



Chiaroscuro

Spring 2020

Literary and Arts Journal of Brevard College

CHIAROSCURO

Spring 2020

Chiaroscuro:

*The treatment of light and shade in art
to produce the illusion of depth.*

2019 – 2020 Chiaroscuro Staff

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Chiaroscuro
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Editor's Note

When a creative person begins to draft a novel, write a poem, take a photo, or design a piece of art, what is the purpose? Why would anyone spend hours upon hours of their time creating some physical representation of an idea in their head? Some would argue we create in order to express ourselves, record a fleeting moment of our life, or showcase how something ordinary can in fact be extraordinary. These are all wonderful reasons to create, but I think there is another aspect we often forget.

We create to connect with one another and build community.

Just think about it. When was the last time you picked up a book because a friend wanted to discuss it with you? When was the last time you looked at a photo or a piece of art because someone close shared it with you?

As creators and consumers of creative work, we are always finding bits and pieces of ourselves: in a character of a book, in a lyric in a song, in the message of a painting, in the performance of an actor—this list could go on. When we find such kernels of ourselves, we feel seen and a connection is formed.

This arts and literary journal is an example of community.

Chiaroscuro features work from creative students, alumni, and faculty. In the back of the journal you will find contributor bios for all the individuals who decided to share their work here. I wanted to include these bios because it's important to see not just the work but also the creator. I think many of you will be pleased (and surprised!) at the variety of creative individuals at Brevard College who are all bound together in this journal.

Thank you to all of the people who made this year's *Chiaroscuro* possible. All of us on the staff are blown away by the support we've received.

And to all of the creative individuals on Brevard College's campus, keep dreaming and keep creating. The world needs your work.

Alexis

This journal is dedicated to the memory of

BRET JAMES STEWART

30 August 1973 – 17 February 2020

*BC alumnus, former Chiaroscuro staff member, and
Kings Creek Bookstore assistant manager.*

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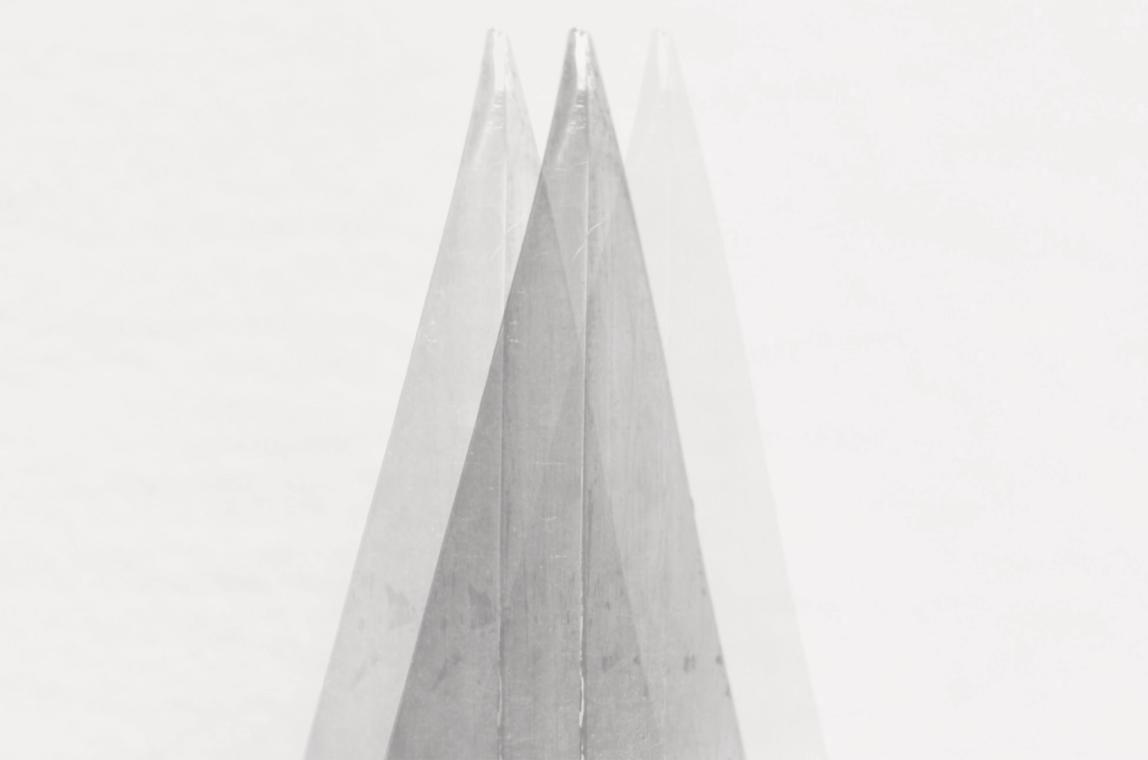
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POETRY



Photo courtesy of [MJS](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Forgotten

Kenny Cheek

My mom has pretty much forgotten me entirely.
She hasn't said my name properly for three months.
She calls me "Sow-ear-see" when she remembers me,
despite the fact that my name is pronounced
"Sear-sha," spelled Saoirse.
I know this type of thing happens when people get old,
but I didn't expect this to happen until she was at least in her eighties.
She's only sixty-seven.
It isn't fair that my own mother doesn't remember her "little stinker."
She forgot that I loved holding her tiny hand, and she won't
even let me stroke her curly grey bob anymore.
Dad died last year, and she was all I had left,
and now she's forgetting me and I feel like I'm all alone.
All alone without my mother.
Without my father.
Missing out on everything that we used to be.
We used to be a family.
Now I'm just some woman who comes in to check on her.
The first couple of times she forgot where she was or who I was.
I didn't think much of it. She was just a little forgetful.
But then she walked out of the house one morning and
made her way two cities over.
That's when I had to move her to the facility.
They say she's getting better and she remembered me.
She's never looked at me the same way.
I think she forgot she was ever even married, but she wears
the ring my dad gave her still.
That gives me hope.
I'm about to go visit her again.
Hopefully this time she doesn't think I'm the nurse.

Enough

Alexis Henley

I bathe in their expectations

 flowing

 down my back.

My words pour onto the page,

overflow,

smudging lines. I'm

Drowning

 D r o w n i n g

 D r o w n i n g

A constant stream of letters

movable lips and aching tongue

beg to articulate.

A cry for help unheard.

Papers, thin and white,

like bone cradled in my hands.

My worth drained.

The edges are

swift and sharp.

Pain erupts from my pale skin.

A release. An expression.

Thick, warm red oozes down.

This crimson ink

on white paper continues to speak over me.

 Why are those words

 all they listen to?

How much more must I continue to bleed

until they are

Satisfied.

Dementia

Carmen Boone

It kills me

to see it kill you.

But more than that.

It kills the other people around you too,
the people that watch it.

It is...

a parasite that eats away at the insides,
a storm of anger, frustration, and defeat.

Triggered by words you can't find,
lashing out at family, friends, and yourself.

A brain rotting, a degenerative disease.

There is no winning, only fighting.

Memory that no longer functions fights the battle against
forgetting

who you are,

who you used to be,

who you love.

It is painful to witness and heart-wrenching to see
what it does to the friends and family that love you.

Tears stain my cheeks as your screams of anger pierce the rigid air.

Why can't you accept help? Why do you yell at those who love
you?

When did you develop that passive, blank look in your eyes?

Confused minds continue to puzzle around possible solutions
and despair over the absence of them.

Hearts, souls, brains,

people you don't remember

will anguish over something you don't understand,
until they are no longer faces that you recognize.

Fear of What's Never There

Robert Massey

My lover rolled over, looked at me, and said, "It's time for rest."
My pillow was hard, stuffed with angst, I undressed.
I was weary and lacked the desire for such a feeling,
but still I laid there gazing up at the off white ceiling.

Lying there in silence, I could not sleep
lying there in pain, "they love another" I weep.
I wake them up, but we only verbally fought.
They wouldn't hurt me, or that's what I thought.

Things escalated quickly and anger manipulated.
Hands reach a knife and was pulled. I was invaded.
I tried to converse, but the fear inside of me took over.
Then I suddenly realized it was the 31st of October.

To be taken advantage of has the hurt of a deep cut,
enough to hide the pain of the blood spilling my gut.
The room was now spinning and my life was a gaze.
The blade that ruptured my skin, was pain that did not fade.

Slowly removing the shiny sharp silver blade,
I begin to scheme, kill us both, a decision made.
As I hold in my scream and walk over to my lover,
I took my last breath, then the breath of another.

In death I was awoken, remembering it was only a dream,
but as a black beetle scaled the off white ceiling I screamed.
Rolling over, startled, I said to my lover, "it's time for rest,"
but I lived alone, I remembered, heart stopping inside my chest.

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Ode to Elizabeth Bathory

Scott Urquhart

Halloween Contest Winner - 1st Place

Elizabeth Bathory was a Hungarian Countess known for being the most prolific female serial killer of all time. Most of her victims were young girls, tortured in a plethora of ways, and whose blood was supposedly drunk to reinvigorate the soul at old age.

Death is a global currency
expendable like your tainted pleasure.
Whatever you've done,
you're in the midst of what makes us all equal.
Someone else's lost treasure, you are woman.
Oh! I can't forget
all those times spent falling down.
Down into that pit of red painted pleasure
you are woman.
Oh! You work your best to dissect
atrocities
clear enough, it all is,
that you
can't get enough of the blood as it runs
murderous woman, oh!
I live a life of trepidation and misery
it keeps me in the fog of the early morning
blues
and I mustn't forget
all those times it took to get to where I am,
this strange and funny feeling place
in which we shook hands is right behind you.
So what are you blabbering on about?

“Just take it off”
said the harrowed maiden,
pent and penchant
woman
oh! What is beauty
this you must know!
Sickened enchantress
of still charm!
Your final years
you spent lost in time
but we will never forget
those repugnant atrocities,
those profane
and plentiful crimes
of immoral passions
which made you
conceited in nature
and acclaimed with hatred
you are woman
Oh!

The War

Grace Kelley

Your entire life, from the moment you start forming in the womb, is a war.
You will go through numerous battles,
but the only end to the war, at least on *your end* is death.
Others will take on your war and treat it as one of their battles.
Sometimes until their own death.
Various battles will be won.
Others will be lost.
All will involve questions.
Sometimes you question what side you are on; sometimes you question who
or what you are actually fighting.
Yet, you keep fighting.
You keep fighting because the alternative terrifies you.
The alternative is death.
You keep fighting because the aftermath of your death would affect others.
There would be disappointment and blame.
Suicide doesn't stop the war, it only issues a change of command.
This change of command can become a burden to others.
The alternative is worse than reality.
Therefore we keep fighting, even when we think there is no fight left in us.
We keep fighting anyway.
Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.
You don't have to fight alone.
Reach out. Tell someone. Be direct.
Check-in on your friends. If you're concerned, then ask them directly.
It is okay and should not be taboo
to use the term "suicide."

Desert

Nick Edwards

Her hands are thin and soft
her fingers crisscrossing over mine
but ignorant of the fact
that even after she leaves, they are still guiding me.

Tracing circles over my arm, her nails are painted red
close to the same shade I see every night
almost like she's patronizing me.
The maroon of a sunset displayed on hardpan.
The farmer weeps over his withering crops.

"Am I okay?" I hesitate. These three words want to
crawl back down my throat.
Her stare suffocates me—she continues to draw shapes on my limbs.
The sun concludes its journey over the ridge.

Her response hangs over us like a scarecrow.
The conversation has hung its hat and gone home for the day.

"Yes, I am sure everyone thinks you are doing great."

Clear Loss of Mind

Robert Massey

Erotic and patchy,
broken and blind.
Color was ashy,
Clear loss of mind.

The faltering black canine
approaching the crashing shoreline;
day by day drinking salt divine.
Gaining thirst but not strength
and traveling over sand to water's length.
Disillusioned actions no more;
except sudden succumb upon seashore.

The water lured another life in.
Undefined and drinking the salt in sin,
no return day by day like others have been.
Now entering the water and passing from sight,
no water reflected the loss of sunlight.
For grudgingly lost in the waves
the ocean eagerly enslaves.

Alluring and pure,
durable and defined.
Still so unsure,
Clear loss of mind.

Coffee House

Carmen Boone

Christmas Contest Winner - 3rd Place

Lost in a land of candy cane forests
confined within a book cover.

Snow white as sugar knits a blanket over the city
while intricacies of winter dance across my steaming cocoa.

Melting into the deep, chocolate eyes across from me,
and toying at the thought of snuggling into
warm, safe arms.

Hearing sleigh bells
as jolly music plays softly overhead.

The familiar tippity tap of a keyboard,
faint whispers of pages turning over.

Chilling, crisp air brushes the nape of my neck
as I burrow into my scarf and consider moving away
from the door.

Mistletoe hangs nearby, over a head of curly red hair
ordering a white chocolate mocha at the counter.

I wonder if she knows what will happen next.

Warmth meets my lips and steam traces a smile
across my face.

Cozy, comfortable, content.

Too Deep

Sarah Hajkowski

There are things I do too deeply,
from the moment I get up I'm aware of the scraping timbre where a
light voice had ought to be.

My voice is too deep,
hammers on the piano strings of my vocal chords
hold the sound there in that raspy register
that rattles my morning away unfinished, until I drink something...

There are things that I do too deeply,
we humans hardly know that we breathe,
yet my mother, when we are sitting across from one another
asks my two, fully open eyes
whether I am snoring, checks that I'm breathing.
My body, I think, has this tendency to forget itself,
to slip out of itself and walk around on moccasins made of my thoughts.
An old poem once said "Tread lightly, because you tread on my
dreams,"
I breathe deep, to suck out the marrow of life, and I'm not asleep, I
promise.

There are things that I do too deeply,
another of them, is thinking-
I delve, into the depths, swirling waters within my mind and I go
scuba diving,
I find as I go, pearls and all manner of fish
sometimes I surface on an island,
and whilst my eyes are zooming the faces in a classroom

Poetry

in reality I am many, many miles away.
Sand in rainbow colors I've only read about
spirals illusion,
from my crowned head to my toes
and I avoid looking back again, but pad about for sinkholes, and let
thinking swallow me.
For better or worse I think deeply,
I can at times be aware of nothing
but the ancient sound of waves marrying the strange shore made of
words, images, and all the music that gets stuck in my head, when
life
is less than lyrical.

There is a multitude of things which I do too deeply,
chief among them, is love.
I am a self-deprecating teenager, friend,
our trade is melodrama and the currency that love, sometimes
sacrificing
their egos high schoolers can't borrow that necessity, and I don't like
that, so I strive my daily toil
to mend some less than mint robes, for these kings and queens amid
the ordinary dozens--
I love too deeply!
I love dogs,
I love trees, too, and feeling the air brush my cheek in the middle of
the woods on a smoky night
and reaching for the moon with my fingers into the clouds that pass
by-ships' and birds' and rabbits' shapes-

But, to be real, or real enough while still dreaming,
love is mysterious and gross and wonderful,

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I think, though I am most aware of its depth,
the phrase “slippery slope” tends to smack of not knowing
of falling, in fact
but I know better that rocks in the road are in the road for a reason
and they don’t stop the road, falling can never be fatal to you...
And after all, maybe, I am looking too deeply at this stumbling block.
Maybe with some of them there is no beauty about.
after all it does hurt when you stub your toe.
But I am a whole person,
we are whole people,
with voices, lungs, minds and hearts and eyes,
we scratch out the meaning of life in chalk drawings on the
slate, and
satisfied are enough to let
the rain wash it away.
We are more,
I am more,
than those reflections I have on all things about me which run
too deeply,
but after all I must remember
I was, the way everyone is, set with all those powers of eking out
what each of us is made to do best
In this ocean of people.
So, my eyes rove and my voice echoes, trembles,
and so my attentions go with my thoughts, swept off to the land of Nod
no depth of myself will frighten me
no wave will assume any tumult as could scuttle my heart.
So are we, in a sea of people
what’s a little depth?

Dacha

Scott Urquhart

Must have been 10
already started drinking
chugging moonshine.

Working,
grilling,
drinking more.

They say it's a tradition to dress up
and drink till you shake.

I say that's fine
I'll put something on
just pour me another one.

To That Little Girl

Caroline Hoy

That little girl is here,
trying to fly.
She wants to be free,
she hides inside,
inside an older body.
That older body what must it be?
An adult.
Only at 17 that little girl hides,
she may only shine at times
her friends let her shine.
Adults tell her no,
but she is still a child.
Not in their eyes.
In the big world only some survive.
That weak little girl can't thrive though.
She grew up too fast,
she tried not to,
but they caged the little girl.
No playing outside,
it is homework time.
All that little girl wants,
is what she cannot have.
In all of us is that little one,
that little one wants to be free.
But the ones before say no
and the no has been passed down.
That little girl in me wants to be free,
but I was told no.
I want her to be free,

but I can't let her be free.
I must say no to her.
One day I will be the adult.
One day I will cage the little one.
I may not want to
but it will happen.
And when I am the one caging,
I will be sorry
but I will never say it,
except now.
To the future one I cage,
I am sorry,
I truly am...

Chiaroscuro

PAW PAL

Nia Davis

Best pals since the age of six
sweet Diddy you were our fix.
Beautiful mutt determined to survive
with strength and time, you thrived.
Going on fifteen your still here,
we fear the end is near.

You've brought such joy into the home.
You're the main key, you made this house a home.
The memories will forever remain, because
when you leave our hearts will never be the same.
If we could we would press reverse
your approaching end feels like a curse.

Your love healed when we didn't know we were hurt,
gave the courage to keep facing every day.
You were mistreated before you came to us,
yet you still gave love away.
Here for a short time leaving behind permanent lessons
on how to live life leaving a message.
A special spot in my heart
because you were always a blessing from the start.

The Pen

Carmen Boone

Sometimes when I let the pen slow down,
darkness spills.

The kind of pain that screams out in the night,
howling as if the wolves are hunting me down, but no,
there is just black on white.

Ink splatters the page with words I can never say aloud,
words darker than the canvas of blackness behind the stars-
thoughts pouring out of my head faster than light can find them-
but sometimes,
when I let the pen slow down,
music spills.

Bach's "Ave Maria" plays out on the page.
Compositions of smiles and laughs and love
fill the air with smells of the happiest memories:
Mom's brownies, Nana's apple pie, Grandma's pancakes...
and life is good again.

And sometimes when I let the pen slow down,
it's a blur.

It's the rush of a roller coaster, looping around until I'm lost
inside of fear.

It's the comfort of chocolate and vanilla ice cream swirl.

It's two seconds of anger for every one second of peace.

It's a hug for 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 seconds until I'm calm again.

But it's all relative, like time.

I am just a pen, writing words on a page.

Adderall

Grace Kelley

Adderall XR

Taken as prescribed.

Hesitant before starting,
shame associated with stigma.

Drug test before prescription.

Adderall XR

Taken as prescribed.

It's night and day,
a light switch.

Chaos becomes organized.

Adderall XR

Taken as prescribed.

Thoughts line up neatly,
productivity occurs.

Systems work more efficiently.

Adderall XR

Taken as prescribed.

Wish this was suggested sooner.

Stickin' with it

Scott Urquhart

Isolation is a weird drug
that you can take
any way you want
anywhere you want
you live with it
love it
and
despise it.
It becomes comfort
a solitude
that's hard to kick
and any disturbance
to that
habitat
is always met
with contempt.

Dear God

Lauren Agrella-Sevilla

Valentine's Day Contest Winner - 1st Place

I put my arms around myself
as if feeling my own body for the first time,
as if coming home to a house I had
always seen peripherally
but had never walked into.

I put my arms around myself,
felt my ribs, the fullness of my breath,
felt the warmth of my own skin, even beneath my shirt,
and said aloud, to no one in particular:
You are so precious to me.
So.
Very.
Precious.

In that moment, filled with love
and the wonder of my own aliveness,
I felt as though I had found Jesus
or some other wonderful hope for my salvation.
I felt as if I were one of my own children,
my heart linked to theirs as they step through the world,
their pain felt so acutely in my own being.
I felt that significant, that whole,
as if I had found a mother to have faith in me, to tell me she was proud.

Poetry

I put my arms around myself.

It was a day like any other,

the sun filtering through the trees, the sound of my feet on the trail.

I was simply in the woods as I often am, walking to work.

A strange pull encouraged me to finally, after so many years, embrace myself,
as I so freely embrace a dear, dear friend.

And I will never be the same.

Not ever.

Losing Flowers

Robert Massey

The blades of grass smoothly
shifted side to side.
Wind blowing and flowers
holding onto countryside.
In the woodland up north
a traveler paced back and forth.
Catching glimpse of purple columbine,
he thought this was a sign.
The traveler removed it from ground,
it's roots now untied;
picked it up and brought it
slowly to his right side.
Bringing the flower to his ear
the traveler slid the stem
behind right ear lobe.
Feeling free from the world
feeling strong once again,
but attached to flower's stem.
Gazing over that field
the traveler found no flower alike.
For the flower he wielded
was practically dreamlike.
In his gaze once more,
he saw another traveler.
As the other approached
the traveler asked,
"Notice the beautiful flowers here?"
The other responded,

without any care, saying,
“There aren’t any flowers anywhere.”
In shock and confused
the traveler said jokingly
“Not even the one in my hair?”
Again the other said,
“There aren’t any flowers anywhere.”
Then the other walked away, leaving
the traveler once again alone.
Feeling his right ear lobe
the flower was gone.
Was it blown in the wind?
That was unknown
but as for losing flowers again,
the traveler was alone.
Losing flowers.
Losing flowers.
Losing flowers.
Until the traveler noticed
the flower was never there.

They Are Watching Me

Kenny Cheek

Something was always moving in my cabin.
Moving with claws like talons on a hawk
ready to pounce and tear my flesh.
They are hungry.

A footstep out of turn with the TV chatter.
Small sounds of giggles in the dark bathroom,
rough like tires on gravel.
They are quiet.

Cigarettes burnt out long ago
and burgers medium rare
filling my basement in a burnt sort of way.
They are putrid.

I could taste the ooze they put in my food
to try and trick me into eating the foolish meals.
Sweet and savory dinners just waiting in the kitchen.
They are clever.

Long, skinny, and grey with skin like leather,
and large hands, and tiny eyes above mouths.
Full of sharp teeth and a silver tongue, watching from the patio.
They are hideous.

When I wasn't expecting it, they brushed against me.
Tasting my skin with their slimy feelers as I laid in bed.
Their hairless bodies gently touched my neck.
They are quick.

Poetry

They hid in the corners of my room
and flicked out my lights when I wasn't looking.
And now I'm sitting in the corner
writing this before they get me.

Chiaroscuro

his/yours

Ace Clevenger

Valentine's Day Contest Winner - 3rd Place

he said he loved you.
maybe he did, or
what he thought you were.
the ready wit
the gentle hum
the eyeliner outlining sleeplessness -
he laid claim to the surface scars.
his eye candy, his friend,
his one and only -
always his.
just his.

he called you pretty,
extravagant, exquisite, even -
never without expectation.
you did not fulfill it.
you were the backseat of his car
the floor of his room
a hand to hold, an eye to catch
sharp, pretentious, perfect.

you were never just a person, were you?

you were someone to argue with, and
to hold when the nights froze over.
you were a voice in the dark
until you cracked and broke.

Poetry

you were a reassurance for every apology, and
a response to every call, and
a concern for every drop of blood, and
everything
everything
everything
to him.

and now you're drowning alone
grasping for purpose and obligation
and you just never learned
how to be anything at all
to yourself.

Why
Nia Davis

God sent his son to pay the price,
crucified to save our life.
He took the punishment for our thoughtless acts and
sinful ways.
When Jesus laid on that cross
He forgave.

Why is the church empty, when Jesus went to the grave?
Why is the church empty, when Jesus rose again in three
days?
Why is the church empty, when Jesus went to hell
and back to give us a second chance?
He was hung high and stretched wide.
The weight of the world depending on one life.
Significant, selfless, sacrifice.
Sharing with us his amazing grace and eternal life after life.

Spelling It Out

Carmen Boone

Can we not see the damage?

The **d**eprivation of sleep?

The **a**ching muscles?

The **m**entality growing weaker?

The “**A**” students slipping behind?

The **g**radual decline of health?

The **e**ating disorders?

Can we not see the pain?

The **p**ractices that run too long?

The **a**ctive complaint of fatigue?

The **i**ntense pressure?

The **n**ever ending schedule?

Can we not see the health issues we cause?

Can we not see the constantly drained student athletes?

Can we not see the broken system?

A Verse to the Holiday

Dr. Vance Reese

Christmas Contest Winner - 1st Place

A Contest for Christmas? I scratched my head. How
does one write a poem for a holiday now?

We've finals to take, and we've papers to write
neglecting to mention the classes. (Yeah, right.)

I asked Goddess Kali, "A 'Christmas' poem yet?"
She bared her sharp teeth and said, "Bae, I will get
some extra-strength Karma just for the occasion
to sway people from this strong 'Christmas' persuasion."

I told her, "You're on!" She rolled up her ten sleeves,
and launched into one of her recitatives.
Her blue face was fierce, and I stood in amaze
as she rattled off festivals lasting for days:

"You've passed up my Puja a bit 'fore November.
Another ten years, Ramadan's in December.
These lunar days float, like the one called Diwali,
a Fest'val of Lights like no other," said Kali.

"Go out and proclaim 'Nes Gadol Haya Sham'
and tell them where dreidels and latkes come from.
or if you are willing to hit the bonanza,
then tell folks about the creation of Kwanzaa.

Here's one you'll like. It's called Zartosth No-Diso.
Zoroastrian food might not go well with miso
which people might eat when they celebrate Tet—

Poetry

Oh, wait. That comes next month. We're not quite there yet.

On Bodhi Day—also next month— then you shoulda
give thanks for Siddharta Gautama—the Buddha.
For those who think Islam is more than a hobby,
then honor The Prophet on Mawlid al-Nabī.

Make noise for Osiris and Isis in chorus
who managed—don't ask how—to give birth to Horus
around the dark Solstice which most folks revere
as the time when we most need to have some good cheer.

I've Orthodox holidays, feast days of saints,
some rad tribal rituals that feature old haints.
You want more? I've holidays up to my bindi!"
(Shiva had warned me that she was long-windy.)

I thanked her profusely and offered my death,
but she said, "My thanks all the same. Save your breath.
Days that are Holy should make you feel small,
to recognize Other, to learn to say 'All.'

On Holy Days one feels the pangs of new birth
and likely the drastic destruction of earth.
Life goes in circles, would you not agree?
The hero returns to the start. That's the T."

Before Kali left, she imparted this sooth:
"It's not only Christmas that carries the truth.
So write down this poem and go make eyebrows furrow.
Perhaps it will be in next year's *Chiaroscuro*."

Home

Alexis Henley

H
o
m
e

Another “X”

drawn on the calendar
to countdown to the last day.

I massage the ache from my wrists, rub
sleep from my eyes to prepare for the journey
where roads are familiar, old friends welcoming me back.

The house opens its doors, light shining in its eye-like
windows. It’s the one I used to
color red to represent the brick.

In bed I stretch out like a starfish on freshly washed
sheets while the ceiling fan, with its soft tick, brushes
the hair off my face. Under my
feet the wood floor creaks as
it grows used to me again for
I’ve been away. The gas log fire
draws me in and I bask in its warm embrace. The wall
photos whisper their stories although I’ve heard them
many times. So I sit and think: This is where I belong.

This is home.

“A War — Alone”

Courtney Augusto

Was born, was healthy, was happy,
was tiny, was precious, was full,
was loved.

Was wanted, was home, was complete,
was a healthy heartbeat,
was small girl big town, was full house everyone around
was silent tears, was struggling times, was
most likely fall, but from there I'd rise, destined
to fail, but there I was, was determined, was
strong, went through hell, was done.

Grown in a blink of any eye,
was strong, was moved, was held down and bruised
was with fire, drive, was wholeheartedly alive,
was strong enough to fight (a war of hate alone),
was beaten, was bruised, was fighting with everything to lose.
Was worn out, was washed-out, fought strong and heavy.
Drained out, ground full of sweat and tears,
Was knees on the ground, blood filed the years.

Come and go and there they went,
years just like you,
came and went.

You lost all hope and broke my heart, fingers strangling my dreams.
Finally the war was over,
but life gracefully gave me more to see...



VISUAL ART

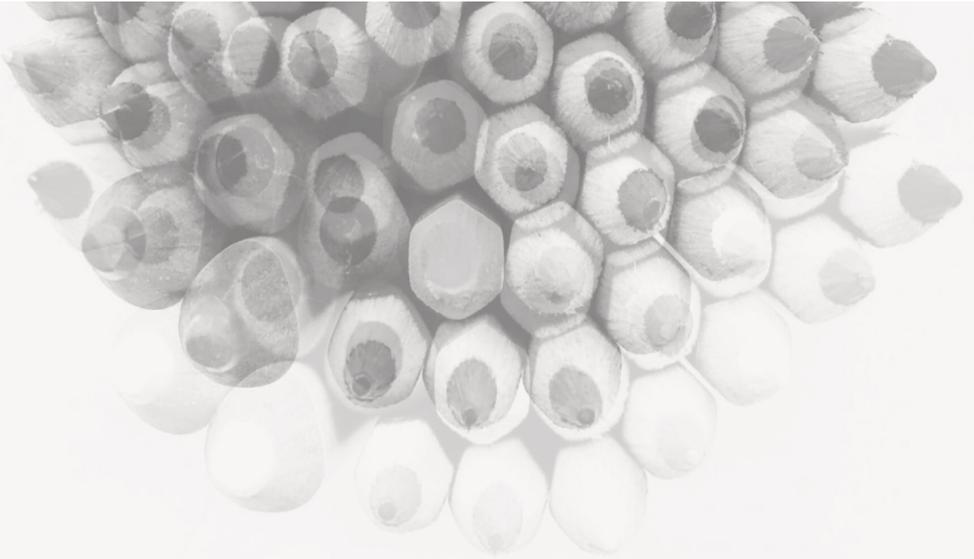
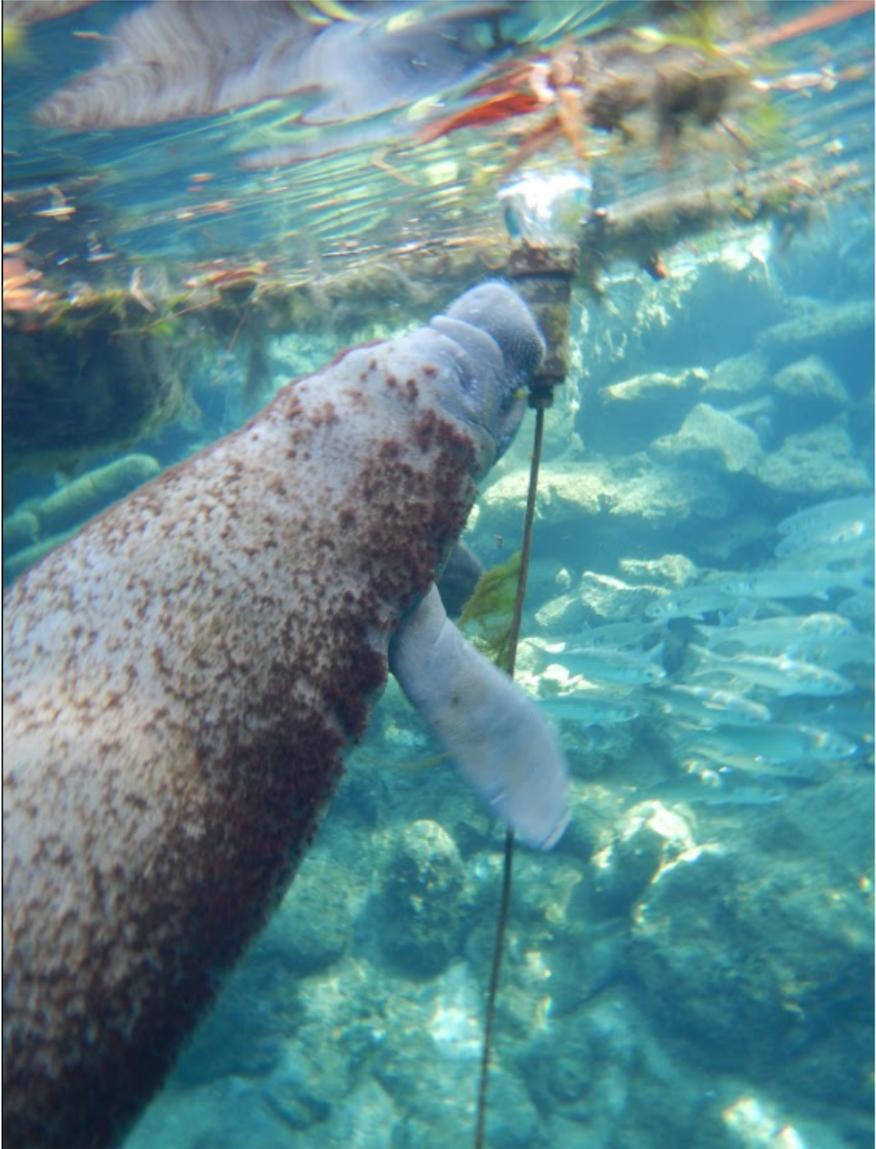


Photo courtesy of [Taru Huhkio](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Visual Art

Enlightenment

Alexis Henley



Chiaroscuro

Brookgreen Gardens

Carmen Boone



Visual Art

Pearlescent Reality

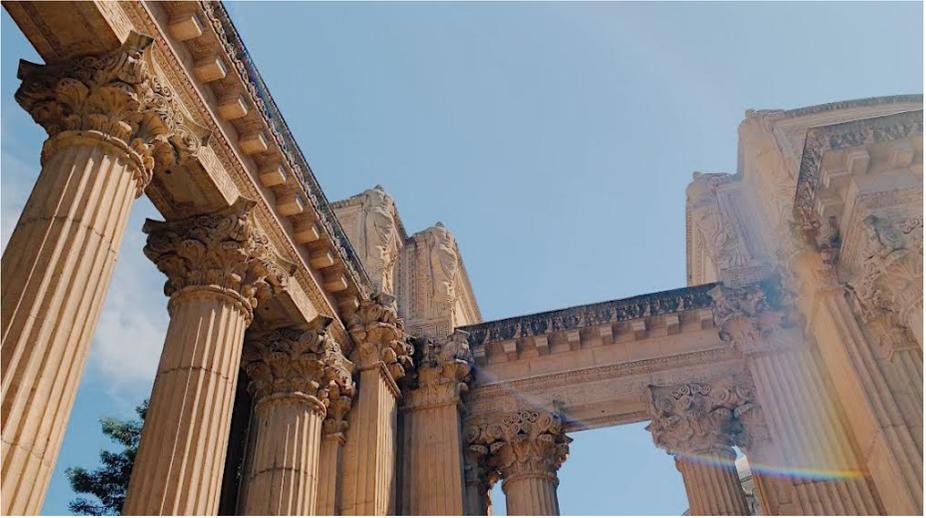
Jawaun Ervin



Chiaroscuro

Beaux-Arts & Stick

Chloe McGee



Visual Art

Gothic Revival & Italianate

Chloe McGee



Chiaroscuro

In Vilnius

Scott Urquhart



Visual Art

Myiasis

Gwyn Jennings

Medium: Digital Art



Chiaroscuro

Pigsty Parallel

Madison Heath

Medium: Watercolor and acrylic paint mix



Halloween Contest Winner - 3rd Place

Visual Art

El Toro

Ashley Maziarz

Medium: Collage



Chiaroscuro

Cliff's Fairview Garage

Chris Tipton



Visual Art

After the gallery, early in the A.M

Scott Urquhart



Chiaroscuro

Macrocosm

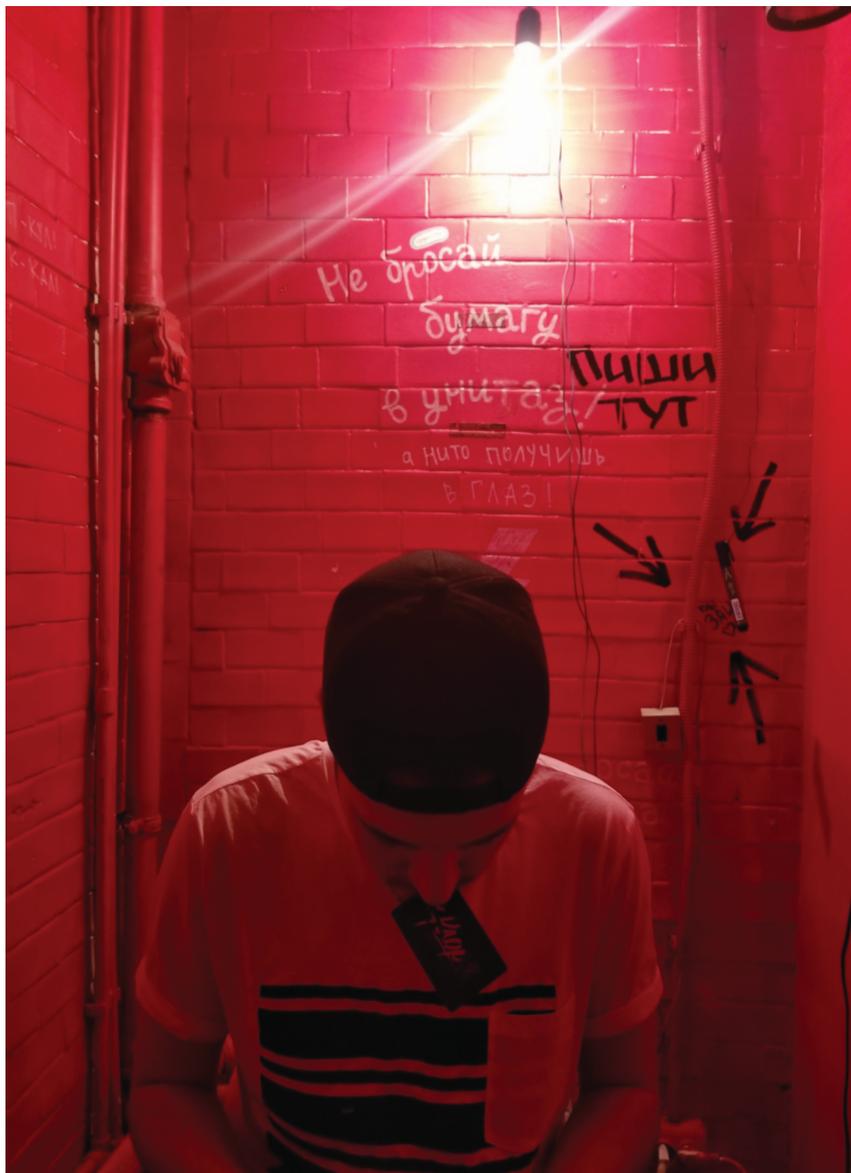
Jawaun Ervin



Visual Art

Sasha in the Gallery

Scott Urquhart



Chiaroscuro

Mushroom Zombie

Caroline Vargas

Medium: Theatrical Makeup



Halloween Contest Winner - 2nd Place

Visual Art

A small world for you and me

Jawaun Ervin



Chiaroscuro

Seeing Red

Ashley Maziarz

Medium: Collage



Visual Art

Duke of Dare Motel #1 & #2

Chris Tipton



Chiaroscuro

River of Love

Joy Poe

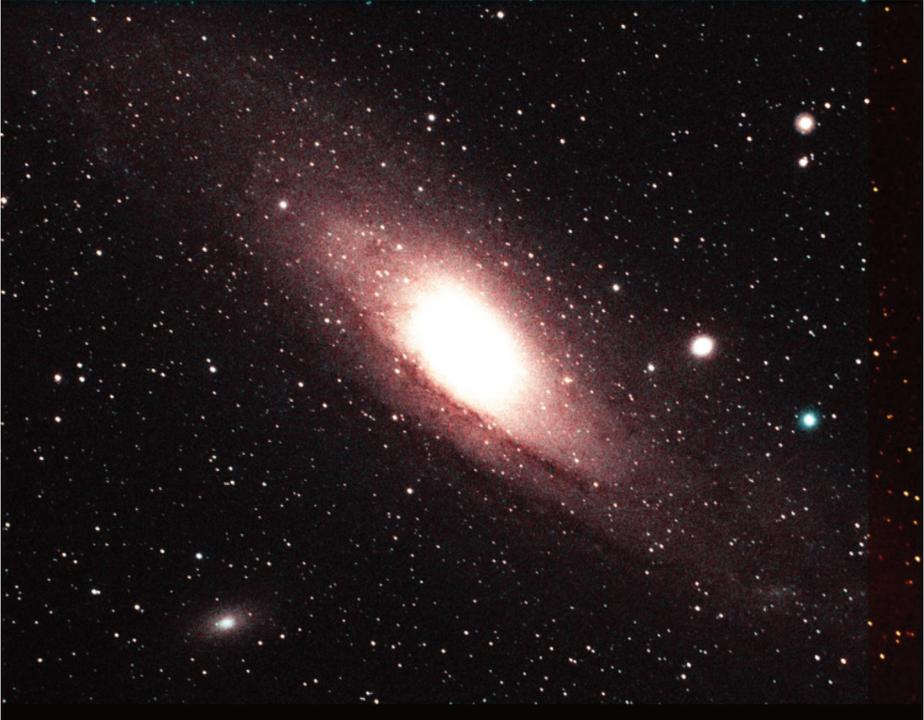
Medium: Graphite Drawing



Valentine's Day Contest Winner - 2nd Place

Andromeda Galaxy

Peter Trench and Davis Gentry



This photo was taken by a CCD camera attached to a telescope. When Andromeda was high enough in the sky to get above the dense parts of the atmosphere, Trench and Gentry pointed the telescope to it, tracked it, and started taking pictures.

This photo is the final product of several photos taken through three filters (red, green, blue) that were layered on top of each other to create a fully colored image.

Chiaroscuro

Skopje, Macedonia #1

Aia Andonovska



Visual Art

Skopje, Macedonia #2

Aia Andonovska



Chiaroscuro

Deserted firmament

Jawaun Ervin



Visual Art

Warm Hearth, Warm Heart

Jayne Fought



Christmas Contest Winner - 2nd Place

Chiaroscuro

Light the way

Jawaun Ervin



Visual Art

Winter is Coming

Caroline Hoy



Chiaroscuro

Moonlight Anatomy

Madison Heath

Medium: Shading Pencils



Visual Art

Ma'am, we are finished here

Grace Kelley



Chiaroscuro

haunted

Madison Ramsey





FICTION

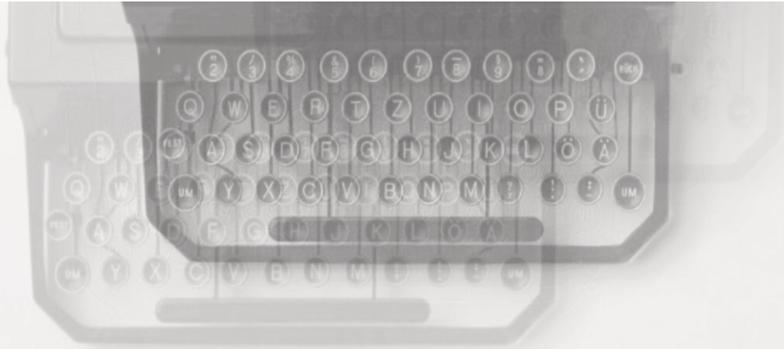


Photo courtesy of [Florian Klauer](#) on [Unsplash](#)

A Grim Start

Alexis Henley

They decided it was best to have a closed casket funeral.

Under the funeral home tent, Ruby tried to pay attention to the preacher's sermon about the long and fulfilling life her grandmother had lived. Sweat trickled down the nape of her neck, and she rolled her shoulders in an attempt to dab the moisture away with her black and red dress. She based her flickering attention not on the lack of love she had for her grandmother, but on the fact that every word out of the preacher's mouth was a lie. Ruby glanced up at the tent tarp, *I'm half expecting it to burst into flames.*

The rest of the attendees, people who lived in the same quaint town with her grandmother, sat or stood under the tent out of the harsh rays. No one spoke as the preacher continued, wiping the sweat from his forehead as he told stories of her grandmother Olive's wit, charm, and undying loyalty. No one needed to. The words *liar, crazy old bat, witch, old hag*, and other unsavory names were like a dam about to overflow. They were at the edge of people's tongues, held back only by tightly pressed together lips. People called it small-town polite, whatever the hell that meant.

Grandma Olive had spent the last ten years of her life as a recluse with the exception of the tourists to keep the halls of her plantation style house filled with some vivacity. Police found her sitting at her desk, poring over old photographs and letters during a lull period where guests had left, and new visitors were coming to stay but couldn't contact her. She was seventy-nine.

She was seventy-six the last time I saw her. She was quiet during our visit, listening to Mom and I tell stories of home. That was right before she began to spout on about how death and ghosts walk among us and how Grandpa Jaune was still alive. That went on for nearly three years, Ruby thought, shaking her head.

The preacher's words faded out of focus, changing into a drone similar to the parents on the *Peanuts* show. The ever identifiable "wah

wah” sound filled Ruby’s head as she turned away slightly to look at Iris, her mother. Iris spared a glance at Ruby, her eyes watery but attentive to the look on her daughter’s face, and took her hand as the preacher wrapped up his piece. Ruby squeezed her mother’s hand in return and rested her head on her shoulder when tears made delicate trails down Iris’s cheeks. The rest of the attendees all bowed their heads as the preacher led a prayer, Ruby shifted her gaze to the coffin.

May you find your way to Grandpa and peace, she thought, nodding at the coffin.

Ruby never considered herself religious and knew Grandma Olive was the same way so she squinted her eyes in half solidarity with both views. The world blurred under her eyelashes as she glanced around, careful to contain her movements to avoid reprimand.

A flash of silver streaked across Ruby’s eyes.

Startled, her body seized, going tense. Her mother shifted her shoulder, and Ruby turned to find the origin of the streak. She peered around with squinted eyes, the blurry shapes she saw in the distance stilled her. Under the expanse of the cemetery’s weeping willow’s autumnal leaves stood seven cloaked figures, unfazed by the heat from the early October sun. A chill seeped through Ruby’s body, and she opened her eyes fully.

What the hell? she thought.

The hood of the cloaks shadowed their faces, so she couldn’t discern any identifiable features on their faces. The black fabric was bulky enough to engulf any body type. The only difference between the seven was height. The outer two were the tallest and going inwards the figures grew shorter except the tall middle figure. All of them stood straight and still like statues. Staring and watching the funeral proceedings.

Then the middle figure reached up and pulled their hood back.

Ruby’s breath caught in her throat and her mother squeezed her hand, probably under the impression she was getting upset. The bottom half of the figure’s face was exposed, revealing a sharp jaw, but nothing particularly masculine or feminine. A smirk stretched across the figure’s lips as they shifted to one side, their cloak slipping away from their body.

A silver scythe rested against the figure’s hip, blade shimmering

from the glare of the sun. The figure laid a hand on the blade, stroking the surface with their thumb. *Holy shit, that's real*, Ruby thought, *Why the hell do they have a scythe?*

The hairs on the back of Ruby's neck stood up as she stared down seven personifications of death. Goosebumps rose on her arms and she squeezed her mother's hand again.

"Hon? You okay?"

Her mother's voice broke through her concentration. Ruby flinched, whipping her head to her mother who eyed her with concern. The preacher had finished praying and multiple sets of eyes rested on Ruby. They brimmed with false concern and Ruby could practically hear *oh, bless her heart* ready at their lips. "Oh, the poor girl," was whispered in the crowd.

Ruby ground her teeth together, sending a glare at anyone who met her eyes.

"What? Do you want a picture? If you don't have anything better to do then leave," Iris barked, taking the words right out of Ruby's mouth.

Iris placed a hand on her back, rubbing circles of comfort. When Ruby looked at her, she only raised an eyebrow in question.

"Yeah... Yeah, I'm okay, Mom," Ruby said, her mouth dry. Yeah, totally fine. Other than, you know, the figures and the scythe.

She licked her lips as she pushed herself up from the rickety wooden chair.

Her mother rose with her, and Ruby released her grip on her hand. "Can we just go, please?" Ruby asked.

"Sure," Iris replied, lightly placing a hand on Ruby's arm as they began walking to the car.

Ruby headed towards the passenger door as all the attendees filed into their cars and began to drive away. As she put her hand on the handle, Ruby glanced back at Grandma Olive's casket.

The seven figures surrounded the casket, cloaks pushed back to reveal seven glinting scythes aimed at her grandmother. Ruby let out a shaky breath.

In unison, the figures turned their gazes to her. She stared down death once more before slumping into the car.

Ruby felt the seven's eyes on her even as her mother drove away.

The Matchmaking Tree

Caroline Hoy

Why would people do this to me? What did I do to them? All except this one man. I have known him his whole life, 34 years to be exact. I live in a park in a huge field. All these little children with their grubby little hands, tear off my leaves and scratch me until my sap bleeds. They put this tire on me, then they swing on it. I am 300 years old and they dare do this to me!

Today is Sunday, Bill will come today. Bill treats me nice. He saved me from the kids when he was younger, but unfortunately, he can't come see me as much now that he is an adult. Only on Sundays does he come to talk to me. He is currently working as a lawyer, whatever that means, at a big company on the other side of the park. He told me that he would try to come see me more often, but he had a busy schedule.

I see Bill walking up in his fancy black suit with his briefcase. "Hello, Mr. Oak Tree."

"Hello Bill, I missed you! You won't believe what the little kids did to me this time."

"I'm sorry Mr. Oak Tree. I'm doing everything I can..."

"What's happening, Bill?" He doesn't reply. "Bill?"

"Mr. Oak Tree they want to chop you down to build a parking lot." This just makes me hate people even more. Bill is the only one who likes me! I can only trust him. He's so much like her, but she's been gone for so long...

"I was able to get in contact with an environmental scientist who is willing to come out and try to help. I wish you could just tell him why you're so special.

"But I can tell them, Bill!"

"Well, I have to go, Mr. Oak Tree. I'll see you tomorrow."

With that Bill leaves me. About five minutes after he leaves me the grubby little gremlins come. It's the usual three little demons: Gabby, Jacob, and Dave. I wish Beverly was still here. Way back long ago, probably a time Bill doesn't remember anymore, Beverly was Bill's best friend. They would come every day to save me from the leaf pullers. The bullies at school were mean to Beverly, and it ended out spreading to Bill. He couldn't take it anymore. They stopped being

friends that fateful day. Bill stopped coming to see me as much, and Beverly just stopped altogether. The rest of the day I had to deal with the demons.

The next morning, I see a woman approach me. She is stunning, standing tall with platinum blond hair and thick purple glasses. She brushes her petite hand on me. I know her right away; it's Beverly! I then see Bill walking up.

"Nice to meet you, must be the scientist who was willing to help me save my best friend here."

"Your best friend is a tree?"

"Mr. Oak Tree is amazing! He is the best best friend I could ask for."

"Why is that?"

"I once had another best friend. The two of us were inseparable and we protected this tree, but in school my friend had bullies and I, well, I was weaker as a young kid. From then on, I made sure to not lose my other best friend."

Beverly smirked and said, "I see. Anyway, shall we discuss this more at your office? I've gathered all the information I need from here." The two of them left together. As soon as they leave the gremlins come. They start to pull my leaves until my sap bleeds.

About one hour later Bill and Beverly come back. They shoo the gremlins away. Beverly pulls off one of my leaves and puts it in a plastic bag. "Sorry Mr. Oak Tree, but I need this sample for the lab. That's all I need. Bye Bill, see you tonight."

"Bye Beverly." After Beverly leaves Bill lets out a lovesick sigh, and hugs me

After that reunion, Bill and Beverly put up a sign on me. Apparently, I'm a type of tree that is endangered, whatever that means. The two then lived happily ever after. I was happy for them, but the gremlins still came for me. So they didn't all live happily ever after.

“I’m Not”

Carmen Boone

This mountain road is curvy, winding around the mountain like a merry go round. It makes my stomach uneasy, like something will jump out in our path and we will collide with it, and plummet off the mountain to our death. I know what my last thought will b-

“Anna, I know what you’re thinking. When are you going to admit this to yourself,” says Taylor. “There is nothing to admit,” I say back. “I’m allowed to have a casual conversation with someone without it turning into something.”

Taylor looks at me, “You call that a conversation? That was the definition of flirting Anna. And that, what you just said to me, that’s called denial.” Taylor turns down a road.

“What are you doing? Where are you going? This isn’t the way to my house,” I say.

“I know,” says Taylor. “This is the way to my sanctuary.

It’s a lake. It’s beautiful, like the kind of thing you see in movies. Taylor parks the car and says, “Come on, let’s go for a walk. Let’s face your fears.” We walk about half a mile before saying anything.

Taylor stops me and looks at me. “Why does this scare you so much? What are you afraid of? We have been friends since we were kids.” I look out over the water. It sparkles like stars. The reflection of the moon catches my eyes and we stare back at one another for a moment. I look back to Taylor. Those brown eyes like a chocolate cupcake, that wavy hair that rolls like the ocean, those lips and the smile they form.

“Yes, I’m scared,” I say. “I’m scared of this feeling. I’ve never felt this before and never would I have dreamed I’d feel it about yo-”

“So we kissed!” says Taylor. “Why is it such a big deal?”

I throw my arms in the air and say, “because I’m not a lesbian!”

The Letters

Alexis Henley

Lyra Finch- LOG #495

I remember standing in line at Party City holding onto my neon pink “Sweet 16” balloon with one hand, inhaling the rubber smell that lingered in the store like a guy who put on too much cologne that morning. It was summer. I wore these olive green shorts with tiny white and yellow daisies with sewn shut back pockets. Do you remember the time where girls never had adequate pocket space? It seems so far away, like a dream clouded with uncertainty. I’d give anything for my biggest annoyance to be crappy pockets again.

As Mom and I stood in front of the cashier, the world as we knew it died.

My phone began to ping like crazy, the vibrations allowing it to wiggle out of my front pocket and crash into the floor. When I grabbed it I noticed the frantic texts written in all caps, and I had just turned to my mom when the power went out.

I learned later that power went out citywide. Portland was a dark blip on the map.

I still don’t know what caused those monsters to rise. All I know is that when you get close enough to one of them that’s starting to turn, the red seeps into their irises and maneuvers like roots of a tree burrowing in the ground. Maybe that serum only awakened something deep within us. Maybe we need to be cut off at the roots.

I’m never going to leave Portland like I planned. My bones will be laid to rest in soil that’s been drenched in the blood of humans and monsters since the day Mom and I fled into the parking lot and I drove away with remnants of neon pink rubber tied to a string.

Adrienne smoothed out the creases of the faded lined notebook paper with her thumb. In the light of the setting sun, she could barely make out the words of the lieutenant’s last log.

She’d been radio silent for days and Adrienne was assigned to check her tower. It was an old fire watchtower, just like the rest of the team’s, which were re-purposed after the world went to hell. Lyra had nothing other than her official supplies and her required logbooks.

Thirteen years. Thirteen damn years, Adrienne thought, folding the

piece of paper and shoving it into her vest pocket. *Where the hell did you go, L?*

The radio on Adrienne's hip let out a high pitched squeal. She brought the radio up to her mouth and clicked the receiver. "What's up?"

"Just got word we got a new recruit flying in tomorrow. How's cleanup duty?" Eris asked, her voice glitching through the static.

"No personal items. Her weapon and radio are missing. I'm heading back to my tower."

"What does her last log say?" Genevieve's voice filtered into the communication line.

"Bet you ten bucks she went after that horde," Nicoletta chimed in.

The plastic case over Adrienne's radio crackled as her grip tightened. She gritted her teeth as she stepped out of the cabin onto the balcony. Peering over the tips of the trees, she shielded her eyes against the orange and pink hues and squinted to look at the gray concrete wall surrounding what remained of Portland. From the vantage point of the fire watchtower Adrienne managed to make out the closed southeast gate and a crowd of small figures corralled around it, eager to get in.

"Knock it off, Nic. And Lieutenant, get back to your tower safe," Indigo said over the radio.

"Will do. You guys get ready to wind down. We start rounds when the sun comes up." Adrienne released the receiver button and placed the radio back on her belt.

The new chain of command weighed heavy on Adrienne's shoulders. She took a step towards the trapdoor when something crinkled under her boot heel.

Looking down at her feet, Adrienne noticed the white corner of a piece of paper poking out from Lyra's so-called "welcome" mat made out of sewn together leaves and boredom. She stepped off of the mat and plucked the piece of paper up. At the top the letter read "*Dear New Recruit.*"

The seed of dread that found its way into Adrienne's stomach the second Lyra went radio silent bloomed. Up until now she had fought it off, held just a glimmer of foolish hope. The hope dwindled but despite this, she read on.

Welcome to Portland Watchtower Five. It's where I've lived for thirteen years. Made it cozy, and I hope you appreciate the attempt.

Chiaroscuro

Watchtowers typically never have the same occupant for as long as these wooden walls held me, but watchtowers also create survivors. When you're out there in the woods with nothing but a radio to keep you connected to your team, and yet you know that they're too far away to do anything when it truly counts... well, it makes you independent. Never leave your tower without your gear. Pack your bag the night before so when you wake up so goddamn early, because the sun never works with your schedule, you won't forget anything. Never go anywhere without reporting it. You don't know this area. It will swallow you alive if you let it. The mines are a siren's call. Don't listen. Never forget to charge your radio even when you're tired of the others' voices. Nic makes badly timed jokes, Gen is a mother hen, Indigo goes quiet often and you think she's dead, Eris is just a pain in the ass, Quinn is creepy smart and can get under your skin with her comments, and Adrienne tries too hard because she believes we'll beat these things somehow. You've joined a hell of a squad. They thought the best of me. Tell them I'm sorry. I was tired.

Lyra

In the distance, a black flare shot into the sky and screams echoed in the forest. Adrienne let out a strangled breath. *I'm not ready*, she thought. *I'm not ready*.

Call It What You Will

Kenny Cheek

A soft hand rested on his shoulder and pushed him against the wall. Light and chapped lips hungrily feed against his own. Her smell was sweet, and reminded him of a gentle room filled with patrons eating to their heart's content, swigging glasses of delicious sins, chattering around the bar, and hitting balls around on the pool table. She was nothing if not a memory for him, and yet he was prepared to lose himself again in her wonderful feelings to help him forget the past one more time.

It was the last time. Just like the time before that. And the time before that. However, this would be the last time, he swore in his mind. Nothing had ever captured him like she had. She was a tall glass of water with a poison planted deep in that silver voice, and a swing in her hips that would make a flapper jealous. Her hair was smooth as silk, and her words were little and vast, but they always provided him with the excuses he needed. To escape his reality for a moment and to keep her around him for an eternity. Her hands wrapped against his tie and loosened it, dark chocolate sparkles staring back into his own drunken state. He felt a burp escape his mouth softly as he started to play along with her wants.

That morning had been nothing to him. His wife was yelling and moaning about bills; bills he thought he had paid at some point, but apparently had not. He was a forgetful man, but sometimes that helped him to remember things he needed more. He often forgot how depressing work could be, but that helped him remember he got to see her every other night. He often forgot that his wife was there for him if ever he needed help. He forgot his wife in order to remember her. That gorgeous and delicious woman.

He knew his wife knew about her. It wasn't hard to tell he wasn't a faithful man. A little mark on his neck at the end of an "overtime shift." The smell she left coated on his clothes. Sometimes she even had a way of switching the way he spoke. He was more confident and collected around her. She brought out that side he loved to remember, even if he often forgot it after she left. His bank account was a little less than dry after a night with her, and he knew his wife could check it. Some here

at a bar, some there at a motel. Sometimes he would need to get away from town in order to enjoy his time with her. He was sure his wife knew, but maybe she simply did not care.

She was able to drag him out of his thoughts about his wife, pressing her burning hot lips against his one more time and pushed him to the floor. He stumbled, earning a swishing laugh from her. That laugh brought blood to his face and embarrassed him when he thought about how his father would see him. Then again, alcoholism did run in his family. He grew up seeing her around his father, and maybe that was why he loved her so much.

His father would love her, kiss her, forget his mother sometimes, and waste away his time and life . She had one hand in his and her other wrapped around his wallet. His father was never a faithful man. Maybe that ran in the family too. Watching his father with her for most of his childhood made him love her too. He loved her more than he did his job. He loved her more than he did his wife. To an extent, he loved her more than he did his life.

As she laid next to him, her dark brown hair spilling over the floorboards, he chuckled. His father had died with her right by his side too. She kissed his lips one more time, sucking that little bit of life right out of him. Maybe he could see her again tomorrow, if he woke up on time. If he woke up at all.

She drifted from his vision. The world around him was a haze. His limbs grew heavy. He realized how hard it was to raise his chest and suck in that sweet oxygen. Maybe she would be enough for him. One more kiss, he told himself, and took it the moment he thought it. It was the last time.

His wife found him lifeless on the floorboard the next morning, clinging to the all too familiar bottle that he seemed to have glued to his hand. His shirt was stained in the alcohol, and his hair was matted against the ground. His wife knew alcoholism ran in his family, and maybe she had hoped that this would happen. He was always away with the drink. A couple hundred at one bar, and less room in the fridge to make way for his six-pack. She could almost swear he loved the bottle more than he loved her. She knew that he would never listen to her if she ever warned him about it, and time and time again she proved herself right. Call it what you will, but at least he kept his last promise he had made to her; it was certainly the last time.



THEATRE

Photo courtesy of [Kyle Head](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Kuchisake-Onna - Freed

Ian Hueston

CHARACTERS

KUCHISAKE-ONNA: A gorgeous Japanese woman with long black hair. She wears a stylish, high fashion outfit which is disrupted by a white surgical mask covering her mouth and nose.

MAN: A 28-year-old Japanese man. He is transgender, and transitioned after graduating college.

TIME

Present day, roughly midnight, an eerie fall evening.

PLACE

A park bench in Nagasaki, Japan. There is a streetlight and a public trashcan nearby. The trees have all turned red and orange, and dead leaves litter the ground. The wind blows ominously around them.

Casting

Both Kuchisake and MAN should be cast as Japanese actors if possible. If casting options are too limited, they may be cast as actors from other parts of Asia that look similar enough to Japanese. If no Asian actors can be cast, the play may not be produced. MAN's actor should be a trans or otherwise non-binary man. If casting options are too limited, he may be portrayed by a cisgender man. This play may not be produced with a cisgender woman playing MAN.

Theatre

(Lights up on set. KUCHISAKE-ONNA is sitting on the park bench alone, waiting for something or someone. The wind around her. Something about her feels off somehow, but it's impossible to put a finger on what it is.)

(MAN enters stage right, holding a bag of fast food and disposable cup-carrier with two soft drinks.)

(The two speak in English on stage for the sake of the audience, but are presumed to be speaking Japanese to one another.)

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

You came back.

MAN

Of course.

(He takes a seat next to her on the bench at a friendly but respectful distance.)

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

Asking to sit and talk about it isn't an answer I normally get to my question. I thought you were making a break for it when you went for food.

MAN

I'd be lying if I said it hadn't crossed my mind. I think you need this talk, though.

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

We'll see.

MAN

(He reaches into his bag of fast food and pulls out two burgers and some fries. He holds out a burger for her.)

Chiaroscuro

I didn't know what you liked.

(She holds up a hand politely to decline. He places the food and drinks on the bench between them to indicate that she can have them at any time if she chooses. He takes a bite of his burger and eats in silence for a moment. He grazes on the meal as the play progresses.)

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

You still haven't answered my question.

MAN

It's a complicated question to ask.

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

Most people just say yes or no.

MAN

Have you ever been satisfied with either of those?

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

No.

MAN

Has anyone who's answered that way been satisfied with their answer?

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

I think you already know the answer to that one.

MAN

I do.

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

You know how this works, then. You have to answer it.

(She pauses expectantly.)

Am I pretty?

MAN

(He inhales deeply and sighs, preparing himself for the conversation.)

Well first we've got to define beauty, that's the first hurdle. It's always shifting, always changing. What was beautiful in Japan a thousand years ago? What about a hundred, two hundred years ago? Even in the past couple decades, what people think is beautiful is never the same. And that's just this city and this country. Beauty is different all over the world. Different body shapes, facial shapes, makeup and hair, clothes, there's so many variables to it, and so much of it is totally arbitrary. As a group we decide that, say, a small nose is beautiful. No reason. It doesn't do anything for us, it just is. And in a few years that might change and all the small-nosed women are suddenly ugly even though they haven't changed.

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

You still know the answer, though.

MAN

So do you.

(She nods.)

So why do you ask?

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

You talk about beauty like it's some hypothetical, mystical thing that's

KUCHISAKE-ONNA (CONT)

impossible to capture, but it's not. It's real, and concrete. It has consequences. Women are constantly being rewarded or punished for their looks in some way or another. It's the difference between getting hired or not, whether people listen to us, whether we're valued. It matters, and there's no way around that.

MAN

(He nods solemnly.)

Do you think there's a solution?

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

I used to think, maybe if everyone looked the same there would be no judgment. I'm not sure anymore. I think it's human nature to seek out any difference, no matter how small, and categorize it as other. I don't think there's a way to stop it.

MAN

You feel trapped.

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

I am trapped!

MAN

You don't have to be.

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

Who's going to stop people from treating me and any other woman differently because of our looks? You? Look at me, look me in the eyes and tell me that you will be there every time a girl is overlooked because she doesn't have the brightest eyes or the silkiest hair. Every little moment when she's not given the same enthusiastic hospitality

KUCHISAKE-ONNA (CONT)

someone prettier would have gotten. You can't do that. Not even I can do that. It's unavoidable.

MAN

That doesn't mean you have to be ruled by it.

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

(She snaps at him.)

What do you know about it?! You're a man! Men are celebrated no matter what they look like. Do you know who looks better with makeup on? Everyone! You don't think a man would look better with a cheekbone that could cut through glass, or perfectly trimmed brows? But it's only women who are expected to spend hours on how they look every morning. Only women see themselves in shaving commercials running a razor over already waxed skin, or pretending to wash a bare face that's fully caked in makeup. You can try to understand all you want, but You. Just. Can't.

(There is a long and tense pause. They stare at each other. After some time, KUCHISAKE-ONNA produces an enormous pair of rusted scissors, like fabric shears, seemingly out of nowhere. The parts that aren't rusted are still gleaming silver. She holds it up to him.)

“Am I pretty?” I ask someone that every few months or so. I keep it random, sporadic. And it's always one answer or the other. Some people will try to say, “You're average,” or something neutral to try to trick me but I always get my answer.

(She gets closer to him as she talks. The shears are getting closer as well.)

“No,” someone might say. Do you know what I do? I cut them in half. It takes more than one cut, you know.

Chiaroscuro

(She illustrates, opening the shears and gets them uncomfortably close to MAN'S stomach, snapping them shut with a loud clack.)

KUCHISAKE-ONNA (CONT)

I start at the belly button and carve deeper in with each cut. They're awake the whole time, of course, until the last chop. The spinal cord, that's the last to go.

(She lets him soak in her words, stew in his unease. MAN is terrified, but does not flinch.)

“Yes,” someone might say. You already know what I do to them, don't you?

(She removes her surgical mask, revealing a sickly Glasgow smile. The corners of her mouth have been slit upwards, giving her a permanent and grotesque grin.)

I make them look like me. Kuchisake-Onna- Slit-Mouth Woman. I've been around a long time, you know. I've been doing this longer than you've been alive. And it always, always ends one of two ways. No exceptions. So tell me. Am I pretty?

MAN

(He takes a shaky breath and gulps from his soft drink. He pauses a moment before speaking again.)

Can I tell you a story?

(KUCHISAKE-ONNA says nothing.)

When I was a little kid, everyone wanted me to look and act one way. They all told me I was a little girl, and I believed them. That's what the doctor said when I was delivered. I believed what they told me little girls were supposed to do, how to act. When I was about sixteen I started to realize something wasn't right about what they told me. It wasn't until college when I finally realized I wasn't a girl. I never was. It

MAN (CONT).

took me even longer until I started telling people. When I did, they gave me a lot of different answers. Some congratulated me, some laughed, some tried to “fix” me. My boss, at the time, he told me that I still had to wear skirts and makeup to work, told me I couldn't cut my hair. But I did cut my hair, I wore what I wanted. I presented myself as who I was. And he fired me.

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

What did you do?

MAN

I burned his house to the ground and framed him for insurance fraud.

(KUCHISAKE-ONNA smiles.)

There will always be people who want to treat you differently because of who you are or how you look. Nobody can change that. You have to choose to live the way you want in spite of them.

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

And if they treat you like garbage anyway?

MAN

I trust you to think of something in that scenario.

(They smile with one another. They understand each other. KUCHISAKE-ONNA stands and takes her surgical mask to the garbage can. She throws it away. She grabs her burger and drink from the bench and starts to walk away, taking a bite, then stops.)

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

Pickles. I like pickles on my burger.

Chiaroscuro

MAN

Next time?

KUCHISAKE-ONNA

Next time.

(She exits stage left. Lights fade on MAN.)

(End of Play)

‘Nam Keeps Rat From Entering The Church

Sarah Hajkowski

This is an excerpt from a longer play currently in the works. The play, as yet untitled, follows the lives and loves of a young woman calling herself Astral Weeks in the tumultuous period of change which was the late, sometimes psychedelic, 1960s. The scene excerpted below transpires when Astral and her recent friend, calling himself ‘Rat,’ have been on the road bound for Chicago, IL and wind up attending the wedding of one of Astral’s friends in her hometown. Upon arrival, Rat utterly refuses to enter the church, bidding her go in alone and offering no explanation beside the name of the current president, Lyndon B. Johnson.

RAT

Fine, we’ll just sit here. You’re the fool.

We’ll just sit here in silence.

ASTRAL

I don’t care.

RAT

(after a moment)

Astral, you’ve got nothing to gain by sitting here with me. All you’re going to get from me, I’ve already given you. Now on the other hand, there is the oft-mentioned wedding of the century (so far as you’d see it happening just inside those doors, at this precise moment. And if you don’t choose right, you’re going to miss it.

ASTRAL

I don’t care. I’d rather be here. Blame Lyndon B. Johnson.

RAT

Oh, that’s very clever. You’d rather be here, blame the prez, for what exactly?

(ASTRAL shrugs)

Fine. Okay. Be here, then.

ASTRAL

I am.

Chiaroscuro

RAT

You won't go back inside for anything? Even if I promise you we'll stay here a week? Two?

ASTRAL

I'm staying with you.

RAT

This is ridiculous. We make the stop in New Rochelle specifically to get you here, to get to this moment, and you won't even see it. You won't even go in the goddamned door, all because the goddamned church may have some kind of a curse for me.

ASTRAL

A curse for you.

RAT

Yeah, well buy a clue, girlie: think for yourself.

ASTRAL

That's not what I'm doing? You sure didn't want me to stay out here and I am anyway. Think for mys— where are you going?

RAT

Well-pump around back. I assume there is one?

ASTRAL

There is one. But—

(He turns sharply around and disappears around the misty facade upstage, the sound effects of RAT pumping water and drinking it from his hands project thereof. Then in a moment, muffled weeping. ASTRAL tentatively ventures upstage after him, obscured but not completely disappeared herself in the mist. We can see her outline, and hear her.)

ASTRAL

Oh, Rat, you're crying— oh...Come here.

RAT

(broken)

No.

ASTRAL

Rat, come here to me.

RAT

I can't...I don't want to.

ASTRAL

Is that all? And here I was afraid you couldn't. You don't want to, that's not such a big deal. You can overcome that, easily.

RAT

I can't, Astral.

ASTRAL

Rat, come to me. Come here. It's okay.

(He moves the littlest bit toward her, we see her step toward him.)

RAT

Goddammit. God—god damn it!

ASTRAL

Shh, shh it's okay. Hey—

(More projected sound, ASTRAL and RAT finally reach each other, she doing most of the legwork, and Astral tries to pull him into her arms. He resists, sniffing and speaking indistinctly. She tries again, this time the sound of her clothes crushing against his, his muffled complaint covered in the softness of her shoulder.)

RAT

(tremulous and strange, somewhere far away)

I'm so scared. Was so scared, scared, scared I was—

ASTRAL

Chiaroscuro

Mhm, it's okay. Hey, it's okay.

RAT

Where's Denny?

ASTRAL
(gently, mothering)

Hmm?

RAT

My brother, Denny. He's— where is he? Why can't I—

(subsides to a gasp, then choking tears again)

Oh, Fuck!

ASTRAL

Alright. It's okay, just let it out of you. Let it out.

RAT

Fuck if I didn't love him, goddamn if I didn't—

ASTRAL

Rat, easy okay? Go easy, come on and rock with me, here.

(Slowly, she leads his half ghostly self out of the mist.)

RAT

It's not worth it.

ASTRAL

What? Don't, shhh.

RAT

I mean it. It was never worth it, any of it. I wanted...shit (holds for his emotions to check themselves) I wanted to get to Chicago, get all those places, and I'm nearly there and no wonder you should stop me. Here I was hoping against no hope it wouldn't be for naught, I mean that it would mean something, anything. It's going to mean nothing anyway, and what did I expect when I am nothing, just, nothing...

ASTRAL

Rat.

RAT

It's true. You saddle yourself with a sad bastard, following me. I don't know if I would want to if I was you, honey. After all, you don't know what I did, what I did was...awful.

ASTRAL

I'm sure that's not true.

RAT

Oh, but it is.

ASTRAL

Rat, you're a good man.

RAT

You haven't met enough men.

ASTRAL

You're a good person.

RAT

How can you say that? You can't say that, you don't even know the truth to me, such a bright young thing you are and you don't know me from—

ASTRAL

I know you enough at least to know whatever it is you've done, you must have had a reason.

RAT

Nope. No reason.

(Sharp inhale, almost 'heh')

I killed my only brother.

Chiaroscuro

Or technically I got him killed, anyway it doesn't matter, every trigger on a gun I've seen since I see myself behind. It doesn't make a difference.

(ASTRAL puts her arms about his neck, he may not realize this or the tears streaming coldly down his cheeks. He may not feel himself shaking.)

That's what I am, I have been since we got that telegram and since I tore up my GD draft card. Fuck me, Astral, that's what I am, is a child-murderer. Night we got the telegram...clicking I was, clicking away at my keys, on the typewriter I was...

(Voice dropping lower)

The night Denny died. The night LBJ and the rest of them with my family knew he was dead, I'd just gone the other day to the rally and torn up my damn draft card. A rat, a rat—you know how I always knew I was one? The goddamn typewriter told it to me. That thing, I'm clicking away, tapping away and the fucker throws three keys. Threw an 'R,' an 'A,' and a 'T.' The truth machine told me what I was, I didn't need a second opinion. Rat, rat, rat. God pointed right at me then. 'Cause I ducked my responsibility, sure I did...I killed my brother, I'm a rat and my brother had to die for me, my own...

(He dissolves into more muffled anguish behind his hands, ASTRAL strokes his hair, his back.)

ASTRAL

You didn't kill Denny. That's his name?

RAT

It was.

ASTRAL

No, it still is. Don't you see that? He's still Denny whether he's right here or up there, or anywhere. He still... He's in you. He'd be proud of you, I'm sure.

(RAT grunts, skeptical.)

I'm proud of you. I know he and I would agree on that and I never even met him. Denny loved you, he knew how you loved him, and anything you did had no effect whatever on what happened to him. You love him, Rat, you carry him with you. And you let him live that way.

You say you and I barely know each other. I know different. And you

should know different. I'm not going to hear you say you're nothing, that you mean nothing or that all you do means nothing. It means...a lot. Maybe I shouldn't have stopped you on the way to Chicago, we're almost there and that means almost to the finish line where we get started on the something that's way beyond us, I know you can see it as well as I can, you're just unsure. You can keep telling me I'm all the things you aren't, that I don't understand or that you're not up to it, but I know you see the future like I do. And you want to go to Chicago, go anywhere you can to start your amazing work.

Tell me I'm naive, tell me I don't understand. I know that's what you're going to do. I've seen your...your determination, for one thing, firsthand. I don't know where I could find you any better proof of the difference you make and the importance you have. Do you know how important you are to me? You've changed me. You can talk all day about your reasons and all the logical reasons you shouldn't get the credit for that kind of influence on me. But you have changed me. I know so much more what I want and what I'm going to do, where I'm going to go and how I'm going to get there—all because of you. I love you, Rat. I do. You and me, you can say all you want how different we are, but I told you, I can tell, I could tell from the beginning that we're alike. That you want to fight for it. For Denny, for a million other things, you want to believe in the revolution we keep talking about, and so do I. And it only starts with Chicago.

RAT

'S good a place as any.

(She nods. They walk together out of the mist.)



NONFICTION

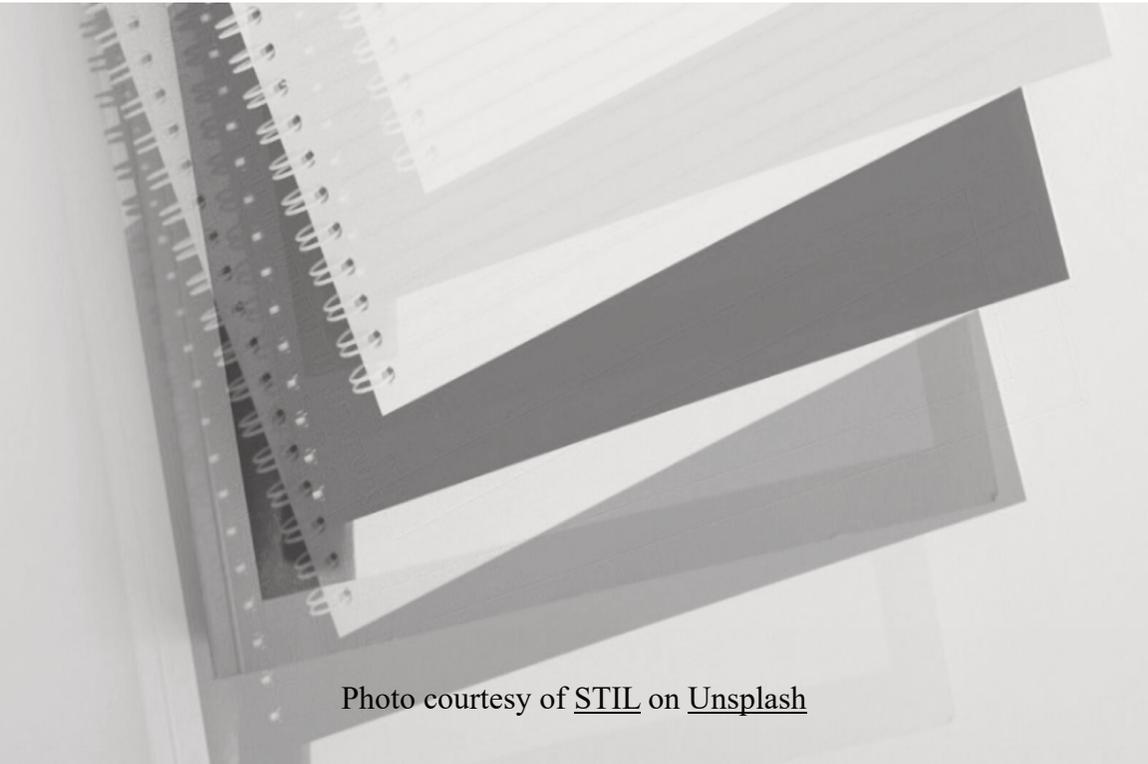


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i close my eyes and dream of surgery

Ace Clevenger

Mt. St. Helens erupted on May 18th, 1980, at approximately 8:32 AM. The blast killed over 50 people and caused countless amounts of property damage.

You think about her a lot.

You wonder what it's like, to explode like that, when the surface not just cracks but crumbles. Maybe that's a metaphor, and you need to take a closer look at what's lying in wait under your skin. Then again, maybe it's literal, and you should have paid more attention in Geology class two years ago. Neither interpretation will let you sleep tonight. You fall back onto pillows or rocks and wonder what it's like to be irreparable.

How does that make you feel? asks the white lab coat in front of you.

It makes me feel bad, you say automatically, twelve years old and new to lying. *The things I said made other people feel hurt, and that makes me feel bad.*

How does that make you feel? the white lab coat asks again. *And please tell the truth this time.*

I don't know, you say. *I don't know how I feel.*

The white lab coat writes something down. Thirty-two years ago, the mountain explodes.

Let me ask you this, he says. *If you could live that moment over again, what would you change?*

You don't even hesitate.

Not a damn thing.

Mt. St. Helens erupted on May 18th, 1980, at approximately 8:32 AM. The blast killed over 50 people and caused countless amounts of property damage.

God, it must have been beautiful.

When pressed, you define art as a combination of intention and impact. It keeps the definition limited, at least a little bit. Otherwise, the whole world becomes art, and you shudder at the sheer number of visual analysis essays to be written if that's the case.

Think past definitions for once in your life.

Is death art?

Of course, you say, fifteen and hollow-eyed and burning in her magma from twenty-two hundred miles away.

Of course not, you snap, twenty and hungry with a dissertation on the subject at your fingertips. *Of course not. Of course not. Death is just a process. No intention. No theorica. No analysis waiting to be written. Just impact; just meaningless, meaningless impact.*

Nothing's ever art. Not really.

Of course, you whisper, fifteen, full of death and intention and utterly impossible to convince. Thirty-five years ago, the mountain exploded. You reach towards what you think is west. Neither the mountain nor the moonlight reach back.

You die; a work of art.

Of course.

Mt. St. Helens erupted on May 18th, 1980, at approximately 8:32 AM. The blast killed over 50 people and caused countless amounts of property damage.

They always did call her beautiful. Symmetrical. Beautiful. Maybe she misses that.

She was a glorious mountain. Symmetrical. Beautiful. Symmetrical. It must have come out of the blue the day she blew, when she stopped shaving down her angles and legs to the symmetry that mothers and grandmothers and high school boyfriends demand.

Who decided to call symmetry beautiful, anyway?

How does that make you feel? asks the white lab coat.

You pull yourself upright, mascara outlining sleeplessness. *How is it supposed to make me feel?*

The white lab coat smiles and tries to explain to you that emotions aren't prescribed like pills. You don't buy it. Thirty-six years ago, the mountain explodes. You explain the five stages of grief in agonizing detail. The white lab coat is kind enough not to remind you that he has a degree in psychology.

He repeats the question.

You respond the same way.

The circle keeps spinning. It goes nowhere.

Someday you will be crooked and overlooked. When the lights are out, you long for that day. You decide that, like the mountain, you will grow flowers from the ashes of your shape.

Mt. St. Helens erupted on May 18th, 1980, at approximately 8:32 AM. The blast killed over 50 people and caused countless amounts of property damage.

It was all her fault. Blood on her hands, smoke in her eyes. Over fifty people, dead, gone, hopes and dreams and all, because of her.

It was all their fault. Humans can move, evacuate, run for their lives. Mountains can't stop erupting. Over fifty people, and each of them to blame.

Your seventh grade social studies teacher made the whole class repeat, over and over, the words "my rights end where someone else's begin." At twelve, you understood perfectly. At twenty, you don't understand a damn thing.

It's such a nebulous space, and so full of smoke. Where do you end? Where does the rest of the world begin? Did over fifty people have fewer rights than the lava and ash? Would you?

Nonfiction

You tuck into yourself, sharp and wary. You stay away from the blurred edge of you and other. You lean back onto bricks or rocks, you reach towards what you think is west, and you wonder what it felt like to burn in her wake.

You stop the bleeding and draw a line around what little you know is only you. Thirty-eight years ago, the mountain explodes. You weep for those the line touched. You're far too vain to admit you weep for yourself.

Mt. St. Helens erupted on May 18th, 1980, at approximately 8:32 AM. The blast killed over 50 people and caused countless amounts of property damage.

And you?

Maybe you'll explode, too. Maybe you won't.

Good for you. Both of you.

You step across flowers and rocks. You walk towards what you think is west, towards this new shape, unfamiliar, lovely. Smoke billows out of your lungs. You are burning. You are shaking. You are new. You are viciously, viciously alive.

Forty years ago, the mountain explodes.

How does that make you feel? asks the white lab coat.

Christmas: Jesus is the Reason for the Season

Grace Kelley

I daren't say this without being deemed a heretic or spreading blasphemy, but I disagree with this statement. To say that Christmas is just a big birthday is a disservice to the message of hope that the birth of Jesus brings. Often I find myself focusing on the miracle of birth, yet glossing over the messages that lie within. Hope, joy, and faith are keywords that are mentioned around this time. I rarely reflect on them and their true meaning. Both Mary and Joseph stepped out on faith. What would have happened if Mary had said, "no thanks" to the angel? What would have happened if Joseph did not have faith and trust in the message of the angel telling him to believe Mary? Have you considered that before?

There was great joy when Jesus was born and mass parties in the streets. Oh, wait, that didn't happen. What is the difference between happiness and joy? Often I am happy and full of laughter but joy is overwhelming, consuming, and contagious. Personally, as of this year, I strive to no longer say the phrase, "Jesus is the reason for the season." I prefer to focus on if my actions reflect that with hope, joy, and faith, or if they are founded elsewhere.

How often do you feel the need to say out loud and to every single person you come in contact with that Jesus is the reason you woke up and got out of bed this morning? Do you say, "Jesus is the reason for the season" and truly believe that in every fiber of your being? Do you say that because you feel like that is what you're supposed to say? This Christmas, instead of saying, "Jesus is the reason for the season," I will instead focus on the message of my actions. If my actions are not those that show and/or portray and/or spread hope, joy, and faith, then I do not feel as if I have truly understood and contemplated the reason for the season.

where we go in the night

Ace Clevenger

The deer know too much and see too much. That is their burden. They bear it so that we do not. They see so that we do not. They see too much. The deer see things they cannot unsee. The deer know far more than they should.

Tentacles wrap around the deer, clutching at their throats. The eyes, the insufferable eyes that see too much and know too much, wrap in slimy strands around the deer and the deer see too much. The deer are nothing but eyes and tentacles. The deer are wrong. The deer know more than us. This is intentional.

She knows too much. She carries all of our burdens so that we do not have to alone, but who will carry hers? The deer will not. The rosaries of confession wrap around her throat, clutching and clawing with everything she knows. The deer cannot unsee things for her.

She will never get what she needs. She will never be able to unsee, unhear, unknow everything we have placed upon her shoulders, all of the tentacles we have lovingly draped over her. She bears the burden so that we do not. The deer see this with a thousand eyes.

I want to be found. She does not know this. I have taken to unknowing things for her. I see the tentacles weighing her down, trapping her feet with every step. I see the burden we have placed upon her. I see how we have killed her and called it love. She will not know where I want to be found.

When the hour turns over, the deer see us. The deer see through us, with too many eyes and too many tentacles. They do not look like deer anymore. The daylight is gone, and with it, the veil. In the night we see the deer. But no matter the stretching stillness of oblivion, we do not see what the deer see. Some have. None tell the tales. We avert our eyes from their reaching, writhing tentacles, and allow them to take the burdens from us.

She does not know where I want to be found. The man of blades does. The man of blades knows of the too-deep circles, the barbed wire, the hesitation. Always hesitating. Hesitation and impatience, battling like twilight in the gray-grim sky.

I know the consequences yet I press the blossoms against my lips until they are stained with purple and death. Hesitation and impatience and deer. Maybe it's not that the deer know too much. Maybe it is simply that I am too known. Burdens and barriers and eyes wrap into tentacles, bruising across my throat in the same colors of the nightshade blossoms.

Our minds wander like we do. Our minds traverse the endless landscapes, climbing through the empty deserts, wandering through

Chiaroscuro

forests of things that aren't trees anymore. They drag us, kicking and screaming, into the black unknown night. The deer watch silently. The deer guard us. The deer protect us. Maybe the deer are protecting the rest of the universe from us. Whatever their silent quest, the deer remain, and the deer stand guard as we are pulled through the tentacled abyss.

Will any of us make it out alive?

Only the deer and the man of blades know.



BIOS

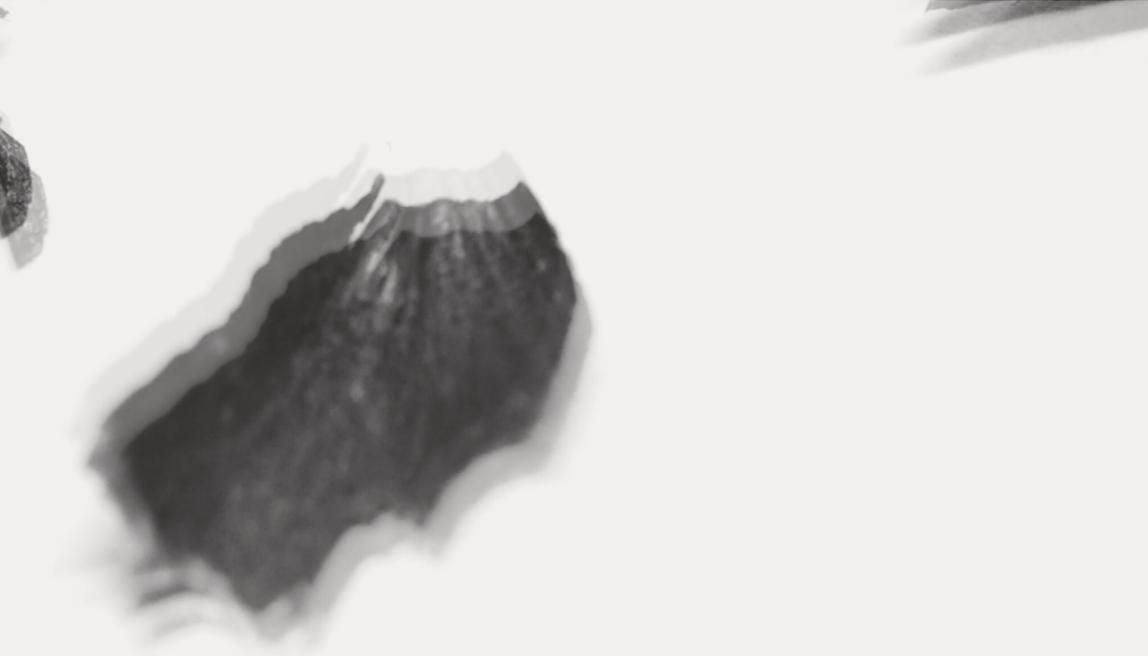


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Lauren Agrella-Sevilla is a yoga and mindfulness instructor who loves mountains, poetry, moving her body, and her inspiring sons. She teaches yoga and mindfulness, including yoga for BC students, and writes poetry because it helps her make meaning of this wild human life. She has a deep attraction to the stories within each of us. She's inspired by the myriad ways we offer love to one another, and interested in just how hard it is for us to love ourselves.

Lauren's poem "Dear God" won 1st place in the Valentine's Day Contest.

Aia Andonovska is a junior history and English double major. Combining her majors with her literary studies emphasis and art history minor, she works on the Clarion, is President of the Pastimes history club, and enjoys writing overall. In her spare time, she loves to take pictures and considers photography a hobby. The pictures she submitted to *Chiaroscuro* were taken in Macedonia, where her family comes from. She's proud of her heritage and is happy to share the beautiful pieces.

Courtney Augusto is a sophomore English major with a literary studies emphasis. She is a student athlete and has a minor in education as well. She plans on obtaining her teacher license once she graduates in Spring 2022. Through the teacher licensure program, she would like to work on getting certified in the state of South Carolina and pursue a teaching position in a public high school.

Carmen Boone is a senior English major with a creative writing emphasis. She plays tennis and is secretary for Canterbury Club. She's been copy editor for *The Clarion* and poetry editor for *Chiaroscuro*, where she's been published multiple times. Her senior project is a poetry collection, for that is where her heart lies. Her soul lives at the beach, but the mountains are her home.

Carmen's poem "Coffee House" won 3rd place in the Christmas Contest.

Kenny Cheek is a sophomore English major on the teacher licensure path. She is from Pittsboro, North Carolina. Since Kindergarten, she has been dedicated to becoming an English teacher and since middle school she knew she wanted to focus primarily on creative writing. Kenny typically likes to write in the horror genre, specifically psychological horror, or focus on anything creepy and/or dark.

Ace Clevenger is a junior English major with an emphasis in creative writing. They have a passion for creative nonfiction, an interest in poetry, and an unhealthy dependent relationship with the hiking trails of Pisgah Forest. When they're not existing as a writer, they can be found as a layabout, a costume shop assistant, or a general nuisance.

Ace's poem "his/yours" won 3rd place in the Valentine's Day Contest.

Nia Davis is a junior integrated studies major with concentrations in English and psychology. She was born and raised in Durham, North Carolina, is the second daughter in her family, and completed thirteen years of home education from H.N. Davis Christian Academy. Nia is a creative person who loves to express herself through art, singing, songwriting, blogging, and writing novels. She enjoys spending time with her family, dogs, friends and playing lacrosse. She plans to pursue a career within veterinary medicine.

Nick Edwards is a senior integrated studies major with concentrations in English and psychology. Prior to this, Nick was a spoken word poet who performed at Brevard College. He used to spend hours self-advertising and self-circulating compilations of his work. Due to this, he drew fairly large crowds at open mic nights. He prefers open form poetry to closed form poetry, but has written extensively in both.

Jawaun Ervin is a sophomore art major with concentrations in photography and graphic design. Originally, he wanted to major in architecture and engineering but then found his hidden talent for taking photographs. He has only been doing photography for a little over a year. Capturing moments with his camera has become a daily part of his life and he keeps a portfolio of his photos on his Instagram account under the alias of “Villa caméra.”

Jayne Fought is an adjunct WLEE professor at Brevard College. She is the owner of Island Ford Adventures, where she focuses on outdoor education for adults. Jayne combines her love of the outdoors with a passion for education, sense of humor, and flexibility to bring the groups she guides and teaches a unique and unforgettable experience. Jayne and her husband, Clyde Carter, live in the Dunns Rock Community just south of Brevard.

Jayne’s work “Warm Hearth, Warm Heart” won 2nd place in the Christmas Contest.

Sarah Hajkowski is a freshman fulfilling a double major in English and theatre. Her spare time includes a lot of writing, whether it be plays or poems, and she draws inspiration in both of these genres from favorite books and movies, and the world around her. Recently her poem, "In Bloom," was accepted for publication online and in print in the Petite edition of the literary *Pomme* journal.

Madison Heath is from Hendersonville, North Carolina and is majoring in biology. She loves nature and mostly enjoys drawing or sketching plants, animals, and landscapes in pencil. Aside from drawing, she enjoys playing the guitar, singing, hiking with her dog, church, and hunting with her dad.

Madison’s piece “Pigsty Parallel” won 3rd place in the Halloween Contest.

Alexis Henley is a senior English major with a creative writing emphasis who has a passion for writing young adult fiction. This year, she's the Editor-In-Chief of *Chiaroscuro* and Student Assistant for the 2020 LGRWC. Her current work-in-progress is a YA witchy fantasy novel titled *A Tale of Witches*. When she has any free time she likes to read, play video games, spend time with her mom, and go to coffee shops only to drink tea.

Caroline Hoy is a freshman environmental studies major with a focus in sustainability and is a creative writing minor. She is from Charleston, South Carolina. She was a Girl Scout and is continuing to pursue her love for it by being a troop leader while living in the mountains. Caroline is excited to be a part of the *Chiaroscuro* staff this year after previously working on her high school literary magazine.

Ian Hueston is a Brevard College graduate with a Bachelor's Degree in theatre with a focus on costuming and play-writing. He is currently box office manager at Waukesha Civic Theatre in Wisconsin, where he also contributes by designing props and serving on the costuming team for occasional productions.

Gwyn Jennings is a junior art major with a time based media concentration. She's lived in Brevard for five years. Her work has been featured in the TC Arts Council Faces of Freedom and The Other Side art shows. Her work will be on stage at the BC Theatre Company's Mr. Burns and Brevard Ballet's Nutcracker. She likes to work with watercolor or digital art of gory pop surrealism. Her favorite artists are Mark Ryden, Camilla d'Errico, and Margaret Keane.

Grace Kelley is a senior elementary education major with a WLEE minor. She lives in Cambridge, Maryland with her mom, dad, and brother who she tries to bother each break. She's a Student Ambassador and the president of Canterbury Club . She assists at Brevard First United Methodist Church with the Middle/High school Sunday School class and the Middle/High school youth group. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her Emotional Support Animal (cat), Minerva, hanging with her friends and getting out in the woods. She's attempted to learn how to play the ukulele for the past few years and is always looking for new projects.

Robert Massey is a freshman planning to pursue a business and organizational leadership degree. Alongside this he enjoys writing and the aspect of controlling an audience with his words. This is why he's also on track to minor in creative writing. Many see him as a baseball player or just a student, but his dream to become an author of books, poems, and plays reflects much more about him.

Ashley Maziarz is a freshman art major with a digital media focus. She's from Huntersville, North Carolina. Currently, she has no works on display aside from a ceiling tile she painted to resemble her favorite work, *The Starry Night*, that currently resides in her high school art teacher's classroom. Her favorite type of art to do is collages and her favorite music to listen to while making art is anything by Elton John.

Chloe McGee is currently a fourth year student pursuing degrees in art history and English with a journalism concentration. She's a member of the *Chiaroscuro* editorial staff; she serves as the Arts & Life editor and the Layout & Design co-editor for the *Clarion*; and is the principal saxophonist for the Wind Ensemble. She is grateful to receive a well-rounded fine arts education here at Brevard College and beyond.

Joy Poe is a mixed media artist living in Brevard. She received her BA in Art from Brevard College ('03) where she was introduced to mixed media collage and served as Editor of *Chiaroscuro*. Her love of the human figure has informed her work for over 20 years. She strives to evoke feelings of nostalgia in the viewer by using graphite, paint, paper collage, and beeswax. After graduation, she studied classical drawing at the Fine Arts League of Asheville. In 2019, she completed a master's in Entrepreneurship from WCU with the intention of helping artists thrive in their creative endeavors. Joy currently works as the Creative Content Writer for Brevard College's Office of Public Information.

Joy's piece "River of Love" won 2nd place in the Valentine's Day Contest.

Madison Ramsey is a junior history major and is considering an art history or art minor. She's from a small town called Swords Creek, Virginia. Her primary medium of art is Photography but is interested in branching out into ceramics and pottery. In her spare time, Madison can be found taking pictures around campus, or in Pisgah Forest and on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Whenever she's not taking pictures, Madison enjoys keeping up with the latest news in American politics and watching hockey games. When she's off campus, she enjoys spending time with her dog Duke.

Vance Reese is an Assistant Professor of Music who received his early musical training from hearing his father read Dr. Seuss and sing Gilbert & Sullivan tunes. Deciding he wanted more, Vance followed a rather demanding muse through three degrees in music, the last one in organ, sacred music, and music history at Indiana University. Besides playing music and writing the occasional verse, he enjoys dream-work, bicycle-riding, and a good conversation.

Vance's poem "A Verse to the Holiday" won 1st place in the Christmas Contest.

Christopher Tipton is an Adjunct Professor of business & organizational leadership who retired to the Brevard area after thirty-one years in the corporate world, including several international assignments. Photography has always been a hobby, and his travels while working provided ample subject matter. Chris and his wife Eija (a native of Finland) enjoy hiking, fly fishing, mountain biking and road biking. Chris also has a small real estate photography business.

Peter Trench is a Brevard College graduate. He majored in applied physics and mathematics, but is currently enrolled in the engineering physics program at Appalachian State University. He took his picture of the Andromeda Galaxy during the summer of 2019 while studying cosmological redshifting. It was a test of the equipment he would later use in his studies.

Caroline Vargas is a senior theatre major and graduated in December 2019. She is a self taught special effects makeup artist, and is heavily inspired by horror movies and video games. She did her senior project on the stages of a zombie infection, and showed the different techniques she used to create realistic injuries with makeup.

Caroline's work "Mushroom Zombie" won 2nd place in the Halloween Contest.

Scott Urquhart is a senior English major whose words take on vices and human suffering, whether pleasant or displeasing. He's working on his upcoming collection, *American Letters of Mexico*, that will cover the tragic loss of a beloved soul and the journey south of the border to scatter the ashes of the once was. After graduation, he's leaving the states to pursue his passion of restless travel and teach English as a second language wherever needed.

Scott's poem "Ode to Elizabeth Bathory" won 1st place in the Halloween Contest.

Contributors

Lauren Agrella-Sevilla

Aia Andonovska

Courtney Augusto

Carmen Boone

Kenny Cheek

Ace Clevenger

Nia Davis

Nick Edwards

Jawaun Ervin

Jayne Fought

Sarah Hajkowski

Madison Heath

Alexis Henley

Caroline Hoy

Ian Hueston

Gwyn Jennings

Grace Kelley

Robert Massey

Ashley Maziarz

Chloe McGee

Joy Poe

Madison Ramsey

Vance Reese

Christopher Tipton

Peter Trench

Caroline Vargas

Scott Urquhart

