



Filibuster
2019





Dear Readers,

The theme for the 2019 issue of the Filibuster is "Travel and Culture." The world is oftentimes viewed as extremely massive and intimidating. However, there are thousands of interesting places to discover and explore. Even the smallest of places can hold the biggest inspirations. For instance, William Wordsworth found much inspiration in the beautiful town of Grasmere. While living there, he wrote renowned poetry, deriving much of his creative genius from the lush landscape. This is the kind of thing that travel brings to the creative mind. We can learn so much from other cultures and bridge gaps in unconventional ways.

Art is able to bridge the gaps between cultures. In order to better understand other cities and countries, we should take the time to look at the art produced by the individuals who come from there. This provides insight into a world unknown to those who have never visited or studied the place. To bridge these gaps is vitally important to the success of society, and something that is often overlooked.

First and foremost, I want to thank every person reading this magazine. Without your interest and intrigue for this labor of love, we would not be able to produce such exquisite artistic capsules. A special thank you to our co-editors, Tye DeVore and Erin Terrell. They spent countless nights emailing me and editing for this year's issue. Another special thank you to our graphic designer, EmilyRae Burton. Her exquisite artistic vision carries throughout the issue. I seriously cannot thank these three enough for the immense amount of hard work and dedication they poured into this year's issue. Last, but most certainly not least, a massive thank you goes out to our faculty advisor, Dr. Robert Klevay. Without his guidance and passion, the Filibuster would not be possible. He has been an amazing mentor throughout this process, and we can never thank him enough for all he has done for us.

As you turn the pages of this soul-filled issue, keep in mind the world you have yet to experience. There are a million and one places waiting to be discovered by you. Where will you go next?

Editor-in-Chief

Michelle Aitken

THE ADVENTURERS



Michelle Aitken
Editor-in-Chief

Self-proclaimed nerd and music junkie Michelle pursues a graduate degree in English at AUM, where she recently graduated with a Bachelor's degree in the same subject. Her dream is to fill her passport while enriching the lives of those she encounters through the power of literature. When she is not working or at school, she spends her time playing video games while her cat lounges on her shoulders.



EmilyRae Burton
Graphic Designer

EmilyRae Burton is a foolhardy adventurer who rafts down rapids, rappels off cliffs, and hikes Pikes Peak in hail storms. When not straining at paddles or darting away from lightening, EmilyRae works and double majors in graphic design and English at AUM. After she graduates in May, she hopes to start a career in a Christian ministry where she can weave visuals with words to make marketing masterpieces.



Erin Terrell
Co-Editor

Horror writer, art enthusiast, and future time traveler, Erin graduated in English with a minor in creative writing from AUM. She is now a part of AUM's MLA program and strives to create everlasting ties to this world through her writing. When not studying or writing, Erin spends her time ensuring her cat does not steal cash from her pockets and hide them under the couch. She hopes one day this problem will end so she can focus on publishing and editing.



Tye DeVore
Co-Editor

Tye is a graduate student within the MLA program at AUM where she also received her undergrad in English with a minor in creative writing. When she grows up she wants to be a teacher/professor. She thinks it will be fun to teach younger students about writing short stories and poetry. When she's not busy writing her thesis or leveling up her teaching skills, she dabbles in entertainment such as video games, binging YouTube and Netflix content.

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Want to Join in?

Email Dr. Klevay at rklevay@aum.edu to ask about available staff positions.

Or send your creative works as an attached file to filibuster@aum.edu. The deadline for the 2020 issue is December 31st, 2019.

Feel free to ask questions!



My Body, My Rules
Hali Bush



Kumba
Nyaradzai Mahachi

College Students

Erin Rembert

College students are like vampires:
We are independent, left on our own.
We drink liquids filled with redness
While we are away from our homes.
We feel immortal, like nothing
can ever go wrong.
We do what we want until the night grows long.



Sheep in Glencoe, Scotland

Peyton Buchanan

Drifting in the present's past

Destini Jewell-Wright

My life quickens but loses its depth
I find myself lost the more I observe my surroundings

I am seventeen, but I don't live in the past or present
However it appears to be a summer morning in June

There's wild green pastures all around me
Flowers sprout out of the weeds that are beneath my feet

The sun shines and birds call out into the sky
Nature signals Earth's continual rotations

Everything moves quickly like my mind

I wander over towards the pond and gawk at the ducks

It is as if my mind is floating in the water
Drifting along side the water lilies in the shallow pond

I turn around and look at the wild green pastures
And the flowers beneath my feet
The sun was shining and birds were calling out into the sky

I realized nature was signaling Earth's continual rotations

At that moment
I woke up
opened my eyes and realized
I was alive

A Pause in the Forest

Bethany Messer

The blizzard howls outside the window pane,
And dancing shadows circle toward the fire;
The rising moon conceals its smiling wane,
As tension grows, it lifts the air of ire.
The cabin's smoke is swept from snatching snow,
And critters scatter up the trees to hide.
For now, the chilly wind and ice are foe,
This harshness forces nature to abide.
The wolves take cover in their earthy den,
And caribou have huddled for a rest.
This harsh and brutal time for beast and men,
Will strengthen those who live and pass the test.
The woods will soon be noisy, full of song—
Like living, filled with parts of strife and calm.



Living in the Storm

Alyssa Nuckols

I ride alone, as always, into the dark storm clouds.
How bad will this storm be? The thunder makes me wince.
When will the darkness shine through the void?
Where are the rainbows, chirping birds, and brightness?
This is a long storm, twenty one years and counting.
The ground has absorbed all it can take, the trees are bare.
The immense darkness frightens me.
Others tell me of the light, blue skies, and glee.
It must be nice, living outside the storm.

Here I go, putting on a coat and boots.
I smile beginning another day in the tempest.
Familiarity soothes violent surges.
I would not know where to begin in a bright dawn.
You see, I have an umbrella, boots, and coat, all ready for the fury.
What should I have for a cloudless day?
It may be nice living in the storm.

Change of Seasons

Kayla Stribling

A flower blooms; a day dawns new and bright.
Now lazy petals reach the far up sky,
Away from ground, the flower yearns for light.
Time passes, seasons change, leaves fall and fly.

While Fall is brief, with Winter comes the snow.
So white, it covers, blankets, shelters, dorms
Of people, sleeping sound at home who know
That Winter saves them, keeps them snug and warms.

Those long and dreary Summer days are gone,
Then flowers birth themselves from earth's premier,
And bees are buzzing, flying here and yon.
Yes, time does fly, and Spring again is here.

With life anew, abundant, rampant, pure,
And flower petals bright in morning's lure.



Castle on the Hill

Michelle Aitken

Willow

Grace Burrow

The weeping willow
Cries like a mourning widow,
Never finding peace.

Mountainous Relic

Jordan Shea

The castle stood like a mountain,
its peaks dusted with winter snow,
cold and everlasting.
Once vibrant with life,
now a sad, stone gray.
Vacant of inhabitants
save for occasional visitors.
Quiet—
but enchanting.



In too deep

Michelle Aitken

What exactly does it mean
To become a disappointment
To yourself?
To try and try and try
But to never succeed?
To be on the receiving end
Of all those scrunched eyebrows,
And tilted heads,
And hands over hearts,
And Bless your soul's?

What exactly does it mean
To know a hollow soul?
To care and praise
But to rarely succeed?
To be on the receiving end
Of all the heavy tears,
And shaking hugs,
And panic attacks,
And pleas to die?

I don't have the heart to
Tell him I don't
Love him –
I never did.



Angry Child

Erin Terrell

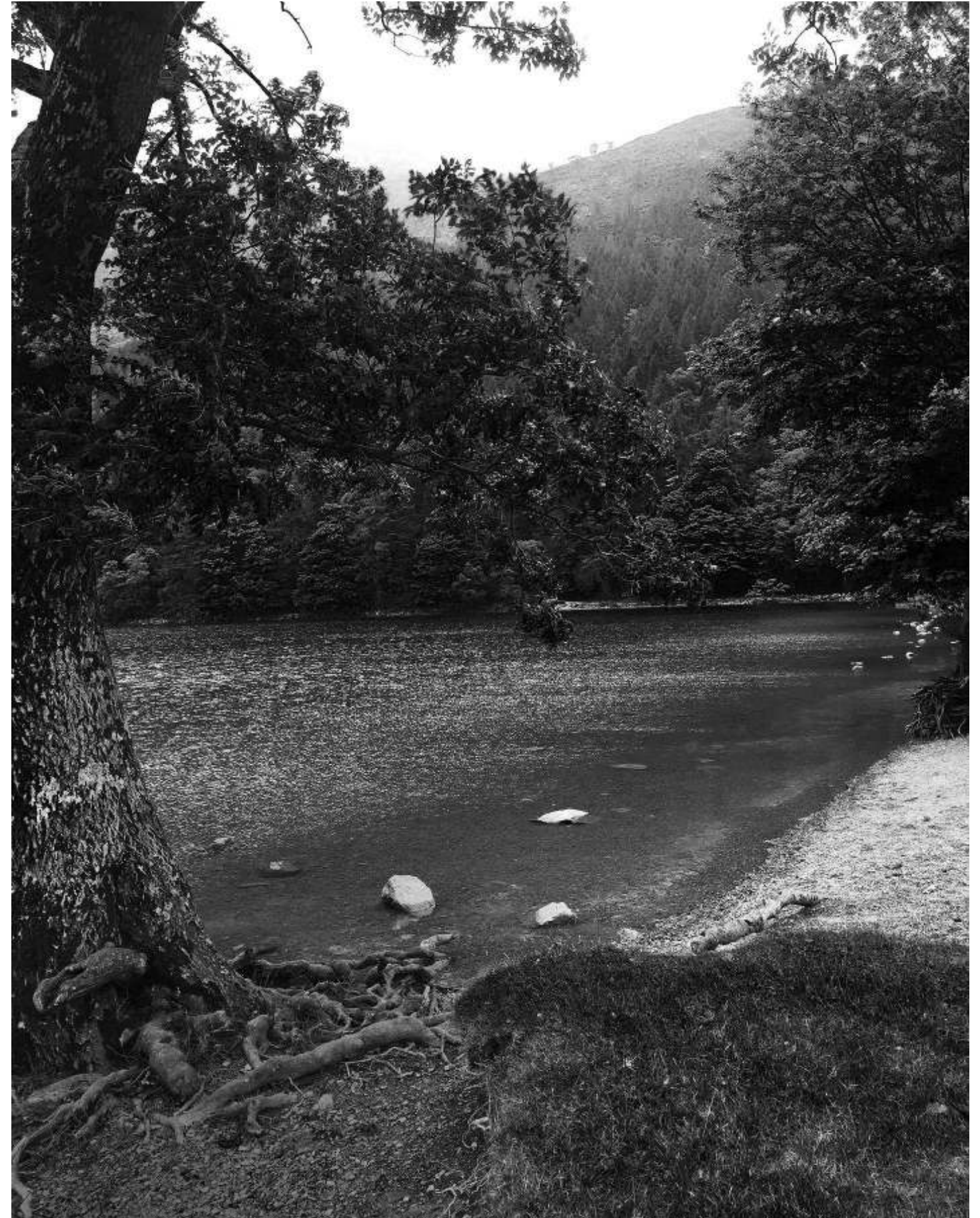
Too many colors on too many trees,
They fall and sink all in mounds,
Birds pick away at their insides.

He sits and watches,
Clutching grass and dirt,
Feeling the grit beneath his nails.

The colors are never-ending
Blues and greens and yellows and grays,
Thrumming under his skin as they turn to one.

The boy laughs, now covered in red,
Red clothes, red nails, red face–
It consumes him.

He moves, death on his fingertips,
Rotting fruit cakes the ground,
There is no rest for angry men.



Neverland

Michelle Aitken

Red Roses

Michelle Aitken

“Don’t you know that red is the color of love?”

Thomas scoffs. “Why’s that?”

“Valentine’s Day, cupid, your heart, roses.”

Sam picks up a red bouquet and twirls it absentmindedly. “It’s all red, duh.”

“That’s a ridiculous reason, Sam. Red is the manufactured color of love.” Thomas gestures at a vibrant red card display. “Someone just slapped it on a hallmark card and said ‘I love you’ in swirly font.”

She drops the bouquet and turns towards him. “Well what’s your color of love then?”

“Black.”

“Black?”

“Yeah, black.”

“That’s the most depressing color ever. How is it love?”

He picks up the red bouquet. “You said red is love because of Valentine’s Day and hearts and stuff, right?”

She nods.

“What do you wear to a funeral?”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“Just answer me.”

Frowning, she replies, “Black, you wear black to a funeral.”

He smiles back, thumbing through the petals of the bouquet. “And do you know why you wear black?”

“Because someone died?”

“And you’re mourning. Everyone comes together to mourn over a collective loss. The black shows their grief, their pain, their hurt.”

“So how does that mean love? It doesn’t make sense.”

He sets the bouquet down. “Why doesn’t it make sense?”

“Well, uh, because you’re mourning. You’re sad, not happy.”

“So love has to be happy?”

Sam laughs. “Well, yeah. Love makes you happy. That’s what it’s supposed to do.”

“So love has never made you sad?”

“It wouldn’t be love.”

Thomas sits by the flower display, running his hands through his shaggy hair. “The people at the funerals wearing black. It’s a solidifying thing. They came together to show love for someone they lost. It’s the one thing they know is right, besides showing up.

That’s love to me. The solidarity, the unification.”

Sam sits next to him, reaching out to rub his back, but faltering for a moment when he speaks again.

“Love is not always a happy thing. There’s fights and loss and tears—”

“Thomas, are you okay?”

Tears streak Thomas’ face. “I lost her, Sam. One second and she left. She was gone, forever. I never got to say goodbye, or tell her I loved her.”

“Thomas...” Sam comfortingly rubs his back.

“I wore black for her, Sam. And so did everyone else. It was beautiful. There was so much love that day.”

“Thomas, I’m so sorry.”

Thomas looks up, locking his tear-stained eyes on Sam. “Red roses were her favorite, too.”

Homecoming

Erin Terrell

“It’s been six years since you’ve seen your family. What are you going to say to them?” Allen asked, clicking his seatbelt into place. Haze drummed his fingers against the steering wheel.

“Probably fuck you.”

“I don’t think they’ll like that very much.”

“I don’t think they liked the fact that I left with you and never looked back.”

Allen laughed and kissed him on the cheek.

“What do you think they’ll say when they see that I’m still here?”

“If I have it my way they won’t say anything at all,” Haze pulled out of their drive way and headed towards the interstate. He wished it was raining, then he could make up some excuse not to go.

“Yeah, I hope they don’t say anything but your mother was . . . particularly nasty the first and final time you introduced me to her.”

“If only it could be the last,” Haze sighed and sat up straighter. “Look, she’ll be too upset that Dad is dead and that Marsha’s as flaming as me.”

“Your sister’s gay!”

“Burning in the pits of hell as we speak. Bi actually.”

Allen punched him in the shoulder.

“You know what I meant. Why’d you wait to tell me? I knew I liked your sister. She was sweet when your mom left the room and . . . before your dad came in.”

“I didn’t tell you because I didn’t know. Well, I guessed, but when Mom stopped talking to me and Marsha didn’t accept my calls. I just didn’t think about it.” Haze scratched his bearded cheek and sped up merging into traffic. “They didn’t want me. But Marsha called me yesterday crying and I calmed her down and she told me she’s dating this girl she met in college. It seems serious. I just hope it’s good for her. She never was good at picking boyfriends.” Allen placed his hand on his thigh and squeezed.

“Everything will work out.”

Haze took one hand off the steering wheel and squeezed Allen’s hand.

“One of us has to be optimistic.” Haze took his hand away and pulled out a card from his pocket. “Could you call the hotel and make sure our room is good.”

“You’re asking me to do this now? This should have been done a while ago.”

“It kind of slipped my mind, having to take off work to go to my racist homophobic father’s fu-”

“Haze!” He looked at the road and the car ahead of them had stopped. He slammed on the brakes and swerved his car into the other lane. Car horns blared around him and another car slammed into his tail. Everything was spinning, and then it stopped. He held his breath and looked at Allen, letting out a sigh when he seemed okay.

“Well at least there’s only going to be one funeral today.”

“If I didn’t feel like puking I’d hit you right now.” Allen groaned.





Piccadilly Circus, London
Peyton Buchanan

For Me?

KeChyria Wheeler

How happy are sparkling glitz of glamour!
Now aglitter is just the thing,
to get me wondering if diamonds are lively.

Pay attention to the citrine,
the citrine is the most golden quartz of all.
Are you upset by how prosperous it is?
Does it tear you apart to see the citrine so chromatic?

When I think of jewels, I see an antique day.
Something with such beauty that was cherished before me.
From mom to daughter, is this for me?
My very first heirloom?!

Oh my, look at the beauty,
deep down into the darkness of the jewels.
Gently they go -

down the line perhaps?

Mother of Pearl

Sarah Smith

A string of pearls
—one real thing before I die—
passed to a daughter bonded by blood.
Each pearl an irritant, just a defense.
Tiny reminders of self-preservation.

A string of pearls
—my mother's one real thing—
passed to a daughter bonded by love.
Each pearl a gift, full of wishes and hopes.
Tiny mementos of the meaning of family.

Warm white, maybe pink. No, I'll call them peach.
Nacre like nectar, sweet summer memories.
These heavy pearls, filled with wisdom, weigh me
down.

They drape like drops of ice around my neck,
clinking together like sleet against my window.



Traveling Rivers

Kara Wooke

My fingers brush the streams
Of infinitely flowing water
That has seen everything

From the skies of Asia
Through the seas of Africa
To the soils of America
It has unbiasedly
Tasted the lips
Of people faceless to me

But the water
Has fed these faceless souls
Provided their life
Learned the delicate intricacies
Composing their bodies

I envy the water's empathy
To know the value
Of every place
Of every person

It travels where
I could never
I can never
Go

So I let it teach me
When it freezes my fingers
Or burns them
Or warms them
Or cools them
Or swells them

Each sensation showing
We feel the same things
As it flows on our fingers
Flows through our bodies

No matter where it goes
The water knows
And we should know
The importance of its course
Taken to each destination
As well the worth
Of each place it slows



Oblivion

Michelle Aitken

Homesickness

Cody Grier

My street name tastes like honeysuckle
on the tip of my tongue.
I can see the county road bend through the woods—to the gravel driveway.
It's Autumn here, so I know the nettle grows there—
between the cracks in the cobblestone paths.

I can picture the dachshund lounging in the armchair;
If I came home today, I wonder if it'd think a year was a week.
It's Winter here, so I know the door is snowed in there,
and icicles hang from the rain gutters.

I can hear pancakes flipping in the pan,
and feel the cool pillow beneath my head.
It's Spring here, so I know the confederate roses bloom there,
and the terrier is swimming in the pond.

I can see the beat-up truck collecting pollen in the backyard,
and the swimming pool filmed over with algae.
It's Summer here, so I know the days are longer there,
and the birds are nudging their fledglings—out of the nest.



A Brief History of Stanley Smith

Sarah Smith

a boy walked out of a field
left the peanuts, left the corn,
left the place where he was born
and he entered another state

a man walked into the army
signed the page, signed his name,
signed up for all that came
and he entered another continent

a soldier walked into a party
found the girl, found his wife,
found a person to share his life
and he entered into a marriage

a husband walked into a hospital
scared to death, scared alive,
scared he'd never survive
and he entered into fatherhood

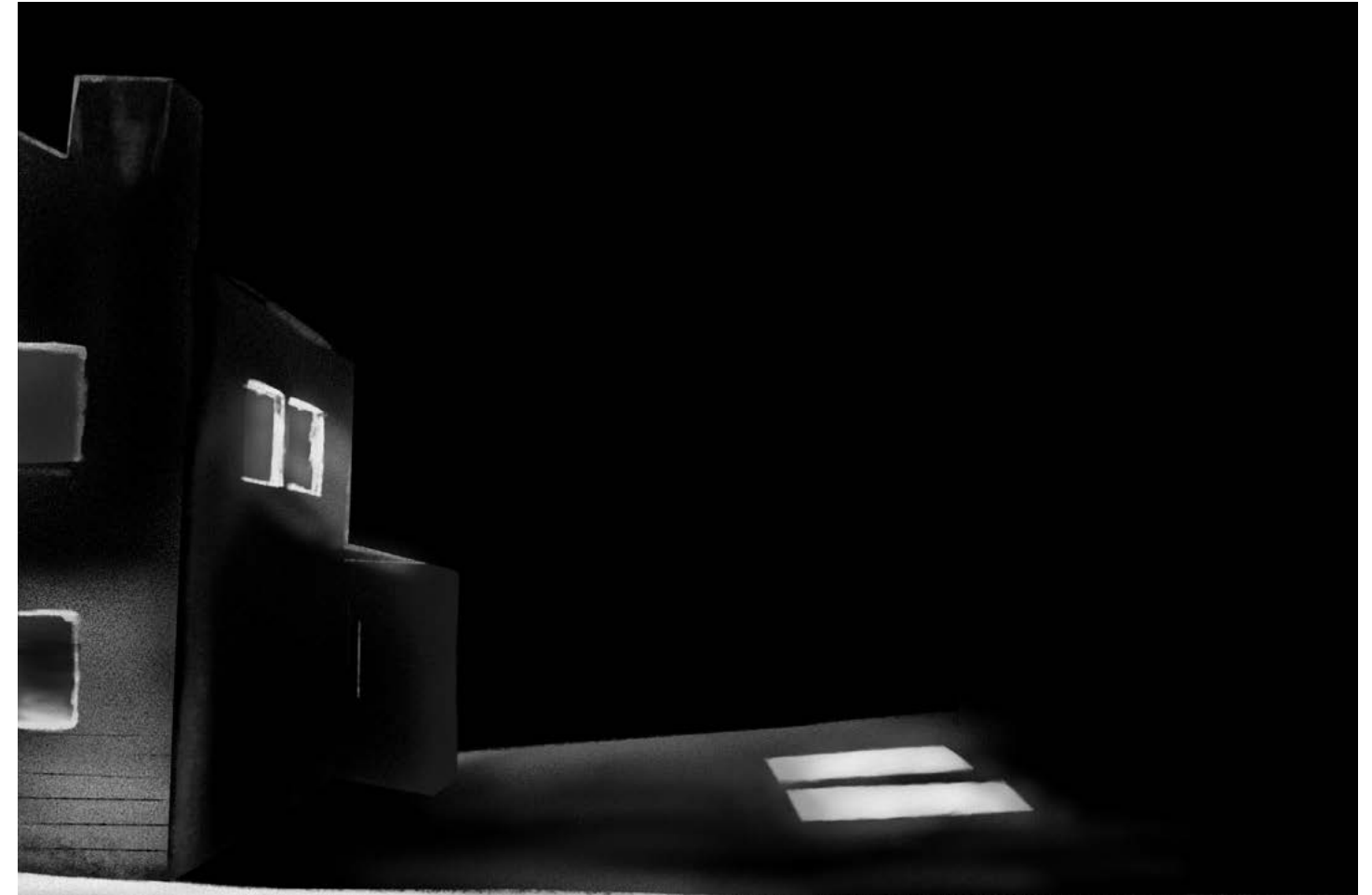
a father walks to the family table
his children there, his heart so proud,
his life so full, he laughs aloud

*Bag the groceries—it's a paying gig
Go to school
Learn to drive
Graduate*

*Guard the gate
Board the train
Visit Holland but live in France
Live in Germany but visit England*

*Cross the ocean
Bring her home
Change her name
Start a family*

*Story time, bed time
Learn to drive
Bag the groceries
Graduate*



To Let, Two Come, One Goes
EmilyRae Burton

In Loving Memory

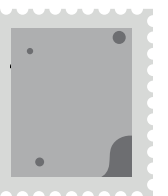
Keyonte' Croom

With knowledge of the time upon us,
we pre-grieve as controllably as we can.
The hidden disease has kidnapped you
and dragged you to the afterlife quicksand.

We say our final goodbyes,
thinking it would make the parting so simple.
But as we leave, we get the call
and those yells and cries destroy my mental.

Inner battles between my thoughts:
“Why didn't we stay and talk more?”
“Why did I think those goodbyes would work?”
Various questions like “Why now?” and “Why Lord?”

Witnesses said it was a peaceful passing,
that the light got brighter as you went.
I realized you were on your way to your castle
and that life was only for rent.



Inlayed Gold

Erin Terrell

She is a canary in a coal mine,
placed there for their own protection,
unaware of what awaits her.

She's complacent
Happy to be with them,
Lacking the most common of senses.

Except, the instinctual knowledge of
what is to come when death is at your
--door.

They say she is free to do as she wants
Trembling behind the shackles that consume
Her entire life.

But what she doesn't know won't hurt her.
The danger has yet to come
She smiles and nothing is wrong.

They keep her safe here
They keep her warm here
This cage inlayed in gold.

They will need her
and when she is good
They reward her.

She is a canary in a coal mine,
Placed there for their own protection,
Unaware of what awaits her.

The air caresses her,
Flutters through her hair,
Entangling her lungs.

She smiles
The blood runs down her eyes
And chest

They've used her
Every part of her
And she wants to do it again,
But she can't because she's dead.



Who's There?

Erin Terrell

The basement floor was soaking wet and Sasha's
socks stuck to her feet.

"So . . . what's the problem?" Holly asked, stick-
ing her head in through the upstairs door.

"I don't know."

"Don't you live here?"

"Funny." Sasha waded around her dad's tool
shelf and work-bench and found the gushing water
pipe.

"I don't think I have enough tape for this."
She pulled her hair up into a ponytail and heard the
splash of someone landing on the last step of the
basement stairs.

"Holls?"

"It's cold!"

"It's winter." She walked over to the water
heater and switched off the main water valve that was
next to it. The water in the pipe trickled slowly to a
stop.

"It's kind of hot that you know how to do all
this stuff."

"It's kind of sad that you don't know how
to do it at all." Sasha grabbed the duct-tape off of
her dad's work bench and taped up the pipe. Holly
wrapped her arms around Sasha's waist.

"Don't be mean."

"Sorry. I'm just a little . . . I don't get how this
happened. Dad just finished gutting this place and
fixing everything. It's all new." She threw the rest of
the duct-tape back on the bench.

"Maybe the pipe just broke?" Holly pulled
away and dashed up the staircase. Sasha sighed and
followed her.

"It's not a faulty pipe. It kind of looked like
someone took a wrench to it. But that's not possible."
The microwave in the kitchen dinged.

"Popcorn's ready!" Holly put the popcorn in a
bowl, while Sasha pulled off her wet socks and threw
them in the laundry room.

"I guess I should text Dad about the basement,
ask him what he wants me to do." Holly popped a few
pieces of popcorn in her mouth.

"Or we 'ould start a mo'ie 'nd eat pop'orn."
Holly swallowed and pulled Sasha onto one of the
kitchen chairs.

"But the water."

"It could wait."

"Or I could do it now."

"Sasha, come on. That's no fun." Holly kissed
her and Sasha pulled away tasting cherries and but-
ter.

"Fine. Fine. Let's watch a movie and then later
when Dad yells at me for not talking to him sooner,
I'll blame you."

"Your dad loves me. He's not going to get mad.
We can just say we didn't know in time." There was a
knock at the door. "If that's the pizza man tell him I
love him." Holly skipped off to the couch and Sasha
went to answer the door.

"Hell." The bullet reached her chest before she
registered what was happening. She was falling and
could not breathe. Her attacker grabbed her body
before she fell to the ground. He shut the door and
dragged her out of the house.

Options

Michelle Aitken

“I’m sorry. We’re full.”

“You—you’re full? How is that even possible?”

The guard glared over the brim of his glasses.

“Ma’am, do you know the amount of volume we process on a daily basis? We had to hit capacity eventually.”

I staggered back, dumbfounded. My entire life I had done everything right: went to church, said my prayers, helped charities. One time I even saved a boy from dying. Was all of that for nothing? “Am I not good enough to get in?”

“Ma’am, this has nothing to do with how ‘good’ or how ‘not good’ you are. It’s simply a matter of fact. We don’t have the means to accommodate you.”

Tears streamed down my face as I fell to the ground. The guard huffed and walked over to me, plopping softly beside me. I knew I shouldn’t be mad at him. He’s most likely just doing his job. My heart ached as I thought about the hundreds of other people who were waiting behind me before I walked through the door. Would he have to give them the same talk? Would they react the same?

“Ma’am, this isn’t your last hope. I know it might feel that way, but I’ve got some other options for you if you’re willing to listen to them.”

I quietly nod. “Okay. I’m listening.”

The guard’s face was softer now, almost kind in a way. The urge to hug him was unbearably strong and he seemed to know this because he scooped me up in one arm into the warmest embrace I have ever experienced. He dropped me onto a plush sofa beside his post and quickly assumed a professional persona.

“Now, ma’am, here are your options.” He gestured to a large screen which I could have sworn wasn’t there five seconds earlier. The screen displayed four brightly colored squares, each with different names and animations. I sat in awe for a few moments before the guards snapped his fingers in my face. “Ma’am, did you hear any of that?”

“No sir, I’m sorry. Could you repeat it?”

He gave me a stern glare and cleared his throat before continuing, assuming the manner of a very professional instructor. “Now, Option 1 is obviously the most desirable, hence why we are totally full up here. That’s not to say that will always be the case, though. We’ve constructed a wait list and will be happy to put your name down if you ever so choose

to come back here if a spot opens up.”

A large scroll appeared in front of me, hundreds of names scrawled upon it. I glanced over the list, looking for any names I recognized, but there were none I could see. I’d probably have to read for hours before I found one I knew. But, signing this didn’t seem like a bad idea. This is the most desirable place to end up. However, something told me to hold off until after he gave me my other options.

“What’s my next option?”

The guard chuckled, somewhat shocked by my question. “Well, ma’am, Option 2 is not very desirable. You see, people normally just end up there, but we have to make it a choice. Politics, you know. But, you’d spend the rest of your life working on the volcanos and mantle of the earth’s core. Some people like being hot, so they choose that, but it’s up to you.”

“So, I’d be stuck there forever? Like shoveling rocks or something?”

The guard cleared his throat. “Not exactly, no. Not just shoveling rocks. You’d be making sure that the earth’s core doesn’t overheat, that the mantle and the crust and everything else stays polished and unbroken. It’s a very strenuous job. You’d use the lava from the volcanos down there to help mend the cracks. Just basic maintenance so the earth stays intact.”

“That sounds...hard.”

“Ha, exactly. Which is why people don’t normally choose that option. But we have to keep it up there for fairness.”

I pulled my knees to my chest and mulled over what I had learned. Is this really how things in the afterlife went? Or was I just having some sort of bizarre dream? This is way too weird to be real. But everything looked right. The tall, pearly gates. The fluffy white clouds under my feet. The peacefulness of the air. This is everything I had learned in Sunday school. It all just felt so off.

“Ma’am!”

I jumped out of my daze and refocused on the guard. He seemed to be getting highly irritated with me. His hand moved to his belt where a radio was clipped, and he kept it there as he continued to talk to me.

“Now, ma’am, please pay attention. Are you ready to hear your other options?”

“Um, yes sir.”

This was beginning to feel really, really wrong, but there was nothing I could do. I had to keep listening. It’s not like I could run away.

“Alright, so Option 3 is somewhat strange, but it seems to be a favorite. You essentially will be placed back on earth, alive, with perfect health for the rest of eternity. You’ll never worry about any sickness or injury. For the rest of, well, forever, you’ll roam the earth, able to do as you please. Don’t get too excited because you aren’t getting any cool powers or anything like that. You just won’t have to sleep anymore. If you really wanted to, you could eat. But, the world would be yours to do as you please.”

“So, I would be immortal?”

“In simpler terms, yes, you would be immortal.”

The thought of never getting sick or hurt again was very tempting. And never having to sleep? Imagine the things I could do with all that free time! Who wouldn’t want to choose this option?

“But ma’am, here’s the thing.” The guard cleared his throat and tightened his grip on his radio. “You’ll never be able to see your family or friends again if you choose this option.”

“What?” I sprang out of my chair and he whipped out his radio, ready to speak into it. “Why can’t I see my family if I get to go back to earth? That’s not fair!”

“Ma’am, stay calm. They think you’re dead. If you suddenly pop back up, they wouldn’t be able to understand. It would breach our confidentiality agreement up here. We can’t let the living know that this is an option after death. It’s just the way things are.”

Balling my fists, I started towards the guard. Tears cascaded down my cheeks like acid, burning streaks into my face. The guard started speaking into his radio, and next thing I knew, I was surrounded by ten guards who all looked exactly like him.

Raising my arms in a futile attempt to defend myself, I started screaming, “No, no! What’s happening?? This isn’t right!”

The original guard smirked at me through the crowd and slowly walked towards me. He laughed as I tried to back away, only to be met with the wall of guards. They held onto me with iron grips as I squirmed and screamed. This can’t be real. This isn’t how things are supposed to go. Why is this happening to me?

“Now, ma’am, I told you before you had choices. But since you became violent with me, I think I might just choose for you. You see, my personal favorite has always been Option 4. I rarely ever get there because all you people get so emotional when I

tell you that you’re forbidden to see your loved ones again.”

“Please, no. I never did anything wrong. I was a good person my whole life!”

“Option 4 is sort of fun. While the others allow you to keep your body, Option 4 puts you in a new one. You get to go back to earth. But, this time, you’re going to be a pet. Now, you could be anything from a dog, a cat, a turtle, a fish, you name it. I usually let people choose, but I think I know what would suit you best.”

At this point, my face is drenched in tears. My body racks with coughs as I try to yank away from these awful, horrible guards. This is not how Heaven’s guards are supposed to act. This isn’t right. I know this isn’t right. But I’m completely powerless to stop it.

The guard smiles. “It’s been nice talking to you, ma’am. I’ll see you again soon. I always do.”

Next thing I know, I’m plodding along the ground in a well-furnished house. I walk past a mirror and am met with the image of a very fluffy Siamese cat.

Beignet Heaven

Tye DeVore



Butterfly Ring

Bethany Messer

Butterflies are the symbols of change.
They flutter around, and
no one spares a thought
of what they used to be.
Paper-thin wings, delicate yet strong,
make the struggles of flying
look effortless.
They say when a butterfly
flaps its wings,
it later creates a hurricane.

But this butterfly you gave me
is rigid and cold.
Its wings are metal
with delicate swirl designs.
The body is not thin
but a rock of a dirty royal blue.

This ring of metal and rock
is the symbol of your choice.
You are a butterfly
who transformed after heartbreak
and covered us with your wings.
The blue gems of your tears washed
the doubt and fear
and gave you the spirit of valor.
You are not rigid and cold,
but solid and firm—
a foundation we could rely on.

Although the choice you made now
creates a hurricane in my head,
no distance is too great
for your wings.
And you remain strong
like rock and metal.



Building Blocks

Michelle Aitken

You're Fine

Kayla Stribling

The bike betrays me, sways too far for my little frame.
Fall to the ground, scrape knees.
Run to Mom, the tears pour.
Bandaged up with a kiss on the head.
"You're fine," she says, and I was.

Summer before a new school, back on the bike again.
Long ride downhill, too much speed.
A rock this time is what betrays me, and, for a moment, I learn to fly.
A broken arm casted in blue.
"You're fine," the doctors say, and I was.

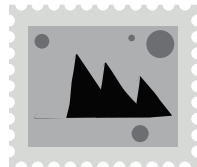
Eighth grade dance, and I am dying to go.
Someone takes notice, plots my impending pain with her friends.
They trade my date for cruel tricks, my trust for a wrinkled party dress.
And home again to mommy, crying in her arms.
"You're fine," she says, but I wasn't.

Two years go by, tenth grade now.
Bullies shove and push, call names in the halls.
I think I am strong, I pretend to be, at least.
But night comes, and the bruises are too much.
"You're fine," I say, but I wasn't.

Senior year, and nothing is better.
The pain cripples for days on end, no medicine can help.
My body feels broken, it works against me daily.
It forms wounds that no one can see, that no one believes.
"You're fine," the doctors say, yet I wasn't.

College years come, and not much changes.
Body betrays, and feelings are too much.
Countless doctors come and go, and my hopes dwindle.
And then, one changes it all, with three simple words:
"You're not fine," he says, and he was right.

Months of this year spent in and out of hospitals.
Struggles with bad medicine, pain that keeps me awake,
Emotions in shambles.
But it gets better; day by day I see a new me.
"You're fine," I say, and I am.



The Cigar Box

Cody Grier

I pried open the tender lip
of the box—as careful as a sexton—
to hear the crimped secrets
it withheld all these years.

The softened wood trembled—
almost gave—under my fumbling hands.
I smelled the scent of yellowing paper
rather than the musk of tobacco leaves.

I left the wispy rosewood lid—
ajar—so to keep the spirits in.
Postcards quilted the fragile walls
like taffeta in a coffin.

I spread the flimsy pictures—I found
therein—
on the bed like ashes in the grass
and sifted through them
wringing my hands for a gem.

I found a faded love letter
amongst thimbles and spools;
Its spidery words were written
in pensive cursive.

I wondered if the homesick hands wrote—
from afar— and if they tremored so.
Were they much too lovelorn
for punctuation?

I pinched the time-stamped photographs
between my fingers—as prudent as a gardener—
clipping the heads of the late summer roses
from the fading hedgerow.

It was a splintery echo-chamber,
the box, —my confidant—my abettor.
A conduit for lost voices
put away on the dresser.

It was brittle like a cicada shell
left behind on the ground;
The nymph flown out,
absconding to the pine trees.

A Witch's Self Care

Jordan Shea

Inside the mirror mounted on the wall,
I witness my self bound in mortal flesh.
Cold moonlight streams through windows with a
drawl,
And autumn breezes bring scents pure and fresh.

The smell of burning incense fills the room,
Sharp fragrance: earthy pine and sandalwood.
My tall white candles bring light into gloom
And flick'ring flames cast shadows where I stood.

Inside my palms I grasp a bowl of glass.
Salt rests upon the water filled within.
I speak the words, and feelings I amass
Slip out as water droplets grace my skin.

When I put out the candles next to me,
I finish off the spell: “so may it be.”

Consumption

Michelle Aitken

One hit –
Just one taste –
One try,
That's all it takes.

Before your very eyes,
The world births anew –
Birds sing louder,
Colors shine through.

With arms outstretched,
You take to your throne,
Gazing at the world—
Now yours to own.

The sun on your face,
Casting down its rays;
Skin soaking up,
Caught in a daze.

Your arms crash down –
It begins to fade.
Fright fills your soul;
You scramble for aid.

Where is it?
Searching your mind,
The world darkens –
You're running out of time.

Failure foreboding –
Your throne shatters;
Heart beating faster,
Nothing else matters.

Your bleary eyes find
The cure for the craze;
Anxious hands lift to lips,
Poised to ease the haze.

Breaths ease,
Body relaxes –
For a little while longer
The high surpasses.



My Dear Friend

Alyssa Nuckols

Hello bird, what brings you here today?
Did the wind send you, with her plentiful gust?
You are quite the observer, looking high and low.
What do you see when you look at me?
Do you see the fault lines, like a broken earth?
Or do you see me as a part of the plentiful crowd?
Those beady mirrors twitching with fear,
You will fly away soon, they all do.
I will watch you soar, far, far away,
Until another comes in your place.
I know nothing of your life, and you know nothing of mine.
You are the perfect friend and observer, one of a kind.
You speak only with a chirp, and cannot judge me, only look.
Give me your wings friend, allow me to soar,
Do not leave me down here, spare me this life.
Each step I place into the Earth makes a mark that gets blown away.
My footprints that I try so hard to make, are erased by all that has ever been.
When I am gone, you will continue to observe.
How I envy thee, small insignificant bird.

Settling In

Cody Grier

In the medicine cabinet, I saw my life pirouette
like a whirling dervish in the glass.
I stood on tip-toe and reached for pill bottles,
turning their labels over in my hands.

I filled a mug—half-empty—with tap water
and set it down on the edge of the sink.
Turning it over, I threw back my head
and washed down the pills.

I saw myself—glassy-eyed—in the vanity.
A hairline fracture cut across my reflection
and my right eye was smudged out.
I sat on the foot of the bed,
then sulked into the comforter.

I wrung the salt out of my eyes
and rubbed my nose as raw as silk.
I read a passage from a book
left carelessly open on the nightstand.

I ran my hand over the annotations I'd made—
then, something as fine as spun glass
inside me frayed.
I laid my head on the downy pillow,
screwed my eyes shut and prayed.

My words lilted at first—slurred—
and then stopped.
My head spun on my shoulders like a wooden top.
Settling into oblivion, my forehead perspired,
my throat burned, and my stomach was afire.

This is the first death from which I
sprang back into the world of the living.
All else is secondary from here on out—
a little taking—a little giving.



Broken Promises

Tye DeVore

Cain's plans are coming together. Nothing will go wrong tonight. He gleefully watches flames from the bonfire reach the sky while he takes a swig from the lukewarm beer, grimacing.

"I think the fire is big enough."

"Get me another beer, Abel." Cain listens to his brother sigh.

"Cain, did you hear me?" Abel hands him his beer.

Cain takes a long drink from the new beer, throwing the empty bottle into the large fire. He watches the flames dance and the smoke pillar up into the sky. He reaches down, grabs another log, and throws it in, watching the fire lick up the new fuel.

"I think the fire is big enough."

"I just said that!"

"Go get Mary."

"You never listen to what I say." Abel kicks at the ground. "Besides, why do I have to do it? It's a lot of work and I have to carry her all the way down here. Can't you at least help?"

"You have to do it because I told you to. Now

stop being a baby and go do what I asked."

"Fine." Abel reluctantly walks away from the light of the fire.

Cain continues watching the fire, occasionally drinking his beer. The yellow moon rises in the sky while he waits.

The past runs around in his mind. Thoughts of how his family always loved Abel more. How Abel was loved by all. It just wasn't fair. Cain tries so hard to be perfect. To do everything in the name of God. But it never was enough, all praise went to Abel.

"Cain." Abel says.

Cain dazedly looks at Abel and shakes his head. A sadistic smile spreads across his face.

"Did you get Mary?"

Abel nods, shrugging the body off his shoulder into the fire. He wipes at the sweat on his brow and sighs. Cain grabs the gun from his waist band and aims it at Abel. A shot rings through the air. Abel clutches his stomach while the blood pools on the ground. He gapes at Cain standing over him.

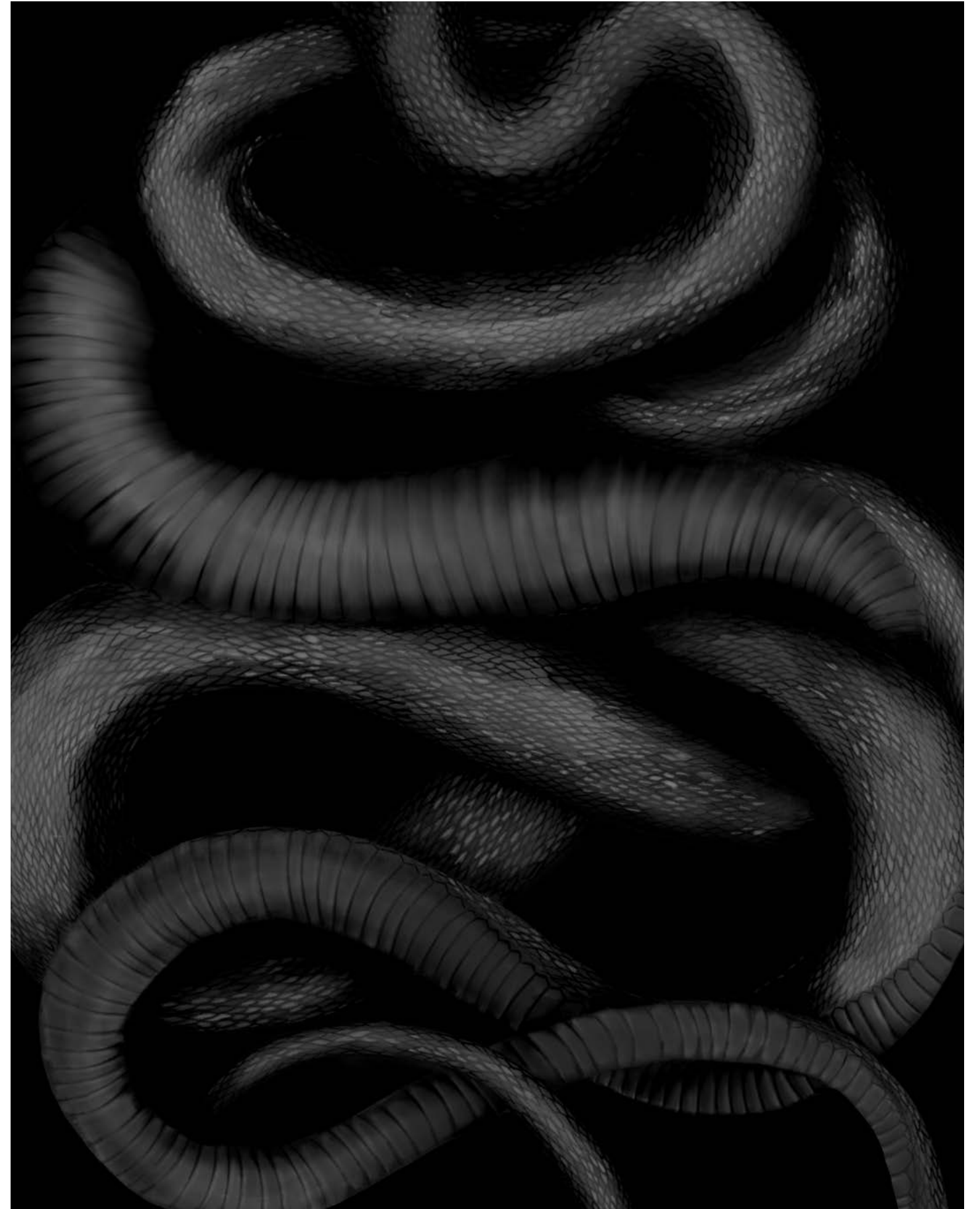
"I'm sorry Abel." Cain picks him up. "I have to get rid of you. Maybe I can finally make God happy."

He throws his brother into the flames next to their sister. The night air is interrupted with the screams of pain and the sulfurous smell of Abel burning.

Untitled

Stephen Smith

How could I say it
The words that lived on the tip of my tongue
That hid back behind my teeth
One day you'll get sick of saying you're fine
The same story you've told since you were nine
Please don't get me wrong
But I'm tired of the same old song
The one only I heard
But never said a word
Like oil and water mismatch
It's time for us to detach
You may never know that I dread
The words I never said



When You Sleep
EmilyRae Burton

Anesthesia

Atima Adams

I am numb.
I do not know what to think.
My heart doesn't tell me how to feel

I think about him,
But my body won't react.
I just wonder if the truth is real.

I hear nothing.
I just wander in my mind.
The deafening silence is surreal.

I am numb.
I do not know what to think.
My heart doesn't tell me how to feel.

Remembering the ecstasy.
Our bodies created internal heat.
Our passion could not be concealed.

There was joyous agony,
But betrayal in your thrust
Because you opened her up like a meal.

I am numb.
I do not know what to think.
My heart doesn't tell me how to feel.

That ungrateful bastard!
I kept my word—closed my legs.
He alone could break the seal.

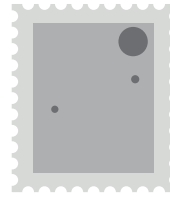
Poison floods in.
I'm heated beyond measure.
How could he put me through this ordeal?

I am numb.
I do not know what to think.
My heart doesn't tell me how to feel.

There is a knife.
A dull, dark, deceptive knife.
Stabbing, slashing, slicing with steel.

A single tear.
Falling to the depths of a never imagined destruction.
Can someone tell me how to heal?

I am numb.
I do not know what to think.
My heart can't tell me how to feel.



The Stars Above Rhône

Jordan Shea

Black and inky blue sky
stretches above the dark river of Rhône.
Stars twinkle amongst the darkness
and reflect against the calm water.
Lights flicker in the distance
from the city across the bank.

It is dark and cold,
sad and dreary,
with black and indigo colors.
They reflect the melancholy feel
of loneliness, of sadness,
of pain.

But the lights
of the stars and the city,
they twinkle and shine.
The vibrant yellow is a reminder
of better days, of happiness,
of healing.

And there is a couple standing on the bank,
watching the sky and the stars above them
standing close to each other.
I wonder,
whether they see the dark skies
or the shining stars?



Truth

G. Davis

What can I say?

Lord you guide me every day.

What can I say?

You continue to strengthen me along the way.

I get weak Lord.

I get drained.

God, I thank you for knowing my name.

You know when I am weak; and, you know when I am strong.

Lord, please do not leave me alone.

Your presence is refreshing God.

You make me feel complete.

Truth is Lord, you are all I really need.

What can I say?

The Platform

Evy Barrett

Up or down? Up or down? A simple enough choice when you're not stuck on a subway platform in the middle of London and terrified of escalators, but she was. Perdie stood in the corner, shoulders hunched, and thick strands of hair falling in her face, marveling at her pickle of a predicament. For the past few days, she had studied the London Underground map with quasi-religious zeal; there were at least two or three copies on her person at all times, with a few more back in her hotel room. The miniature maps, while a pain to unfold and refold, were Perdie's salvation—each with a little key of the stations with stairs or, at the very least, elevators. The idea of being trapped in a metal box suspended by cables in a city as old as London was hardly appealing, but it was still better than the escalator. And yet, here she was, stuck on a platform without either option. The only choice was up or down.

There was another choice: get back on the Tube and find a station with some damn stairs. But it wasn't an option...not really, not when her tour group and tour guide had long since taken the escalator down to the next platform, hopped on a connecting line, and headed off in an entirely different direction. It was the group's last night in London, so the tour guide had scheduled a celebratory dinner at a restaurant, the name of which was unknown to Perdie. Tomorrow, many of her fellow travelers would make their weary ways to the airport to catch their flights back to the States, while some would stay on in London for a few days as solo tourists. Perdie belonged to the latter group. She'd planned to stay in London for a few extra days before hopping a flight to Edinburgh, Scotland. Why not? The tour group had allowed her to sample the finest of Dublin and London; it seemed a shame to fly this far and not see Edinburgh while she was on this side of "the Pond." But now, stuck on this platform and paralyzed with fear, Perdie wondered idly if she'd even make it out of this station, let alone this country.

Over and over again, Perdie re-played the moment when she was so cruelly separated from her tour group, growing increasingly bitter with every passing minute. The tour guide knew of her fear, knew how deeply affected she was by it, and knew (or at least knew by now) that she was no longer with the group. Some of the girls had seen Perdie attempt that first daunting step onto the descending

escalator, hop back, and then get pushed out of the way by impatient Londoners and other tourists. Surely, if she stayed patient, the guide would come back for her; but time marched on, and, once fifteen fear-filled minutes had passed, Perdie was forced to accept that he was not coming back for her. Once she had accepted this, Perdie's bitterness grew. How many times had one of her fellow travelers been separated from the group? Four, that Perdie knew of. And how many times had their guide put things on hold to go back for the missing members? Four. So, where was he?

If he thinks I'm giving him a good review after this, he's dreaming. Perdie scowled. Five more minutes passed, and Perdie once more toyed with the idea of getting back on the subway. The dinner was a prepaid event—part of the tour's price—and Perdie hated the idea of wasting money, but there was no way she'd ever find them now. Twenty minutes had passed she'd last seen a recognizable face, and with absolutely zero cell reception this far underground and no idea where the restaurant was or what it was even called, her chance of rejoining the group was nil. At this point, the only thing that made sense was for Perdie to give up on the endeavor before she succumbed to a full-fledged panic attack.

Perdie was already in the early stages of a total meltdown complete with rapid, shallow breaths, trembling hands, and light-headedness when she became vaguely aware of someone talking to her.

"Miss? Miss? 'You okay, miss?'"

Perdie felt something touch her shoulder, and she flinched violently, the pacing of her heart responding in kind. She whipped her head over to the source of contact and saw a funny-looking man in a yellow vest to her right. The man looked to be slightly north of middle-aged and was short and portly, especially around his stomach. He had one hand stretched out towards her—a universal sign of caution—as if Perdie was a wild animal that could attack at any moment. The sausage-like fingers of his other hand fiddled with the walkie-talkie clipped to his belt. Both Perdie and the man—Bernard, if his sewn-on name tag was any indication—stared at each other for several, tense moments, drawing half-hearted stares from mostly disinterested commuters as they passed from platform to platform.

"Miss?" Bernard repeated, slower this time. "Is ev'ry f'ing okay, miss?"

His voice was gruff but polite, and, suddenly,

Perdie felt like crying. Tears spilled down her cheeks, and her breathing quickened as she gave into her anxiety. Though initially alarmed, Bernard had the common decency to act sympathetic to the simpering lunatic in front of him. He looked around, most likely wishing for someone to magically appear and handle the hysterical girl. When no one came, he doubled down on his efforts to soothe her.

"Aw, miss, it's gonna be okay. Don't fret. Just tell ol' Bernard what's wrong and he'll fix it for ya."

Poor Bernard was repaid for his kindness with a whole mess of tears and stream of consciousness that Perdie, herself, could hardly decipher, but Bernard nodded as if he could understand her perfectly.

"S 'okay, 's 'okay. Ya know, miss, I've lived in London my whole life, and even I get lost now and again. Happens to the best of us." Bernard paused to smile. At least two teeth were missing, and the rest were either crooked or yellow, or both. "Ya wouldn't happen to know the name o' the restaurant, would ya, mis?"

"Nooooooo...uh...oooo...uh...oooo...uh...oooo...uh...ooo...uh...ooo...uh...oo," Perdie wailed.

"And ya can't call yer guide on account a ya got no service, yeah?"

"Nooooooo...uh...eugh..."

"Right, right." Bernard grimaced and looked around, as if the solution would waft in on the stale air of the Underground. "Give me a minute, then, miss."

Bernard stepped away to grumble into his walkie-talkie while Perdie tried to compose herself. By the time he came back, the crying had subsided, leaving a wake of sniffles and hiccups.

"Okay, miss, so what's gonna happen is we're gonna stop one of the escalators for ya so you can walk up 'em like regular stairs. Once ya get above ground, you'll have no problem callin' yer guide. Now, how does that sound?"

Touched, Perdie started crying again and could only nod her head violently in reply. Moments later, one of the escalators stopped, and Bernard pointed out that it would probably be better if Perdie sobered up for the long climb.

"Now, if ya want, I can walk up behind ya in case you get scared. Would ya like that, miss?"

Perdie nodded, meekly, approaching the halted escalator with extreme caution. Slowly, she reached one hand out, allowing it to hover over the handrail. Then, as if it might bite her, she snatched

her hand back and turned back to Bernard. After the scene she'd caused, she felt the need to defend her behavior.

"Thank you, so much. It's just that I—I—I get scared because I have really bad vertigo. It messes with my balance, so I'm afraid that I'll fall. Normally I can handle it if I don't look up or down and it's only one flight, but this—" she gestured up at the three-story escalator, "I just couldn't. I'm so sorry."

"No need to be sorry, miss. I understand, but we can't keep it stopped fer long, so we's better get ta movin' and shakin' and whatnot."

Perdie turned back to the escalator, trying to ignore the curious glances of passersby and the daunting distance from herself to the top, and began to climb. With each step, her chest tightened, her breathing became increasingly shallow, and her thoughts grew fuzzy. She couldn't help but think that, at any moment, the machine would spring to life, and she'd plummet to her death. Behind her, Bernard chatted jovially away about his various health problems, huffing and puffing furiously in between words. While she appreciated Bernard's attempt at distracting her from the situation at hand, it took all of Perdie's powers of concentration place one foot in front of the other. Still, she hummed acknowledgements as often as she could while as rarely as common courtesy necessitated.

Finally, Perdie reached the top and hopped away from the dreaded machine, still not entirely convinced that it wouldn't start while she was still on it. Then, she proceeded to put as much distance between herself and it as possible. The entrance to the station was only twenty or so feet away from the top of the escalators and was wide open, allowing sunlight and air in, which refreshed Perdie's spirits and cleared her head. She leaned against the wall at the entrance, trying to stay out of everyone's way, as she waited for Bernard to make it to the top. When he appeared, he spotted her immediately and came over to make sure she'd be okay. Perdie thanked him profusely for his assistance.

"Here," she said, reaching into her purse and pulling out a £10 note, "please, have a beer on me after all of that." Bernard made a gesture to reject the money, but Perdie insisted. "Please. It's the least I could do after what you just did for me. Please."

Bernard finally took it, giving her a lopsided grin. "It was no problem at all, miss. Just make sure ya tell all yer friends that there are plenty o' nice folks in London, mhmm?"

Perdie briefly thought of her London-born-and-raised tour guide, but Bernard's earnest expression put that thought out of her mind, and she smiled for the first time since stepping onto that platform.

"I will."

Mona Lisa

Hali Bush

Mysterious Mona Lisa, why do you smile?
The secrets you hide perplex those who are living.
Yet, there you sit, frozen in time—
Unflinching at the controversy caused by your depiction.

A high-class woman, gracefully painted by a master
who held secrets of his own, secret unknown.
Society questions your expression
and the divided foreign landscape
and its muted hues,
dulled by centuries of yellowing varnish.
Vibrant colors and details are absent,
yet your smile never changes.

The Sugar Shack

Khaliyah Ashley

Brown skins dancing under the lights,
To sounds of rhythm in the night.
Hips as wide as the Mississippi River,
Move to the beat, yet there's no liquor.

Music moves these souls tonight.
Bright colors signify their true delight.
Lost in the melodies and bodies of sin,
Jamming together let the good times begin.

This is a place where they can be free,
Free to dance and laugh, free to be.

Untitled
Tye DeVore

The Juke Joint

Alisha Blackmon

We dancin', we swingin',
Our song on,
We singin'.
I see a cutie lookin' at me—

He ask me fah a dance,
I act all shy.
"Would yah like a drank," he says.
I nod my head yah,
"Ok, I'll buy."

We walk on the dance flo',
All fresh and clean.
We dancin', we swingin',
As Marvin Gaye's singin'.

We dance 'til we sweat,
We both ain't ready tah go.
We dance all night—
"Marvin put on a good show."



The Power

Michelle Aitken

“At least do a lil’ dance for me or somethin’ if you’re gonna stand up there. Shake what ya mama gave ya girl!” Jesse chuckled under his breath.

Aria rolled her eyes, toppling Jesse’s desk to the ground.

“Okay, could you, like, not do that? That’d be great.” Jesse picked up his desk and ruffled his hair, trying to brush off the impact. “How’d you even do it anyway? I didn’t even see you move your hands.”

“Well, could you, like, not be an ass for 2 whole seconds. That’d be totes great, my guy.” Aria dramatically waved her hand in the air, poised to flip the desk again.

“Screw you.”

“I’d rather not.” Aria flicked her finger and Jesse’s desk toppled again, with him catching it just before it smacked the floor, waving his hand to send it upright.

“Geez, Aria, who pissed in your Cheerios this mornin’?”

She held up her fingers and started counting off, one by one. “Oh, you know, just the dog and my brother and—”

“You know what I meant. Just get to the point of your weird interpretive drawing up there already.”

“Okay okay, just look, I’m done.”

Aria stepped away from the whiteboard, studying Jesse’s reaction. He opened his mouth as if to speak, but she held up her hand and, in an instant, snapped her fingers, rearranging all the markings on the board into a cohesive unit. It’s a picture of a castle.

Jesse stammered, “How...but...how did you do that?”

“Noodles.”

“What the hell kinda psycho shit are you on about now?”

“No, Jesse, I’m serious. It’s noodles.”

“Since when do noodles make you control your handwritin’? Since when does anything make you control your handwritin’? That’s not possible.”

Aria waved her hand and the eraser lifted off the marker tray and wiped the board clean. “I don’t know, honestly. Maybe always? I just noticed it a few days ago. Was eating that Chinese takeout we got the other night and wrote something wrong on my homework and was wishing I could just rearrange it on the page without erasing. I rolled my eyes and everything moved across the page the way I wanted it

to.” Aria paused for a moment, averting her eyes from Jesse’s bewildered glare. “And then we ate that spaghetti a little while ago. It’s the only thing that makes sense. I think it’s getting stronger. It’s all getting stronger.”

“You rolled your eyes? Is that even a possible trigger?” Jesse stood, mouth agape.

“Well, it worked then, and it worked when I flipped your desk, so I’d said yes, it is possible.” Aria tugged the hem of her shirt.

“You should tell someone. Like soon.”

“I just told you, dumbass.”

Jesse glared at her. “You know what I mean.”

Aria slid back into her desk and faced Jesse.

“Yeah, I know. But I—”

“There’s no ‘buts’ about this. You need help with this, Ar. You know you do. You’re not gonna be able to handle powers like this alone. Not without knowing why it’s happening.”

Aria chewed her lip, “I can’t, Jesse. You don’t understand. It’s probably just a fluke. Maybe I just shouldn’t eat noodles anymore.”

The door swung open and a tall man with a briefcase walked in, nodding slightly at the two of them. Several students followed behind him, effectively ending their conversation. The professor gently waved his hand, making the door click shut.

Jesse leaned closer and whispered, “It’s not a fluke. You know it’s not.”

“We’ll talk later, okay?” Aria turned to face the professor.

“Good afternoon, class. I hope everyone is ready for an enlightening lecture.” The professor smiled broadly, soaking in the groans of the students, while shuffling his hands to distribute a stack of papers to the students. “Now here you’ll see my comments on your research papers from last week. I was highly impressed with some of you, but for many, I was gravely disappointed.”

A dull murmur took over the room as the students read through their papers. Aria snagged her paper from the air above her desk, eagerly inspecting the professor’s comments. She flipped through each page, her smile progressively wavering. A 78? What the hell?

Jesse leaned forward, grinning broadly. “Look, Ar! You were right! I got a 94!”

Aria glared hard at Jesse, tightening her fists. “That isn’t fair!”

Jesse’s smile broke and he dropped his paper, desperately clutching at his neck. “Ar—Ar stop.” He

choked out the words, his face slowly draining color.

Aria widened her eyes and unclenched her fists. “No, no Jesse. I—I’m sorry, I didn’t—I didn’t mean to, I swear!” She reached across his desk, but he flinched away, rubbing at his neck and gasping for breath. A few students stared at them in disbelief, their murmurs growing louder, dripping with fear and disgust. Aria noticed the glares and panicked, grabbing her bag and running for the door.

“Miss Green! Where do you think you’re going?” the professor yelled, twisting his fingers to lock the door across the room.

Aria turned on him, tears streaming down her cheeks. “Please, just let me go!”

“Miss Green, it is class time. I must insist that you reclaim your seat by Mr. Thompson and pay attention.”

“She just choked him, Professor Brown!” a student yelled from the heightening murmurs. Professor Brown looked incredulously at Aria. “Is this true, Miss Green? Did you choke Mr. Thompson?” “No! I mean, yes, but I—I didn’t mean to! It just happened!” Aria’s face burned red. “I swear! I’d never hurt Jesse on purpose!”

“Miss Green, you know violence is never tolerated in this university. You must learn to control your powers better. I’m afraid I have to report you.” Professor Brown pulled out his phone and started dialing.

“No, you don’t. With all due respect, Professor Brown, I’m telling you not to report her.” Jesse stood from his desk, making steady eye contact with the professor.

Professor Brown scoffed, folding his arms across his chest. “Oh really, Mr. Thompson? And what gives you that authority?”

“I do. I don’t wanna press any charges, so there’s no need to report her.” Jesse grabbed his bag from the floor and deliberately walked to the door, throwing it open with a mere turn of his wrist. “Let’s go, Ar.”

“Why would you defend me like that after I hurt you?” Aria hugged her knees to her chest, staring at the floor of Jesse’s car.

“Because I know you didn’t mean to.” Jesse reclined his seat.

“But how do you know?”

“Because it’s you, Ar. You would never try to hurt me. You said so yourself.” Jesse turned the radio on, letting the music fill the car. “I do got a question

for ya, though.”

Aria turned her head slightly, peeking at Jesse’s chiseled features through her frizzy hair.

“I know you didn’t mean to hurt me. But, like, why did you?”

“I—I don’t know.”

“Yes, you do, Ar. What aren’t you telling me?”

Aria leaned back into her seat, letting her legs slump down. She closed her eyes tight and took a deep breath, preparing herself. “It’s a long story.”

Jesse turned to her, gently grabbing her hand. “I got all the time in the world, hon.”

“So, five months ago, back before I moved into the dorms here, I got into a fight with my stepdad. We fought a lot, though. It’s just, this time was worse...”

Aria paced the room, straightening the shelves with her mind. She nodded her head along to her music-filled headphones, but her movements contradicted her serene expression. Her movements were almost erratic.

The grandfather clock at the top of the stairs chimed shortly, marking the half hour. Aria’s movement became more frantic at this, and she darts quickly to the kitchen.

“Shit, shit, shit.” She darted up the stairs, waving her hand deliberately, making the pictures on the wall straighten and the strewn clothes to flop into the dirty hamper in the bathroom.

Aria quickly searched her room, grabbing her backpack and making sure everything was neatly arranged before running back downstairs. Everything looked good. The house looked good. She ran for the door when her body froze mid-stride, her throat wrenched with a ghostly iron grip. She helplessly clawed at her neck, gasping for air.

“Ya no good lil’ heathen. Get yer ass back in here.”

The phantom grip on Aria’s throat violently yanked her backwards, causing her to lose her footing and hit the tile floor.

The voice bellowed with laughter as its body slowly crept into view. “Ya thought you could get away from me, didya? You know what you’ve gotta do before you can even think ‘bout steppin’ foot out there after dark, honey.” The grip loosened slightly, allowing Aria to gulp in frantic breaths. She grimaced, tasting alcohol and cigarette smoke in the air.

“I...I cleaned ev...everything you...asked... Tim.” She made eye contact with him across the

room, eyeing his clenched fist dangling in mid-air. He's powerful, but he's been drinking.

"I'll be the judge of that."

Tim turned slightly to survey the house; his fist dropped lazily to his side. The grip on her neck vanished, giving her the chance to take a deep breath. She balled her own fist and swung, causing a chair to fly straight into Tim's face. He staggered backwards, the impact and the alcohol impairing his ability to stand straight. Aria jumped to her feet and turned on him.

"Why, you little bitch." Tim started for her, raising the dining room table beside her with a smooth wave of his hand.

Aria slung her backpack across her shoulders and sent another chair flying at Tim, but he dodged it. He crept closer, sending the table straight at her face. She ducked and it crashed against the door, splitting the table in two. Panicking, she swung back around and lifted the broken wood behind her with her mind. She stared into Tim's fear-filled eyes before thrusting her arm forward, delivering the pieces straight into Tim's face.

Tim stumbled back, clawing at his now cut face. Blood dripped from the jagged, splinter-filled cuts. He fell to the floor pawing at his face, allowing Aria enough of a window to escape.

"So, that's it. That's why I came here. And why I act so quickly and defensively. I get scared or mad, like I did at you for doing better on that paper."

Jesse sat facing Aria over the middle console, holding her shaking hand. He studied her tear-streaked face, unsure of what to say. "I'm so sorry, Aria. I had no idea."

"I wanted to leave. That's why I came here, to this school. I thought it would help me escape but it's just made everything harder, especially knowing I left my mom to deal with his drunk ass. And now...now my powers are acting weird and I don't know what to do. Why can't I just have normal telekinesis like everyone else?"

Jesse leaned over and wiped the tears from her cheek. "Your powers are so cool, though. It gets boring being normal like me."

"You don't get it, Jesse. You know your powers. Your telekinesis. You're good at it. You don't have to worry about anything, about what you eat or what it could do to you. Whenever you want to just fling some shit across the room, you just gotta flick your finger and it happens. I don't have that security. I'm...

I'm volatile. For all we know, I could eat some damn popcorn and make your car explode by blinking!"

"It'll be okay. It's gonna be okay. I'm gonna make it be okay for you again, Ar. Don't worry. We'll make it through this together. We'll figure it out."

Aria shook her head, pulling her hand away.

"I'll start a journal for you and keep track of all the stuff you eat and what it does. We'll figure out the triggers and the effects. We'll figure out what makes things happen. I'm not gonna let you suffer through this. Don't worry. I'm here."

The radio chimed in the background and an overly zealous voice spoke. "Attention everyone. Widely renowned telekinetic studies institute Samson International is looking for fresh faces and hard workers. They are specifically interested in those that have acquired a striking mastery of their powers or show great promise in their strength. Apply today!"

Jesse smiled at Aria. "Did you hear that? That sounds perfect! You should apply!"

Aria laughed. "Yeah, right. They said they want people with mastery. That's not me, Jess. If anything, that's you."

"They also said they want strong people who have potential. That's you, Ar."

Aria shook her head. "I can't, Jess. I'm not ready."

"What if I apply with you?"

Aria stared into Jesse's excited eyes. "But what if I mess up?"

"Listen, you want someone to teach you how to control these powers, right? These are the best of the best. Anyone successful in the telekinetic business starts out at Samson. The worst that could happen is they could say no." Jesse paused for a moment, studying Aria's tentative expression. "Besides, it means we get out of here...and we stay together."

Aria's cheeks blushed red. Her voice shook as she spoke, "Okay. Let's do it."

Farewell

Farewell

Negativity.

new friend.

exceptional,

valuable

connect

ends.

fraternal

Harmony assists

their good deeds. They would never

keep me gloomy, locked up, and force me to

leave. Happy as a singing bird—that's what

I want to be. Not the dead tree it's singing

in, neither sad like a stale winter leaf. But

for you old friend, there's no resentment. I

get why you confidently stood clear. They say

you get what you put out and I guess I made

you comfortable here. I'm giving you a proper

farewell so that you know neveeeeer to come

back. The attitudes, the fighting, the bad

intentions—we're not having any more

of that. So here's a peace to you

and my past life of hell.

And yes, my new friend's

name is Peace. I hope you

find some as well.

Old Friend

to you,

I've met a

They're

more

and will

my loose

Their

twin

them with

Farewell Old Friend

Keyonte' Croom

Assignment Intro: Imitation Essay

The two following creative works were chosen by the Filibuster's editor from "Genre Imitations" submitted by the the graduate students enrolled in Dr. Robert Klevay's Fall 2018 course on Themes of Culture and Society: Fantastic Voyage and Self Discovery.

This assignment asked students to create their own version of either a "Classical Epic" or "Chivalric Romance" set in the present day and should use at least three characteristics that are presented in works that were read, such as Homer's *The Odyssey* and Christine de Troyes's *Lancelot: The Knight of the Cart*.

Inspired mainly by Homer, these selected pieces follow at least three of the main conventions that embody a "Classical Epic." Whether they invoke a muse for divine inspiration, opens in *media's res* (or in the middle of things), catalogues and genealogies, epic simile, repetition, heroic ideals, and, more importantly, give a clear picture of the social and cultural patterns of life.

Tye DeVore utilizes the "Classical Epic" conventions to over exaggerate and parody them in an unlikely way while Chelsey Bowman uses them to portray the idea that collaboration with others is important.

Pericles

Tye DeVore

Calliope, the beautiful voiced muse, tell us the tale of the brave Pericles and his lists of misfortunes on his expedition home to Basketus. After the victory of Seaticus, many had safely arrived at the plush homeland while Pericles suffered the unhappy fates of the gods, slowing his journey home. Tell us the encounter with the gate keeper, Cerberus, and how Pericles escaped into the land of Denori and its plush, brown grass.

On his way home, Pericles encounters the great beast Cerberus, the guardian of the passage between the land of Kitchina and Denori. Pericles cranes his neck back and meets the fiery gaze of the great black monster.

"Who dares attempt to pass by me, Cerberus, son of Hades?"

"It is I, Pericles," he shouts. "I wish to pass through to go home to my family."

The black beast releases a gruff laugh, each gust pushing Pericles against the smooth ground of Kitchina.

"You cannot pass by me mortal, I will not allow it."

"Why?" Pericles inquires, hair standing on edge.

"You are not worthy enough."

"I have lived many lives, I provide sacrifices towards the gods, and I have fought in the battle of Seaticus against the Doggo's," Pericles states astonished. "Is that not worthy enough?"

The black beast laughs, shaking the ground beneath Pericles's feet, "you think that is all it takes to be worthy? There is more to it than that mortal."

"Then tell me what it takes to be worthy enough to pass."

"You must answer me this age-old question, who is a good boy?"

Pericles becomes stumped, how is he supposed to pass through if he can't answer this question. He sits on the cold, hard ground and thinks for a solution. The way he came, watching over him. The gods sip on their wine, watching the interaction between Pericles and Cerberus.

"Look at your son and Pericles getting along," Persephone states.

"About time, it's been a while since they've been together," Hades sighs, taking a long sip.

"At least he's getting along with him,

unlike the others."

The god and goddess share a laugh at the memory of the battle between Pericles and the Doggos.

"I'll intervene if anything happens, no need to worry about the safety of your baby."

"Thanks, love," Hades smiles at Persephone.

The two watch the scene unfold between the hero and the beast.

"Do you give up yet mortal?"

"I will not give up, there has to be another way to prove I'm worthy," Pericles stands and stares down the beast.

"There is no other way."

"Can I not fight you? I am willing to draw my dagger and prove my worth that way, but I cannot provide an answer to your question."

"Then you are not worthy."

"Then there is no other way," Pericles lunges at the great beast with daggers drawn.

The surprise is enough for Cerberus to take a step back but not remove himself from the spot. Before Pericles can attack again, a booming resonates behind the beast. This causes Cerberus to turn his attention away from the feisty mortal and towards the noise. This opens a window for Pericles to run between the legs of the giant, towards the sound and towards the soft brown of Denori. As he raced around and above the mountains of this empty land, the eyes of the gods watching, Pericles's heart raced with joy at the thought of curling up in his own home. Behind him, he heard the thundering voice of Hades calling out to Cerberus.

"Who's a good boy? Who's a good boy? You are!"

Pericles sprints away from the beast and god, clearing the barren land of Denori in a short amount of time. There wasn't any interference and he is glad for that. When he arrives home to Basketus, he curls himself into a small ball in the warm embrace of his bed, purrs of content escaping him. He lets sleep embrace him as he feels the soft strokes of the goddess Persephone.

'Home at last,' were the last thoughts before sweet rest.

MVP: Most Valuable Percy

Chelsea Bowman

Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of valor and greed, constantly struggling to remain a team player as he faces the mighty Auby Tigers. Many eyes looked upon him as he made mistakes, many blows he took that could have been avoided, heart set on being the MVP, pushing to win this game to show that his team could compete with the best. But he could not do it alone, as much as he tried, with hardly any of their own fans near, the roaring cheers for their opponent; they slowly began to accept defeat, because he could not put himself aside and consider the greater good. Speak, Muse, and tell the tale once again.

By now, Auby U. is in the lead, their players, coaches, and fans are excited; the other team is feeling hopeless and angry as the third quarter continues. But one player, with his mind set on the Most Valuable Player trophy – it is his own selfishness that holds him and the team back. It is Percy, son of P-Manning, the hot-head, who must face Brutus, the state's most valuable defensive tackle, the loud roars of "War Seagull" from the crowd, and ultimately himself. Percy is the quarterback—the leader, the decision maker, the playmaker, the captain, the one that the team depends on, the director, the audible, the head, the chief, the commander, the manager, the boss—however, he is playing as if he on the team alone. With each possession, he fails to pass the ball to open teammates, determined to run the ball in for a touchdown. One particular possession causes a detrimental blow to Percy and the Bamie State Hornets. It is the fourth down and the Tigers are in the lead with the score at 28-7. Percy and the Hornets have possession of the ball. Just like the previous quarters, Coach Naban has been pushing for Hot Head to pass the ball down field to open wide receivers. Nevertheless, the quarterback consistently does his own thing on the field—his teammates are left standing like deer in headlights as he plays the other team by himself. Meanwhile, Brutus, the aggressive and fearless, has been waiting on the right moment to take Percy down permanently. Once the ball is snapped, Percy lazily searches for an open player, knowing very well that he has no intentions on throwing the ball. As soon as he begins his journey down the field, Brutus strikes the torso of Percy within the blink of an eye. Percy goes down hard like Goliath. As the hot head lies in agony after being sacked by none other than

Brutus himself, he prays to the gods and goddesses of football to heal his broken bones so that he can continue playing the game.

The green-eyed goddess of healing sports injuries, Physique, addressed the high god: "Father, son of Footbol, our king, it is true that the best team must win, but I feel bad for Percy, that greedy yet talented soul, lying on the bench, helplessly watching as his Bamie State Hornets are slaughtered by the opposing team. He has had to face many obstacles thus far, including the monstrous roars of War Seagull, whose cheers are unbearable at times of failure and Brutus, whose hit is like the force of ten defensive tackles all at once. What is most disturbing and sad is that he has had to face his biggest challenge – himself. He has had to choose between his selfish desire to be the number one player and his desire to be a true leader and lead his team into victory. Despite his many self-talks, the heat from his teammates, the aggressive language from his coaches, Percy the hot-head managed to cause the team to fall behind in scoring and lose focus on what really matters – winning as a team, showing they that have what it takes to defeat a more experienced team, and teamwork makes the dream work. Oh mighty J-Montana, have you no sympathy for poor Percy? Has he not sacrificed enough sweaty nights of practice, shed enough blood on the field, or cried enough tears in the face of adversity?"

"My dear," replied the honorable J-Montana, "I could never overlook Percy, the hot-headed son of P-Manning, for the Mannings have always shared their most precious offerings. It is not I that has forsaken Percy; it is Foosbul, the ruler of all things negative and people that are against sports that has cursed Percy for bringing joy to those that enjoy the game of football. As long as Percy continues to play football with a selfish attitude, Foosbul will continue to haunt him. But if we come together as a team, I am sure that we can heal the hot-headed Percy and work on this victory for Bamie State. I am also hoping that Percy will learn the error of his ways and become more of a team player. With all of us working, Foosbul will be no match for our superior powers together. Together, we are the Dream Team."

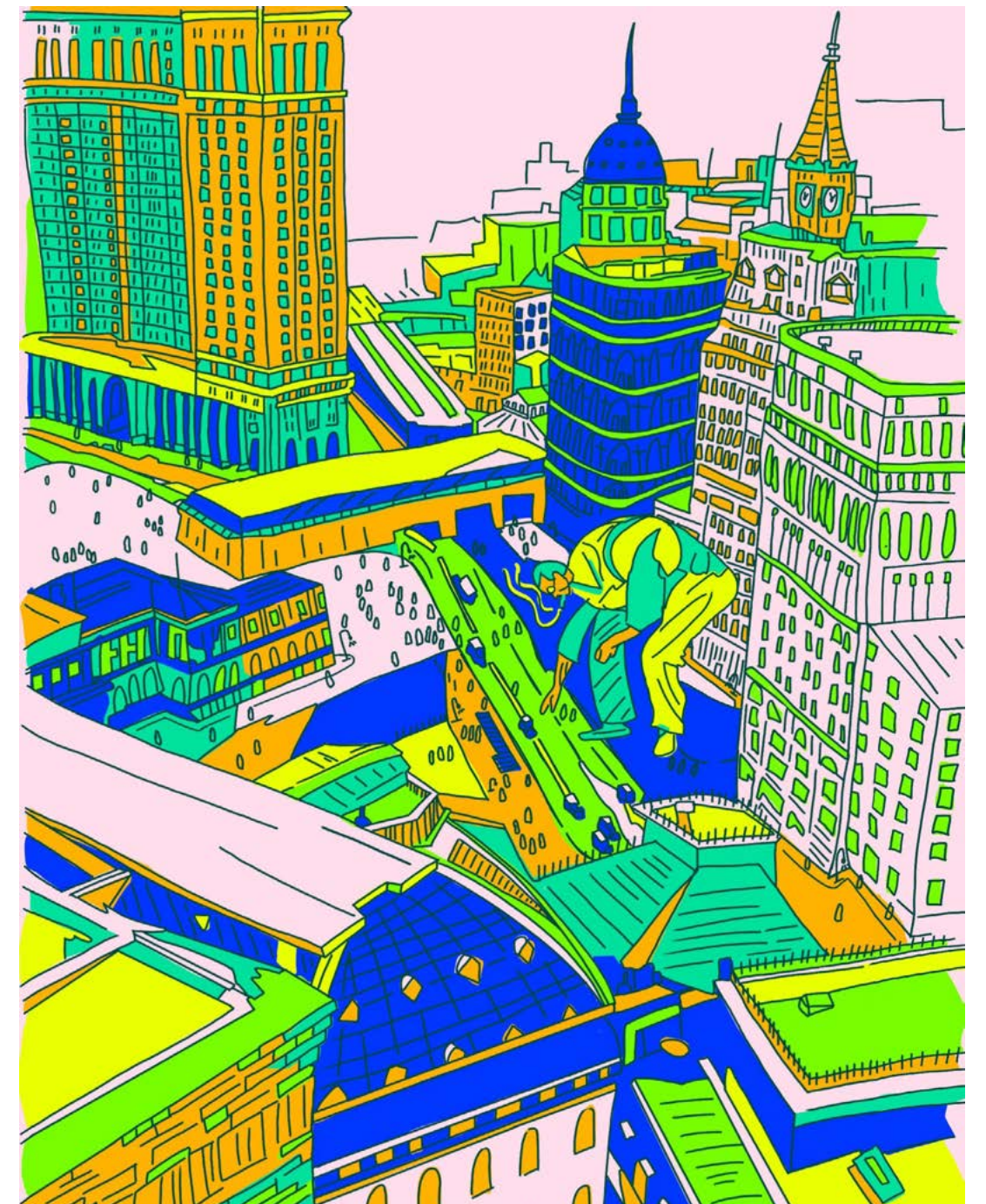
"Father, son of Footbol, our ferocious king!"

If it pleases the gods that Percy will lead the Bamie State Hornets to victory against the Auby Tigers, then let me journey down to the stadium and heal Mr. Hot Head so that he can lead his team to victory."

And so, Physique came down from the gates of Brady Stadium as Phyllis, the world's best physical therapist. It was a miracle for most that Hot-Head could continue to play. Percy thanked the gods for his healing and was honored to have another chance to show that he could be a valorous; no longer will he allow his desire to be MVP stand in the way of his role as the leader of his team. Percy, the hot head, took to the field again and played football with one thing on his mind: there is no "I" in team, but there is a "We" in teamwork.

American Aspirations

EmilyRae Burton





Pillow Thoughts
Michelle Aitken

Horizon
Leigh Ann Clark





Leading
Leigh Ann Clark



Sunset at the London Eye
Peyton Buchanan



Rainy City
Tye DeVore



My Commute, in Three Movements
EmilyRae Burton

