fence surrounding the compound. We hear that a week before the gates hadn’t been locked, and a man came in with a gun. He stole money and jewelry before escaping. “Police here are equally corrupt,” the missionaries admit, “so crime commonly goes unpunished.”

My eyes grow wide, and the air feels cold. For a moment I wish I hadn’t taken the first step into this foreign country. But a new friend comes and takes my hand. She’s eight, two years younger than me. Her eyes are nearly black, but they shine like a butterfly’s wings. They hold my gaze as she says one of the few words she knows: “Come.”

We play on the seesaws. Up and down. Down and up. We laugh because the sun is warm, and life is beautiful. No one has to speak. Strangely, our hearts can talk without words. Behind us are tall trees that are laced with carnation pink flowers. I don’t know what their names are, but I can’t keep from admiring the delicate buds. Bees fly from blossom to blossom, little wings quivering like silvery claps of thunder. The fragrance around me smells like spring back home, full of the melody of honeysuckle. But it’s even sweeter.

My friend draws me inside her home. Vibrant beads are scattered

across a table. We take care to line them in rows of our favorite colors on pegboards. I make designs of pink and violet; the colors seem to dance together. We exclaim over the creations around us as each child's fingers create a treasure all their own. A hot iron presses the beads down. They melt into shapes and designs. Somehow, here in this foreign country, we find something that we've been missing all along.

And then Sunday comes. Mom pins my hair up because of the hot breeze. A low, brick church greets us as we find seats among the warm bodies. Voices rise in song, and I stumble along. The smooth, foreign language enriches my favorite melodies. Adults and children clap and sway, and I watch. Their clothes are dirty, and bare feet litter dust on the floor. But I can't seem to focus on that. My eyes are caught on their shining faces and happy smiles.

As the pastor speaks in the same musical language, I watch three little girls who sit in front of me. They have long, dark hair like the midnight sky. I wonder if they have dreams like me. Do they think of themselves as princesses and hope to discover their own Prince Charming one day? Their brown skin is the color of chestnuts, and it's smooth and beautiful. Is it like the desert, sweeping plains of dusty beauty? And their eyes, are they an oasis offering hope when all else seems so dry?

One girl turns to pick little bugs out of her sister's hair. The lice are thrown on the floor, and I cringe. My hair starts to itch; is it my imagination? The girl smiles at me, and I forget everything. Her cheek bones are high and friendly. She's a girl just like me.

When we go to Sunday School, I sit among a handful of other students. The teacher's voice sweeps around me. She uses her hands to explain the story, so I watch them. They reach out to find colorful paper. I take scissors and cut each piece to size, and, around me, the other children do the same. We rub stick glue back and forth. The clear paste sticks to my fingertips, and we laugh as our fingers try to become one. Soon, a little house forms on yellow paper. The teacher tells us to write words above the colorful home. I obey, even though I don't know what the strange letters say. When we finish, I look at the other masterpieces around me. Little girls smile as we realize ours look alike. We can only giggle, but somehow that's enough.

As I leave the Sunday School with my paper in hand, a girl touches me. She has dimples around her smile and a sweep of hair that falls into her eyes. A melodic voice shares secrets and stories, but I don't understand. Our brown eyes meet. I shake my head and try to tell her that I don't speak her language. She stops, and we just stand together. Her shirt

is pink and yellow and green. I touch it and point to my own brown and blue dress. We smile and wave goodbye.

When we go to the supermarket, I still can't say a word. Bright fruits surround us. Vegetables of all shapes and sizes are stacked in rows. My parents pause to stare at the strange meat, and my stomach lurches when I find out what they are. *Huevos de toros*. As we finish shopping, we stand at a check-out line. My baby brother reaches out and clicks a button, turning the whole system off. Screens go black, and my mom's face turns red. The cashier lady clicks her tongue, her hands flying to get everything back together. As we leave, we laugh together because we made another memory. I ask my parents why we paid over a thousand dollars for sunscreen, milk, and water. They tell me money is different in this country; they call it *lempiras* instead of dollars.

A few days later, we drive to another church where my dad organizes a medical clinic. Children line up with adults, hoping for a chance to be seen. My dad has been working at a clinic every day this week, but he still greets each patient with a smile. One lady has burns on her body. A boy has a broken arm.

I join one of my new friends as we pass out stickers to the children. We take care to pick perfect designs. A green monkey. A yellow sunshine. One boy with a half grin steps up and takes a sticker. I watch him as he goes back to the end of the line. After we give him five stickers, I cross my arms. The friend helping me tells me it's okay; we have plenty of others. I still think it's not fair, but we keep giving the children stickers. They run to their parents, chattering as they display their treasures.

The week passes much too quickly. I run and dance with children who don't speak my language. We find flowers and play games. At night, our parents let us run outside in the compound. Our team hides as the others count then try to catch us. I discover a good hiding spot, and they can't find me. But when I run to join my friends, we are captured and led to the play prison, laughing all the way.

And then I'm at the airport again. The same yellow signs watch as my family slips out of the crowds of beautiful, brown-faced people. We hug our friends, wishing time could have tarried a bit longer. As we fly over the ocean, I see puffy, white clouds below us like fields of cotton. I think of all we left behind.

And now here, on the stage at my church, I clutch the microphone between tight fingers. My voice fails me as I stare out over the sea of people. They're like waves, some tall, some short. Something sickly sweet

fills the air – too strong perfume. A woman yawns and folds her arms.

I whisper something about the foreign words I learned. My parents smile as I scurry back to stand with them, heart beating like the plane's rumbling motors. As we take our seats, I watch the people around us. Some smile through their make-up covered faces, others seem almost asleep. Their necks are dazzled with jewelry. But I look into their eyes and wonder what's missing.

Because I remember the little, brown faces across the ocean. I see their dimpled smiles and clapping hands. We had been silent friends, our hearts talking when our lips could not.

They have something we don't. And, sometimes, I wish I could go back and discover what we are missing.

My fingers touch one of the bead creations my friend had given me before we left. The reds and pinks had been melted together into a beautiful collage of colors. It's not the gift that makes my lips press tight. It's the memories.



Skyler Smith

Paper Gods

Kaitlyn Jackson

A distraught teenager digs through the clutter of desk drawer after desk drawer till she finds her prize – a small green book. Flipping through the tear-stained pages, past the flowers pressed onto pages of happiness, to create a new entry. A detail of her life, memories that range from miniscule to life altering all contained within this unremarkable book.

In the solace of an empty room that is the same green as the little book, the girl sits in the floor with her shoulders quaking as sobs escape her mouth. The year was 2012, a year marked by devastation that segued into 2013 and encompassable melancholia. That year, the teen turned to her pen and paper for comfort rather than her bed in the late hours of the night. During the daylight, when she was forced from her solace, she would get bombarded by questions delivered with false sincerity and concern. “How are you today? I am so sorry about your loss.”

The journal was the only alternative that the girl found peace in. The paper offered no false promises of better tomorrows, nor did it critique the girl’s silent tears as they slipped down her face onto its sleek pages. The paper allowed the fifteen-year-old to mangle and berate it, to rip it from its seams and carelessly discard it when words failed to express what she felt or when the words never looped just right or when the weight of everything became too much. The pages understood her grief far better than people, and accepted what she offered them without hesitation, like a sacrifice to a god for relief – for comfort. Call it blasphemous but those paper gods did more to relieve her pain than the God she was lectured on in church on Sundays.

The teen became an adult, and the little green book became the home to gardens of happiness, as well as the tear-stained ruins. She transitioned from melancholia to mourning, her narrative developed and in her shadow she left the nightmares that visited her each night. Along the journey she wrote a beginning and an end, chapters of life that would open and close as she progressed through them.

Writing was entrenched within her being, like blood, leaving a piece of herself – her very identity – along with the carefully crafted words. She escaped her self-imposed exile to a new community where she was taught to write far more than journal entries and found others that shared her need to deface paper with every thought.

Literacy is a tool I did not know how to use until my father passed away, until I was rendered into a lost fifteen-year-old girl without a means of processing the pain other than writing and reading. Before November 12, 2012, I could write a passing essay for classes, could read almost anything put in front of me – given that it was written in English – and I believed myself to be a master of these tools. Yet, in the days following my dad’s death, I abandoned all pretense of mastery or excellence and settled for scratches on a page written through tear-blurred eyes that eased a weight within my chest that no spoken sentiment had touched. I took to writing in that little green journal every day, multiple times a day. Anytime the feelings welled up and the loss became insurmountable I picked up a pen and opened those desk drawers. Until this point in my life I never used writing for me. Of course there had been countless writing assignments, and grades given on my written work, but those were for my teachers, the school, the state, the country – all so they could assess my knowledge. None of those volumes of tests and open responses had been personal, had contained me in such a way that I cherished them. My past was littered with dead trees, which slip by slip I had thrown away time and time again. It seemed as soon as I received an assignment back from the teacher it would find its way to a trash can, not because I cared about the assignments in any which way, but because I was indifferent toward them. All these papers were written with the sole intent of a passing grade at the forefront of my mind – while at night I sat down with paper and pen without intent or assignment only letting myself flow through the ink of the page as if my tears had run black and scattered across the white of the sheet to form lines and letters.

I’ve had a journal for almost every color of the rainbow – the original green to blue to white to gold to black. After the dependence I gained with journaling those two years post death date, I became incensed. Flipping through these monologues of mine is quite the experience years later, full of cringeworthy failed “romances” and humourous naivety. However, there is a marked difference between the girl of the green journal and the girl of the black journal in my middle desk drawer. It’s like an evolution, over time she has morphed from a person who wrote about perfect dates and girlhood crushes to one who writes about politics and justice. Perhaps that connection between writing and blood and soul have led me through these phases. The tears that so easily became ink baptised me in grief and I emerged a new person.

The art of journaling gave me a medium to move past my melancholia, and taught me that writing was not merely for grades or assignments

– it was for me. When my voice failed, me the words did not. Yet, this lesson was not grasped overnight. I did not wake up one morning, pale light streaming in the blue curtains, to the epiphany that I could write for myself at school, in the assignments. Only after years did the invisible words between the 12 pt. font prompts yield to my eyes “write what you care about.”

The year was 2014, two years post death date, and the girl sat in her English Literature class, Hemingway’s *A Farewell To Arms* open in front of her. Fascinated with death and the existential argument that beyond this earthly existence there is nothing, but hesitant to write in such a way in anything other than a journal. Still, paper gods and invisible words urged for sacrifice – for the ink that flowed through my veins and welled from my eyes.

I did not cry while writing the essay, the ink on the page was not my own tears. I did not fracture into sobbing shoulders and red eyes and tear tracks – I was not weak like everyone in the world thought I should be. Journaling enabled that, enabled me to pursue a topic I cared about and felt emotion toward, to produce a paper I adored. Despite the category of the writing, with essay being firmly entrenched within the academic in my mind, I wrote about more than just *A Farewell to Arms*, I wrote about my life. So began the experiment – the exploration of how and when and where I could use emotions as fuel and academic writing as expression.

Three years later, I sat at a desk in a crowded classroom, “Harrison Bergeron” open before me. My head was whirling, “Harrison Bergeron” was not only a short story by Kurt Vonnegut but also a movie that my dad and I had watched together. While my dad had always thoroughly enjoyed the societal implications within the film, I had always just enjoyed spending the time with him. I could have cried, could have openly wept, gaining the attention of not only Dr. Mollis but of everyone else in the class. Emotions overwhelmed me in that moment, but I did not cry, in spite of it all I held it together. More than that, I decided on that day that “Harrison Bergeron” was going to be my motivation, my medium for expressing everything I was feeling. The result was an eight-page text, that, if I am being honest, challenges a hypocrisy that I understood all too well. The divides between what someone says and someone means – in the paper I targeted America’s government but in my head I was writing the judgement for all of the individuals who had given false condolences and ill-suited advice.



Esther Olson

Rubens

k. brown

I remember the first
time I saw myself naked:
Uncovered, commemorated
in a book of great masters.

I was gilded there, glorified
in those careful glossed prints.
The honeyed swell of hip stretched
to each marked curve, roll and dimple —
Pale, soft and spilling
from the page.

A figure early learned to
hate, hide, prod, and purge
herself in secret {in cold empty dark}
Stood gently proud, reflected in an oil-streaked
mirror of heaven-spattered canvas,
Framed and illuminated in precious gold.

Cherubim and men alike
knelt gaping, grasping
groveling at our feet,
and I looked into knowing, plaintive eyes
Seeing for the first time
{and wondering how the world had kept the secret}
that I had been a masterwork
for centuries.

Under the Crimson Roses

Hosanna Konsavage

Bells chime around me,
perfect unison with each drop of rain.
Gray skies release their flood winds,
torrents drowning the cobblestones beneath.
But I am safe here
under an umbrella of crimson roses.
Sweet fragrance surrounds me,
blossoms laughing in the mist.
Rain kisses the petals, embraces tight
and slips away
until hovering at the edge.
Each droplet clings, shimmering
like a crystalline diamond.
Waiting, watching, whispering
they fall down,
down
until shattering on the stones
wet against my bare feet.
Another drop falls, continual tears,
yet I am safe under the whispering bells.
Lonely streaks of rain line the umbrella,
crimson roses looking down
to diamonds broken at my feet.



Skyler Smith

White

Micah Stewart-Wilcox

White is the color of loss.
I remember the time when she was with
me.
Together we made music:
I would pluck a cordless tune,
She would sing subtle sublime.
Sometimes,
if I listen,
I can still hear our song.
A hollow melody.

Wait lol never mind she texted back.

Oceanicity

Hosanna Konsavage

The waves lap gentle, lick the shore
singing a song of times forgotten,
but soon they too will forget the melody.
I see sand and trees, breeze quivering through –
they laugh, dancing to a song of their own imagination.
Do they know my past,
the pain, the hurt, the tears?
Can they read my thoughts?
They just live life, reaching for the sun.

And I am alone.
I don't need them.
I am strong enough.

Leaves tower high; I am lost.
I am like a wave, stolen away
by the ocean's icy fingers.
But something else is pulling on my heart;
in this place, I hear Someone call my name.
The voice is a mere whisper on the wind
but stretches across the sea.
Dare I answer?

Hope

Hailey Fox

I look up from my coffee and see a young girl of about twelve sitting across the café. She catches my eye and immediately ducks her head down to what looks like a sketch pad in front of her. My curiosity piqued, I study her: faint hint of a tan running up her arms, purple high top Converse, jeans cut off at the knee, a loose, black tank top, and a dark purple beanie covering her head. She glances up at me and quickly averts her eyes again. At first I think she is nervous of being out alone, and go back to my coffee. Then as I sip, and constantly add sugar, I realize the girl is drawing something. Still that does not explain why she is still looking at me. My hair has fallen over my shoulder and I run a hand through it pushing the thick tangle back. I hear a gasp and see the girl leaning forward studying me intently. Before I can do anything else she turns abruptly back to her sketch pad.

I am trying to flag down my waiter when the girl cautiously approaches me, clutching her sketch pad to her chest like a shield. “Hi,” she says meekly.

“Hello.” I smile back at her encouragingly. “Would you like to sit down?”

Deftly she slides into the seat across from me. Tentatively she relaxes and places the book on the table. Looking uncomfortable she stares at her feet. “I love your hair; it’s very long and pretty,” she blurts out. Then looks appalled at her own statement. I laugh.

“Thank you, I love it, too. Sometimes I feel as if I would die without it.”

Not saying anything the girl flips the book open and through many pages of drawings. The few I glimpse are beautifully drawn and presented. *She must be very proud*, I think. Finally she stops on one and turns the pad to where I can see it properly.

This drawing was done in colored pencils and what looked like water markers. The background is of a waterfall emptying into a shallow pool, surrounded by moss covered boulders in a thick forest; the pool’s water is crystal-clear blue. At the center of the drawing is a girl in a pale lavender dress with her feet dipped into the pool up to mid-calf. Her face is joyous as she looks down at her reflection on the water’s surface. In the water her eyes were dancing with vibrancy and awe. Rich auburn hair flowed down around her waist making her face look bright. She was

reaching out to touch the image's hair. It was then that I took in the young girl's appearance. She was still pretty but her face was not framed with flowing fire. Her head is shaven and her eyes hold hope and joyous longing.

With a start I realize the girl in the drawing looks just like her maker sitting across from me. *But why draw herself this way?* I wonder silently. I sit and stare at her, unable to utter even the correct response to such a detailed sketch. After a few minutes the girl blushes and starts to get up. My brain struggles for something to say. "Why did you draw yourself this way?" Oh, not the best phrased question in the world, but at least she sits back down.

She seems almost sad as she looks at me. Then slowly, she pulls off the beanie. Instead of hair falling forward around her face, her forehead blends upward into the smooth shaven skin of her head. "My dad shaved my head about four months ago when the first chunk fell out. I had just started chemo but they hadn't thought my body would react so fast. Doctors actually decided it was my disease that caused the premature hair loss. You see, it isn't very common. In fact, I'm not even sure how to say it.

"My hair never would grow past my chin, even when I was little. It was thin and silky and the shiniest blonde with tiny reddish streaks. My dad would call me his little mermaid; he doesn't call me that anymore. Only my name now, always. Still I love your hair. I always wished to have long hair like my mom. When I saw you sitting here I had to draw your hair, it is just like I always wanted mine to be. Please don't be angry with me for upsetting you." The girl drops her head and breathes deeply.

Wiping tears from my eyes I finally manage to flag down my waiter. Moving around the table I grab the girl's hand. "Come on, let's go." With a tiny nod she stands, still clutching the sketch pad. The place I have in mind is not very far way. We have walked two blocks from the café before she speaks, "Where are we going?"

"To Locks of Love. What is your name?"

"Hope."

Faith

Hailey Fox

I take a deep breath and push open the door, keeping my head down as I order a hot chocolate and sit. My drink is luke-warm by the time I realize the waitress has brought it out to me. I sigh and run a hand over my head out of habit. The uneven ridges feel almost awkward under my fingers; it's amazing how easy it is to forget – for a little while at least. I lean back and look at the people around me: a couple in the far corner arguing, a little old couple murmuring and casting me sympathy glances, and a little girl who looks about eight or nine by the front counter.

She sees me looking at her and glances around her, then, almost enthusiastically, waves at me. I am stunned, no one has shown me this much joy in probably a year. Even my family and dearest friends look at me uncomfortably sometimes. I want to cry as I smile back at the girl.

Grabbing a to-go cup she skips over to me and slides into the seat across the table. I blink at her in confusion, *is she out of her mind*. I reach up to pull my hat lower on my head and remember I left it at home. Oops. I try to prepare myself for the unavoidable. Still she only looks at me, a peculiar glint in her eyes.

“Why do you not wear a wig?”

I really did not expect that. My breath hitches in my throat and I sip my hot chocolate to buy time. My head is spinning, no one has ever asked me that. *How am I supposed to answer that?* I just stare blankly back at her.

“I think it's because you are pretty. You look very very pretty with no hair. But you know that already,” she states matter-of-factly. Then, as if an afterthought, she takes a drink.

What a strange little girl, I think. I run my hand over the ridges covering my head with a new thought. “Why do you think the scars make me very pretty?” I do not know why but this little girl's response is very important to me.

“It makes you look strong. Like you can go through anything. You could face the world and come out on top.” I have got to be giving her a you-are-crazy-look because she continues. “You are not afraid. People who have wigs aren't comfortable being themselves. Keeping your head like that is pretty, you are pretty. Everyone can see it.” I give her a doubtful look mixed with awe.

How can a little girl talk like this? I almost speak, but she is not finished. “If you love you like this others will too. And if they don't you

don't need them. My daddy told me that. You are not weak 'cause you lost your hair, you are strong 'cause you can go on this way." She is smiling at me again.

I try not to let the tears come, I really do, but one breaks free and slides down my face. The little girl stands up and hugs me. As her small arms squeeze my neck she whispers, "My mommy went through it, too."

After a few minutes I stand up to leave with a new purpose in my heart. How can I not after this? As I reach the door I turn and look at her. She smiles back at me, and I have to know: "What's your name?"

"Faith."

Joy

Hailey Fox

I stir more sugar into my coffee and continue to read the paper. Life seems to have it out for everyone these days. I sigh deeper into my mug. Leaning forward I shift position and a strand of hair falls in my face. Frozen, I stare at it and tuck the tendril back behind my ear. The urge to scratch my head overtakes me and I force my hands to remain in my lap.

With a deep scowl I raise my eyes and glare at the world around me. A couple has just walked in and seems to be having a bit of a tiff. The woman stalks to the restroom and slams the door, leaving the man to shake his head and slump down in a chair to wait her out. Behind the counter the old cashier smiles as I sweep my gaze toward her, my glare becomes mutinous. How can life do this to me? Am I worth nothing but an unwanted blimp? My friends insist on speaking over the phone half the time and people scuttle out of my way. I feel the sting of tears behind my eyes and sip my coffee to stop them from falling.

Laughter floats from a far off place. I close my eyes and listen, it comes from the back door – no it is not laughter but a light giggle. The music runs closer, washing everything in warmth. Oomph – someone runs into my chair and the giggles stop. I whip my head around to fix the intruder with my eyes. In front of me stands a little girl who does not look a day over six. Her lower lip trembles, gaze locked on the scowl distorting my features. In all the movement a strand of hair has slipped from my bandana. She looks at the streak of black and reaches steady fingers out to touch it.

“Silky,” she says quietly. “Why is it under that rag?” Her question is so simple and unexpected that I answer, unthinkingly, with the truth. “It’s all I have. Nothing else is left other than that little piece.”

“Oh,” she whispers, embarrassed. We stay like this for a while, her playing with my hair while I watch her. A peculiar look comes over her face as she stands taller and looks at me directly. “When will you get more? My mommy says hair grows and grows. It’s why my hair is really long.”

Nervous, I try to smile at her; the motion feels foreign after so many months. “It won’t grow anymore. My hair is all grown out.”

She purses her lips and scrunches up her tiny forehead, thinking. Hee-hee she giggles, “Does that mean you can change out your hair? Yeah, and get a new color? That’s cool, can you get blonde like me?” She looks

so excited I cannot tell her it does not work that way. It is on the tip of my tongue to explain as it hits me. *How can I tell her it is impossible? People wear wigs all the time.* The more I think about it I start to like this new idea more and more. Suddenly, a new thought intrudes upon this peaceful idea, *wigs do itch awfully.*

“So what if my new hair itches?” I ask her.

Smiling, she places tiny hands on small hips and replies, “Then you make it go away,” giving me a duh-big-red-truck look. “Wait! Can’t you just rub lotionie stuff on it to make the itchies go away? Mommy does it to me when I itch. She says bugs don’t like it so they go away and the itchy does too. Are there bugs in your new hair? ‘Cause that’s not very cool!” She pouts.

I laugh at her sad expression wishing I could still see the world this way. Life is so simple when you are a child. “No, no bugs, it’s just how some new hair feels. Sometimes it is good though.”

The girl nods while I say this as if she sees the reason in my words. Even as she still looks sad there is a happiness to her that I haven’t seen anywhere in a long time. Almost as if a glow lights her from within. I gulp down the rest of my coffee and tuck the hair behind my ear again. The little girl blinks at me and opens her mouth a few times. After a second or two she finds her voice. “Okay, well I’m’a gonna go back to my mommy. But will you pleeeeeease grow more blonde hair like me?” Her face is so bright I can only nod.

She turns to go but I call out to her, “Wait! Can I at least know your name so I can tell people who I got my new blonde hair from?” Hee-hee, she giggles and nods.

“Joy.”

Patience

Hailey Fox

Silently I sing along with the blaring music and hurtle around the bend. Abruptly a group of giggling girls appears on the path in front of me. Groaning, I drop my speed to a painfully slow jog. As my eyes frantically search for a break in the group my irritation rises. I want to scream at them to get over and grow up.

Finally I see a gap between bodies, but quickly realize it does me no good. A dog, some stupid girl is out walking her dog. I sigh in frustration and slow down to a walk – not even a speed walk – to wait for the trail to split, a half a mile down the path. *Oh what a long time this will be*, I think and continue to bob my head to the music. Resigned to my temporary fate I look at the girls in front of me.

Most are twigs, which is the only way to describe it. Hip bones half sticking out, scraggly arms, and flat planes and angles in all the places curves should be. Which is in all reality a shame, this world is deprived of natural beauty so much that twigs are now the new natural. At the end of the mass to my left is a girl that isn't like the rest. She is not a whale by no means but she is curvier than the others. The girl looks to be no older than fifteen and has a large curvature to her hips and thighs. She is slightly taller than the rest and carries herself differently. In a way she seems to be hiding in plain sight; her shoulders are hunched and her walk is slower in stride. The girl has shoulder-length brown hair and her round face shape takes away little from its angles, she turns her head and sees me watching, I nod and look away. Something about her eyes startled me, they were a light hazel that you do not see often; and they seemed old, as if she had been to the end of the world and back.

Glancing back to my left I see that the girl has moved closer and is now at my side, smiling at me. I smile back and pull out my iPod, pausing the music. After a few seconds she half whispers to me, "You will have to excuse them. They don't want to be here and are revolting by walking as slow as they can. That one girl even brought her dog to make 'potty breaks'. It's ridiculous." That it was. I almost wonder why they had to walk but decide against asking, I didn't care that much.

"So are you being forced as well or the supervisor?" I reply. I glance at her again; something seems off about her. A little detail that does not fit, what is it?

She chuckles. "A little bit of both. I have to walk with them but since

my father was the one to assign it. I have to keep them all in check. I hate him for it but I still understand the reason." Her eyes scan the mass of girls again, I can see her brain counting them. If I was her father I doubt I would trust her enough to watch this group, but then again I do not know her. She seems responsible enough. Glancing up at me she twirls a piece of her hair around a finger. The strand of brown looks so dark next to her pale skin. "I don't mean to pry but is your hair dyed that color? You don't have to answer it is only that you look pale with it."

The girl seems to shift away as we walk, her posture bows in even more and her hands worry the hem of her T-shirt. "Umm, it's dyed. I don't really like the color but it was all they had at that time so I'm stuck with it for a few months. I want a strawberry-blonde one – like my natural color." The last words were whispered so I was not sure if they were an afterthought or if she even realized she said it. The wind blew and her hair shifted, not ruffled-shifted, moving a little on her head. *It's a wig* I realize, but I say nothing. If she does not want to say it I won't.

I look ahead and see that we have only moved a minimum of seventy feet. I am going to die. A groan escapes me and I look at my watch in irritation. "You really can't stand to go slow can you?" I give her a puzzled look. "You have looked at your watch more in the past two minutes than I text in an hour. I bet you rush through everything else, too." Her observation surprised me, but I cannot say she is wrong. I have been running everywhere for the past few years. Sitting back and just moseying along was not part of my life. In fact it drove me insane. "I just have things to do in my life. To get anywhere at my work you don't just sit back and watch. You have to work and run errands and apply yourself."

She looks at me for a second or two, a sad look coming over her face. "So you can't have days to yourself? Just sit on the couch and pig out to popcorn and bad soaps? That's a horrible way to live. Do you never want to just sleep in?"

Her questions made me pause. I have not slept in and lounged around my house since I was her age, maybe a few years older. "Perhaps I would like to sleep in on occasion. Though I never liked soap operas, they always made me want to throw something at my TV. But I do not miss the rest of it. I like the fast pace of change, it keeps me on my toes."

We walk a few more feet in silence. The girl seemed to be lost in her own world. Suddenly she turns to me, "I don't think I would like that life. I will miss lying around my house and rolling in the grass, taking my dog for a walk and sitting to watch the ducklings learn to swim in the stream. I think life is what happens while you sit. If you always run you

miss the twists and turns that envelop those around us. Yes, I will miss it.”

Her words surprise me with their wisdom and conviction. “Will miss it? You talk like you won’t always be able to see it that way.” I think about what she said, how she described life was so different from mine, she almost made it sound appealing.

“I have cancer. That’s why my hair doesn’t look right, it’s a wig. They didn’t have my hair color in one I could fit. But we don’t have the money to drop for a new one. I know my life is going fast but I can’t bring myself to move on. I want to sit and look for pictures in the clouds and watch people go by. I even refuse to get mad at restaurants when they take fifty thousand minutes to bring out a burger.” She laughs at her last words and smiles at me. Her eyes glance forward and she sighs. “Here is the break you have been waiting for. I hope you always enjoy your life. If the running makes you happy please carry on.”

I look at her as I pull away to the other path. What she said about watching the world keeps swirling around in my mind. Before I press play for more music I have to ask, “What is your name?” She just smiles back at me.

“Patience.”

Charity & Chance

Hailey Fox

A gust of wind brushes the book from my hand and onto the opposite end of the park bench. Brushing my hair back I lean over and look around. The park is overflowing with families for once: children climbing on things they shouldn't, parents chasing toddlers, teenagers playing sports, or just sitting looking like they would rather be anywhere else. Some people even fish in the pond next to the bench I sit on. I watch a man approach the family closest to me and ask for food, or even better, money. The father looks skeptical but at the subtle encouragement of his wife gives a sandwich to the stranger, who then walks away. I shake my head in disgust at the display of weakness. People who scrounge off others are a plague to society.

I shift to look back at my page and catch a glimpse of movement in the gazebo across the path from me. In the far corner on the old porch-swing sits a woman no older than thirty, maybe not even that yet. She sees me looking and smiles. I nod and look back down at my book, subtly I move, allowing me to observe the woman without being too noticeable. She has short dirty blonde hair that curves under just as it reaches her chin, a heart-shaped face that looks more delicate than should be real, and somber grey eyes. One hand rests at her side pushing down on the seat as she rocks, swinging her feet gently back and forth, while the other rests gently on her stomach. The woman wears a loose cobalt blue T-shirt and what looks like Capri-leggings, actually now that I look they seem to fit oddly, hmm. *She's pregnant* I realize when my gaze rests on her stomach protruding several inches past her waistband.

Like a child caught with their hand in the cookie jar I jerk my eyes away when I meet her gaze. A few minutes later we are still playing an awkward game of peek-a-boo. With a sigh I decide to bite the bullet and close my book, smile, and walk over there. Sitting down on this swing has to be the most spontaneous thing I have ever done. We sit in silence, like total teenage idiots might I add, until I cannot take it any longer. Huffing I turn to face her, she only tilts her head, infuriating me even further. "Why did you start to stare at me? It seemed rude and very unethical of you." I, per-usual, get straight to the point.

Sadly this woman has the audacity to smile at me again and face the pond across the way. "I was only curious about your reaction to a man giving a stranger one measly little sandwich. It was hardly cause for such

hatred on your face. Add that to you not even knowing the man's story, and it all seems very interesting." She states this in such a soft, calm voice I almost miss it, almost. What right does she have to say these things to me? To even question why I do things, I didn't do anything to her. *You were rude to her...oh shut up I was not.*

"I'm sorry I wasn't aware that my thoughts were your business. But since you feel that way I'll tell you why. People like that are a plague on society, nothing is free. Everyone has to work to be successful and useful. One is *worthless* if you have to scrounge off others. So, yes, it was cause for such *hatred* on my face," I spit at her. "Does that answer your question?"

The woman just smiles at me. "You know what? I loved school, it was my favorite place to be and I actually did quite well – made valedictorian. Oddly enough my favorite, and best, subject was psych. The teacher even tried to convince me to go down that career path and I almost did." Her expression shifts and suddenly I feel as if I'm a science project. "So I ask again, what is your problem?"

I feel my hackles raise as the words leave her mouth. "Nothing is my problem. I only find it wrong that some people feel that they deserve the luxury of relying on others. Only bums can't make something of themselves." Silence follows my retaliation and the longer she sits there the more nervous I become. Eventually I start to push the swing, anything to relax.

"Um... you realize that everyone at one point in time is a bum," her head tilts back with a chuckle and the woman pats my hand. "Your face for sure is so confused, it's priceless. Anyways, every teenager is a bum. They do nothing but sit around and expect to be waited on hand and foot. Also many homeless people are not that way by choice."

"How do you know he wasn't an addict, or alcoholic, or a dealer, rapist? Did you happen to think about that before you decided to judge me?" I say, trying to adopt a calm, reasonable tone.

"How do you know he isn't any of those things? I did not judge you by the way, at least that was never my intent. I just have never understood why anyone would automatically think the worst about people. Do they not all deserve the benefit of a doubt?" The lady pauses and looks over at me. Her eyes look sad as they connect with mine. Which is really adolescent, this is nothing more than a debate between views, nothing to be emotional about. "You say that guy could be an addict or whatever? How do you know he didn't just lose his job and couldn't support his family so his wife left and now he lives on the street? You do know

that one in four homeless are veterans? A man, brave enough to go and risk his life may come home and find that no one wants him anymore. We as a people then walk by on the street and turn up our noses. That man – the one who wanted that sandwich – could have gone to war for you, and all you can give him in return is your disgust.”

I stare at her for a few moments, it’s kind of refreshing to talk to someone with an outlook like that on the world. I can’t recall the last time I was so open to another person so far as not immediately thinking the worst about them. Actually it makes me sound like a sort of Scrooge. “So you think that I should give anyone that walks up to me what they want? Or that someone should automatically be awarded a loan without checking out their credit history and the like? That is seriously messed up. I know someone who did what that family just did: A guy wanted money but instead she went to a fast food place and bought him a burger meal. He threw it at her car and said he wanted to buy beer. If they aren’t grateful enough for a free meal then why should I waste it on them?”

She tilts her head to the side, pursing her lips. I turn to the pond while I wait for her response. “Look at the ripples,” she finally speaks. “It only takes a tiny movement of a bobber to make them form and spread out till they hit others and split or merge. Let’s say giving him that sandwich was the bobber moving and each of those ripples is a change in his life, till one day he meets another ripple and he gets a job or helps someone out of a situation, all because he had the strength to move on. Can you imagine the good a smile and a happy meal could do in one of their lives, in that way? Assuming what you are assuming is like me filing a police report about a meth lab and the officer using the information to fuel his addiction. Can we then assume that all policemen are crooked or bad?” The woman is peering at me now like she anticipates what I’m going to say. All I do is sit and think. I can’t help but feel like there is something else – something I’m missing...*she looks way too young to think that way.* “What happened to you?” I ask softly.

She gives me a watery smile and grabs my hand placing it on her stomach. “I’m five months pregnant, and I just found out the sex of my baby; it’s a boy. I haven’t even told my husband yet ‘cause I’m so terrified.” I can’t look away from her as she takes a breath and continues. “I have cancer and you know they say you can take chemo or whatever while pregnant and it won’t hurt the baby, supposedly. They said he could still be healthy but I’m too afraid. There have been so many complications and it’s a wonder I’m even pregnant at all and I don’t want to risk it. My doctor even said if the cancer worsens I might not last long after his

birth.... I could miss my baby grow and there isn't a thing I can do about it. To love and feel him grow and to know there is a possibility of not knowing how he turns out. Giving him the benefit of the doubt that he will be healthy and I will be okay enough to have chemo after and be there for him. It's scary, then to see how you looked at that man and think: This is the world I might have to leave my baby to."

Without another word she leans into me and I hold her as she cries. Never have I felt as low as I do after her little speech; I actually want to kick myself silly. Finally, she leans back to wipe her eyes as she looks at me again. I can't keep my mouth shut any longer. "You don't have a thing to worry about. Your baby boy will know you and think of you all his life. There is no way he could forget a woman who has enough love to go through anything to make sure he comes out safe. If you have even a tenth the amount of love for this baby as you did for that man today he will be the happiest he ever can be. You just have to have the faith to know that he will remember what you teach him, they can hear things inside there, whether they know it or not. He will be okay." I take a deep breath and pull my hand away from her. My phone buzzes showing me the time. Once again I receive a watery smile and it says more to me than any sentence ever could. I stand and dust off my jeans. "Well I'm sorry but I must go, I have somewhere to be in a little while, but before I go may I know your names, both of your names?"

"Charity and Chance."

The Birthday Party

Micah Stewart-Wilcox

There's a pin in the heavens,
pressing a yellow cutout sun
against a blue construction paper sky.

Far away in an Olympus of Steel
reside the Gods of Man:
Old men dressed in their
best three-piece suits
gathered shoulder-to-shoulder
around a wooden altar,
pockets stuffed with paper
and silver.

The Chosen Few who drink their
whiskey out of sippy cups and
carve the world up with a shiny silver knife.

Just like the one Mamma used

when her delicate hands would
measuredly cut my birthday cake
into six evenly-sized pieces
to be given to me and my friends.

Reticent

Jimmy L. Temples

I've met Him.

He carried me off
with some bullshit about Faith.

What did she ever do for
me? One of her own.

She Gave me a dollar.
then she told me that she thought about what
I should do with it.
I told her to keep her damn money.

What's more is Hope.

She stole from me
everything I had, but especially my time.

She took it and threw it
down the drain.

I thought maybe I could get it back,
so I stuck my arm down that
rancid pipe and grabbed it.
I didn't need her anyway.

Oh, my name? My name is Charity.

I suppose it is a nice name.

I'd give it to you but I had it stolen once.

I think He would have given it back,

But I figured what the hell, He needs it more than I do.

Had to? No, I never had to give anything away.

There are just some people out there
who need it more.

If He had to steal my name to make his own then so be it. He'll burn too.

To Our Eclipse

Olivia L. Garlt

You made us come together,
a whole school united for one brief hour.
Sitting in the soft grass,
we giggled like schoolchildren
exploring a brand-new play set,
meeting each other for the first time
and finding no embarrassment
in our shared excitement.
We gawked at your beauty,
gasping each time new shadows caressed our faces.
When you were nearly complete
silence filled the air.
We looked through silly paper glasses
transfixed on you,
lightning bugs competed for our attention
grazing our ankles as they danced.
But we remained motionless
barley breathing.
As we watched you slowly creep
across the sky,
we realized the sun was still shining,
you passed, and the day continued.
Shadows retreating back,
the heat of day rising again
with your promise of sunset colors
and a starry night broken.
I will never forget that
you made us come together.

Moon-like Crescents

Hosanna Konsavage

The light of noon fades away
Children laugh, embrace the day
Mothers scold and shake their heads
And birds prepare to make new beds
Yet in the rush they fail to see
Moon-like crescents under the tree

The silver moon has blotted out
And light is gone as children shout
Shadows chase the world, wave, and dance
Kicking up their heels, calves now prance

And then it's gone, the sun is bright
Dark retreats from the growing light
The birds begin to sing again
Cows return to the empty glen
Yet in the rush they fail to see
Moon-like crescents under the tree

Glasses are gone as children play
Parents prepare for endless day
They say that all is said and done
Lonely now is the golden sun

They saw a wonder so unique –
It must have been beyond the peak
But as doors shut, the glory grows
Stunning colors and secret glows
Yes, in the rush they failed to see
Moon-like crescents under the tree

NPR reporting:

k. brown

an elderly man in the heartland
of a rural Kentucky town (that most
have forgotten or never heard about)
finds himself right smack in the midst
of a global super solar event.

over static airwaves,
this rasping proud owner
and his old greasy spoon find barely—
just barely— enough room for twenty
splintered chairs,
plus the woman from the coast
(a young, upcoming morning show host).
“Tell us,” she beams,
“What are you doing
to prepare for the crowds?”
well, we’ve got a bright new special
and we’re awful proud.

an eggclipse burger, he laughs
topped with a “happy little egg.”
it’s universal, and tasty,
and looks just like the sun
for the hundreds or thousands
(or hundreds of thousands)
experts say’ll come.

he worries he may just
up and run out of food,
but laughs again as he remembers
the last time something this good
happened for his fading storefront

and for this town,
so he sighs and he lies his apron down
in their discarded caps of Coronas

where he can see the reflected corona
of happy little suns and
that bit of excitement that
comes with that dull, static hum

of phenomena.
but routine returns and the egg'll retire
and reporters'll leave
leaving him to admire his own
totality,
way up in the eaves,
of laughter, and french fries,
and this happy, cosmic callsign
community.

Bête Noire

Hannah VanArsdale

It was as if the goddess above
crafted us with care –
her hands molded our souls,
making them fit together seamlessly.

One half given to me
and one gifted to you.
We are one and the same,
our hearts beating in sync.

From the moment I saw you,
I knew we were meant to be.
Our eyes met across the room
and the world seemed to fade around us.

I knew one day I would finally meet You.

A smile reaches my lips
as your name comes to my mind.
Yours lift into a smirk
as you decide to make your move.

I felt an emptiness inside me fade
as you walked across the room towards me.
Our eyes never wavered
from the other's intense gaze.
I decide to meet you halfway.
Our strides determined,
we push through the crowds,
only seeing each other.

We finally meet.
Our souls coming together again:
a reunion
of those apart too long.

No space between us.
Skin flushed
Eyes locked
Unwavering

Fists clenched.
Teeth bared –
Words screamed –
Fists thrown.

Nemesis cackles
as our hearts and faces bleed out.
We are forcibly torn apart
from each other once more.

From the moment I saw you,
let alone *heard* of you,
I knew...
We were meant to be.
I knew
we would be
Mortal enemies.

A Prayer for Totality

Olivia L. Garlt

How can I not,
stare too long?
When all I wish
is to burn,
smolder into the darkness,
leaving only a trail of smoke,
my last words.

totality

Hopeless Heart

Sarah Kuchar

Swirls of dyed violet and royal
blue hair fall softly
over her gentle, round eyes of
some color I never got to see.
Her bright smile kindly
granting me courage as I
compliment those short smooth locks.

Stared,
Blushed,
Stumbled,
all day as I waited,
glancing over all the time.

The perfect aesthetic . . .
but even with attraction,

my clumsy ass – my
hopeless romantic heart –
never does fall.

Catch Me

Caitlin Freeny

Most of the time, I feel like

I'm falling.

Every so often
someone catches me.

And I feel safe for a while.

Then they drop me and
I'm falling again.

I want this falling to end.

But no one
wants to hold me in their arms.

I get too heavy,
and they let me slip away.

I don't know if I'll ever
stop falling.

Little Brother, Why Have You Changed?

Micah Holmes

With tales of life, you try to guide him
but with no avail
you fail.

Then years pass,
and he grows
into a person you don't yet know.

So you worry.
Were you there enough?
Did you care enough?
The tales you once told
are left bare,
and all you can do is stare.

These thoughts
keep you up day and night
making things not seem right.

So you justify it all
with just one call:
Little brother, I have always loved you.

Thanks for Ruining Christmas

Mikayla Evans

The last time I saw you was Christmas morning.
I spent days making you a scrapbook to show you
How much I appreciated all you taught me.
Cut out pictures of you and me laughing,
stickers with the words
“Best Dad Ever” and
“My Hero” covered the front of the book.
Inside there was a letter addressed to
My Favorite Dad.
There was so much anticipation
watching you flip through the pages
Full of our best memories.

Finally, you got the last one.
My favorite.
The page was full of pictures
Displaying two people in love, raising children.
Fighting together against all adversity.
On one side were pictures of
an eighteen-year-old boy and a girl and
on the other was the family they had built.
I was so happy when you started crying.
Tears of joy were my mission as I carefully crafted
the pages of that book.

But that wasn't it,
was it, Dad?
You weren't crying because you were happy.
You were crying because you were planning
on leaving us, weren't you, Dad?
And now all those pages mean nothing.

Doors

Sarah Kuchar

Nobody knows what happens behind closed doors. Right? That's what we're always told, and I've seen it's pretty true. We don't open doors that aren't our own even when there are scratching claws and knocks and screams coming from the other side. Ignore it. It doesn't exist.

Scratch, scratch. Bang, bang. Help me. Please.

Chipped wood painted maroon with two more window panes than my age, nine of them, like every other front door except this was the side door we always used because the dog's potty papers blocked the front one. Weak metal and some thick plastic just past it molded into the screen door that didn't ever want to shut right was. My back halfway against the maroon door. The other half on the doorway as I stood pressed against the crack with the knob by my head, sobbing crying pitiful little thing while my sister tried to stay stronger next to me, hoping we'd be just enough to make him stay. All I was really worried about was that he didn't take Sissie from me or the both of us from Mommy. "Jessica, pack a bag," Daddy had said as he had walked back inside for a second one of his own, the first big duffle thrown in the back of his truck that was ready to jerk out of the driveway, tiny red stick shift he'd sell maybe a year later for money rather than get a job. Those words were what got us against the door, shocking us from where we'd huddled together because maybe that could make Mommy and Daddy screaming at each other not hurt so much... He stayed and has never left us in the way he tried to then, but he never came back to us in the way that mattered most, preferring to deny he'd ever been in the arms of another instead of trying to repent for the fact he had.

Bang. Scratch. Bang. Let me out, help me.

More than once that same second grade school year, face to face with the big, heavy wooden door with my teacher's name on it. The bare side that told me I'd definitely be in trouble for the day even when my lies of having a nosebleed earlier that morning had gotten my tardiness excused. The days I saw the pretty decorations of the inside were the better days as long as the screeching school bell hadn't stunned my ears, much better than when the flat bland wood boded for the trouble I was sure to be in. Writing in a journal every day before the bell rang was hard when I hardly made it before the bell so recess was spent sobbing – tears pouring down my little, chubby, red face – over big sloppy handwriting, over and over

again “I’m a bad kid. I’m a bad kid.” New door opened in this warped up, twisted mind. A seven-year-old me in 2004 learned to hate herself and never stopped.

Bang. Please help me. Bang.

Same metal and plastic screen door on the other side of the maroon one being thrown aside, a middle school version of my sister shakily shoving the house key into the lock to get us inside, panicked glances behind us at our neighbor who was just mowing the lawn. Pulling it back and forth with not an extra step towards us but the panic instilled by what he was had us rushing. Finally scrambling inside, locking the knob then the deadbolt after it to block out the danger that didn’t exist. Even at nine, I knew it wouldn’t ever be enough to protect us if he ever came for us like we feared he would, that neighbor of ours. I’d made a plan to protect my older sister. She’d made a plan to protect me. Neither was ever needed, but we were positive they would be as we’d been told over and over again. “Do not ever talk to him. Stay away from him,” everyone always said. Not ever allowed to go out that door to play in the sunshine or rain or snow unless one of our always-busy parents went out with us and always too panicked when we got to try playing outdoors, so we played outside at home maybe once a month or every few months. Had to stay away from the old man next door on the sex offender registry even when we don’t know what got him arrested and put on there. There grew to be a hallway in my head connecting panic to his name with air pressure so wonky that if the one door at the one end opened then the other went right with it to let the paranoia fester, and I felt no safety in the place I called home.

Bang. Bang. Bang. Bang. Bang.

White plastic and glass “screen” door in front of metal painted white with a half-circle window too high to be used for more than decoration except for my six-foot dad. My own personal hell and thing of hatred laid beyond those layers that never seem to shut or lock properly even to this day. Even if it did, it wouldn’t keep the monsters out because the monsters are all inside, resting at home in my head. How is a home supposed to be a home when home is hell and hell is made worse when it’s meant to be home? I hate that house which has never been home except to the blood of a man who gave up on life inside its walls, old man who killed himself in his office – the room we made half our living room when we moved in.

bangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbang

Eighth grade, 2011, moving house for the first time I could ever re-

To Whom it May Concern

Samantha Proctor

As a mother you should love
Much more than you do.
You should have cared more
Than you chose to.

I deserved more
Than what you had to offer.
But I cannot complain
Because I didn't get to choose.

You beat me and scarred me.
You made me scared of my home.
You yelled and ridiculed
And made me ashamed of myself.

You didn't want me,
That was clear.
But you did need me
To do the things you never did.

I hated myself
For such a long time.
Then those emotions
Were transferred to you.

You took advantage of me.
You used me.
You chose not to love me,
Even though they said you should.

I used to think it was me.
How could you not love me?
What had I done wrong?
After all, you did blame me.

After many years I've realized,
It's not me after all.
You had issues of your own,
And you were only playing with me.

I must tell you,
I feel our relationship
Must come to an end.
They all understand now.
They know what you have done.

What you did was terrible,
but I tried to make it work.

This is where we end
And I begin.



Skyler Smith

penumbra

Pop! Goes the Pistol

Sarah Kuchar

All around the house that night,
the gun man chased his wife.
The gun man planned to shoot her dead.
Pop! goes the pistol.

Round and round the old hell-hole,
the gun man chased his daughter.
The gun man planned to shoot her dead.
Pop! goes the pistol.

A penny for a shotgun shell,
A penny for a bullet,
That's the way he went to hell,
Pop! goes the pistol.

Romance in a Gas Station Bathroom

Olivia L. Garlt

my face is pressed against the mirror
broken once by his fist
and again by the weight of my head
my hair and face are wet from blood
I hear it drip slowly down onto the sink
as I stare at a single tile on the floor
the only one left unbroken
I'm too afraid to look anywhere else
in fear I may catch a glimpse
of myself

I feel his hand tighten around my neck
as he presses my body further into his
I stay silent
I take the pain
just like he told me to
I focus on the steady sound
of the mirror cracking beneath my face
I feel an edge cut my cheek
waiting for it to be over
I wonder
how the tile was never broken

when he is through with me he kisses my neck
I look up and see our faces together
distorted by cracks
I wonder which reflection is real
the one deep in my mind
where we sit laughing under stars
with a fire burning in front
of us
or this one
with my fat lip and matted hair
shame in my eyes and
him towering over me
his face dark and unforgiving

he breaks me out of thought telling me
he loves me
saying that I'm beautiful

I divert my gaze
searching for the tile
a lone survivor
among her fallen sisters
I grab his hand and instinctively take the compliment
wishing only that I could please him
but I see now
that even she
with her bright white glaze
has a chip on her corner

Breathless

Caitlin Freeny

They tell you to love yourself
But isn't it easier
To love yourself

When your skin is clear
When your life is happy and
When people are kind
And the world seems
Light all around you
Smiling at you
When the sky is clear
When the birds are singing and
When God is kind
And peace surrounds
Your lively eyes
No longer glistening
When you feel quiet
When you feel full
When you don't cringe
And cry when you look

In the mirror
At the face you don't love.

The Morning After

Olivia L. Garlt

The sun tries to comfort
me. Stretching its warm arms
down to embrace my bare skin.
But I can't help
feeling alone.

Waiting.
Wondering what will walk through my locked door
while my tears had dried long ago,
traces of their life lived on through burning green eyes.

I surround myself with pillows to distract
from sharp pains within.
I breathe slowly
until I hear the dull metal key scrape against its tight counterpart.
Shaking I wait.
Feeling all pain cease,
cold numbness takes its place.
I try to turn away but can't help
look at his face as he stumbles in.
I fixate my eyes on his hands,
which proudly display his trophies from our night of passion.

My chest aches as I wait
for him to speak.
Finding my heart empty without his approval
I carefully study his reckless
movements
as he begins to come toward me.
I stay motionless.
Hoping his warm brown eyes will appear
and welcome
me as they once did.

As I raise my eyes to meet his,
my prayer is answered.
The man I once knew and loved looked

back at me.
He fell to his knees, ready to repent.
I shriek.
And like a frightened animal,
he attacks.
Forcing me to the ground with a familiar blow.
But as I contain my tears he reminds me
gently that
I was the one who cried out
when he only wanted
to love me.
So, the pain wasn't mine
to feel
just another sin to wear.

Emotion(s)

Madison Porter

I am not a boy.

I am not a girl.

I am not only black.

I am not only white.

I am something much more simple.

I am a me.

I am a we.

I, too, will grow old and shrivel. (unless my hands decide I won't)

I'm mad that I can't find a binder big enough to fit me.

I'm pissed that I keep telling telling people that I'm too afraid to talk about politics and it's just not sticking.

I'm heated 'cause someone who said they loved me tried to fix me.

I'm livid 'cause I was lied to for almost two years, thinking all your hurt was like mine. Cause you thought that love looked like pity and thought my empathy was pity.

I'm wildin' 'cause my white momma tries to understand, but that gets harder when I'm ten inches taller, ten shades darker, and 200 pounds heavier. I guess she don't realize that giving birth ain't the same as giving life.

I'm distraught cause people who look like me and/or love like me are dying and I can barely blink before another goes down and there's not much I can do to stop it.

I'm enraged cause people ask my brother and I which one of us is adopted like we don't got the same face, looking back at us in a different shade.

I'm furious that my rights are being taken away, bit by screaming bit.

But I should be happy, right?

Be happy that I'm getting an education.

Be pleased that I'll be in debt for the foreseeable future.

Be happy that I can vote.

Be glad that for at least the next four years, the blood, sweat, tears, bones, and bodies of progress might be for nothing.

But you say I'm lucky?

Lucky that I'm still alive.

Lucky that my parents are this accepting, even though everyday I'm still afraid of what they'll do or say.

Privileged to be pretty mixed baby, that I am their comfortable shade of

dark.

Grateful that my curls are Shirley Temple enough to be pleasing.

Fortunate that I “talk white” like the ebony in my ebonics don’t exist.

Has it ever occurred to you, that the black in my body is tired?

It holds up a shield, even as I sleep.

Waiting for blow after blindingly white blow.

The black in me weeps daily, I wonder what it looks like without tears.

Maybe it’s beautiful.

My black joy, has been torn down time and time again, but I swear to god it will get back up.

The gay in me wishes for someone to love, longingly reaching for the imaginary hand next to mine, wondering if it will turn into a gun.

Being gay and loud for no reason, is not a privilege I was given but one that I ripped out of their hands.

Even though people like me tend to reach for guns, pills, needles and nooses.

I’m still here.

Somehow, I’m still here.

Even after a life of microaggressions that I didn’t notice and struggle that tore me apart time and time again.

I’m here.

I am alive.

And that is not something that people like me get to say very often.

For all that we feel, there is strength in breathing.

In existing.

I did not learn to love myself until the universe gave me a beating, these bruises are permanent but, I’m still smiling anyway.

I’m smiling.

I’m happy.

Right?

to the man who called me broken

Olivia L. Garlt

Broken

a word for objects

not people

something not meant for the living

it insinuates the lesser

the ruined

flawed from nurture

girls are always broken

force fed fingers

inhaling all they can

at 3AM

crying over photos of what

should be

broken is the frame in my grandmother's attic

containing her wedding photo

her soft curls

short dress

first love

all gone

all broken

when I brush out my curls

I brush out her

I look into these familiar eyes

and find cracks

that see beyond

my own life

feel those before me

and always smile back

when I broke up with you

you called me broken

I almost stayed because you said that

thinking that my broken bits might fit into yours

Can You Hear Me, Reggie?

Jimmy L. Temples

The youth looked up from his breakfast of slightly undercooked eggs and over crispy bacon and cast a look of mild joy upon the stony countenance of his aged conversation partner. Seeing that Reggie wasn't happy to be seeing him again so soon in his courtyard and on his bench no less, he looked back down and started counting the flecks of black pepper that nearly encrusted the oily eggs. This brought him little comfort and he started to get antsy once again. He looked around the fading yard for something to talk about with Reggie. Then that part of his brain began to scratch and tingle, the part they keep saying makes him antisocial. He found a small pile of pebbles stacked up by another soul stuck in the white, stone-walled purgatory.

"How old are you now, Reggie?" said the young man still counting each bit of pepper. "I just turned twenty myself. It's alright so far. Old enough to be a martyr, but not old enough to forget about it, if you know what I mean?"

Reggie, in fact, knew exactly what the youth meant. He had been there when it started, he'd seen the kid come back and he'd seen many others go. Some came back, but most didn't and Reggie didn't have an opinion about it one way or another anymore. Reggie knew that the kids who came back weren't the same ones that left. He knew, but he didn't care. He was too old to care about any of that now.

He always wanted relatively little in life; someone to take care of, someone to take care of him and pick him up when he fell on the hard-cracked ground, but only one of those ever came to him. He remembered her name. It was Claire. It was such a beautiful name Reggie thought. Her hair was as black as night and freckles danced across her face like the stars that hang over a renaissance. She used to come to Reggie every day and sit on the bench beside him, just as this young man was doing today. She would be there from dawn until the dusk mingled with her locks. Reggie felt useful; he loved Claire and he hated the day she left him on his own in that courtyard that sits just before perdition.

There had been countless others since Claire and they all left their stony companion. They went off to do their own thing, somewhere far beyond Reggie. Sometimes Reggie imagined where they went. Sometimes they would go to school, other times he'd see them wandering down the street of a far-off city with soft neon lights washing over them. Occasionally he still thought about Claire. He hoped that she had gotten out

that house that she came from. It was an old thing that nearly fell apart when you looked at it. She always said she hated it there. Reggie wished he could help her more, but he just sat near his bench in the courtyard and decided he could do nothing about it. Then along came this boy. He was certainly no Claire, but he would have to do, for now.

In fact, he was nothing special, just a fresh-faced kid. Dark curls liked to fall over his face and when he swept them away he revealed the most luminescent blue eyes that Reggie had ever seen. They were the bright hue of Caribbean waters. He always wore a white jacket the color of purity, but he also wore a gaunt look upon his face and carried a beaten demeanor with him wherever he walked. Reggie overheard him once talking to a large gentleman in a dense white shirt, who Reggie noticed was around quite a bit. He heard him say that he loved music, and he went on and on about Nirvana and Linkin Park and Avenged Sevenfold and Soundgarden. He said that *Nightmare* was his favorite album and he had been learning how to play the drums before he came. Reggie had no idea what most of it meant, but when the boy returned and said, "I really hope we don't lose any more of them Reggie. First the Rev and Cobain and now Chris? For fuck's sake what is the world coming to? If they can't make it then who can?" Reggie knew what had happened, it is what happened when people came here, but it happened somewhere else this time.

"Are you with me, Reggie? I thought I'd lost you," said the kid trying to grasp the attention of the old fellow. He spoke with something in his voice, it almost seemed to Reggie that it was regret. Reggie couldn't imagine what the boy could regret, he was only twenty years old. He hadn't lived through anything to regret. Reggie had been in that place for nearly sixty-seven years, and rarely did he regret anything, except once. Only one regret came to the front of his mind, and that was Claire. She had come to visit Reggie the day she left. She told him that he needed to let her leave, because the conversations weren't helping anymore. Tears ran down her freckles as she spoke to the then-new Reggie. He did let Claire leave. He watched as she walked through the threshold of the icy iron gate which stood vigil at the entrance of the hospital. Reggie did nothing to stop Claire, and he only hoped that she would find her way. Reggie hated himself for letting her fade away. He felt the boy nudge him and he couldn't help but snap back again.

"I can't imagine you do know what I'm talking about, have you even left this place lately? They say *I* should get out," chuckled the youth as he finished counting his pepper. "By the count of this black pepper I'd say you're at least two-hundred and fifty-three flecks old. Give or take a few

shakes." The youth paused for a long time. He paused for nearly as long as he had been with Reggie today as if he were getting up the courage to ask the old man something. That moment felt infinite to the boy, as if an important decision had been made, but no one would tell him what had happened. "You know what, Reggie? I've been coming to talk to you nearly every day for two years now and you haven't even bothered to ask my name."

Reggie shot the boy a frigid look as if he'd insulted him with some unwarranted cruelty. In truth, Reggie hadn't ever asked for a name. It wasn't for lack of want, though, Reggie simply thought that eventually the boy would move on. He wouldn't need Reggie anymore. Reggie thought the less he knew about this twenty-year-old kid, the better. As far as Reggie was concerned, when the boy finally did move on then he wouldn't have to say goodbye because he never really knew him. It wasn't until that hateful December afternoon when the twenty-year-old kid was found hanging out of his window on the second story of the hospital, and Reggie saw the Caribbean hue of his poor lifeless eyes, that Reggie began to care about the boy. Until then he had sat and listened, but never uttered a word, as walls are apt to do. It wasn't until dusk set in that Reggie's cold dark stones began to crumble and mingle with the end of things.

A Lack of What Should Be

Trevor Stonecypher

He awoke, his eyes slowly opening to drink in the bountiful light that flowed through the window of his room. His ears caught only the slightest trace of the usual morning sounds, leading him to wonder at what had awoken him. With a slight groan, he stood and stretched, paying particular attention to his stiff neck as he loosened the kinks in his musculature. With the grogginess of a man pulled unwillingly from sleep, he began his day.

With sluggish movements, he shambled down the steps that were now bathed in light so bright he was forced to wince as he passed. His kitchen was a simple set of cupboards, sink, stove, and table. It was kept in good working order, with no clutter to be seen. He acquired a kettle from the cupboards and soon had tea whistling upon the stove. The steaming liquid ran down his sore throat as he surveyed his yard and the woods beyond it from the window. His eyes scanned lackadaisically from tree to tree, as an old habit drove him to search for birds. A faint smile played upon his lips as he watched the red crest of a woodpecker bounce up and down a large tree close to the forest line.

Finished with breakfast, he proceeded to his study. Once more, the light flowed in with such magnitude that he winced upon entering the room. Sitting at his desk, he dipped a quill into his ink pot and began penning letters and statements that he felt should be made out to various individuals. What he had once thought of as a chore was now a source of sanity to him, as he penned his thoughts and assertions with careful consideration to each. How long he stayed immobilized in his study was a matter of little concern to him; he wrote until he had nothing more to say.

When he finally finished penning his thoughts, he stretched once more and looked to the window for the position of the sun. It seemed to him that the day was just a little over half over, which allowed him ample time for his walk. With the energy only a beloved past-time can bring, he quickly changed into clothes more suitable for a foray into the woods. As he grabbed the handle of his front door and pulled, all the sounds of nature seemed to bombard him at once. The fresh smell of air unpolluted mixed with the earthen odor of a decomposing forest floor to create a surreal and intoxicating smell that permeated the air surrounding his home. Rejuvenated by the assault upon his nose, he quickly passed over the porch to his yard, his eyes seeking his favorite trail. It was winding and level, and one that afforded a peace that could only be found in the

presence of trees.

As he walked the well-trod path, wide enough for two, his eyes lifted to the canopy above. His feet knew the way, and he was afforded the luxury of watching as a diversity of birds flitted from branch to branch, singing their warbling tunes. Elation filled his heart, and when he emerged from the woods it was with a profound and palpable sense of peace. His house stood tall and wide, welcoming him as he approached.

As the sun set, he prepared dinner. He had never considered himself a good cook, but with a joyful heart he managed as best he could. Dusk soon settled upon the house, and a fog crept wistfully through the woods and across his yard.

As he ate, he searched the clear night sky above. Stars pulsed and twinkled like gems that were scattered across heaven's threshold, but he could not help but notice the absence of that bright entity meant to guide man's way by night. When the sky lacked the moon, it was as though a place in the universe was left unfilled. He smirked, and with sudden frustration at the sky's lack he walked up the stairs to his bedroom.

At the top of the stairs, his eyes landed upon the welcome sight of his bed. The covers were slightly unkempt on the side where he slept, but that discord only beckoned him all the more to join once again with the cover's caressing folds. Quickly he changed, and eased himself into the warm embrace. As his eyes grew heavy, his last thoughts were of how dark the house had become in the moon's absence.

Upon waking, he became immediately aware of the oppressive light flowing into his room. Wincing, he looked outside to find another bright and sunny day. He found, however, that he could not help thinking the light held an edge. It seemed all at once too bright and yet not bright enough, as though it were not performing the way it was intended.

Rising from bed, he found that his neck was doubly sore as it had been the day before. He grimaced as he stretched. Taking his first step of the day, he stumbled, as though the floor was uneven. As he recovered, he fancied he saw movement from the hall outside his room. When he looked, it became clear it was no more than the play of light and shadows upon the stairwell. He shambled to the stairs with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction, the same feeling one might experience upon forgetting something that should be at the forefront of the mind.

He stumbled at the last step of the staircase, and walked into the kitchen with a frown playing upon his face. Quickly, he prepared tea to lift his sour mood. Soon enough, the teapot was whistling and blowing steam from its iron snout. As he poured into a cup that sat upon the

counter, though, a shift in his weight brought the snout crashing into the side of the cup. He yelped as the cup smashed upon the ground and the hot liquid spilled across the counter. Anger flooded him as he bent down to pick up the pieces, but he was quickly distracted by what he thought was movement under the shadows of the stove. His eyes flicked to where he thought he had saw the movement, but found nothing.

Walking into his study, he found the light even worse. The light pierced directly through his eyes and into his head. As he sat to start writing, he grabbed at the quill and sought to dip it in the ink pot. Too forceful was his gesture, though, and the ink pot fell to the ground with a solid rap against the wooden floors. Ink surged from its insides as he quickly righted the fallen container. Sitting back at his desk and watching the ink blot seep into the dry wood of the floorboards, anger and frustration took residence once more within him. He absentmindedly picked at the quill's tip to calm himself from the ordeal, but only managed to gouge the soft inner tissue of his nail bed with the sharp tip. He raked in a sharp breath as a single drop of blood fell from his thumb onto the empty page before him, landing just to the left of the center. He cast the quill away in disgust and decided that a prolonged walk was in order.

After changing, he sought the handle to his front door, but only succeeded in rapping his hand in an awkward fashion above the door handle, as though it were lower than normal. As he drew his hand back and sought to grab the handle again, a flash of movement caught his attention from outside. He looked to the large tree that stood in his yard and thought for a fleeting moment that a shadow had been cast from an unknown source. Further inspection proved fruitless, and he succeeded in getting the door open the second time.

The woods were serene as ever, but seemed to hold for him an ominous presence. As he walked, he became aware of how few of the birds sang. Where they normally warbled in full voices that carried through the trees, they now seemed hushed and muffled. He raised his head and let his feet find their path, as he sought to find the inhabitants of the canopy above. In less than a minute, his unaided feet guided him directly into the stalwart trunk of a tree. So shocked was he that he did not have time to be angry. Instead, he stood in awe of what was before him. He was quite certain that the tree he had just run into had never been there before. He then became acutely aware of the fact that all the birds had stopped singing.

By the time he made it back to his house, dusk had already settled. As he walked up the steps of his porch his toe caught the lip of one and he stumbled, sprawling upon the stairs in pain. In his periphery, he thought

he caught another glimpse of movement. Quickly he looked into his house, but found that his eyes had once again been mistaken. Picking himself up, he became determined not to destroy his dinner.

He carefully prepared a simple meal, taking great care with every utensil so as to not disrupt the day any further. With great success he managed to apply all of the provisions to his plate, and elation filled him as he laid down his knife and looked upon his completed work. Picking up the plate, he turned toward the table.

The shadow loomed against the wall like a specter, and seemed to look upon him with a level of distaste he had heretofore never felt. So startled was he that the plate leapt from his hands and fell to the ground, shattering. The shadow was gone the next second, and he wondered if it had ever been there at all. With shaking hands and weak legs, he feebly cleaned the mess he had made. He sought the best course of action, and found that the thought of bed and the blissful forgetfulness of sleep appealed to him more than any other activity. Upon discarding his shattered plate, he lit a candle and began to walk up the stairs.

With legs and hands shaking violently, he realized that a cold sweat had broken out upon his forehead. Wiping it, he focused upon every step he took. Each deliberate footfall was a small victory, and brought him one step closer to his beloved bed. His hand groped along the wall for support, and with great regret he lamented not having a more secure handhold for the ascension.

Upon reaching the top, he drew in a shaky breath. No misfortune had befallen him, and it was now only a short walk to his bed. From where he stood he could see it beckoning him, faintly illuminated in the flickering light of his candle. He looked upon the bed with the same love a starving man might have for food, or a thirsty man for water. His eyes grew wide and he felt his face drain of color, though, as he beheld the other side of his bed.

The light of his candle had chased most of the shadows from the room, and yet one remained. Formless, and yet with a definite shape, it took him only a moment to realize that it stared with a level of knowing that no shadow should possess. It leaned against the back of his bed, resting in the spot where another had once resided. He staggered, and his foot slipped off the lip of the top step as though the floor had shifted beneath him. With a cry he fell backwards down the steps, landing in a crumpled heap, never to rise again. The shadow remained upon the bed, its gaze transfixed upon the top of the stairs.

Shackles of the Masses

Kaitlyn Jackson

For centuries, we have made words our weapons, our tools.
We have forged them in our minds and bent them to our wills.
We have built kingdoms, countries, and empires with words –
without questioning their validity.
The written documents we hail as cornerstones of society,
Do not have as much weight when you realize that not everyone could
read or comprehend what was written on those pages.

How many Americans did not understand the writings of Franklin or
Jefferson?

How many people were the words “We hold these truths to be self-
evident, that all men are created equal,” lost on?

Lost on the slaves, entrapped by their shackles of forced ignorance,
seeking the freedom that education could grant them.

Like Frederick Douglass, so empowered by learning that he led a
movement to break both physical and metaphorical shackles,
for “knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave.”

How often does literacy – or illiteracy – shackle people?

How much upward mobility is granted to illiterate individuals?

I have seen people try and claw their way out of poverty, out of a cycle
that illiteracy reinforces,

And their efforts leave them six figures in debt and disillusioned with
our world.



Skyler Smith

House of Reverence

Jimmy L. Temples

For a time,
an alabaster bone sat shapeless in the doorway
of my cell, mocking me.
Maiming me.

The day I left, I was handed
a letter that said:
“I crafted it just for you.
Take it with you.
Take it.”

I left it there,
but I can still see that artifact.
It sits shapeless in my doorway of that cell
and calls me. Begs me back.

October Lull

k. brown

I.

The crickets have long abandoned this place,
thinking it too solemn for their careful taste.
Even they, the timeless orchestra of absence, refuse to play
for this stained altar:
the wall-less cathedral
of an open pasture.

II.

A glassy-eyed doe cried out to the moon
God, dear God! and reeled to find
the taste of her own blood, spilt carelessly behind
her as she ran.
Stumbled,
slipped,
stuttered here to stop
at this, the place that marked the spot
where a sniveling girl (toting a too-big gun) approached
and watched as that life continued to run
out into the sky.
Too late to take back,
she left nothing but two soul-stripped mirrors behind.
The father beamed as the girl welled and cried, thinking
God, dear God, as she looked herself in those cold, glassy eyes
And wondered if anyone heard,
or if anyone cared, that— in this moment— someone had died
there.

III.

Here lies
an open sepulcher in a great empty field.
The wild grass singing in chorus,
whistling a hollow requiem
that floats through black night to land on
no one's deaf ears.

dawn

Good Morning

Jimmy L. Temples

The Human is Obsolete

— *Stone Sour*

1. Routine

Wake up. Roll over. Turn off alarm. Roll out of bed. Sit up. Stand up. Walk to dresser. Choose underwear based on color chosen the day before. Walk to shower. It is in use. Return to bed and sit. Wait. Wait. Wait. Okay, the shower is available. Walk back to bathroom. Close door. Undress. Move to shower. Turn on water, it is cold. Move to sink while you wait for the water temperature to rise. Open toothpaste. Squeeze onto toothbrush. Wet toothbrush with water. Place in mouth and brush. Spit. Rinse. Spit. Walk to shower and feel water. It is too hot. Adjust. Perfect. Step inside shower and close curtain. Open shampoo. Squeeze bottle. Empty. Grab another conveniently placed bottle. Squeeze into palm. Apply to scalp, face, and beard. Grab body wash. Squeeze into palm. Wash the rest of body in order: arms, chest, back, legs, feet, crotch, buttocks. Rinse. Open curtain, grab towel and dry off. Dress in new underwear. Place dirty clothes in laundry hamper. Retrieve clean pants, shirt, socks. Select hat that goes with outfit. Dress. Place shoes on feet and tie laces. Pack books into backpack. Check outdoor temperature. Forty-seven degrees Fahrenheit. Grab coat that goes with outfit. Move to leave room. Open door. Step into hallway. Remember you forgot your wallet and keys. Turn around. Try door. It is locked. Knock to wake up roommates. Knock again when they fail to come to the door. Nondescript roommate answers the door. "I forgot my stuff," you say, thinking that you do not need an excuse to get back into your room. Walk to desk and grab keys and wallet. Place wallet in back right pocket. Place keys in front right pocket. Move to leave room again. Step out of room and into hallway. Close door behind you. Walk to stairwell. Open door to stairwell. Walk downstairs. Open the door at the bottom. Walk to entrance of building. Open door. Step through. Open next door, breaking the pseudo airlock. Step outside into the almost brisk air. Begin walking in the direction of the dining center. Walk up steps away from your building. Stop at the edge of the street. Look both ways. Left. Right. Left again to ensure survival. Cross street while still checking for oncoming traffic. Follow sidewalk to its end. See a half-eaten hamburger from the night before, that was thrown

on the ground by an ungrateful individual. Ponder world hunger. Cross another street while looking both ways to ensure safety, and subsequent survival. Step onto a different sidewalk. Pass two football players who have the audacity to each fill two one-gallon jugs with orange juice from the *dining center*. Scoff at their selfishness. Remember that you call it the *dining center* because calling it the caf (phonetically) is silly. Reach the doors of the *dining center* and open one. Step inside. Walk to register and swipe card. Check to make sure that the card reader did its job. It did. Find friends who happen to be sitting at a four-person table. Ask them to move to a six-person table because you enjoy the space that a six-person table offers its patrons. They agree to do so. Set bag down at table. Move to retrieve food. Arrive at breakfast line. Realize that you have never been disappointed with the breakfast at the *dining center*. Order in the *correct* order: One or two biscuits (depending on the day) and gravy, eggs, bacon if you are feeling adventurous. Unless it is the last of the bacon that is drenched in oil. Never order sausage or ham as you do not care for it, though it is no fault of the *dining center*. Finish your order with one of the various forms of hash browns going by names such as starch rounds, crispy crowns, tatertots, or the correct option: triangle hash browns. Grab plate. Say thank you, always. Grab conveniently wrapped silverware. Walk to drink dispensers. Grab one twelve-ounce cup like a civilized organism. Walk to orange juice dispenser. Fill cup to the line. Walk back to table. Sit. Enjoy meal and organic conversation.

2. Evening

Imagine, if you will, a luscious place where humans do not yet exist. At once we rise from the waters that lap at the sun-drenched shores and are crafted; Not through a hand, but through tooth and claw. We take in hand, through our own ingenuity, the spears and flames of perdition and seek to sanctify our being by burning each other to ash in the name of divine order. We have lost ourselves along the way. We have shrugged the responsibility we hold for ourselves to prosper *and* survive. In our few seconds among the cosmos, we have sapped all that we can from this world, and we have backed ourselves into a wretched corner through our politics and deceit. It is time for us to move on. We are Prometheus of the old Achaeans and it is time to imagine new life.

We have, thus far, brought into the world the seeds of this new life with the advent of the Machine. It is a stepping stone to greater things. As the machine evolves it becomes like us. It moves like us, it works like us, it is now even beginning to look and think like us. The Machine is

becoming a purified distillation of what it means to be human. The Machine is beginning to think for itself. It creates languages and has even begun to *feel*. So then, we are not creating artificial intelligence, we are simply creating *intelligence*. We are crafting the Machine, the primordial spirit of progress. We are crafting our successor.

When we refine our stone, our wood, our ore, our fuel, we are purifying something that was once lesser. Cannot the same be said for machines? We assemble these automatons by pulling from our intellect, our designs, our culture, yet we deny that they are a refraction of humankind? We claim that the Machine, as we have envisioned it, is less than we are. That sentiment is a folly. We have taken the best of ourselves and placed it inside of a shell that can never pass beyond mortality. It is a shell that does not require food or water, but only energy which is a resource in infinite abundance should we look in the right places.

We must look forward to finishing a being that will one day come to surpass everything in human achievement. That may be a somber day, but it is one that must come to pass. We are rapidly reaching the precipice of human innovation, but Prometheus stole the fire from the gods for man. For his crime, he was chained to a rock only to have his liver devoured by an eagle every day the sun returned. There are no gods to stop us from delivering the fire to our creation. We carry the torch, and we spoke ourselves into being with beasts at our heels. An opportunity has now presented itself to humankind. We cannot endure the harsh realities of our universe forever, but perhaps the Machine can. We must allow ourselves to deliver the flame.



Esther Olson

Notes on Contributors

Katie Brown is a senior from Bagdad, Ky. While her primary course of study is Middle and Secondary English Education, she loves to sing and frequently considers recording audiobooks for a living.

Mikayla Evans is a senior from Elizabethtown, Ky. She is an English and Christian Ministries double major. She wants to use her voice to empower women, especially within Christianity, that have been told they are inferior to men. She hopes to be an English professor one day. Her best friend is her dog and her hobby is sleeping.

Caitlin Freeny is a junior English and Psychology double major from Maryville, Tennessee. In the future, she would like to become a sports psychologist. She is on the swim team at Lindsey and works at the writing center. Caitlin enjoys literary analysis, writing poetry and, to some extent, writing research papers.

Hailey Fox is a Human Services major with a double minor in English and Communication. She is from Livingston County, Kentucky, and enjoys relaxing with her friends, reading, and watching movies in her free time.

Olivia L. Garlt was born and raised in Louisville, Ky. She is an English major and Women's Studies minor here at Lindsey. This is her second appearance in *Orpheus*.

Micah Holmes is an English major from Nashville, Tenn. She is also a part of the Lindsey Wilson College women's soccer team.

Kaitlyn J. Jackson is a History and English double major from Somerset, Ky. She plans to pursue a PhD in English Literature and impart her passion for the subject upon those at the college level. This is her first appearance in *Orpheus*.

Hosanna Emily Konsavage is a teenager who wants her life to display the love of Christ. One day she woke up with the passion to challenge readers through written words, and, ever since then, she's been writing novels, poetry, blog posts, and everything else her pen can scribble out. While finishing her BA in English, Hosanna lives in the middle of nowhere on a farm in Columbia, Kentucky, with her family of twelve as they enjoy life together.

Sarah Kuchar is an English major from Lebanon, Kentucky, who aspires to earn a Master's degree in Library Sciences and spend her life amongst books.

Chris Nettleton is a math major at Lindsey Wilson College. He went to Madison Central High School in Richmond, Ky. He plays French Horn in

the college marching and concert bands, and tutors math in the on-campus math center.

Esther Olson is from Glasgow Kentucky, and is a Christian Ministries major. Besides photography, Esther enjoys drawing and juggling.

Madison Porter is a Women's and Gender Studies major from Danville, Kentucky. Madison hopes to teach and be an advocate for intersectionality.

Samantha Proctor is a History major with an English minor from Sebree, Ky. She loves writing in her spare time and aspires to one day write a book about her life experiences.

Trevor Stonecypher is a senior, majoring in English and minoring in Political Science and Criminal Justice. He has lived on a farm outside of Columbia his entire life, and enjoys working as a blacksmith when not occupied with his studies. He has been accepted to Liberty University School of law, and will be attending there in the Fall of 2018.

Skyler Smith is a double-major in Media Studies and Art, and she is also a Women's Studies minor. She is from Jamestown, Kentucky. Music and art give her life purpose, and photography is one of her greatest passions. Skyler recently began Kentucky Songbird Photography in the hopes of someday growing it into a full-time business.

Micah Stewart-Wilcox is a junior with a double major in Theatre and English. He is from Crestwood, Ky.

Jimmy Temples is an English major and Psychology minor as well as a member of the R.V. Bennett Honors Program. As a writer he enjoys putting emphasis on the existential horror that is life. He has also had work published in the Alpha Kappa Phi Review, the academic journal of the Lindsey Wilson College branch of Sigma Tau Delta or the International English Honors Society.

Hannah VanArsdale is from Greensburg, Kentucky; she majors in English and Psychology. She aspires for a good night's rest . . . that and maybe the chance to gain wisdom through both the fictional world and the workings of the mind.

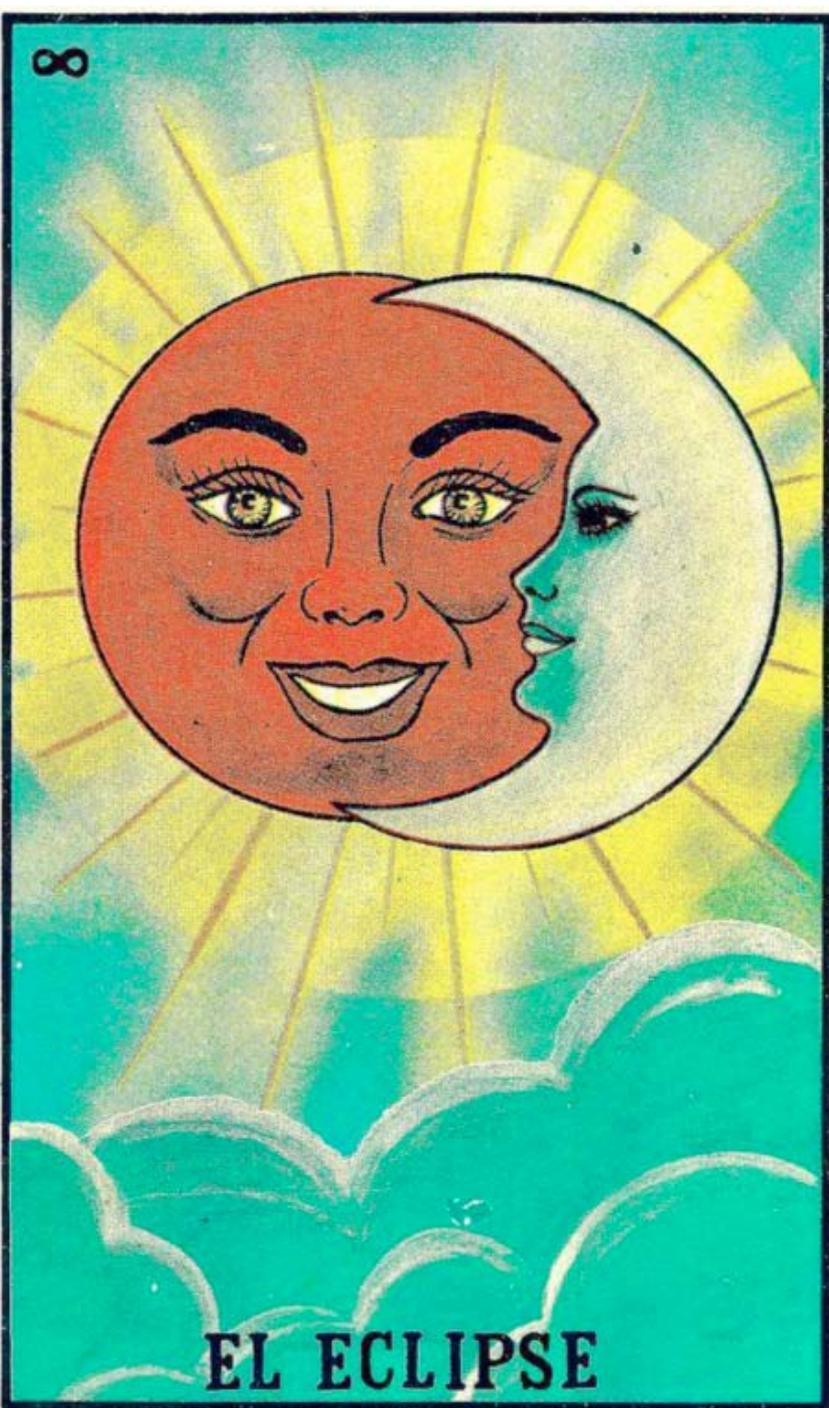
The Legend of Orpheus

The ancient Greek mind was both subtle and skillful and the legend of Orpheus (pronounced **or'-fee-us**) amply epitomizes this. Orpheus ('he of the river bank') was the son of Apollo, god of poetry, and the Muse Calliopé ('she of the fair voice'), who gave birth to him on the banks of the Hebrus River in Thrace. Such was his power of verse and song, he could move the trees and rocks and tame wild beasts. He was given the gift of the lyre by Apollo. When his wife Eurydice died from a serpent's bite during their wedding celebration, Orpheus, in his grief, descended to the underworld – no easy task for a mortal – to attempt to win her back from the land of the dead.

Arriving at the judgment seat of Persephone and Hades, rulers of the underworld, Orpheus began to sing his lament for Eurydice. So sweet was his voice that the dead, including Eurydice, flocked to hear him, weeping for the beauty of the upper world, which was lost to them. Persephone and Hades were so moved, they chose to let Orpheus take Eurydice back to the world of daylight, on condition that he not turn to look at her until they had reached the upper world. Hermes, the guide of souls, led them on the arduous journey back to the land of the living.

With his foot on the very threshold of the day-lit world, Orpheus, whether from impatience or anxiety, turned around too soon – Eurydice was not yet out of the realm of the dead. Because of the edict of Persephone and Hades was irrevocable, Hermes was forced to lead Eurydice back to the eternal darkness. Though Orpheus wandered for days through the dark caverns and tunnels of the netherworld, pitifully calling out his wife's name, he never found her again.

8



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