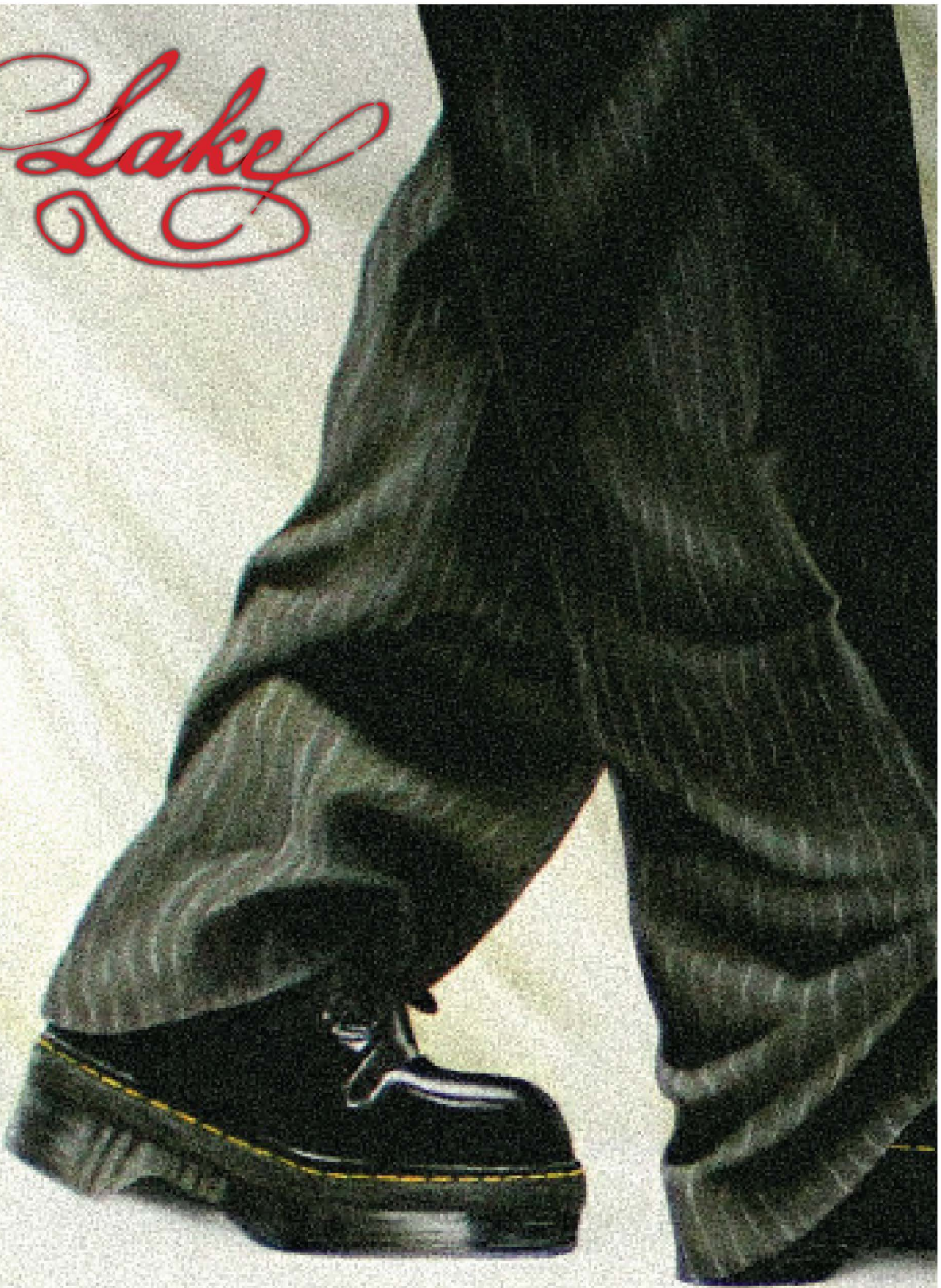


Lake



Issue No. 12

Fall 2023 - Spring 2024

Mission Statement:

The purpose of the RLC Arts Publication
Lake is to celebrate art in all its forms.

Issue No. 12

Fall 2023 - Spring 2024

Rend Lake College

468 North Ken Gray Parkway

Ina, IL, 62846

(618) 437 - 5321

www.rlc.edu



Faculty Editor: Peggy Davis

Layout & Design: Jacy Crews and Rylin Huie

Fiction Editor: Peggy Davis

Poetry Editor: Peggy Davis

Non-Fiction Editor: Rebecca Biggs

Fine Arts Editor: Melissa McClement-Engler

Graphic Arts Editor: Jennifer Tarantino Linsin

Headline font: ©2013 *Declaration*

All Rights Reserved P22 type foundry, Inc.

<http://www.p22.com>



Skin Decay

Paper Cut-Out
Arrow Artistry



Misgendering
Ceramic
Arrow Artistry



Gender Euphoria
Sculpture
Arrow Artistry



Noise Sensitivity
Digital Illustration
Kaitlyn Palmer



Tears

Tears as lifes water dew,
sustain the flowers
within our hearts.
Each tear a flower tends.
For whom these fairy blooms

P. Suess
Poem



Love Forever Leaving

One dark evening lonely lit,
one candle flickered, fading quick—
one vacant heart repining, broken,
one phantom love left leaning,
never fading . . . ever leaving.

Sounds of satin sails billow
with dreams of love forever leaving,
gliding over softened meadows' flow.

Borne bound with silken cord—
a broken heart in tow.

P. Suess

Poem

Mandala Sunset

Evelyn Aden
Photography

A Lone Star Gaze

Paige McKittrick
Photography



Silence

BY: 杨

母亲:

Silence is the house every time you leave because you are the glue that holds a broken household together. Any sense of family I have felt was when you were around, because when you were around, I could pretend you never left that first time. I could pretend we were three generations under the same roof brimming with love. That silence overwhelmed me at first, and I would enter your barren room with its belongings packed into the few suitcases jostling away in the trunk of some taxi sending you far away from home. I would lift up to smell the few scattered personal items left behind, triggering memories I soon force down again. The emptiness is hollowing because we retreat into our rooms behind locked doors when you leave, filling the hallways and living rooms with an unsettling stillness. That silence lifted as I grew older, my tears dissipated, and the overbearing longing for your presence seemed to fade. I always attributed my diminishing sadness to my growing accustomed to your departure, but maturing offered me a wider perspective. My fear of accepting your affection stemmed from a reflexive

urge to protect myself from your absence, believing it would make saying goodbye easier. Goodbyes did become easier, but only as a side effect of blinding myself from appreciating how incredible you have been my entire life.

Silence was our embrace after two years of being separated by the pandemic, your frail body unfamiliar in my arms. My excitement was palpable, yet I exclaimed your government name because calling out any variant of mom felt foreign to my tongue. Three suitcases half your size and around your weight accompanied you on the strenuous journey across the globe from your workplace to home, each overloaded with a myriad of collectables and personal items for each member of the family, all four of us eagerly waiting for our gifts like kids on Christmas Eve. It was a miracle how you sneaked some items past TSA and customs, but it was a bigger miracle how effortlessly you brought everyone together.

Silence remains as you take away much more than the few suitcases you pack for the monthslong trips throughout the years. You take away contentment from my father, because though there may not be an immense amount of love, there is certainly respect. He may not see you as a lover, but you have been his partner for over decades, and I am sure he desires your company. You take away hope from my grandparents as they watch their first child leave, their savior who has brought

them a new life. They radiate with a certain level of happiness I only see when you are around. You take away the mother I need in times when no one listens or knows how to, because all I ever wanted was to feel understood. Tears I have held back for nearly a decade stain the airport floors when we last separated, this time I was the one leaving. I was quite surprised by my reaction. It took eight years of your intermittent visits and a long-awaited trip to China for me to realize how integral you have been to my growth.

婆婆：

Silence is the air after I lose my temper and allow raw emotions to control my words and actions. I stare into your bathroom mirror pent-up with pain and anger only you could summon. I would say if only you were your daughter, I might feel understood. You would tear up, and I would hate myself more for bringing hurt to your already arduous life. I shudder slightly as I clutch a leg of the chair you sit on praying for an ounce of empathy, but I guess that is never how you show love. I still struggle with understanding your affection. Never once do I recall you initiating anything physical or verbally expressing love, because sometimes all I ever needed was an affirmation that you truly cared. Instead, you shower me with processed foods when you think I was not sufficiently fed by your magical cooking. Instead, you tell me to work harder when I boast to you

about a recent academic achievement rather than ensuring me how proud you are to have me as your grandson. Instead, you say good enough and pretty fine rather than fantastic and marvelous. I learned to stop mentioning promising opportunities that arise for my personal projects because the only response you ever gave were reminders not to lose focus on things that actually mattered. You never learned what actually mattered to me. Sometimes I believe our generational differences are too great for us to love each other properly, but somehow that makes the love stronger.

Silence was the walk back to my hotel room after our final conversation before the day you sent me off to college. I traced the geometric patterns with my toes as I treaded the plush carpet, melancholily thinking about our lasts. I remembered the last homecooked meal you prepared before we flew to Missouri, your red braised pork belly as heavenly as ever. I thought about the last time I could knock on your door and expect your radiant smile to welcome me inside for a chat. I considered our last conversation, your frivolous comments still ignited within me a sense of complete frustration. You advised me to layer up when the weather gets cold for probably the fifth time, and I quickly fired back reminding you I was going into college, not preschool. I reminded myself of the same thing when an impulse to turn around and ask to spend the night in your room

appeared in my mind. Change is a terrifying creature, and the idea that I was entering a life without your unconditional support and unwavering care was strikingly daunting.

Silence are the meals I have without your calming presence and frequent insistence to eat more vegetables as you pile bok choy onto a growing mound of food. The silence is deafening during nights I cry out for a voice to tell me everything will be alright to no response. Your voice messages break that silence, reassure that things are better now that you have moved to Canada. I understand the difficulties of being in a foreign country, especially when the support system when we were together was so limited. The happiness that results from you finally living in a house where all its inhabitants truly welcome you is contagious even through the phone. After nearly eighty years of prioritizing your family over yourself, you deserve a better life, and hearing about the adventures my uncle takes you on every day is so relieving. While we both tend to shy away from major change, I am delighted you have found serenity and a home closer to your son and his family.

亲爱的：

Silence fills my phone after you hang up frustrated with something I only wish you shared, and that silence exposes me to a fear of abandonment I have not addressed since the first time my mother left. Words

of encouragement and reassurance seem to accomplish nothing as I yearn to feel some of your pain. I would take myself apart to rebuild you I say. If only you could feel a fraction of the love I have for you, there could be forgiveness. Those marks on your shoulder cut deeper than the surface wounds they actually are, and your demeanor is silent after you shut yourself off from the world that has yet to treat you fairly.

Silence is the drive home after our first date, my mind replaying every interaction over and over again. Your little idiosyncrasies make your beauty effortless, and if I had known how quickly our relationship would blossom, I might have cherished more of those moments. You always teased me about how uncomfortable I looked sitting in silence. Maybe I was afraid that without my jokes to distract you from the present, you might have realized you felt out of place. You mentioned recently awkward silence does not bother me the same, I believe that I have learned to embrace the silence because there is a certain beauty in the absence of sound. Silence allows me to be fully present in the purest form of reality, one that I enjoy greatly with you.

Silence are the sleepless nights you lay in my arms distressed at the dark forces of the universe consistently dealing you bad hands. I tell you to reshuffle, recalibrate yourself by thinking about the certainties in your life, but divorce and cancer still

boldly printed on the billboards of your mind. The love between us is stronger than our personal trauma permits, but we love regardless, and that love is terrifying because neither of us were taught what that word meant until we found it in each other.

Silence is a horrifying idea because it represents everything that could be said, which is why all my deepest fears hide in silence. Silence forces me to think, to acknowledge my present state and all its insecurities unbound. In a world where noise is so easily captured and distractions float like oxygen molecules, silence was once incredibly foreign. Silence used to terrify me because it served as a constant reminder of my hopelessness, but I have learned that this is not its only purpose.

Silence are the calmest lullabies and proudest anthems. Silence are the poetic sunsets and enchanting nights, which stars use as an instrument to reveal melodies of the universe. Silence is the peace of nature undisturbed by the troubles of humankind, a peace unachievable by the production of any sound. Silence is mellifluous, permeating, and everlasting. Silence are our reunions concluding months and years of separation, an amalgamation of the most intense emotions. Silence is the love I hold for all of you, because in the absence of sound, that love persists.

**Because even when nobody
is listening, that love speaks.
Because even when you
take everything away, that
love remains.**



Mid-Evil Family Portrait

Stacie Rae Bullard
Acrylic

The Monster

There's a monster inside me
It lurks deep within
It is wild dangerous
Spine-chilling and hair raising
Sometimes it shouts and screams
Sometimes it will whisper and mutter
It can be a soft voice that is erie to the soul
It can be a great sound that is trembling and cold
It's like a great wind blowing deep within
If it gets out it will run with no remorse
'Till then it torments me
Like a twister of imprisonment
Cold and brutal
I'm caught in its clutches
Fearful as I suffer
There's a monster inside me

Chloe Robinson

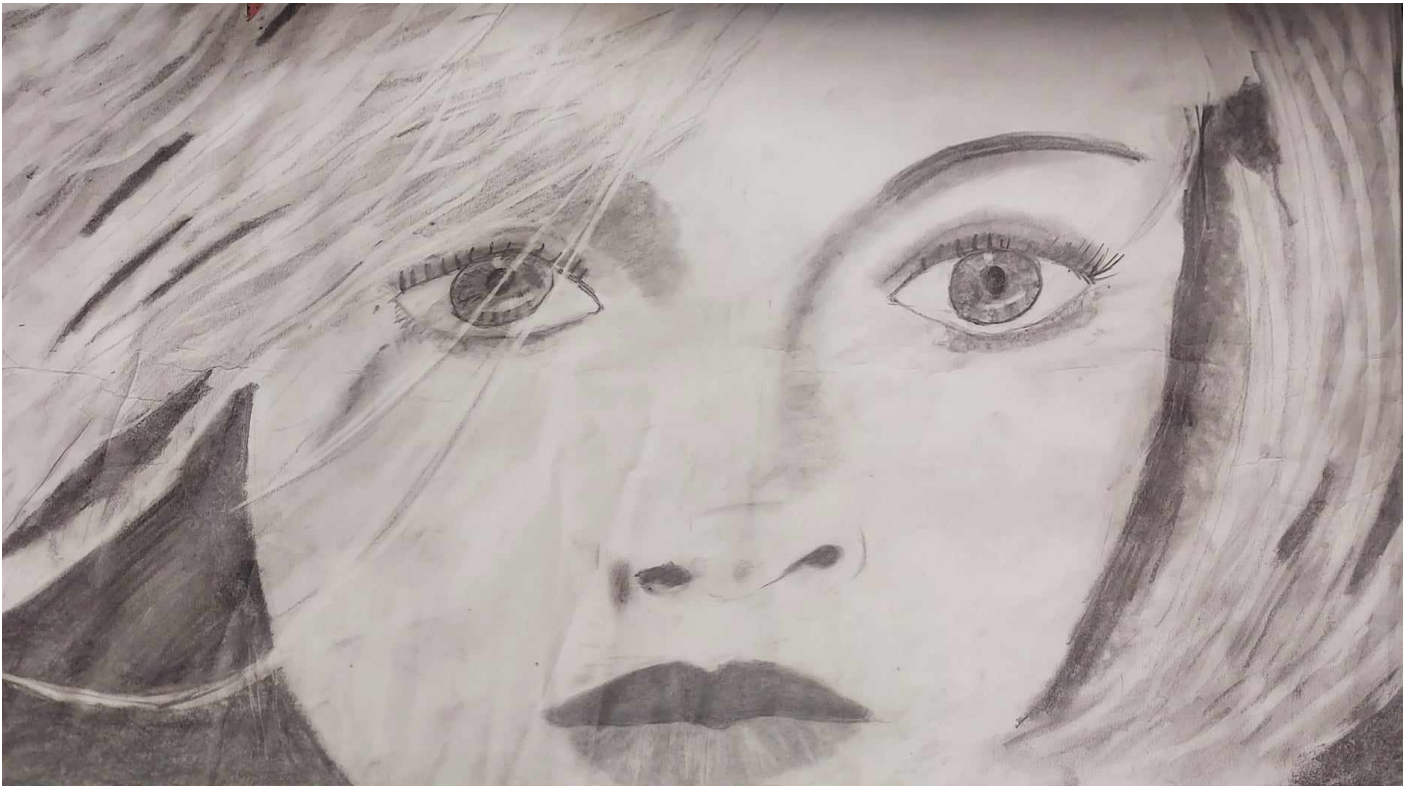
Poem

Begin Sanzen

Adrift round down wings
spiral down round winds
a kite, alike a kite,
aloft, along a strand.
A leaf freefalls
a fate afloat,
imprints upon the sand.
Where seas begin, seas end
Here begins Sanzen.

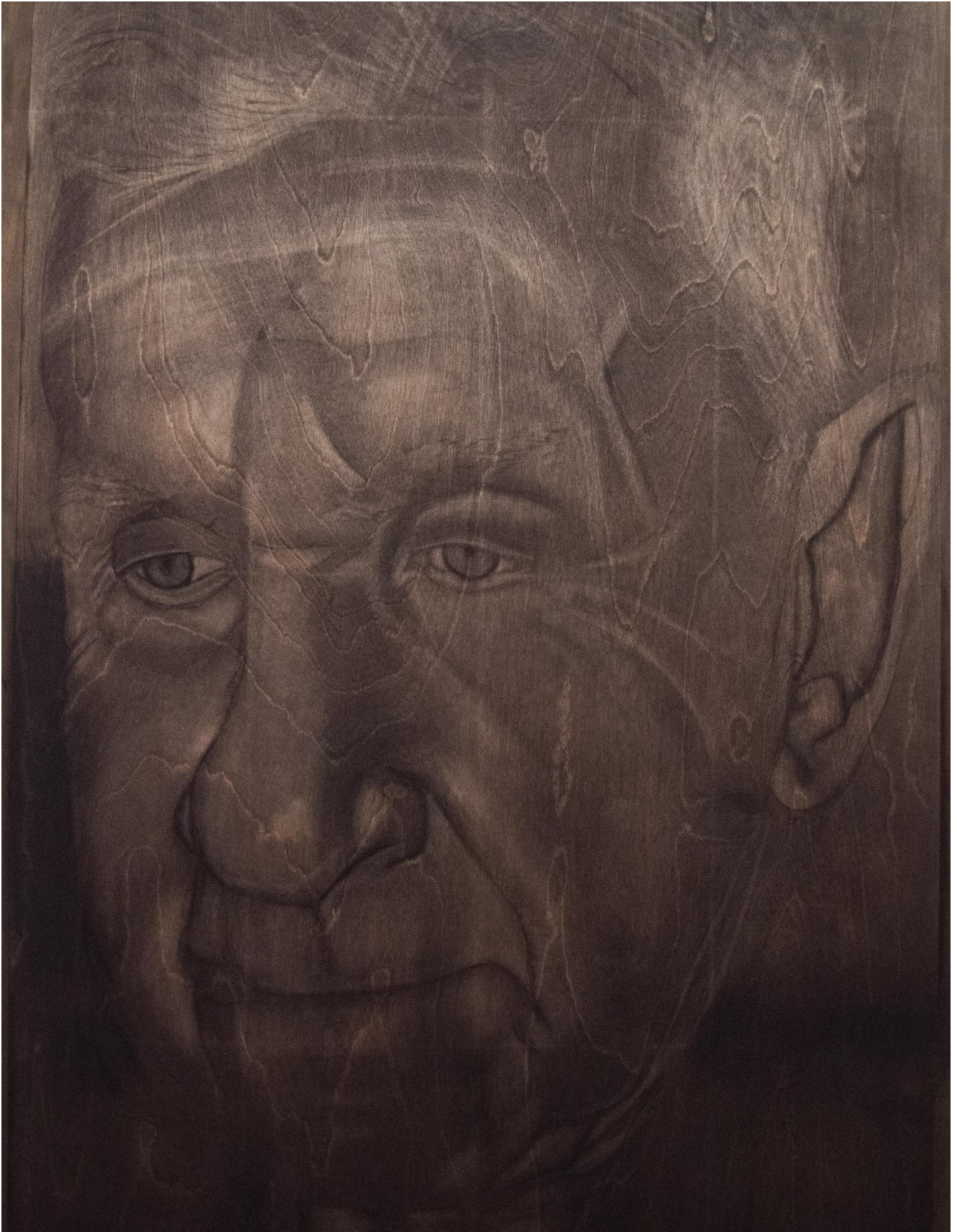
Amidst gentle winds
adrift Zephyrs wings,
glide like ice alight a tide
buoyed, softly skimming rime.
A leaf afloat,
a fate flys free,
imprints upon the sky.
Were seas begin, seas end
Here begins Sanzen

-P. Suess
Poem



Mystery Girl

Kaitlyn Palmer
Compressed Charcoal



Decay Theory

Emily DeForest
Charcoal on Wood





Mourning Dove

By: Kyle Ingram

In darkened trees
above a curtained window
of an over-quiet room
a mourning dove, (prophetic bird!),
somehow sensing spreading
emptiness is heard
hanging on the air its
measured, melancholy
pentacle of notes, like
someone hired to sing
the anthem of our suffering ...

Sell Your Suit and Tie

Hayli Charron
Photography





Malia's Tea

Set

Hayli Charron
Acrylic



Paw Paw's Love
Veronica Jones
Photography

Still

There it goes again.

That one, singular moment where I have the chance to be something,

But I stand still.

I'm the friend who doesn't jump when the rest do.

I'm the man who doesn't mourn when he wants to. When he needs to

Escape from the pain that so seamlessly grew.

There it goes again.

The tick-tock of the clock, ticking off another shot.

I haven't took it still.

I'm the willow in the forest overshadowed by the rest.

I'm set in stone as the freeing breeze doesn't reach the leaves

That try to press away from the stress of the drooping branch.

here it goes again.

My mind is racing as my time is wasting.

The exponential potential I had now lay still.

I know you're not surprised, I'm flailing again.

I'm still still, still waiting, still breathless in the wind.

Just waiting for a sign to keep going, to know when.

When what? I don't know. To either go, or to end.

So I'm still. Still here, still waiting for my when.

But there it goes again.

-Chase Cariens

Poem

Removing the Mask

By Tracey Webb

I wished upon a star one night
And then watched it arc to its doom
I threw a penny in the fountain
Sinking, copper winking in the gloom.

With haste, I raced towards the bright city lights
Rather than glamour, I discovered despair
Each path I followed led me astray
Self-hatred seeped in; I was too poisoned to care.

I laughed when I really wanted to cry,
I wore so many masks, I lost sight of my soul
Rejected, dejected, I stopped and turned back
I had lost my faith, an actor without a role

Destitute and heavy of heart, I sank to the earth
Exhausted, I bowed my head and began to pray.

"I give up," I told the Creator,

"Guide me, if you will."

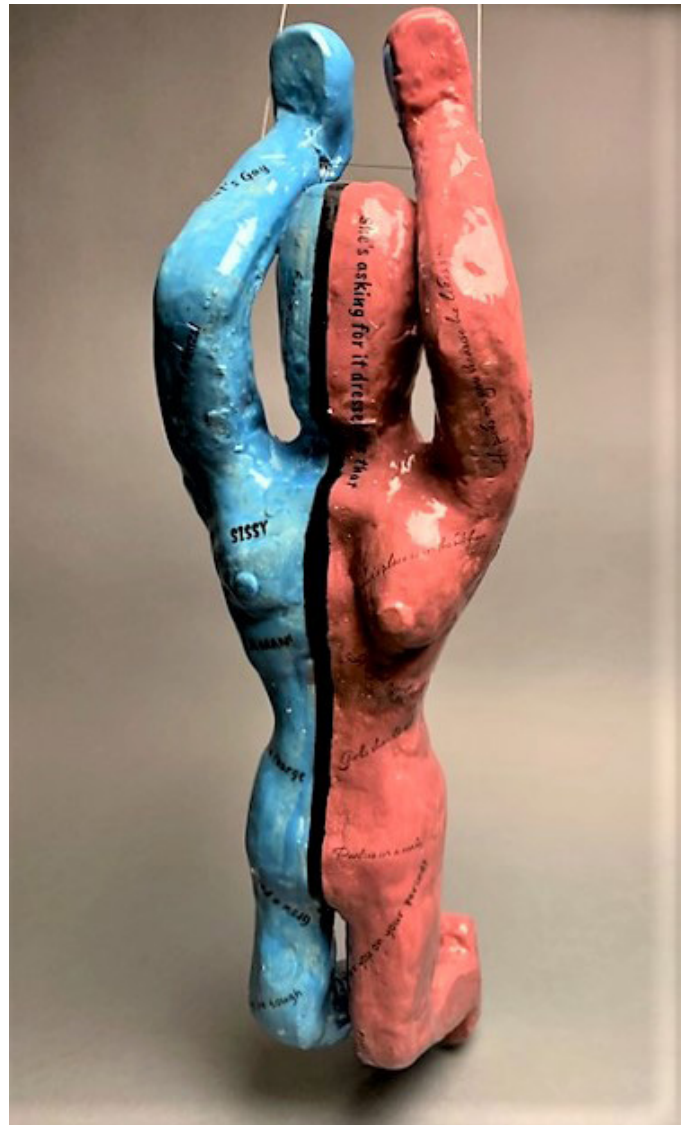
And then I wept until the poison drained away.

Back full circle, I started anew.

I returned to the stage, my haven in the dark.

And like a moth freed from the savage flame

At last I found my place; at last I made my mark



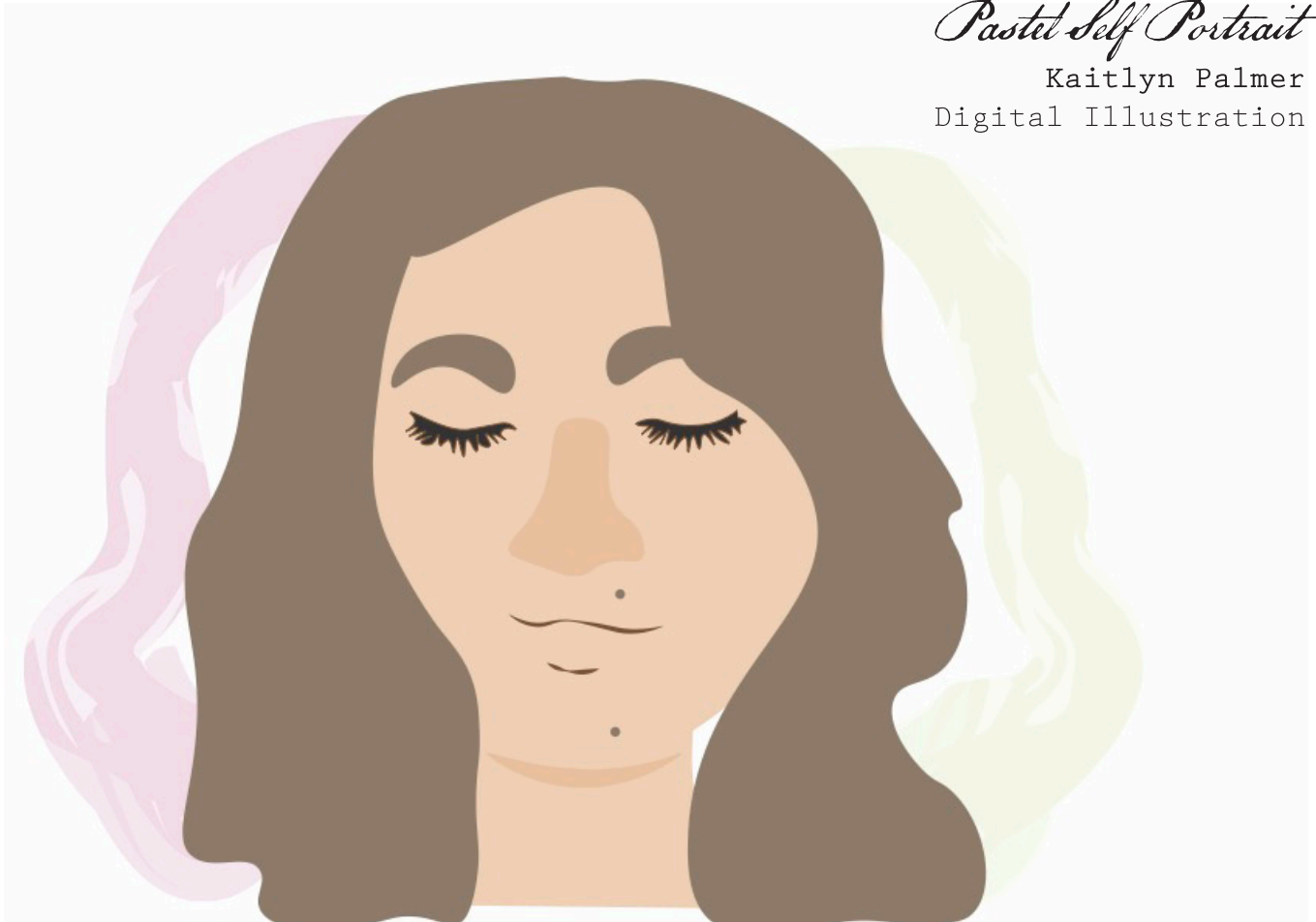
Controlled Society

Arrow Artistry
Ceramic

Memento Mio

If I remain vigilant and
tend to the moment.
Tend to the moment
To the moment
The moment
the moment ends
So many moments
now to tend.

P. Suess
Poem



Pastel Self Portrait

Kaitlyn Palmer
Digital Illustration



Coming Out
 Arrow Artistry
 Ceramic



Self Love
 Arrow Artistry
 Ceramic



Corporate Gender
 Arrow Artistry
 Ceramic



Self Identity
 Arrow Artistry
 Ink



Sell Your Suit and Tie

Hayli Charron
Acrylic



Fall's Embrace

Jonathon Walters
Photography



Melancholy's Black Velvet Bell

Upon a scalloped splintered throne,
room enough for skin and bone,
beneath a clinging lead cloak dwells
a heart beating forth
from shadows' darkened well.

Here reigns low the sound of
melancholy's black velvet bell
whose tone sustains the torment
of a silent soul's refrain:
a munted, numbing, muted theme,
despair's plangent lament.

This reverie of subtle force
depriving hope's desire
presses mournful tears of self-defeat –
leaving sallow days of same and sorrow,
draining dreams of evermorrow.

-P. Suess



Saint Sebastian

Julian Mitchell
Colored Pencil

The Dance Floor

By: Kyle Ingram

She dances, distracted,
in his clumsy grip –
his movements random
as a paint chip caught
in the eddy of
an unplugged drain –
(he's not yet drunk,
but he feels no pain).

Tonight, he says
you'll remember all
your life. He bought
a ring, he means
to ask her to be his wife.
But the only flowers
he ever brings is
Four Roses on his breath . . .

She's always the one who
leads. He fights the
flow – moving counter
to the room's natural
rotation – crashing
into the others who
have no time to dodge.

Her eyes search the
spinning crowd, looking
for a friend, praying
for the song to end,
or that some rescuer
will soon cut in.



CD Store

Julian Mitchell
Pen and Pencil

Covid Boy
Kaitlyn Palmer
Acrylic



Hidden Seas
Arrow Artistry
Ceramic

Ruby

Julian Mitchell
Colored Pencil





Untitled

Julian Mitchell
Marker and Colored Pencil

Formation

I had grown up thinking I was stronger than I was.
That things couldn't hurt me because my hurt was nothing compared to the hurt of others.
It was always others and then me. Then me? The afterthought of wanting to be cared for.
When words spoke of me they were thin and rigid.

Voices changed as I grew a mind of my own.
They stuck to me like crust forming around the core of the Earth.
What once was warm and lively now dimmed by salt and stone.
Both were cast onto me. I couldn't throw them first.

The words were spoken like a breezeless wind, still and careless.
Never knowing that the cause was friction that had happened underneath.
I cared. I felt it all.
The weight of nothing was so compounding it drove me to be breezeless myself.

Didn't you know it hurt me?
The weightless words and the tip-toeing of is he or is he not.
They shook me to the core, and now I yearn to be closer to the Sun.
For it to draw me in closer so I can feel that warmth once more.

-Chase Cariens

Poem



Window of the Soul
Paige McKittrick
Photography



Midflight Majesty
Jonathan Walters
Photography

Faerie Portal

Evelyn Aden

Photography





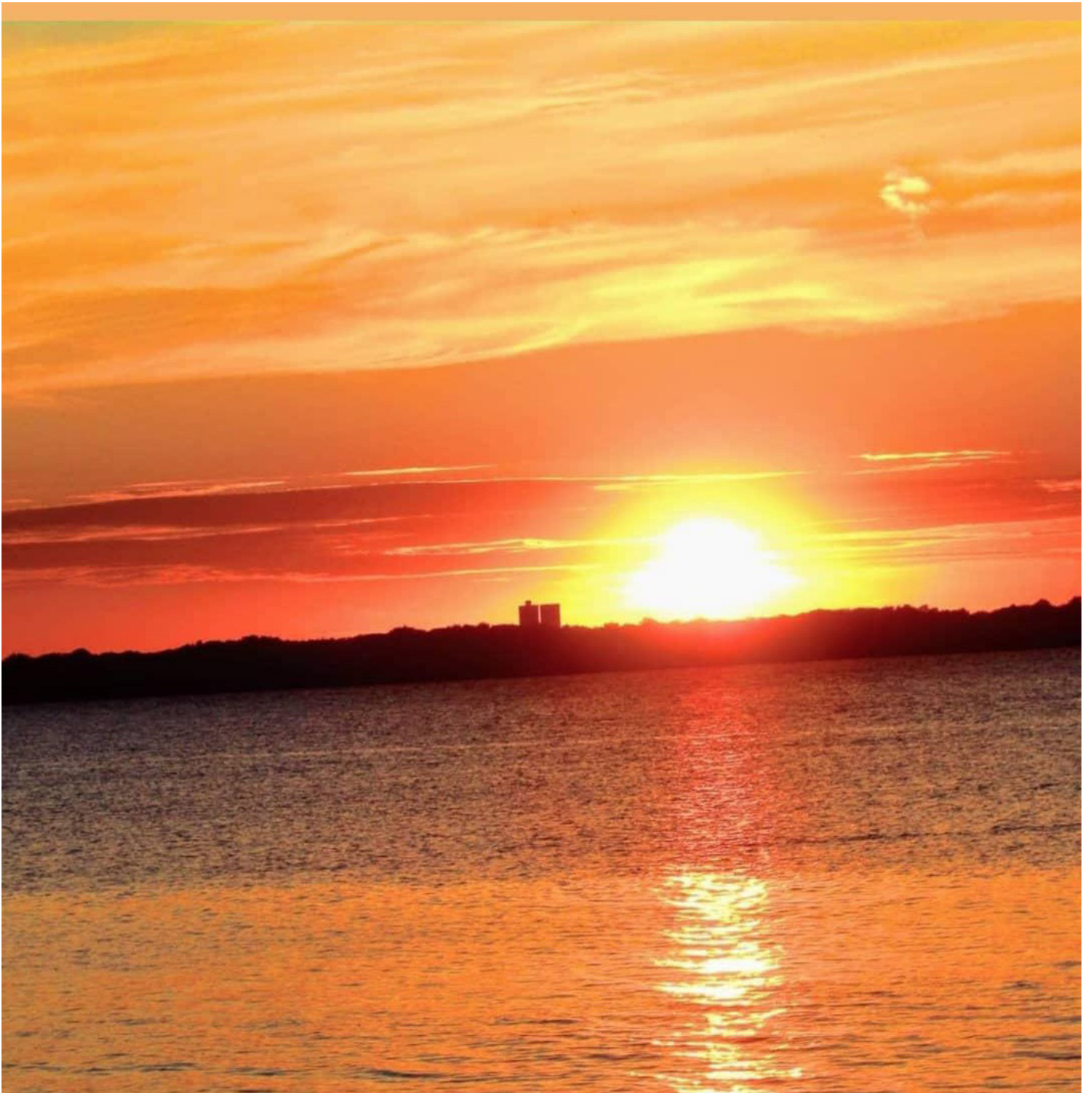
Early Sunday

Stacie Rae Bullard
Acrylic



*Random Objects In
My House*

Stacie Rae Bullard
Acrylic



RL Sunset

Kaitlyn Palmer
Photography



Above The Flow

Jonathan Walters
Photography



*Head In
the Clouds*

Evelyn Aden
Photography



Blue Sky

Evelyn Aden
Photography



*Cowboy's
Champion*

Paige McKittrick
Photography

Dogfall

By: Clyde Hall

The stray's jaws snapped, narrowly missing Philo's fingers. No warning growl, no barking or snarling. One moment he was securing his passenger and the next, the dog was on him. Philo braced against his SUV and kicked at the mongrel. Then he drove the door open, hitting the animal snout-on when it lunged again. Philo pulled the door back, steel toed boot raised for a lethal kick while the dog was addled. But it was gone.

From what Philo had glimpsed of it, maybe a Cane Corso and Husky mix. Shaggy and unkempt, but clearly thick-limbed and heavy bodied. Also, apparently, fast on such wide hound's paws.

"Was that your doggy, hon?"

The girl in the child safety seat blinked slowly but didn't answer Philo. The drugs worked fast that way. The only thing holding her upright in the rear passenger compartment now were the zip ties he'd applied to her arms and legs.

Philo looked again for the stray, noticing a sizeable dent in the passenger door he'd slammed against its broad head. Satisfied the dog was driven off by the pain of blunt impact, he climbed behind the steering wheel and started the engine. He locked the doors, and then Philo carefully checked the alley in both directions before pulling away.

Meticulous planning was the key and it had served him well unlocking fourteen previous treasures like the one Philo transported now. Careful preparation meant maximum indulgence, but random elements were hazards. Distractions like the stray animal threatened his anticipated pleasure, and that was dangerous.

Because humans were never so vulnerable as when they indulged their guilty pleasures.

Even guilty, they were still pleasures and pursuing them made people sloppy, careless. Philo blamed society's fixation on instant gratification. No one recalled the satisfying surge of excitement from executing a perfectly planned strategy. Perhaps chess masters still grasped this sort of rewarded patience, but few others in the modern world did.

Passing beneath a burned out street light as he left the alley and pulled onto a side street, Philo checked for pedestrians and onlookers. He travelled the prime witness zone now, precisely between the small town's trailer park and the nearest Mom & Pop convenience shop. In preparing for tonight, Philo checked out both and had found them ideal. Neither in good repair, with the alley itself devolved into potholes filled by fallen tree limbs.

Such factors drew him like a moth to a porchlight. Foot traffic was common between both rundown locations, and typical poor parenting meant children sent on errands for diapers, phone cards, and even, depending on the store management, cigarettes. This girl carried a stack of dollar bills along with a handful of change and a bag of generic French Roast coffee. Whoever waited for delivery was due for disappointment. Philo hoped a derelict family member suffered caffeine withdrawal in the meantime.

He glanced at his passenger in the rearview mirror as she bobbed through semi-consciousness. She'd told him her name was Kaira, but most likely that was a lie. The girl was perhaps seven, dusky complexion but straight auburn hair hinting at a racial mix. Most importantly, her skin was flawless.

The smoothness enticed Philo, just as a similar healthy glow lured him to his last passenger, a pre-teen Hispanic boy. Despite differences in their ages, both were taken using the same system Philo refined over the years. Finding a likely candidate, young and small, walking along an alley or backstreet near sundown. Pulling over, window down. Presenting himself as a visitor looking for an address on his GPS and holding his cell phone for the child to see. When they reached out, and they usually did, he grabbed their hand and administered the injection. The cocktail was quick, overdose dangers no concern for Philo. Seconds later they were secured and travelling.

Destinations were preselected and prepped. Pulling onto Route 7, Philo checked the odometer and estimated distance to the abandoned rock quarry he'd selected for tonight. It was perfect. Remote, a few shacks standing, and a deep quarry pond filled by rain and groundwater. Privacy with a convenient disposal method afterward. It was where this child, like the others, would spend her final hours appreciated, the center of Philo's world, before being freed from a miserable life of poverty and abuse.

Misty rain began forming on the windshield. He turned the wipers on lowest setting and reduced speed on approaching a long curve. Philo was rounding it when the dog appeared again.

It was the same animal, its black fur matted, eyes caked with infection. It padded lazily from behind a copse of pines, stopping short of the blacktop as it locked gazes with Philo. The dog bared teeth as the SUV passed.

Philo applied the brakes gently, slowing rather than slamming to an attention-drawing halt while checking for traffic and peering back with his side mirror. The beast remained on the shoulder, glaring at him. At least five miles from their first encounter, maybe more, on a straightaway blacktop without switchbacks. Yet there it stood, muzzle skinned back and displaying sickly yellow canines. As quickly as it arrived, the dog turned away and melted back into the treeline.

It wasn't possible. Philo's mind raced as he sped up, headlights sweeping around the curve.

But he wasn't hallucinating, and he trusted his judgement unconditionally. The dog was real, and such random coincidences could get you caught if you obsessed over them.

Watching the road carefully as twilight deepened, Philo wiped away a bead of sweat and adjusted his glasses. He passed the last street light before the quarry, the final mile turning to gravel roadway skirting meadowlands. Feral dogs ran loose in cattle country like this. They scavenged and killed smaller animals. Pets. Goats. They often bred with coyotes and wolves, as well. Such a melting pot of canine genes would easily produce similar but different specimens scattered across the region. Nothing more.

The rutted dirt road leading off the gravel came up just as the odometer logged the proper mileage. Philo recognized the leaning post and rusted, rural-sized mailbox, battered by passing teenagers until only the red flag and one caved-in side remained. When he scouted the area during daylight hours, the words 'Littleport Supply Company' were still visible on the side. He turned and carefully navigated the disused entrance. The heavy machinery and gravel trucks that once frequented here created an ideal place for getting high centered.

Passing a stand of dead honeysuckle bushes, Philo eased up the lane to a chained metal gate. The posted No Trespassing and Private Property signs didn't discourage him any more than on his first visit, when he'd used a bolt cutter on the aged padlock and replaced it with a vintage lock of his own. Philo checked his passenger once more and, finding her still insensible, left the SUV, used his key on the gate, and pushed against the hinges he'd greased during that first visit. It swung open with little resistance and even less noise.

In moments he pulled his vehicle through, resecured the gate, and made a wide loop, backing up to the largest shack. It was where Philo'd placed his provisions. Restraints. Wardrobe. Toys. Cord and cinder blocks, for weighing down a body. His imagination began taking hold. The entire evening stretched before him and his passenger. Time to make some memories.

Jostling over the rocky ground as he guided the SUV to the doorway of the shack, his headlights briefly illuminated the secured gate. . The beams revealed the oiled hinges, the padlock firmly in place, and, on the outside looking in with eyes bright road flares stood the dog.

"W-where are we?" the girl's voice seeped thickly from the back seat.

Philo frowned at the mongrel, watching as its panting created clouds of condensation and made its glowing eyes eerier. But Philo understood it was a trick of the light, high beams reflecting off the animal's eyes and the foggy air adding effect. He was also done. Now the stray was cutting into his special time, and he had just the solution. But first, he turned to the girl.

"It's a very special place, one made just for you," Philo answered with practiced earnestness. "But before I can show you, tell me something. Do you recognize that dog?"

He pointed toward the gate and waited as her unfocused vision tracked that direction.

"Don' see no dog," she answered weakly, working the zip ties on her wrists with matching feebleness. "I wanna g-go...go home."

"Sure, after we play," Philo nodded and smiled at her. She managed a smile back before surrendering again to the drugs.

He left the SUV running and climbed out, keeping an eye on the animal as it did the same for him. Walking to the back hatch, Philo pulled out a hardcase and knelt behind the rear fender. He'd never needed the rifle before, nor the .45/410 derringer in his pocket. But the dog messed up when it tracked them here. They were down the overgrown drive far enough no late night passerby would see them, and the rifle loaded with .22 long CB caps made less noise than a pellet gun given their subsonic speed. The small scope made missing an impossibility at this range.

Pulling gun to shoulder and releasing the safety, Philo sighted. The ugly stray, bathed in the headlight beams, was a monster. One ear hung down,

split nearly in half from some long ago attack. Slobber dripped from its muzzle, and those eyes. It was as if the animal looked right back at Philo through the telescopic sight. When it snarled again, Philo got off two quick rounds, directly into its left eye.

The beast didn't move. It never even blinked. The second shot picked a leaf off a scrub tree behind the dog, but the beast's only reaction was showing more teeth and growling loud enough Philo heard it over the idling engine. He took aim and fired another shot, another. And that's when the creature walked through the gate. Not squeezed between the posts, but passed through the rusted wire like it was a beam of moonlight.

It broke into a loping charge, baying, and Philo panicked. He dropped the weapon, sprinting for the SUV and jumping in as the hound's slavering jaws narrowly missed his ankle. Philo jammed the accelerator, his vehicle jouncing down the dirt path and angling steeply into its deepest rut. The child cried out while Philo floored the gas pedal, building speed to crash the gate. He didn't get that far.

The SUV slid further askance, nearly overturning, and its undercarriage impacted the hard, rocky soil before grinding to a stop. Idiot lights flared on the dash accusingly, and Philo was hit with fumes from the fractured exhaust system. The driver's door, aimed skyward, had slammed against his ankle hard when the SUV jammed to a stop. Still, in the side mirror, Philo saw the black dog. Standing near the shack, haunches bristled in anticipation, it waited for its prey to bolt.

Philo did, straining through driver's door and making a leap to the ground. The door closed as he beelined for the quarry's pond. Beyond it were sections of fence with rusted gaps. He'd have a better chance fitting through them than climbing over the nine foot concertina-topped sections framing the gate. The water would also put the animal and himself on more equal footing. Philo was a strong, experienced swimmer. He'd leave the dog sodden and weighted down with its waterlogged coat.

Nearing the water's edge, Philo made one tactical error; he looked back, just in time to see the creature leap at him,

eyes still afire. The man stumbled, flipping backward as he hit the water. At the same time, the dog was on him, its rotten breath making him gag just before those jagged teeth found his throat. Philo tried yelling for help, but the beast's grip didn't allow air enough for that. A scarlet stream arced from Philo's neck in time with his heartbeat,

and the last thing he saw were those hell-fire eyes locked with his, ushering him from this world to the next.

The shuck watched the man die while partly submerged in the pond where he'd stumbled and fallen. The rusted animal trap, likely once meant for wolf or bear, plied its trade on the man when he landed atop it. It had snapped shut on his neck, held him with its anchored chain as the severed jugular bled out.

His work done, the creature turned, plodding past the still running SUV sitting unevenly along the dirt path. The beast heard the girl when he neared the front of the vehicle.

"Help me...please," she hacked.
"Please...r-run and get help..."

And the creature knew she could see him now.

He stopped as the vehicle visibly filled with exhaust. Answering his calling, the beast stepped forward.

Kaira's throat and nose burned. The man had fastened her to the child safety chair after doing something to her, and she couldn't get loose even though the stinky air made her pull until the straps cut into her arms. The wreck had wakened her, and adrenalin warred against whatever made her sleepy. She caught movement through the windshield and spied the scary looking dog as it passed. Desperate, she called out.

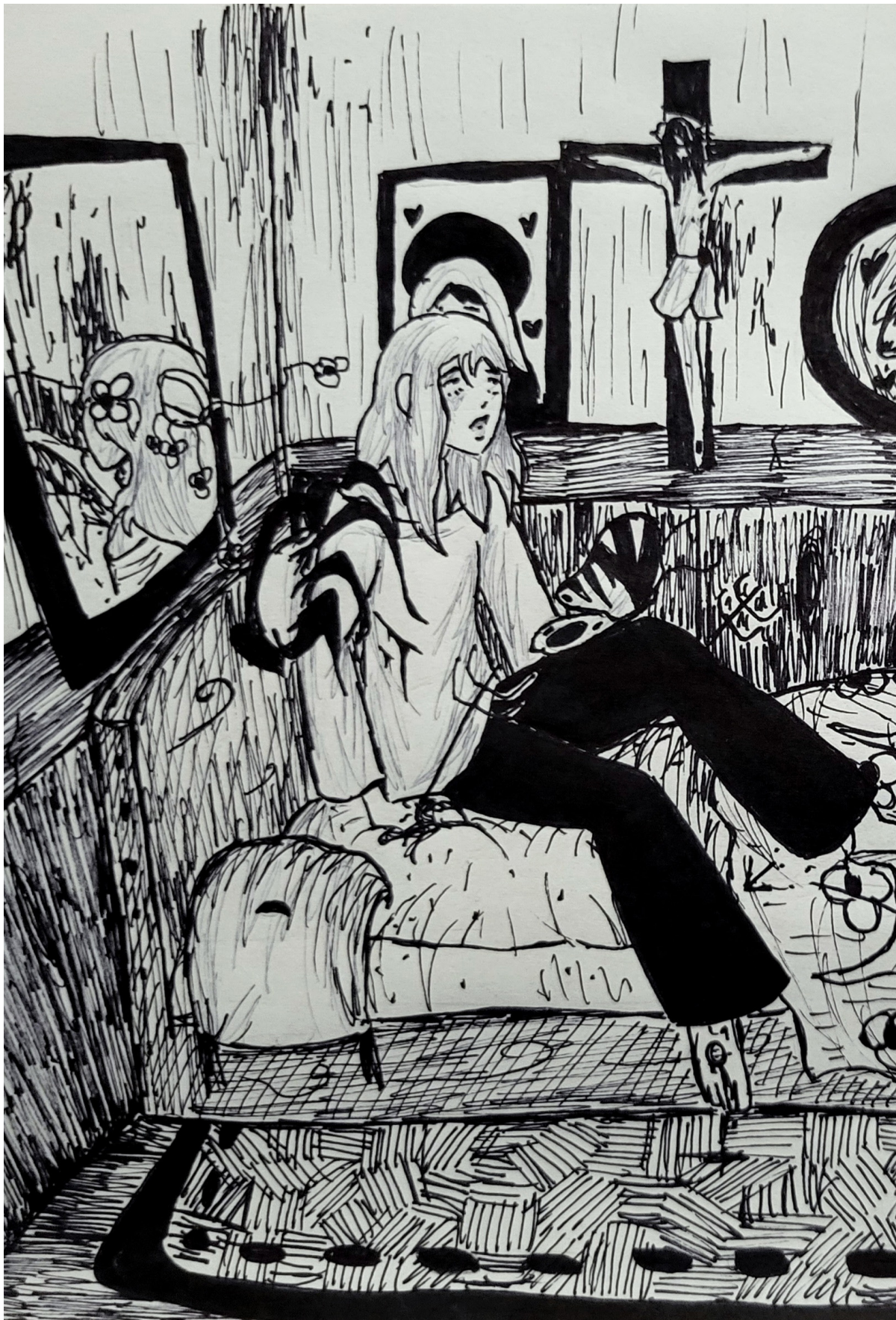
It heard and then turned, making Kaira wish she'd just let it leave. It was sick, mangy, and vicious. It's eyes glowed

like a jack-o-lantern's, showing pus caked around them. Even though she couldn't stop coughing, Kaira tried hunkering down in the seat, hiding from the approaching dog. And while she never heard it get into the vehicle, a dark tail suddenly appeared above the front seat, the rest of the animal hidden from view. Which seemed impossible, given how huge the dog looked when outside the vehicle.

A chocolate-colored, wiry haired terrier slowly peered over the seat and barked happily. Kaira started. Blinkered. Then laughed. The little dog's eyes glowed happily, and it was wearing the cutest canine smile, the kinds Kaira'd seen online when rescue pups got adopted. She caught a pleasant whiff of pet shampoo emanating from the dog as it hopped over the front seat and joined her.

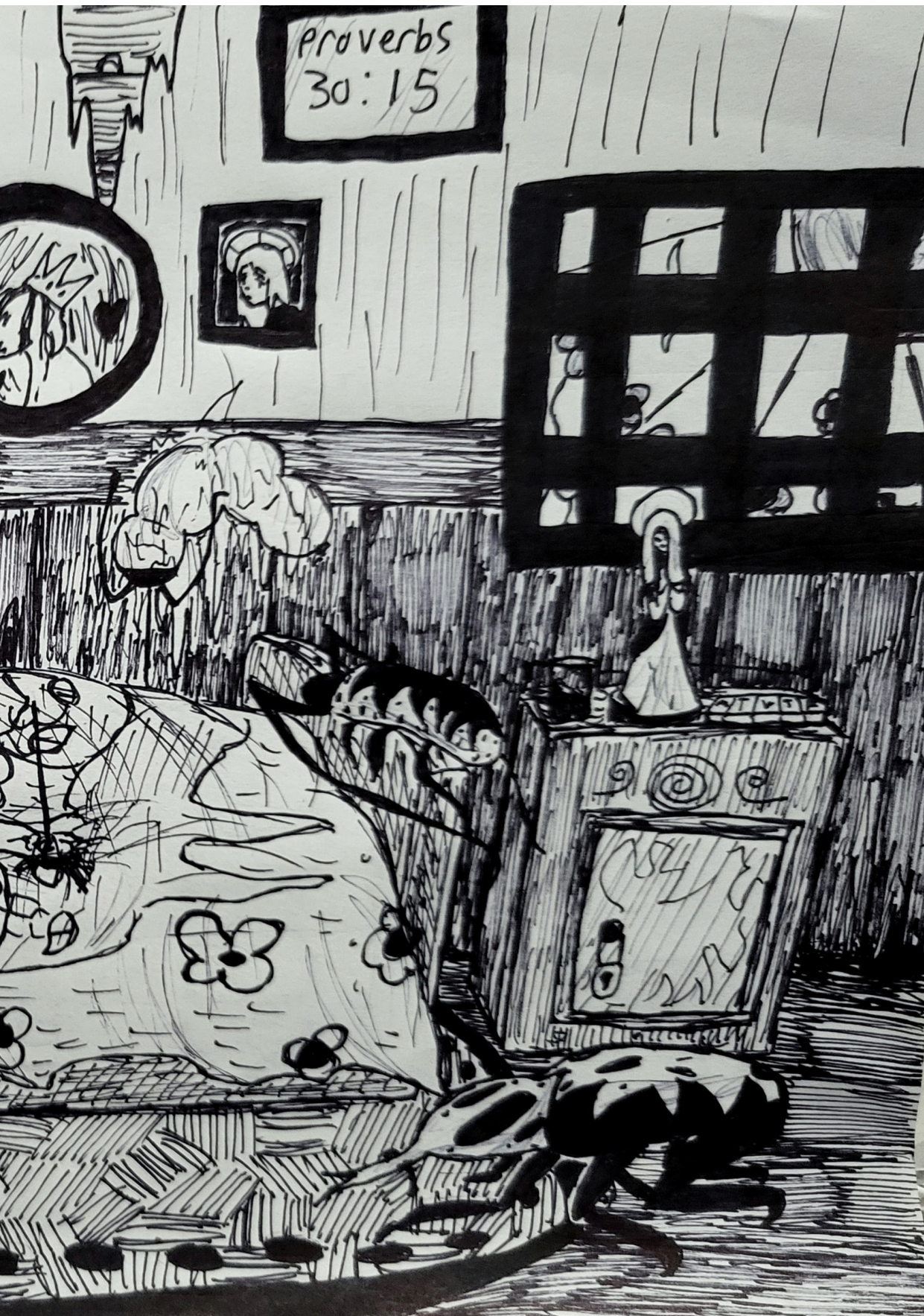
He yapped excitedly and licked her face, bringing more giggles and making the nausea, the burning sensation in her chest, drift away. Kaira reached out with one of her bound hands and patted the little dog, getting appreciative finger licks in return. It curled up on her lap, nuzzling close, as if for a restful, peaceful nap under the stars. It made Kaira sleepy, the dog bringing a sense of warmth and security. Both drifted off into happy, and in the child's case endless, slumber.

The End



30:15

Julian Mitchell
Marker on Paper



2024 Artists and Artist's Statements

1. Arrow Artistry

Self-Identity

Controlled Society

Gender Euphoria

Skin Decay

Coming Out

Self Love

Hidden Seas

2. Emily DeForest

Decay Theory

Charcoal on Wood

In my artistic journey, I delve into the concept of decay theory, where I focus on the gradual erosion of memory and the relentless march of time. Through the simple combination of charcoal on wood, I aim to evoke a sense of time passing with the faded images of those who have passed.

Charcoal, with its smudgy, ethereal quality, becomes my medium to create images that hover between clarity and obscurity, mirroring the elusive nature of recollection. Each mark that I made brings images through, representing a moment suspended in time, fading and evolving from a haze of memories.

The choice of wood as my canvas is deliberate, as its natural grain serves as a metaphor for the passage of time. Etched into its surface like the lines on an aging face, the grain bears witness to the inevitable march of years, reminding us of life's journey.

Through my art, I invite viewers to reflect on sharing memories with others. It is a gentle reminder to cherish the present, for all things must eventually fade away, leaving behind only stories of what once was, and the memories of others alive.

3. Hayli Charron

Sell Your Suit and Tie

Photo and Acrylic

4. Evelyn Aden

Mandela Sunset

Fairie Portal

Head in the Clouds

I've always gravitated towards art and creativity, and it took me a really long time to actually accept myself as both a creative person and an artist. I did not set out to be a professional photographer, however. Initially, I began taking photos to help me preserve memories. Due to turbulent circumstances throughout my childhood, it was especially difficult for me to remember or hold onto anything positive. Finding happy things that I found beautiful and to preserve in some way was a coping mechanism. So, despite not feeling creative or confident, more often than not, I'd find myself with a camera in my hands throughout the years. Though for many of those years, my limited access as well as my low esteem got the best of me - resulting in little to no creativity whatsoever at times. Late in my college career, I slowly circled back around to all things creative. Once I officially started learning more about photography though, photography though, I

was sucked in. I fell hard. Not only for the creation process and the storytelling but also for the fact that I could interpret and share with others the overwhelming emotions that I feel. Feelings that start as a big ball of riotous emotions in my chest, heavily evoked by the beauty I see in the world around me. Because life and nature and people are just so overwhelmingly beautiful sometimes and it is often so very difficult for me to put those big feelings into words. Photography is my way of doing that. To translate the deep sense of awe & wonder I experience, among other things, into something more physical. A way to tell my story, the story of the world as I see it, & my overall connection to it. the Clouds Blue Sky.

5. Julian Mitchell

Ruby
CD Store
30:15
Saint Sebastian
Untitled

My submitted works are entitled "Untitled", drawn in marker and colored pencil on paper. Inspired by some of my favorite musicians, this work is an isolative, distorted lens into loneliness and obsession. "30:15", drawn in marker on paper, is a dark, surreal image based on Proverbs 30:15, which reads "Greed has two daughters named 'Give' and 'Give.' There are three things that are never satisfied, really four that never say, 'I've had enough!'", in reference to unrestrained greed. "Ruby", a piece done in colored pencil on paper, is a Gothic fantasy work based on the novel "Carmilla", which follows a seductive female vampire and her relationship with a

young human woman. "CD Store", a work done in pen and pencil on paper, is inspired by the imagery of 90's indie movies, focusing on a sorrowful, bohemian girl sorting through records at a CD store. "Saint Sebastián", a colorful fantastical interpretation of the martyrdom of Saint Sebastián, follows themes of religious trauma, repressed sexuality, and gender dysphoria. My name is Julian Mitchell, I am 21 years old, and my artwork is evocative of children's drawings, taking inspiration from dreams, memories, religion, and music :)

6. Kaitlyn Palmer

Covid Boy
Mystery Girl
Noise Sensitivity
RL Sunset

Chasing the sunset is a photography piece taken on a lake in South Carolina. Covid Boy is an acrylic portrait of my younger brother based on a photo I took to represent the effects of covid on young children. RL sunset was taken from the campgrounds on Rend lake. Mystery girl is my first and

only compresso months. Noise sensitivity Is a digital illustration based on a deep hatred of something that is loud noise due to the fact I have noise sensitivity issues. Pastel self-portrait was a digital illustration created to go in my final physical portfolio -Kaitlyn Palmer

7. Paige McKittrick

Lone Star Gaze
Cowboy's Companion
Window of the Soul

8. Jonathan Walters

Above the Flow

Midflight Majesty

Fall's Embrace

9. Veronica Jones

PawPaw's Love

10. Stacie Rae Bullard

staciaebullard@gmail.com (618-472-4740) 18589 East IL-15,

Mt Vernon, IL 62864

Random Objects in My House

Early Sunday

Mid-evil Family Portrait

Stacie Rae Bullard

Early Sunday (Acrylic)

Early Sunday is a painting for art class. This was my first ever still life painting. I have put so much work into this piece. I would take it home day after day and work on little by little of it. This painting holds a special place in my heart. It helped me learn my capabilities and what I am fully worthy of.

Mid-evil Family Portrait (Acrylic)

Mid-evil Family Portrait is a part of the piece I am currently working on. This was the first part of the piece that I finished. I enjoy looking at all of the small details. The king, an atrocious man who is full of himself, owns the family. The prince on the right is a mischievous boy who could care very little for his future. The prince to the left is the exact opposite. The queen in the back, who is also pregnant, hopes for a caring baby

girl, because her first child was ordered to be killed by the king. No queen will rule his land.

Random Objects in my House (Acrylic)

Random Objects in my House was my second still life I have ever fully completed. I took many of the dusty antiques sitting around my living room. I sat them together in many different poses until I found the perfect one. When I did, I took a picture of it, and I started painting the objects as they sat by the door. It features two bowls, a dirty rag, two pots, and a coffee bean grinder

Writing

1. P. Suess

Begin Sanzen

Forever Leaving

Melancholy's Black Velvet Bell

Memento Mio

2. Kyle Ingram

Mourning Dove

The Dance Floor

3. Chloe Robinson

The Monster

4. Clyde Hall

Dogfall

"The ache of unexpected loss and the healing comfort of pets. These have been my companions the last few years, both becoming fuel for my writing. It's often been a process of therapy through creative expression. Dogfall began as a Halloween season short story and ended up combining both. It's dedicated to Ella."

5. Chase Cariens

Still

Formation

Written during two dark times in my life, "Still" and "Formation" served as a way to express myself through writing. Both were written in the Notes application in the middle of night, but they formed into something much more therapeutic than I first thought. I tend to write from whatever feelings I can conjure up, focusing on why and how I feel the way I do. "Still" focuses on untapped potential while "Formation" focuses on how childhood feelings shaped who I am. This causes me to delve into parts of me I'm still discovering, and experiment with different poetry schemes that reflect my thoughts. These poems as snapshots looking back on them, and I appreciate the fond memories I have of fully expressing my thoughts in the middle of the night, shining a light on my healing process.

6. Tracey Webb

Removing the Mask

7. 杨

Silence

"Silence" is a lyrical memoir that offers three impressionistic portraits of my loved ones—my mother, grandmother, and romantic partner—and the silences associated with each. I first talk about the silence left in the wake of my mother's departure, discussing the work-related sacrifice that drains the life of my family

life of my family. Then I explore the dynamic familiar to many Asian households and the struggle between misguided love and identity. Finally, I discuss myself in love, having the silence represent the inexpressibility of my partner's melancholy at times. Emerging from these glimpses into my relationships is a character portrait of silence itself, embodied again and again through figuration. This piece is incredibly special as it displays a level of vulnerability I often shelter from my writing. I would more aptly describe myself as a poet, finding solace in composing rap verses around my thoughts. However, this longer piece allowed me to develop an idea into a more sophisticated concept, while maintaining the authenticity of the subject.

General Submission Information:

Everyone in the Rend Lake College district may submit work.

You keep copyright to your work.

To improve your chances of acceptance:

Carefully follow the specific guidelines relevant to your submission.

- Be original
- Proof carefully and edit
- All Fiction/Poetry/Non-Fiction submissions must be typed /in 12-point type/ in Rich Text Format.

Submission Deadlines:

Submissions entered by the deadline will be eligible for publication in the Spring issue of the magazine.

Note: Check specific Contest Guidelines and Deadlines as these may differ from general submissions.

The magazine is not responsible for submissions that do not reach us for whatever reason. It is advisable for writers to verify that submissions have been received.

Writers whose manuscripts are chosen for publication will be notified by e-mail. Be very certain that your e-mail address is correct on the manuscript.

Fiction/NonFiction Submission Guidelines:

Submit short fiction/nonfiction (2000 words or less).

Nonfiction may take the form of Creative Nonfiction or Critical Essays. Submissions MUST be typed (ds, 12 point, Times New Roman)

You may submit more than one work at a time, but all should total 2000 words or less. Longer submissions will still be read, but the possibility of acceptance may be impacted.

Submissions must be original

Submissions must include your name, address, Warrior Tag # (if you are a current student), e-mail address and approximate word count of the manuscript.

The story or nonfiction essay title and page number must appear on each page of your submission.

Submissions will be accepted both electronically and in hard-copy form.

Electronic Submissions are Preferred.

Hard Copy Submissions:

- Should use standard white paper/black ink
- Should follow the general fiction/nonfiction guidelines above
- Each story or essay must be stapled together

If more than one story or essay is submitted, each of your stories or essays must be individually stapled.

You must provide a cover sheet with the following information:

(Story/Essay titles -- with the word count of each-- your name, address, Warrior Tag number, and e-mail address.)

The cover sheet should be placed on top of the manuscript and all held together with a binder clip.

The manuscript should be delivered to the following addresses:

For Fiction:

Peggy Davis
North Oasis 150
Rend Lake College
Ina, IL 62846

For Nonfiction:

Rebecca Biggs
North Oasis 147
Rend Lake College
Ina, IL 62846

Electronic Submissions:

- Submissions should be in Rich Text format.
- You must provide a cover sheet with the following information:
(Story titles -- with the word count of each-- your name, address,

Warrior Tag number, and e-mail address.

- Follow all relevant guidelines above.
- Send submissions to the following e-mail address:
Fiction: davisp@rlc.edu
Nonfiction: biggs@rlc.edu

Poetry Submission Guidelines:

No limit is placed on the number of poems you may submit, but a good general guideline is three.

No limit is placed on word count.

Submissions must be typed, single-spaced, in 12 point type, using Times New Roman.

Submissions must be original.

Submissions must include your name, address, Warrior Tag # (if you are a current student), e-mail address and approximate word count of the manuscript.

The poem title and page number must appear on each page of your submission.

Submissions will be accepted both electronically and in hard copy form.

Hard Copy Submissions:

- You should use standard white paper/black ink
- If a poem is over one page long, please staple the pages together.

You must provide a cover sheet with the following information:

(Poem titles -- with the word count of each-- your name, address, Warrior Tag number, and e-mail address.)

The cover sheet should be placed on top of the manuscript and all held together with a binder clip.

The manuscript should be delivered to the following address:

Peggy Davis
North Oasis 150
Rend Lake College
Ina, IL 62846

Electronic Submissions:

- Submissions should be in Rich Text format.
- You must provide a cover sheet with the following information
(Story titles -- with the word count of each-- your name, address, Warrior Tag number, and e-mail address.
- Follow all relevant guidelines above.
- Send submissions to the following e-mail address:
davisp@rlc.edu

Playwriting Submission Guidelines:

The play should be short, running 6-8 minutes or so in length.

The play may be a comedy or drama as long as it has a beginning, middle, and ending.

The play needs to follow Aristotle's "Three Unities":

- Unity of time (only a short span of time - no episodes)
- Unity of place (only one setting: a living room or a gymnasium, kitchen, etc.)
- Unity of action (only one plot - multiple plots will complicate the play too much)

There must be a crisis that is happening or has just happened.

All characters need to be named in the script somehow (either they introduce themselves or others identify them) All characters need to be developed and reveal something about their personalities, motivations, etc.

All characters need to serve a purpose.

A twist at the end of the plot is often a neat device that may teach a

lesson or surprise the audience. The play needs to provide a message of some sort to the audience.

In order to save room on paper, the play needs to be formatted with the characters' names all in caps, and to the left of the dialogue. The dialogue should be tabbed over from the names about 5 or so spaces:

JOE: I am having trouble, Jill!
JILL: Really? What kind of trouble, Joe?
JOE: (Sits down with head in hands)
I lost my homework, my car keys, my cell phone, and my dog.
JILL: Yes, I'd say you're having trouble.

Stage directions (what the characters DO during their dialogue) must be set off with parentheses to show they are not spoken.

Questions or submissions (in MS Word) should be sent to:
Tracey Webb
webbt@rlc.edu
618-437-5321, Ext. 1295

General Graphic Design Submission Guidelines:

All artwork must arrive at our offices on or before the published deadline. High-res digital image (300 dpi at 8 1/2" x 10") entries should be sent as JPG, TIF, or PDF files preferred. If work is 3 dimensional, photograph the work and submit electronic file.

Each submission must be labeled with "Designer - Title"

All submissions must include in the top right corner of the document (or on a separate cover page/in the body of the email for design piece):

- Designer's name
- Title of the work
- Designer's contact info (email, address, phone)

1. Email your work to Tarantino@rlc.edu
 - In the subject line, type your name and the submission's title.
 - If you have more than one submission, type your name and "submissions" in the subject line.
 - List all of the titles in the body of the email.

OR

2. Drop off hard copies or CD/DVD of your work in Tarantino mailbox in North Oasis, room 111.
Submission of two works into any one design category. You may enter as many times as you wish.

All forms of designs are accepted, including but not limited to: posters, logos, ads, mailers, brochures, packaging, architecture, and more.

If you do not follow the submission guidelines, your piece may not be considered for publication.

Fine-Arts Submission Guidelines:

All artwork must be sent to my email (davis@rlc.edu) on or before the published deadline. High-res digital image (300 dpi at 8 1/2" x 10") entries should be sent as JPG, TIF, or PDF files preferred. If work is 3 dimensional, photograph the work and submit electronic file.

Each submission must be labeled with:

- Artist's name
- Title of the work
- Medium
- Artist's contact info (email, address, phone)

Email your work to davis@rlc.edu

- In the subject line, type your name and the submission's title.
- If you have more than one submission, type your name and "Submissions" in the subject line.
- List all of the titles in the body of the email.

Photography Submissions Guidelines:

Please send digital files to davis@rlc.edu

Each submission must be labeled with:

- Artist's name
- Title of the work
- Medium
- Artist's contact info (email, address, phone)

Email your work to davis@rlc.edu

- In the subject line, type your name and the submission's title.
- If you have more than one submission, type your name and "Submissions" in the subject line.
- List all of the titles in the body of the email.

The journal is under no obligation to accept submissions in a specific category if none are deemed appropriate for a particular issue.



