

Phoenix Literary and Art Magazine 2022-2023



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I Can't Wait to Fall Asleep Next to You ... Alessia Watt

Quiet Grasses ... Hannah Feinberg

Darling Changeling ... Hannah Feinberg

House on Top of the Hill ... Daniel Monturano

Blind Beast ... Daniel Monturano

Autumn ... Daniel Monturano

Homes ... Leo Burchell

Catholic Guilt ... Leo Burchell

Nonsense ... Leo Burchell

Breaking My Shell ... Leo Burchell

Dance of the Whisk ... Grace Folkins

New York #2 ... Anora Nuriddinova

Friends to Strangers ... Anora Nuriddinova

Nika Shakamuri ... Anora Nuriddinova

I Am Rational ... Mia Notaro

A Paperclip's Duty ... Grant Tosolt

Reflection ... Sara Van Reymersdal

Gutter ... Sara Van Reymersdal

Tik-Tock ... Sara Van Reymersdal

Odyssey ... Sara Van Reymersdal

The Existence of Love ... Maeve Smith

The Rapidity of Maturing ... Maeve Smith

The Haunted House On the Hill ... Maeve Smith

Music, when soft dies, vibrates in the memory ... Riya Mallavarapu

I am From ... Aidan Wolf

Nothing ... Ella Gross

A Pen ... Grace Krause

Solitude ... Cole Young

The Lighthouse Keeper ... Anna Cuce

Locket ... Lily Appleby

Zip It ... Ethan Cone

Fictional Fall ... Eva Rosini

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I can't wait to fall asleep next to you

By: Alessia Watt

I can't wait to fall asleep next to you.

Although it might be nice to let you know

If you are awakened to the

Choking sounds of a dying shrew

It is me peacefully asleep,

Not a shrew.

I promise it not to be too bad.

Maybe I will grow out of it by then.

I just thought I should let you know.

As well, I suppose it may be nice to tell you

When we wake up together each morning,

And I am still comfortably wrapped up around your torso

You may notice a slight puddle of morning dew

Beside my mouth.

Tainting your favorite band tee.

Essentially,

I drool.

I thought it would be nice to tell you.

You should also be aware

Your slumber will be delayed at two,

By my sudden need to talk to you.

Thus, you will be expected to listen to delusional tales

Incomprehensible even by the awake mind

I will try not to let my insomnia be a bother

And save my incoherent thoughts for morrow.

I don't know.

I thought you should be aware.

Maybe it should be said,

That I will keep our room chilly

With the sole purpose of occupying the same section of our bed.

My apologies if you end up feeling cold

But I will be there to supply with a warm embrace

Or if you really want, I guess I could raise the temperature instead

I just thought it should be said.

To make you a bit more eager to sleep next to me,

The greatest cuddle buddy I can be.

And despite all my taboos I have just shared,

I hope maybe you're still fond of the idea.

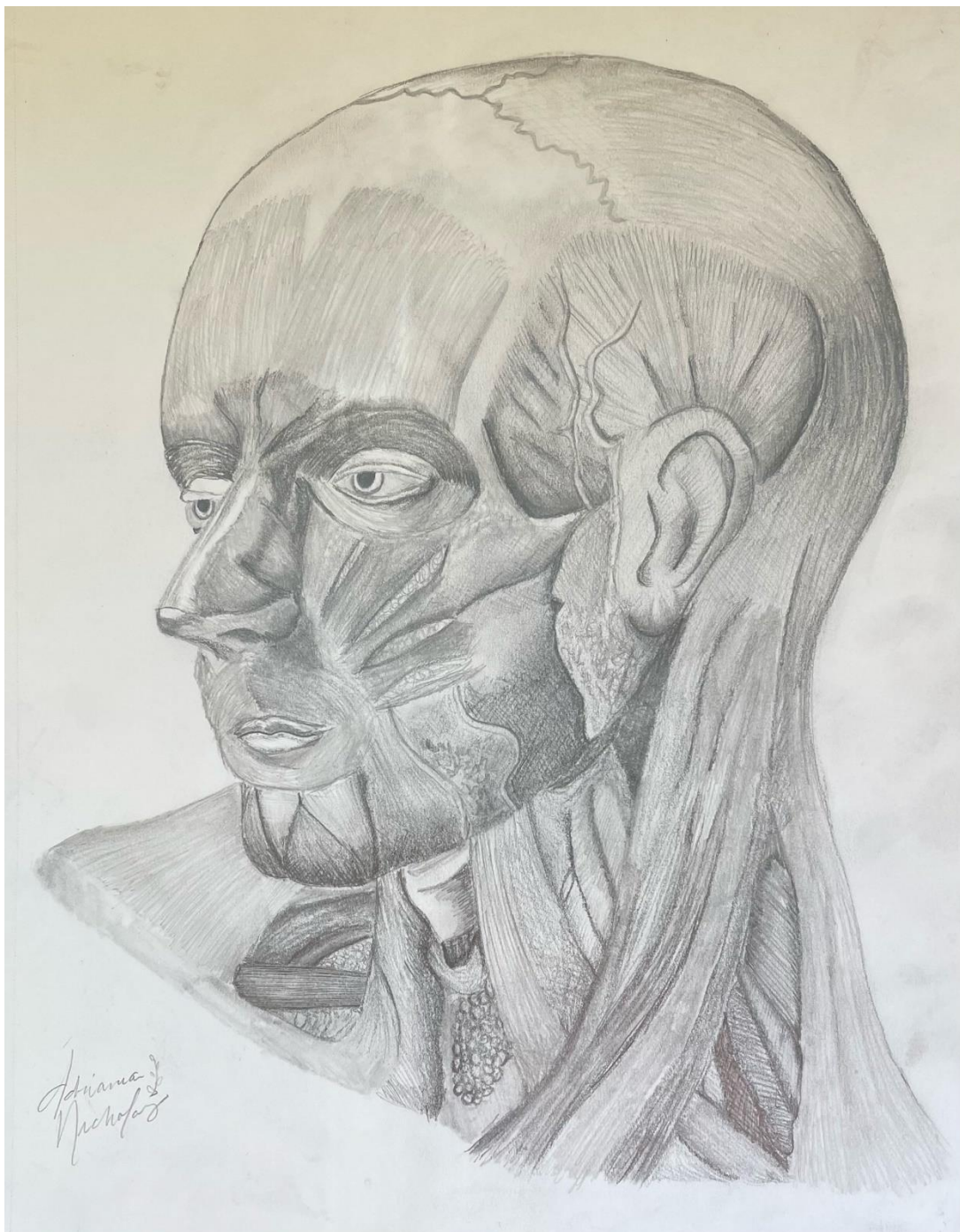
Because for all your weird habits thus far I haven't a clue,

I will learn to accept and maybe crack a joke...

Or a few.

Regardless, I will accept.

Because I really can't wait to fall asleep next to you.



By: Adrianna Nicholas

Quiet Grasses

By: Hannah Feinberg

We venture out into the fields
Where no one seems to be.
It's quiet here as grasses dance
As far as we can see.

Upon a barn we stumble
Seemingly built before our eyes,
But no construction has been
Happening since pre-1909.

This shack has been abandoned.
By whom? No guesses here,
For who would leave their home
If not because of fear?

We open up the creaking door
And enter at our risk,
Just as autumn winds pick up
And blow and whoosh and whisk.

Leaves litter the dirty floor
And grime seems to set in.
Our group discovers rooms
In which few have ever been.

The chill begins to intensify.
We shiver all at once.
We can't stay long, but we'll return
In next year's summer months

Darling Changeling

By: Hannah Feinberg

Morning.

The young boy is lifted from his bed and placed in his freshly wiped highchair. His mother wipes the dribble from his face before placing a bowl of cheerios in front of him. He has been eating solid foods for the past couple of months now that his baby teeth have descended.

Bath Time.

The toddler splashes around in the warm suds making the bubbles land on his father's shoulder. His plastic boats and trains float toward him, and he picks them up just to crash them together, laughing happily all the while. His father begins to hum a soft tune, causing the boy to clap and flick more bubbles at his father. He doesn't mind.

School.

He is dropped off at his preschool just down the road from their house. He learns all about the colors and shapes alongside his new friends. At snack time, the teacher hands out napkins and paper cones filled with goldfish crackers. Naptime follows, then fades into the end of the day when the whole class sings along to the vegetable song.

Afternoon.

When the boy's father picks him up, the child has a wide grin plastered on his face because he sees the playground in the distance. Every day after school, they drive past that playground. There was a glorious slide and swing set there. The slide was bright orange, with a fresh dusting of autumn leaves. The father agreed to let the boy play for a little while.

Dinner.

The toddler's dinner consisted of a piece of untoasted bread with blueberry jam spread on the surface. A side of mashed peas accompanied the main course. A tall glass of milk as well was placed in front of the child, so his bones would grow big and strong.

Bedtime.

The child begged his mother to read him a bedtime story, so since it was getting late, she told him if he put his pajamas on all by himself, then she'd read his favorite story to him. Once the blue duckie PJs were secured and zipped up, the boy hopped up on his bed and awaited his promised story. His mother strolled over the crowded bookshelf to collect the picture book. As "The Ugly Duckling" was read aloud, the child began to yawn and his eyes began to droop, signaling to his mother it was time for her to go. She closed the book softly, readjusted the covers, kissed her boy on the top of his head, and flicked off the light switch.

Midnight.

As the clock struck twelve, the boy's eyes clicked open. It was time. He could feel it in his joints. They ached as he sat up. He cracked his elbows and knees before placing his small, bare feet on the cold hardwood floors. The three-year-old wobbled toward the light switch to illuminate the room now that the parents were surely deep in sleep.

His small frame couldn't reach the switch, so he simply elongated his legs and arms instantly. As the lamp flickered back on, the boy decided to just return to his natural form while he was at it. The child's eyes shrank back into his skull and reddened significantly. His ears sharpened like pins and turned outward. His skin turned an ugly shade between puce and tan while his nails grew out and grayed. His nose hardened into an almost callous, and his hair receded back into the follicles. His knees turned inward, and his ankles curled under the weight of his true body. The hunch in his spine caused the creature to lean forward, almost toppling. Fangs sprouted out of

his gnarled, purple lips as he hobbled over to the slatted closet. His claws grasped the knob before turning the creaky door on its hinges.

It scowled as the shaking mass of Liam huddled on the floor at the back corner of the space. His hands and feet were bound with rope, and he had been gagged. Dried tears were visible on the young boy's face. The same face that had been safely tucked into the sheets just minutes earlier. The changeling crouched down to Liam and took the cloth out of his mouth before putting one arthritic digit up to his mouth signaling Liam to stay quiet. A small whimper escaped the toddler's lips at that.

The creature smoothed Liam's hair back, smiled, and said, "Goodnight" in its gargled voice. The changeling snapped its bony fingers, and Liam's body went limp instantaneously. The monster slowly reformed into the body of Liam before hopping back on the bed and flicking off the lights once again. He'd deal with the body in the morning.

End.



By: Alexis Stellana

House on Top of the Hill

By Daniel Monturano

A house on top of a hill

As lonely as can be.

The grass intruding into broken glass

The paint peeling

Revealing dirty planks.

A house frozen in time

As clouds pass by.

The mountains in the distance encompassing the home

Condemning it to solitude.

The muddy footprints inside

From another time.

The empty interior

Consumed by nature

Worn down by elements

Sitting silently in the meadow.

The house on top of a hill

As lonely as can be

As lonely as me.

Blind Beast

By: Daniel Monturano

Love is blind as they say

Always one step behind you.

The intense emotions bubbling up inside

The excited chatter with friends

The worry if they like you back.

It becomes a monster in the shadows.

A fake friend

A two-faced freak.

Full of empty promises

And leaves you in the dust.

The purity and hatred of love
Changing many
Losing who they once were
Becoming engulfed by the beast.

A problem around for generations
A tale as old as time
A fight we all face.

Autumn

Inspired by Terrance Hayes

By: Daniel Monturano

The summer fading away. We
feel the winds telling us it's real.
The morning air is crisp and cool
as we get up early for school. We
remember the summer sun before it left.
As the night closes in after school.
The woods transform as we
watch creatures lurk

when it's late.

After staying up, we

hear the clock strike

Twelve at night, as we go straight

to bed. We

listen to owls sing

while we repent our every sin.

Leaves turn vibrant colors as we

watch flowers thin.

We listen to people drink gin

and parties in the moonlight. We

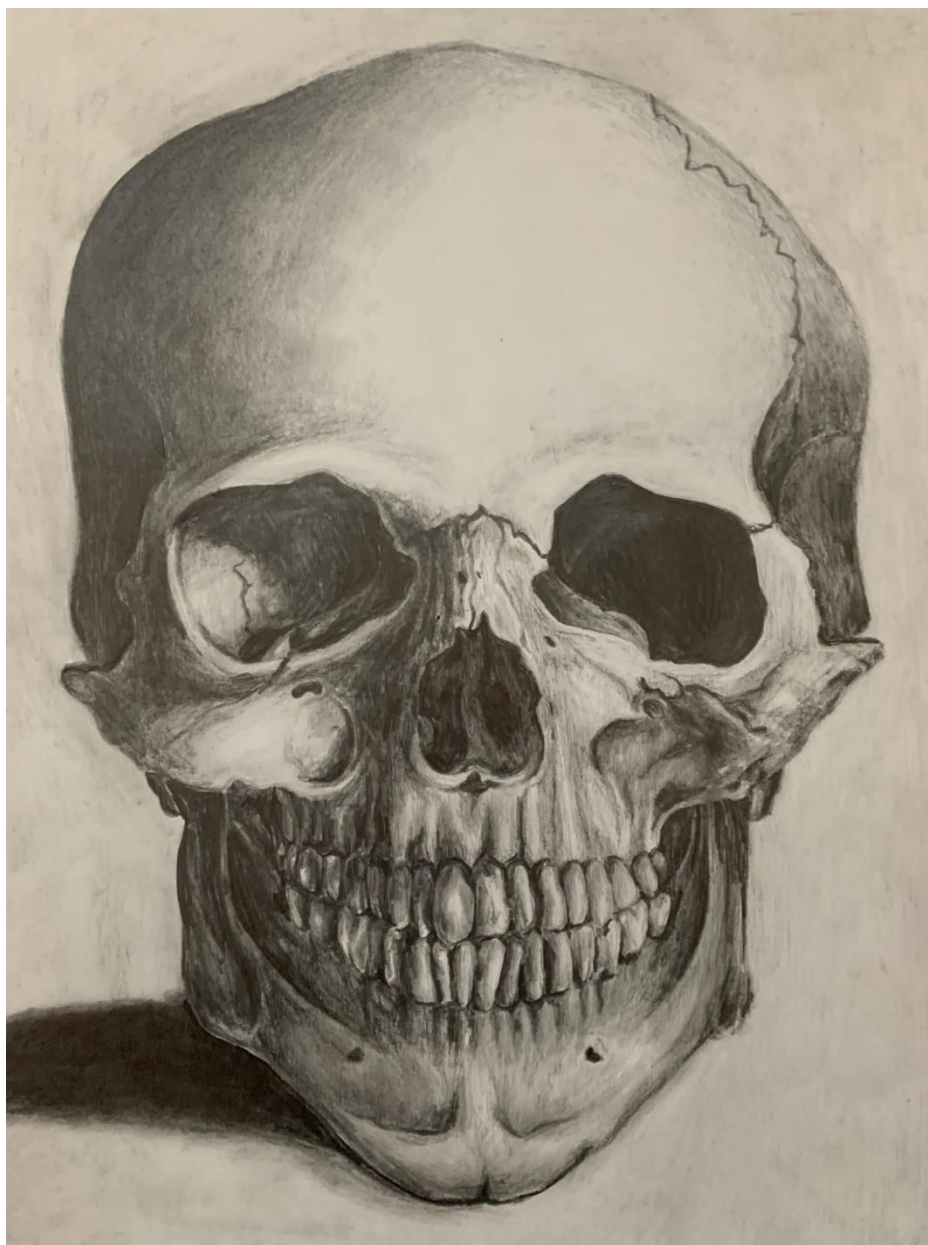
wake up to jazz.

A memory of June.

Halloween nears as we

watch the trees die.

Autumn is soon.



By: Annika Greb

Homes

By: Leo Burchell

Father's guitar has fallen out of tune

right along with her body

He plucks at her heartstrings with opal fingers,

not knowing where they were forged

Disease steals the blush from her cheeks

unearned, undeserved

A daffodil stem around her neck

Cut and glue, ruby red

falls from the ring around her rosie

Aging eyes, the ocean inside

Her shoreline eroding, eleven children

dig their heels into her beaches

Crumbling sand, crumbling buildings

Her mind, a beach town

Her body, a vampire

Father picks her up from inside a dusty box

plays a tune with her emerald hair

Her freckles, the sheet music

her hands, the branches

Father never reads a book more than once,

keeps his eyes on the flamenco dancers

wishing to play their bodies as golden guitars

She is crumpled in a sock drawer

Fruit, flowering

Orchids, rotten

Catholic Guilt

By: Leo Burchell

My most familiar emotion is guilt

It is the one that has made a home in my heart

growing deep roots in my arteries

It was planted by a priest,

nurtured by light from stained-glass windows

shooting through the red mouths of saints

and watered by bloody wine

Confession still feels like a necessary act

But there's no one around

to listen to me spill my sins anymore
So I divulge my darkness to my houseplants,
watching them wither under the weight of my crimes

My moral code is as unyielding as Moses's stone tablet

but my soul is caked with dirt
I make my own rules,
then just as quickly defy them
Never forgiving myself for my disobedience
whispering Hail Mary's to my notebook
in the hopes it'll swallow my sins
Pretending I am the priest and the penance

I am a dishonest man
Adam, the original sinner
only, missing his apple



By: Annika Greb

Nonsense

By: Leo Burchell

Sunrise

Amber rises from her bed, stretching with a groan. She draws open her silky curtains, peering between the bare branches outside for a glimpse of the sunset. A bird taps at her window with its beak, but Amber doesn't notice. The girl is too engrossed in the hues of the new world.

Breakfast

Butter drips onto Amber's fingers as she munches her toast, making them sticky. She wonders if her mother bought the store brand of butter this time. It doesn't taste like much of anything. Amber forgets to ask by the time she finishes her toast.

Bus Ride

Amber's forehead rattles against the cool glass of the window. Her breath fogs in front of her eyes. She needs to crank the volume of her music all the way up this morning to hear it. Her earbuds must be breaking.

First Period

A squid sits limply on the table in front of Amber. She is tasked with dissecting its body into different parts. The other students complain and pinch their noses, but Amber doesn't notice

the stench. She is too busy following the lab procedures that her lab partners do not seem bothered to pay attention to.

Second Period

Amber squints at a bowl of fruit. Two pears and a cluster of grapes stare back at her. She copies their shapes with colored pencils, imitating their positions. Mr. Garner notes her unconventional use of color to the class, remarking at her creativity. Amber thanks him politely, unsure what she did differently than usual.

Lunch

Joey and Quinn insist on sitting outside, even though the sun is barely shining through the gray clouds. Amber's hands are so cold she can't grasp the spoon to scoop her vanilla yogurt. Her friends don't notice. She settles for eating her sandwich.

Third Period

Amber's eyes flutter shut as she focuses her attention on her violin. She joins the river of sound of the rest of the class. Mr. Lambert abruptly stops the musicians, and Amber opens her eyes to see a few students around her staring at her, not unkindly. Mr. Lambert asks why Amber didn't tune her violin correctly. She plucks the strings and cannot hear a sound.

Nurse's Office

A cool compress lays on Amber's head. The leather cot is hard under her body. When the nurse comes in to check on her, Amber can't see her face. She drifts asleep, waiting for her mother to pick her up.

Cocoon

When Amber wakes, there is nothing there. It feels as if cotton is stuffed in her ears and around her body. She strains her eyes against the darkness, but there is no light anywhere.

Rose

Rose rushes into Amber's hospital room, her beat-up sneakers skidding around the corner. She stops short when she sees her girlfriend's mother leaning over her daughter, tears shining from her cheeks. Rose slides an arm around her shoulders. She grasps Amber's limp hand in her own.

Metamorphosis

Amber's eyelids twitch. They open to reveal deep brown eyes, tears in their corners. She whispers, "You're the light." Rose thinks her nonsense sounds beautiful.

Breaking My Shell

By: Leo Burchell

Each spring, my mother's preschool hatches chicken eggs. One year, I offered to help her check on the chicks on a still-chilly Thursday night.

My mother called me my birth name, but the chicks wouldn't flock to me, despite my coos. They didn't see me as their mother. I didn't either.

A weak peeping trilled from the incubator. I watched in wonder as a chick gradually emerged from its shell. I felt kinship with the tiny animal; I was rebirthing myself every day.

That April, I came out as a transgender man to my mother. Her arms were warm around me.



By: Ava Morgan

Dance of the Whisk

By: Grace Folkins

She waltzed onto the stage,

pulled toward the crowd.

Her posture like a metal rod,

aligned with the wall behind her.

A tight bun assembled a loop,

atop her head,

allowing for precision,

and focus.

Her tutu began at her waist,

and puffed its way down her legs,

until it covered her feet.

Her gumbdrop pink tutu,

highlighted the

tan battered floor

beneath her.

She twisted and mixed,

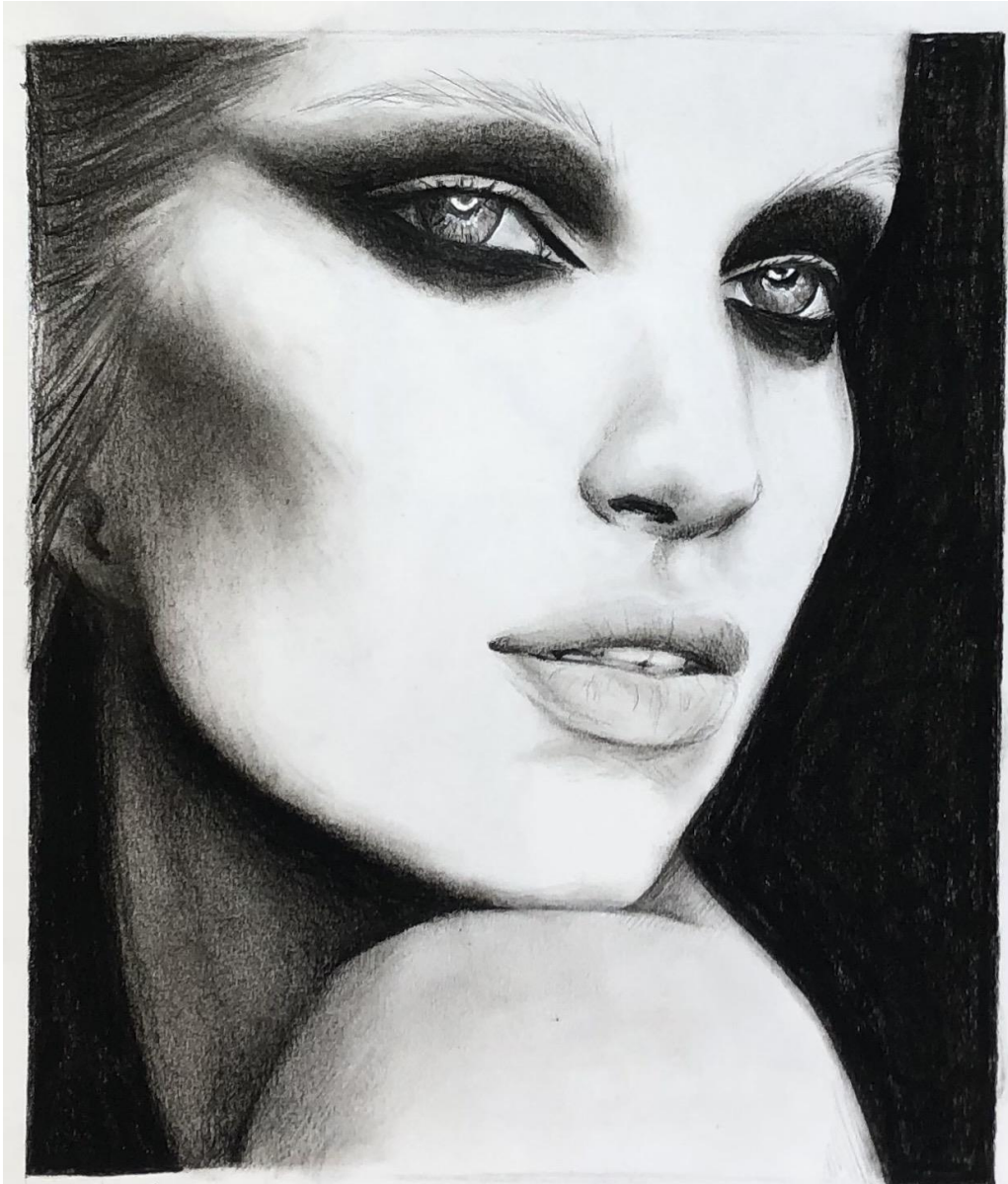
every which way,

creating a delicious scene

of fluidity.

She curtsied,

and floated off stage,
leaving the audience
savoring the taste
of her performance.



By: Ava Morgan

New York #2

By: Anora Nuriddinova

Looking at the picture now,
I realize how fast the things can change
Millions of things going on in the photo
Millions of feelings and emotions all in love.

Looking at the picture now,
I see hundreds of people,
Walking those streets
You can see how everyone has their own lives.
Their own thoughts, their own problems to solve,
And their own jobs to attend.

Oh, how I wish I could tell them all
Something that I'm sure they need to hear.
Live your lives, live your lives in the moment.
Go tell the person you love, about your feelings
Go call your family and ask them how they are.
Forget about what others think of you,
Live your life, live in the moment.
The moment that is today. Because there might not be tomorrow.

Friends to strangers

By: Anora Nuriddinova

People they go from strangers to friends

After years of trust and thousands of lies

They become unknown and it all ends

Them being all nice and acting so touched

When you talk the first time, and look at the skies

People they go from strangers to friends

You try to act tough when they left you crushed

Yet, they lied to your face so many times

They become unknown and it all ends

Closing your eyes on how it was rushed

You think you can trust, thinking your wise

People they go from strangers to friends

You wish it was all left untouched

So you can save all your cries

They become unknown and it all ends

You give them all you have, and they turn it into dust

But it's fine, because it has opened your eyes

People they go from strangers to friends

They become unknown and it all ends

People they go from strangers to friends

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They become unknown and it all ends



By: Ava Morgan

Nika Shakamari

By: Anora Nuriddinova

She woke up and got ready for school, like always she waited at the bus stop and talked to her friend that was standing next to her about everything and nothing at the same time. Today was just the same as yesterday, she thought. The bus came and they were on their way to school. She met up with her other friends, they walked to class together. Someone started talking about the situation that has been going on in the country, women being harmed because they are taking off their head scarfs. That didn't stay as a topic of our conversation for long, they didn't want to focus on negative things. Someone brought up the new place that opened down the street from school, she offered to go there after classes together. Everyone agreed.

After school, she was nowhere to be found. Everyone already got to the main exit, where they agreed to meet. She wasn't there. After seven ignored calls, she finally picked up. "I'm fine don't worry about me, I won't be able go with you guys today, I promise we'll go some other time!" was the first thing I heard, she sounded very excited and proud. I couldn't understand why, I immediately asked where she is, and why she's not coming with us like we agreed. I felt the atmosphere getting tenser and my heart beating faster, I knew something was wrong. "There is another protest meeting next to that shop we always go to, I'm going there, I burned my scarf as soon as I got out of school, I'm fighting for our rights. Don't worry about me, I'll be fine, love

you, bye” That was the last thing she said to me, none of us knew it’ll be the last time we’d talk.
I didn’t even get to say bye to her before she hung up on me.

The next day, her parents called me, and asked if she’s with me, she did not come home last night. I told them everything that I know. That was when we all started looking for her. Five days into searching, there was no result, I almost lost hope, but we continued the search. I’d hope she would come back until her birthday in two weeks. Another five days later, her body was found, it was delivered to her parents. She was buried on October 3rd, her 17th birthday.



By: Brookelyn Green

I Am Rational.

By: Mia Notaro

No, I don't find myself to be an irrational figure, in fact I see myself as very rational since I am me and me is always rational. Don't you see? Do you remember the night of the 13th (no not Friday that wouldn't be rational)? I have been convicted of a crime that only an irrational figure could be capable of. Don't you see? I have blue eyes, a full head of hair, elegance, class, and I can read. None of these things could have been like the killer because the killer was bald, had red flaming eyes, clumsiness, and

obviously could not read because section 4.6 of the Oklahoma written laws handbook states it is illegal to kill. He did kill someone though and it wasn't just one person it was multiple.

I am honestly offended that I was dragged down to this police station past supper time only to be interrogated for a crime I obviously couldn't commit. My hands aren't sweaty, and my legs aren't bouncing frantically under the metal table (that's what guilty people do). Stop slamming your fists on the table; this is completely unnecessary considering the fact that these 'cops'

are the ones committing a crime. Breaking, entering, and kidnapping. I was washing my dishes after having a lovely meal including homemade mashed potatoes, leftover medium-rare steak that I cooked myself the day prior, a glass of red wine, and some soft slightly overcooked green beans. I re-watched my favorite episode of Law & Order, quoting almost every line. As I was soaping up my pretty much clean plate, I heard a violent pound on my door. This was their first fault. No need to be so aggressive. I prefer gentle. I knew who it was, however. Only the police

department who thinks
they run everyone's lives
would knock with such
impoliteness and continue
to knock after you don't
answer the door
immediately like you have
wronged them personally. I
dried my hands after
pausing my dishwashing
and sauntered toward the
door. By this time, the
police had already kicked
my door in and were
coming at me with nothing
but force. Next thing I
know, I'm here.

Did you know that they
don't actually offer you
food when they take you in
for interrogation? Or at
least they don't bring you
any after you ask. I've

been here hours now and
not a damn cup of water
has even entered the
premises. How can cops be
so stupid. If I had killed
those people than I would
not have gotten caught. I
would have made it out
free and live a lavish life
while I watch everyone
live in fear for, I am still
on the streets. If I had done
it, I wouldn't have dumped
the bodies so close to my
home. I wouldn't have left
my own DNA at the scene.
Most importantly, I
wouldn't have eaten left
over human flesh like steak
the next night. I wouldn't
have paired it with green
beans, mashed potatoes,
and red wine. I would have

done it better because I am
smart, and I am rational.
How could I have been so
stupid? Why did I make it
so obvious?



By: Ari Bullock

A Paperclip's Duty

By: Grant Tosolt

I am the warden of knowledge

The glue that keeps the rebellious wily papers in their place

I run the meeting access to secret and vital knowledge

I go unnoticed the dull gleam of my coat does not catch any eyes

My hard work overlooked

The struggle to maintain the overpopulated prison unending

A prison break seems imminent.

Tossed aside without second thought

My hard work undone prisoners pulled into freedom

The clatter my impact makes attracts my nemesis

The idle officers

Short stubby and full of malice

Snatched up I am contorted into painful configurations

The need for me renews

I must round up my prison

Their screams fall on deaf ears

I am accustomed to unpleasantness

I am the warden of knowledge

Battered and beaten

Overworked and underappreciated



By: Delia McHugh

Reflection

By: Sara Van Reymersdal

I found a piece of your mirror yesterday
turned it
on its jagged, narrow edge and stared
down the lilting curves
trying to remember
the day you threw it at my face.
I wish I knew who you were
wish I knew
what caused that wounded scream
face puffed pink
hair strangling your golden eyes.
“You took it! You took it!”

Truthfully, I think you
took it—took something, at least
made my pulse reverse direction,
veins squeezing heart
kidney drained
everything bruised and battered
without ever touching the outside

Did I create you to understand the pain?
Were you ever real?
you keep shifting
colors to shapes and shapes to sparkles
dots

Am I making any sense?

I don't feel like it
just feel
small
with eyes half-shut against the glare
like prey cowering in the face of its predator

Maybe we both took something that day
split it down the middle so vicious it
cuts the pad of my thumb,
leaving the truth scattered somewhere amongst
cloudy, shattered bits of glass.

Gutter

By: Sara Van Reymersdal

We went to the bowling alley on a Sunday
afternoon. Two hours for \$50—a steal
for four people. My brother
insisted his double strike was a fluke,
but it only encouraged my dad
for more and more outrageous throws.
My mom and I were just happy
when the blue streaked misfit
didn't glide off the edge.

All around us were people having fun.
Two lanes down the husband
had to break out his crazy socks
to disarm his wife's spares.

Three generations across had a father
explain in Spanish to his hunched father
which ball was which and what to do with them.
He kept an arm around his teenage son,
who alternated between checking his phone
and spiraling the ball toward the pins.
Behind us, a single mother and her son
went rapid-fire through the frames.
The eleven-year-old boy had a penchant
for nine pins; whenever the ball swished
right around the tenth, he took off
his blue-rimmed glasses and mimed
throwing them to the ground; it made his mother laugh.

The blacklights pulsed underneath our faces,
neon oranges and greens sucking
the color off our haggard cheeks and onto the wall behind.
Even as we bopped to the too-loud pop music, we knew
it couldn't last. The husband and wife would
go back to their separate beds,
wondering where their marriage had gone.
The father would slip the IV drip
into his father's frail arm, already considering
when the three generations would become two.
The single mother would close the door
to her apartment behind her son and stare
in the walkway mirror, waiting for that second set of arms
to wrap around from behind the way they used to,
the way they now never could. And my family and I
would walk out of the bowling alley into the
harsh sunlight, temples pulsing from the hiss

of the ball hurling passed the painted arrows, knowing
what it feels like to be a hollow pin waiting to topple.



By: Anna Cuce

Tic-Tock

By: Sara Van Reymersdal

it follows me wherever i go
the never-ending thrum
the cluck of its metallic tongues
banging around its glass face

i walk quicker
my feet pulsing against the floor
but everywhere
it comes
it sees me
the clock's black hair accentuates
its perfectly round face
ten and two leering
deep black irises following me
i'm running out of time.

digital and analog and silent and grinding
they all bind my brain with their cruel stare
always assessing:

so much to do

so little time

you'll never make it

fasterfasterfasterfaster—

“Enough!”

I take the clock off the wall
and smash it to the ground.

The glass splinters,

and the ticking ceases, its face stuck
in a lopsided, frozen grin.

can't stop running
fasterfasterfasterfaster
knowing
its words were true
feeling
the clock's presence in my mind
still commanding my life

It'll be back.

Odyssey

By: Sara Van Reymersdal

They told us high school would go by so fast,
that it would be over in a blink of an eye.

And we blinked.

And we blinked.

And we blinked.

It didn't, though, it began
with everyone tethered to their computers,
earbud wires jutting against our cheeks like IV tubes.
It began with ceiling fans, frozen Zoom calls,
and jumping on two minutes before the bell just to hear
other people our age talk to each other.
Gatsby and trig identities,

heavy metal Rasputin on a loop and trap and release corn kernels.

Long walks outside jammed in snack time replaced prancing through the
halls.

We'd steal conversations in the void of silence,
straining against the three foot space between desks.

We tried to keep up with friends, tried to talk to our teachers, tried to get
good grades.

Did we fail? What counts as failure when the world's failed you?

And we blinked.

And we blinked.

And we blinked.

All at once the world snapped into focus
not back but mostly back and moving forward

friend groups huddled together

the smell of French fries

World War I getting into a bar fight

donut sales

sparks fluttering between couples brushing arms

studying for AP exams like it's a job

College?

COLLEGE! Oh my gosh college!

spraying water on kids in ponchos

"This is Sixteen"

soccer by the flagpole

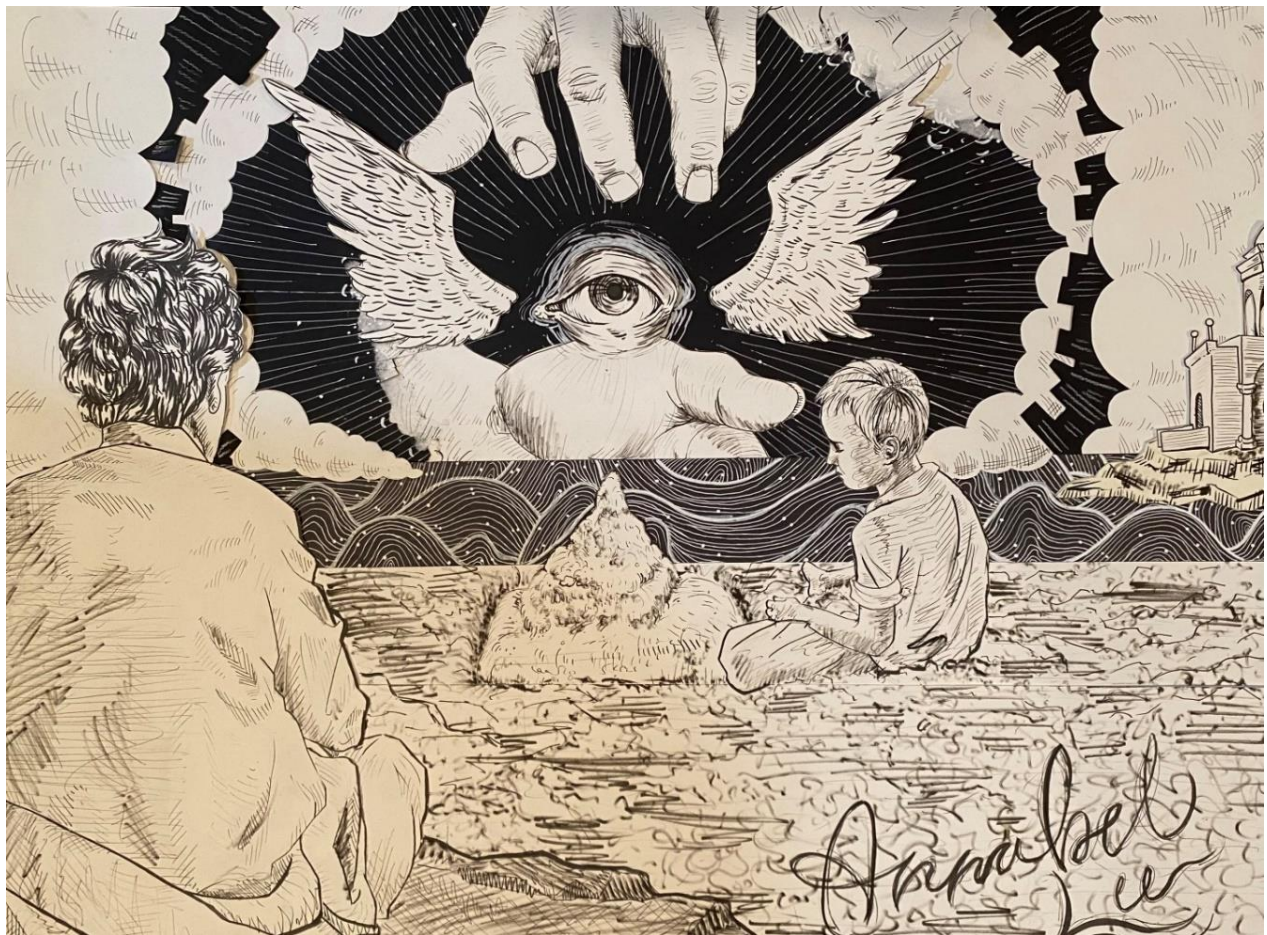
And we blinked blinked blinked

We came back prepared to conquer.

Diesel and coffee blend together in the air
to produce something uniquely West.

We drag our feet to class,

friend groups lingering in intersections
and lovers leaning toward the other.
We're adults...legally, at least.
Hopping fences and sword fighting drunkenly,
derivatives and trade deficits.
We complain about things we'll miss in a year,
time stretching nostalgia taut.
Everything is set on a timer—deadlines for eight different tests or
counting how long until graduation.
Last Math class, last Christmas with family, last fall semester.
And we peel our eyes wide open, afraid of what might happen
if we blink.



By: Delia McHugh

The Existence of Love

By: Maeve Smith

What would love feel like to be in its presence

Its identity, its personality, its characteristics

The unique petal of a rose gently floats off

Of the tender, elegant flower

That he bought for me years back

All signifying one idea in the end...

The theory of heartbreak and forever love.

The softening fade into the distance

The dainty dancing of the stars in the night

The intricate sun electrifying eyes

Enthusiasm and excitement ending in a sudden

Way that is so joyful, but yet

So full of sorrow.

Perspectives of love always changing

The impacts on happiness and freedom

The sadness of heartbreak shatters the need

To search for love again in the midst of it all.

The worlds of two human beings collide
The dramatic influence towards someone's life
The mysterious touch of their heart
Falling in love; what a cheerful feeling
Finally achieving a story that was never believed
To actually be real.

The delicate beauty of what love would feel like
To be in its own presence.

The Rapidity of Maturing

By: Maeve Smith

The joy of being a child
It never lasts for long
Memories vanish everywhere
The moments disappear away into each other...
Like the shine of faded lightbulbs
Who gleam in the darkness of the night.

I am in my elegant room again

I peek at all of the petite paintings
With shades of turquoise and aqua
That surround my favorite color on the walls
The pink paint lasts for ages
It never thinks to crumble in on me.

The bliss of pink makes me enthusiastic
But then I remember the hardship and challenges
Of putting things, memories, and objects behind you
For your past to store
In its mind of its own
It locks up all of your personal memories
Just for itself to see.

I gaze up at all of the old photos that line the walls
They exhilarate my room with radiance
The gentle peace of my beloved room
All disappears with no traces found
Like extravagant butterflies
Captured all of a sudden.
My intricate room shines with freedom
Vibrant patterns of lavender border my bedspread
Before I know it, there is this flood of messes

Objects remain on the ground
On the pink carpet of my room
As if they never left me.

Now I constantly search for more room
Zero storage encompasses me
Closets overflow with clothes, toys, and pictures.

I never want to leave my endless feelings of happiness
That plead to stay in my mind
Every memory, every moment that I hold on to
Forever.

The idea of growing up
It only increases the chance of placing
The little memories behind you.

Thoughts become stored in the backs of brains
Certain moments get further away in my thinking
They all convey how unbelievable
The rapidity of maturing is.

The Haunted House On The Hill

By: Maeve Smith

The abandoned house sits on the green grass steadily
The weeds and grass grow towards the top of the house
The windows and shingles broken up into glass that penetrates
The leftover furniture inside.

This broken-down, tore-up house rests with beauty upon
Gracious mountains that settle behind the deadly house.

Not knowing what is going to come out
The thoughts fill up my dreams
They take towards my nightmares
So many questions with no answers.

I forever cover my eyes and ears
Of the possible scares on the inside
They carve frightening images in my mind
My brain visualizes nerve-racking pictures, possibilities
That remain in my thoughts
Upon my own thinking.

Afraid, so many chances of anything happening

My anxiety increases

My worries repeat to me

My fears never let go...

Timidness takes hold of me

It engulfs me in its dark path.

Meadows intrude into the brown, crumpling walls

They stay stable through rocky Autumn winds

The brisk breezes of fall.

Adventures claim the dangers

Of the haunted house on the hill.



By: Kate Casarella

Music, when soft voices die, vibrates in the memory.

By: Riya Mallavarapu

Music, when soft voices die, vibrates in the memory. That may have been my senior quote, but to me, it was a lifelong truth. I listen to her songs every day as I get ready, and they give me life. They give me her life, the life that I don't deserve to have. She used to play her beautiful songs on the piano, and I used to cheer her on, my tiny voice squealing with every pause. I was scared that the silence meant the song was over, but I never imagined that one day, it really would be over. Forever.

She hid all her scored music under her bed, and although it was the most obvious hiding spot, I pretended to not know. Until it became my only way to connect with her. Bringing the box back to my room, I carefully lifted the lid and started observing each piece. The circles with tails and the weird symbols didn't make any sense to me, yet I knew that I was experiencing the peak of art. There were dozens of them, each with their own delicate names, and I laid them all out on my bedroom floor, being sure not to fold or tear them. The pieces were like a story, and each title was a new chapter, but the last one didn't feel like an ending. *This Moment*. That was the first one I decided to learn. I had never been a music person, let alone a pianist, but I knew this was my only hope to bring her spirit back. She didn't record anything she wrote, and although all of her songs had stuck with me, I knew they would die with no one to play them.

I started with YouTube lessons. I'd never been an especially motivated person, but I'd never had anything to be motivated for before, and I knew I had to do this. I started by learning the 12 keys on the piano. Why did it only go until G? And why were there sharps and flats when you could just have 12 separate letters? I guess I'll never know. Then I learned how to dissect the

score. It took a while, but I learned how to count up the lines and spaces and the difference between treble and bass clef. Then I finally put my hands on the piano.

At first, the sound coming out of there was awful. I mixed up the clefs and forgot to look at the key signature. I had to stop several times to clap out the rhythm. But week by week, I finally pieced it together, and after half a year, I could get through it if I concentrated really hard. I still had such a long way to go, and I knew I would never be able to capture the magic that she had when she played it, but I felt like she was right there with me, encouraging and correcting me.



By: Lucia Casas

I am From

By: Aidan Wolf

I am from lies and misconception
The diluted memories cut reality,
And what my parents don't want me to see,
Remains on the side of the glass window I cannot see.

My childhood taken away so quickly,
Now all I have left are scattered memories,
I can't ever seem to connect together

I am from the PlayStation Two,
Lego Star Wars with my dad,
But the light of my character's lightsaber,
Could never brighten the darkness,
Rather it blinded me instead.

I am from T-ball
The YMCA,
Nintendo,
Pets

I'm not from disfunction,

Chaos,

Breakage.

Right?



By: Maddie Edwards

Nothing

By: Ella Gross

I think you've closed the door you opened.

Slammed it shut,

hid the key,

And in turn,

I find you in nothing.

Not in the songs I listen to, or

the people I meet, or

My restless nights.

When I'm in your presence,

I don't want to talk about anything.

I don't want to hold you close,

With the intention of never letting go.

I don't want to witness your eyes,

Looking,

Searching for something in mine.

I don't want to lay in your lap while I'm crying,

Or discuss our futures, or

If we'll be strangers in five years.

I want to be able to forget.

I swallow your presence,

Choking down the pill that is you,

Without water.

Nothing makes it easy.

I want to be able to not place your face,

In a crowd.

In moments of weakness,

I reflect

Upon what could have been.

I reflect upon,

You.

But I don't feel a yearning,

Just pity.

For me, and

The subjection of pain I let myself endure,

For so long.

I wanted to feel everything,

but now,

You've made me feel nothing.

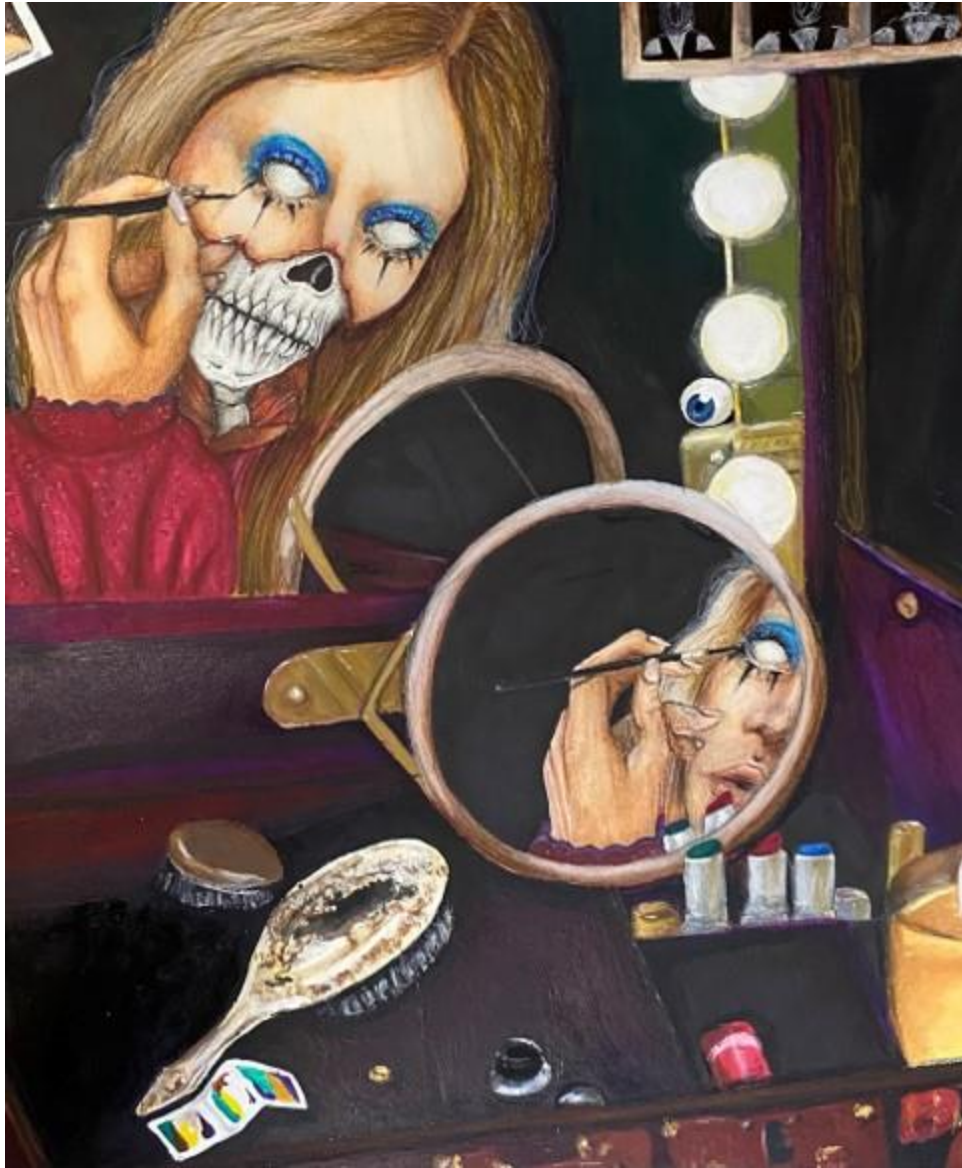


By: Mushroom Barlow

A Pen

By: Grace Krause

A charcoal-colored sparrow
Picking up and placing down
Seeds of thought
With its ballpoint beak
Diving downwards, intently
Onto the snow-white ground
Leaving inky imprints in the blizzard
Of unforeseen language
A potent plastic vestibule of possibility
The longer the sparrow hovers
Hesitant
The heavier the gravitational pull
Between its bean and the sheet
Becomes, enveloping,
Shedding unsubstantial feathers, juxtaposing
The weight of centuries on the holder's mind.



By: Riley McDonald

Solitude

By: Cole Young

Abandoned,

Broken,

Lonely.

The House Doors Left Open,

But Remains In Solitude.

Drained Of Its Patience,

No One Enters.



By: Ryan Bender

The Lighthouse Keeper

By: Anna Cuce

I awake, open my big yellow eye,

Then I wait.

My light skims the sea.

May the waves break my knees,

May the rain pelt my windows,

May the wind tear my lighthouse boy's jacket,

As he stumbles into the wrath of the storm

Yet I stand, I hold my breath

Keep my walls steady, stone sturdy, be the compass

Watch the boy run to the cliff's edge

The sea quickly and angrily climbs the rocks, grabs out

The boy is not afraid though, not for himself

I shine my light towards the water

Where he searches, eyes squinting, hands wrung

I will my beam to be brighter

Please come home, little boat, I beg

Please don't leave him all alone

A giant wave rises—

Atop it, a boat, wooden, splintered, beaten

Atop it, two sailors, two fingers pointed

One at the golden beacon of the house

One at the brother who cares for it



By: Ryan Bender

Locket

By: Lily Appleby

Ivy on burnt brick walls
of what was and is still home.

Stark silver ropes
wind deeper into the veins.

An agonizing ambition
behind doors sealed,
concealing nothing but an urge
to return to memories of home
held deep within.

Gifted by shared blood,
a needed reminder
lays hidden in plain sight.

Its soul made of tragic decay,
pushed ashore and pressured
in the cycle of a thousand years,
Before peaceful rest preserves perfectly.



By: Ryan Bender

Zip It

By: Ethan Cone

The cool air of Tennessee winds blew over the kids' faces. The counselors were setting up the tents and getting the campfire ready. It was their last night at camp. They had just gotten to a nice area to rest for the night after their long day at the festival in town. Most of the kids didn't seem to be bothered, but Timmy was feeling uneasy. He met tons of people that day, but one stood out. He was running the Win a Pig booth. What Timmy could remember was what he looked like. He was taller than most, makeup on his face to make him look like a clown, soulless eyes, and he had what appeared to be a beer belly. Timmy also remembered what the guy told him, "We're all pigs in one way or another, buster," as he pointed towards the piglets. It was unsettling because of how he said it.

It was getting late, and Timmy was too tired to keep on worrying about the creepy clown. Timmy started unzipping his tent when he heard some coughing from deep in the woods around him. He quickly tried to rip open the tent as the coughing got closer. Timmy was starting to freak out, and the zipper didn't seem to want to budge. Out of the bushes came Jordan, one of the counselors, with a cig in her hand. They both looked at each other.

"Why aren't you in bed yet?" she asked.

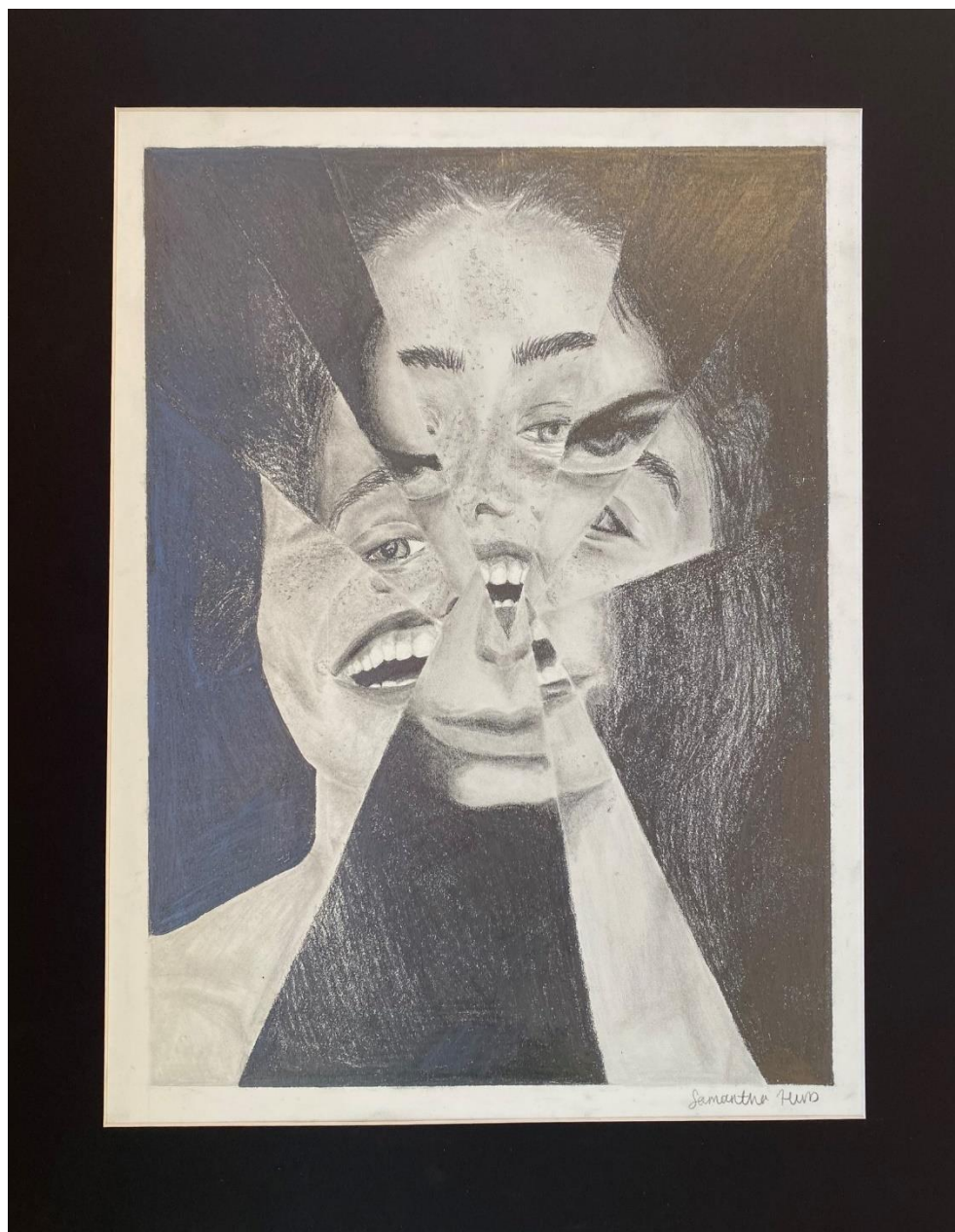
"I uh-I'm about to uh-." Timmy was embarrassed.

"Just go," she said as she leaned up against a tree, "and you didn't see anything. We aren't allowed to be smoking while on the job, so zip it, you hear?"

"Y-yes ma'am," Timmy stuttered.

As Timmy turned back around to start unzipping the tent again, he heard a muffled scream. He turned around quickly, and Jordan was gone. She couldn't have gone anywhere that fast. He started walking towards the tree she was backed up on. Very quietly, he heard tearing and munching on some sort of meaty object. He peered around the tree and saw a beast absolutely annihilating a corpse. All Timmy recognized from the corpse was one of the shoes that Jordan owned, a dark brown hiking shoe she always wore. Timmy started to slowly step back in fear and stepped right onto a branch. The branch cracked, and the beast quickly turned its head and screeched. It had the same clownish look from the man at the festival except his face was morphed into what he thought was some sort of demon.

Timmy stood completely still. The beast got on all fours and started to investigate the noise. It came really close to where he was standing and started making little noises as it looked to be sniffing around. It didn't see him. Maybe it only can see and hear sound. The beast got bored and started crawling away. Timmy also started carefully walking away. He just saw the one he adored get eaten. He didn't know what to do. But then he remembered the conversation he just had. He was to do exactly what Jordan had told him. To be quiet. To zip it.



By: Samantha Herb

Fictional Fall

By: Eva Rosini

When my caged heart first
Fell, it was not for
My elementary crush, who
Complained I talked too loud.

It was not during
My unbearably awkward middle school years
Or from a stolen glance
During a sleep-inducing lecture
While drool dripped out of my mouth.

No, what is so heartbreaking
and vomit-inducing about my first love is that
It was never real,
Not for the other at least.

Because my heart tripped
Through the ink-structured pages
That created in-depth description,
Perfectly shaped personalities with cheek bones

Like the Greek gods, consequently setting

Way too high of standards.

Yes, I fell for a fictional man.

You may ask yourself

How I'm not embarrassed by this admission

Surely, I can't be happy with this compromising fact.

Just put yourself out there! You say,

Just take your shot,

Experience the real world.

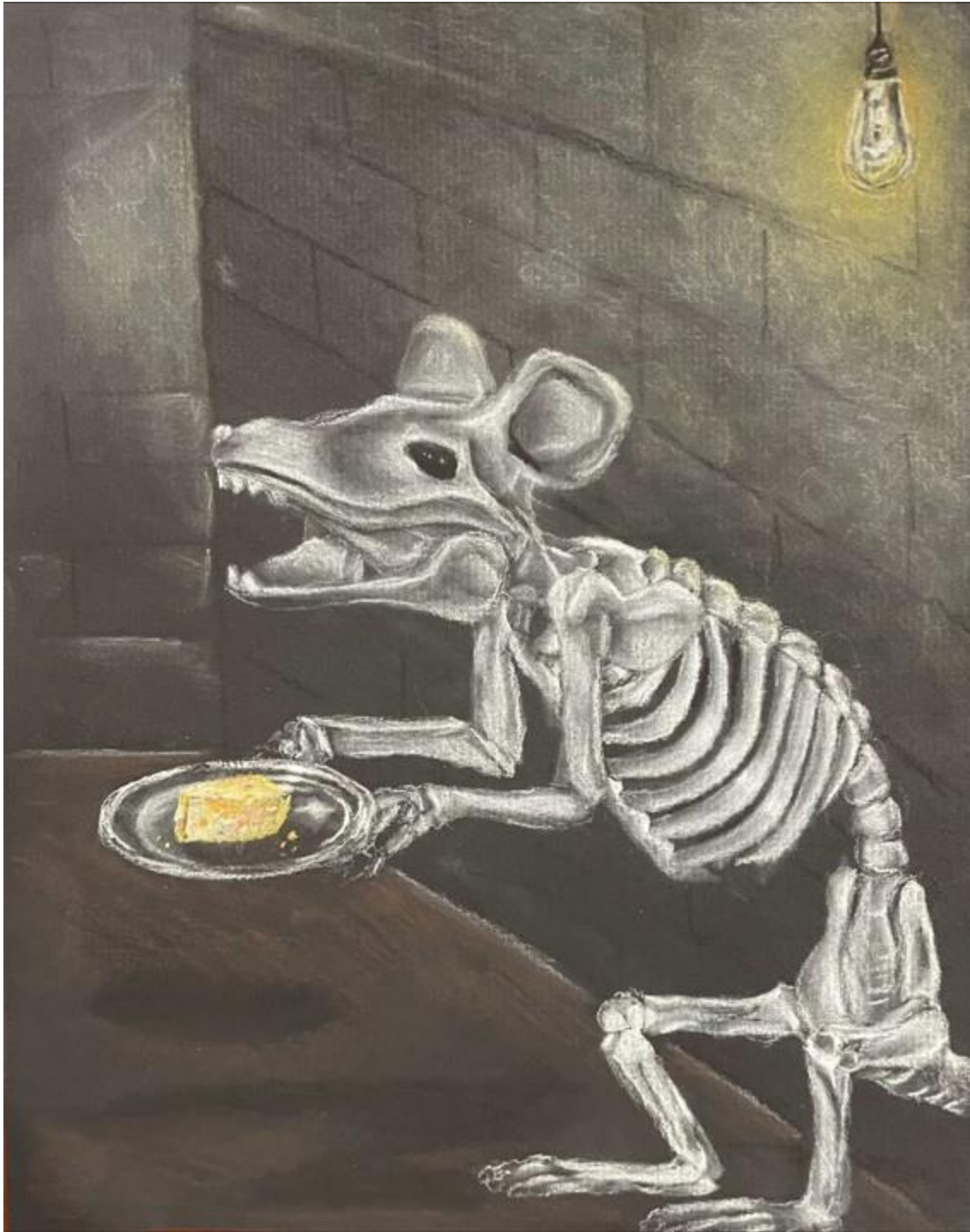
No! I say,

At least this way, I can never be

Disappointed

or be the

Disappointment.



By: Samantha Kubala