

Community College
of Denver

Student Literary &
Art Magazine

2019
2020

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Hello Ourglass Community!

Ourglass, now in its 40th year of publication, is the journal of the English, Graphic Design and Visual Art Departments at the Community College of Denver. We are dedicated to providing a forum for the poetry, prose, drama, design and artwork of our students.

Submit Your Work!

Ourglass publishes the best creative work produced each year by CCD students. To that end, we accept submissions between Sept. 15 and May 15 of each academic year.

Please submit one 10 minute play, one story, essay, set of three to five poems, or set of two to four short-short stories, as well as any interesting combinations thereof. We aim to publish a variety of styles, voices, and genres.

All writing submissions will be eligible for the Leonard Winograd Award. Now in its third year, this award, named in honor of Leonard Winograd, longtime English professor and editor of *Ourglass* at CCD. Finalists are chosen by the editors, and the winner selected by a faculty member.

To find out more, or to donate to the Winograd Award, go to CCD.edu/Ourglass. The link for writing submissions is located at CCD.edu/Ourglass. To submit artwork, please contact the Visual Art Department.

Due to the sheer volume of work we must consider, we can only notify the authors chosen to be published. If you don't hear from us, please do try again next year.

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook | [Facebook.com/CCDOurglass](https://www.facebook.com/CCDOurglass)

If you have any questions, email: brian.dickson@ccd.edu

Thanks,
The editors

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The rain. The wind.

No.

The crackle of trees as they bend over in submission to the greater strength of the malicious whistles and howls of a vicious breeze.

Yes.

A lowly.

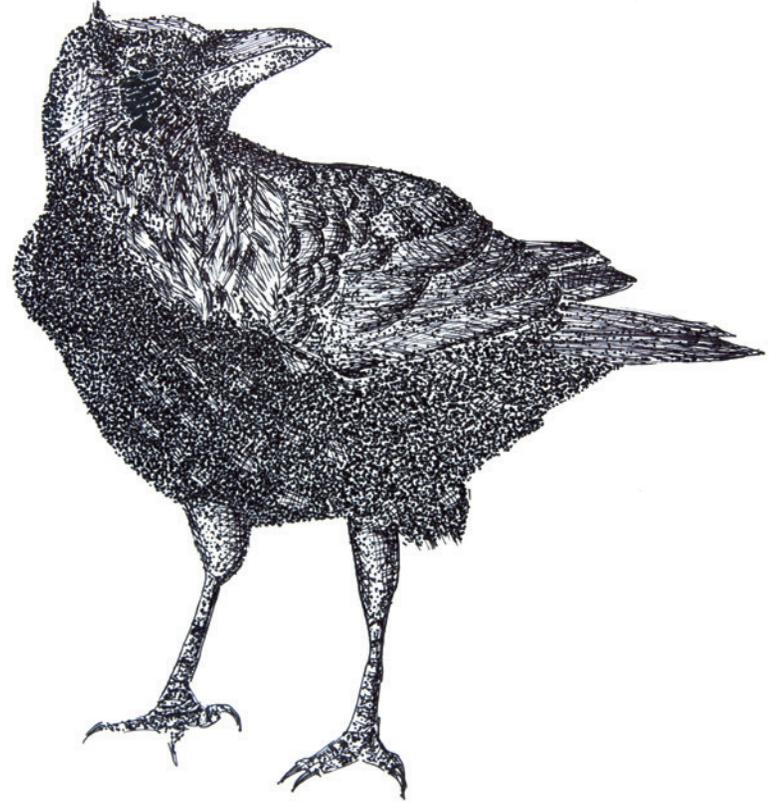
No.

A lonely raven flying upstream
against the monotonous patterns of adversity,
wings nearly clipped
by blades and daggers of air,
revealing soft pink skin and
fingertips.

Through storm clouds they see
not feathers, but
silken hair

like ashes and coal.

Taken is her air as she falls
to the dirt.



Under the oak tree outside the Met
before the rain
soaked souls
ambled downtown
noshing dirty water dogs and exchanging reveries
inspired by limned portraits
of lightning creators,
begging for head of thunder
like Kerouac's Golden Eternity
inhaling saccharine air from pushcarts
as train cars rumbled below
Time sublimated into ether
like droplets onto hot pavement
as the city hailed cabs
and stuffed check presenters with bills
only to run off like tributaries into the sun.
They say it never sleeps
but was it ever really awake?



You are the moon luminescent white and away
 But my want leaves me waiting
Still a nightjar sitting silent
 Nightly song stripped bone bare
In your milky piece meal glow
 Half-baked hand kneaded sliver

Of moon I will take
 What I can get





The bombs. You sent bombs. They fell from the sky. They painted once golden sands red. The bombs did wonders on my hearing. A storm without rain, only thunder. The rubble. The rubble that once stood solid and tall is now bleeding. The rubble holds the bodies beneath it, hostage. Sometimes the rubble gets stuck beneath my mother’s fingernails as she digs for lost children. The ashes. The ashes mix with charred flesh. The ashes make it hard for me to breathe. I know what humanity smells like when it burns. Its residue resides in my lungs. Lung cancer. The homes. The homes no longer have a head of household. Fathers become extinct. The homes quickly turn into orphanages. The mosques. The mosques no longer echo sounds of prayer. The mosques are now a temporary sanctuary for lost children who are found.

I know that bombs rumble before they land. I know that daytime screams turn into sobs at night. I know that children are the loudest. I know of children who are never found. I know the determination of a mother that refuses to leave her children behind, even though they are no longer alive. I know that they won. They will always win; they never give us the chance to recover. Is there a way to recover from this? I know that concrete easily stains, it’s very porous. It soaks up my people. I guess that’s how we’ll learn our history, by studying pores, anthropology. That’s if they haven’t gotten to the schools. I hope they haven’t gotten to the schools. How else will I free my people? I haven’t learned how to tell human ashes apart from dust yet. I don’t think I will ever learn. I know that homes turn into houses when rebuilt. I know most people cannot afford to rebuild. I know they’ll come for the mosques next. I know hospitals are running out of room, even the floors are full. I know, I, like many others, have become a refugee and I know you are not very kind to refugees, although you should be, for it was your bombs that created them. ■

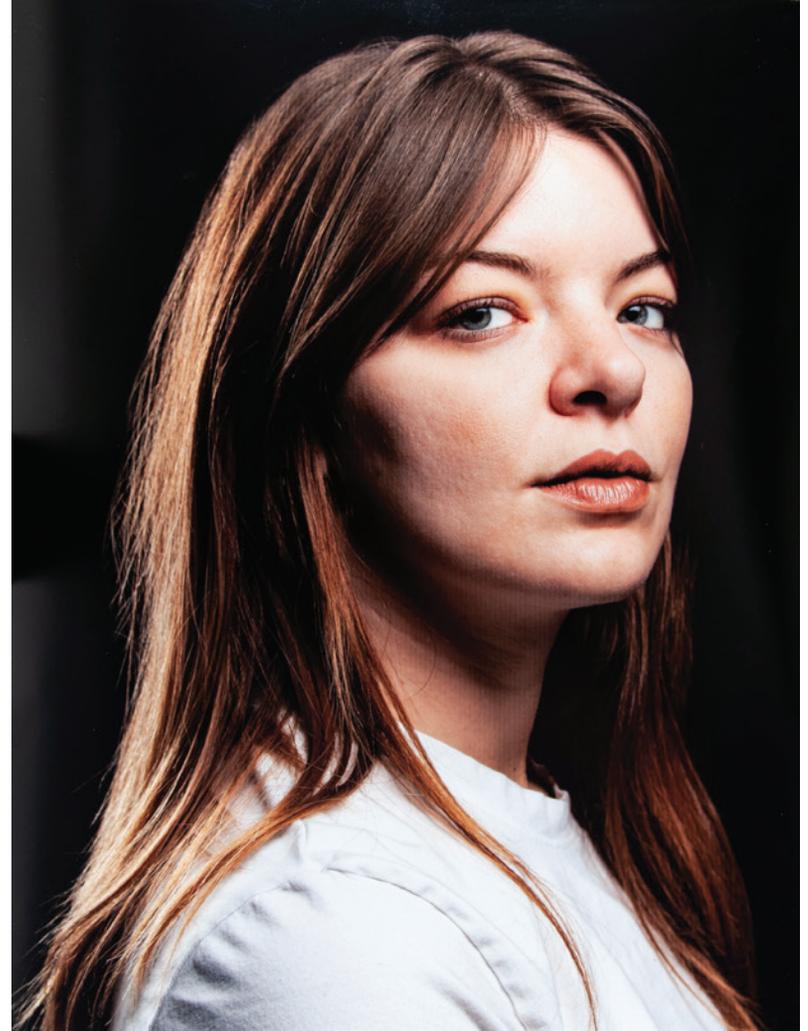


you step on my shoe,
i would never step on yours
i'm not as ruthless as you

i hear your name and i
Let my thoughts wander
and allow you to barge
into my head.
and you sit
on the couch of my thoughts,
You get too comfortable.
And that's my fault,
i let you make yourself at home,
at this broken home,

you fuckin' homewrecker.

but other times,
i hear your name
and the results
whimper, "empty"



Bread

This morning I bought a pumpernickel boule
 Roughly palm rounded and roasted nut dark
 The woman asked me, "Would you
 Like this sliced" and I decided I
 Would tear it

 And drag it through butter
 Scattering crumbs on my couch to be later pressed
 Into my skin like flowers between journal pages
 as I fall asleep there,
 and fuck,
 it's 4PM, and I forgot to open the blinds again
 and the plants need the light.

Blue

This morning I discovered
 Our blood is not truly
 Blue in our veins
 A common myth stemming from the veins that tend
 To rest high in our flesh
 And the blue wave spears
 Of light
 they throw
 Scattering upwards
 Or back.

A thick slit shame settled over my stomach
 twisting and (blue and
 Self-Imposed), impressionability my eight-year-old hallmark,
 My eyes stumble over this
 Shame in the paragraphs
 beneath click bait head-line epitaph.

Thread

I found a common thread
 In which unraveled, shimmering and sickly
 I find (for some reason: Self-Imposed)
 I am unable to forgive myself the slightest of failures;
 Misstep

 Or misinformation
 Or misunderstanding.
 Because if I do not punish myself someone else will and
 What is shame if not
 a preparation?
 The cliff bottom bracing for a shoe
 to come
 battering down

Grey

Tonight I spit into the sink
 In self disgusted passing at the taste of my mouth and
 found my spit grey with fools' gold flecks of black
 Which made me think
 of the mottled grey smokers' lungs we saw every year
 in the elementary school gym
 And as much as I wish
 My ashen spit
 Spattering our ivory ceramic sink
 Covered in hair
 Was a metaphor for
 Cleansing

 Or realization
 Or growth

I realized quickly it was only
 pumpernickel





I used to walk the sidewalk in front of my house, trying to complete the circle left open by the mouth of the cul-de-sac. We moved into the house when I was eight. While the movers set boxes in the house, I walked along the sidewalk, putting my heel in front of my toe and leaving no space between them. I was wearing oversized, red rubber rain boots that day and it took 104 steps to complete the circle. I always wore the red rubber boots after that. On sunny days, my feet would get hot in the suffocating boots. On rainy days, the rainwater would fill the empty spaces in the oversized boots to the brim until I finally grew into them. On holidays, I would sneak out of the house, away from my family, by tiptoeing outside because the boots would squeak on our hardwood floor.

I was a creature of habit in those days. Every day after school, I would come home and walk through the mouth of the cul-de-sac. I would make a mental note on how it never changed. It never grew or shrunk. The mouth was always open, and it reminded me of my class fish in 5th grade. He, Toby the Fish, always had his mouth slightly open. This was because he needed to be able to push the water down his gills to turn into oxygen, and the movement of opening and closing his mouth would do this. If Toby closed his mouth, he would die. If the mouth of the cul-de-sac closed, I supposed I would die and my family and all my neighbors. So, when I walked around the cul-de-sac and completed the circle, I imagined it was happy with me because it must be tiring to keep your mouth open all the time. Toby always had his mouth open, and he always seemed tired. I wanted to help him and tell him, "If you want to take a break, I'll push water down your gills." I figured if I used a straw I could blow the water over them, and then he could close his mouth and take a nap. But then I thought if he didn't have to pump water that way, would he start to think about where he was? Would he see all the human children staring at him and wonder what they were? Would he see the fish book and shark book that his tank was wedged between and have a stroke from realizing that he wasn't the only fish out there, but has lived his entire life as if he was? So, I decided not to try to help him. Besides I was the only kid in the class who would clean his tank.

The tank was almost always dirty and the thought of the filthy water getting in my mouth scared me more than Toby not knowing there were other fish in the world. It must be a lonely existence to think you are the only one.

After I walked through the mouth of the cul-de-sac and made sure it hadn't shrunk or grown, I would go inside and make myself a peanut butter and banana sandwich. I would put my red rubber boots on and eat and walk the cul-de-sac. Heel to toe...1.... bite....heel to toe....2.... bite. I should mention that I was deathly afraid of choking at this time in my life. My mother would always tell me not to eat while walking because I could choke. But I was more afraid of the cul-de-sac turning against me if I didn't complete its circle right when I got home. If it saw me go into my house and make myself a sandwich and sit down and eat, it would think it wasn't my first priority. Then what if it decided to close its mouth? Heel to toe...27..... bite. I always finished eating my sandwich at step 27.

I would save the final bite for Harry the Hairy Dog, who had one lazy eye and always reclined on the lawn of The-House-No-One-Lived-In-But-Wasn't-For-Sale. I didn't know which house he belonged to, or if maybe he just came back because I fed him, but he was nice and always sat there waiting for me and left when I was done walking the cul-de-sac. I always finished the circle right back in front of my house at 104 steps, then I would look at Harry the Hairy Dog and he would tilt his head, and I would get an overwhelming sense of being in danger. Harry the Hairy Dog would run off, and I would run back into my house with my heart pounding so hard I could hear it in my ears. This was my every day. Then I turned 13.

I came home from middle school and made my sandwich inside the house as usual. That year, Toby the Fish died. I knew of his death because my friend's little sister was in the class and she cried on the bus the day he died. I only cried when I walked home. He was all alone. I left the sandwich on the counter while I put my red rubber boots on. I used to be able to just slip into them, but recently they had begun to shrink, and I would have to sit down to tug them onto my feet. It started to be painful and I would lather my feet in olive oil just to get them on. But on a Tuesday, three weeks after my thirteenth birthday, they wouldn't budge no matter

what amount of olive oil I put on my feet. I began to panic, and I started to cry, fearing the end was here and the cul-de-sac would close its mouth on us, and my parents wouldn't be able to get back in, and I would die alone. I screamed and tugged until the bananas on my sandwich became brown and the bread was soggy. Defeated, I put another pair of shoes on. They were yellow rubber rain boots that my parents gave me on my thirteenth birthday because they noticed the red ones had shrunk. The yellow boots seemed bigger than the red ones, but I guessed that was because I didn't remember what the red ones looked like before they shrunk. I grabbed my soggy sandwich and ran outside in the yellow boots. It was still August and today was the hottest day of the year. Harry the Hairy Dog wasn't there; I figured it was because someone moved into The-House-No-One-Lived-In-But-Wasn't-For-Sale-And-Now-Someone-Lived-There. I began my walk. Heel to toe...1.... bite heel to toe...2....bite. By the time I got to 27 steps; I wasn't in front of the house Harry the Hairy Dog was usually at. I had been holding my almost finished sandwich for a few steps. This was odd and I began to be concerned. I ate the last bite because it was becoming sticky from the heat and soginess of the bread. Heel to toe...28.

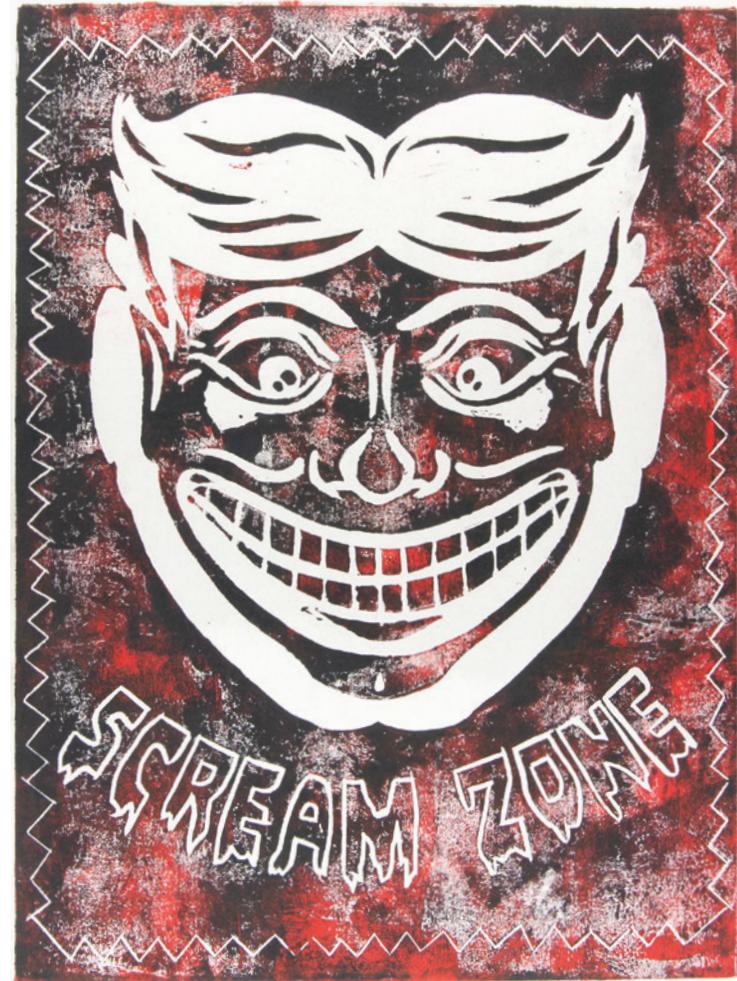
When I finished, right back at the front of my house, my heart was pounding so hard. It had only taken me 93 steps to complete the cul-de-sac's circle. I was afraid and the mouth of the cul-de-sac seemed like it was about to close, so I started walking again. I made sure my heel was as close to my toe as I could make it. I figured I must've messed up and counted wrong. I walked all the way around, but the number came out the same. 93. 93 steps. It had to be the boots. They were too big on my feet. I took them off and walked barefoot on the hot concrete. Heel to toe, all the way around. The concrete burned, and I felt like I might cry as I felt blisters start to boil up on the bottom of my feet. I finished the circle and it was 99 steps. The panic was setting in and I realized I was alone. The silence made my ears ring.

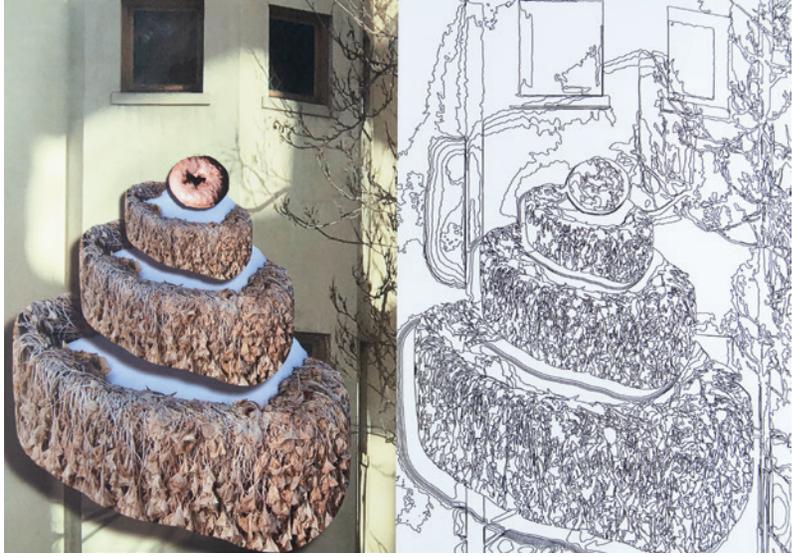
I walked it again, this time putting my heel slightly on top of my toes. The blisters on my feet were now cruel, and the heat made them bleed. The mouth was closing. As I walked, I cried at the pain and when I finished in front of my house again, it was 103 steps. One short. My legs were trembling and I had left bloody footprints down the cul-de-sac's sidewalk. The bleeding wouldn't stop, even as I rinsed my feet in the garden hose. I sat on

the porch, rinsing my feet, when Harry the Hairy Dog showed up. He slowly walked over to me and licked my fingers after he smelled the residue of banana and peanut butter. It was the first time I realized he was old. He didn't have the excitement he used to have when I gave him sandwich bits, and he was satisfied with just licking off the flavor from my fingers. He stuck his tongue in the hose and drank some water. Then he laid down on our lawn.

That night, I heard the sound of thousands of little fingers tapping on my window. I had to wrap my feet in gauze and crawl everywhere. Because of this, my parents didn't even notice my feet because they didn't know I was even around. I crawled past them to get dinner and then cookies and they didn't think twice. My swollen feet kept me up that night and the fingers tapping, begging me to come outside became louder as the night went on. When I finally looked out, it was just rain. The rain couldn't wash away my bloody footprints.

As I grew up, I realized that the cul-de-sac's mouth would never close. I threw away my yellow rubber rain boots and never walked the cul-de-sac again. No amount of rain or snow has ever been able to wash away the blood on the sidewalk. You can still see the footprints today. Toby the Fish didn't die because he closed his mouth, but because he was too old to keep breathing. As his lonely body floated to the bottom of the fish tank, I wonder what he thought. I wonder if he thought that he had spent all that time breathing just to die in the same place he had been his entire life. ■

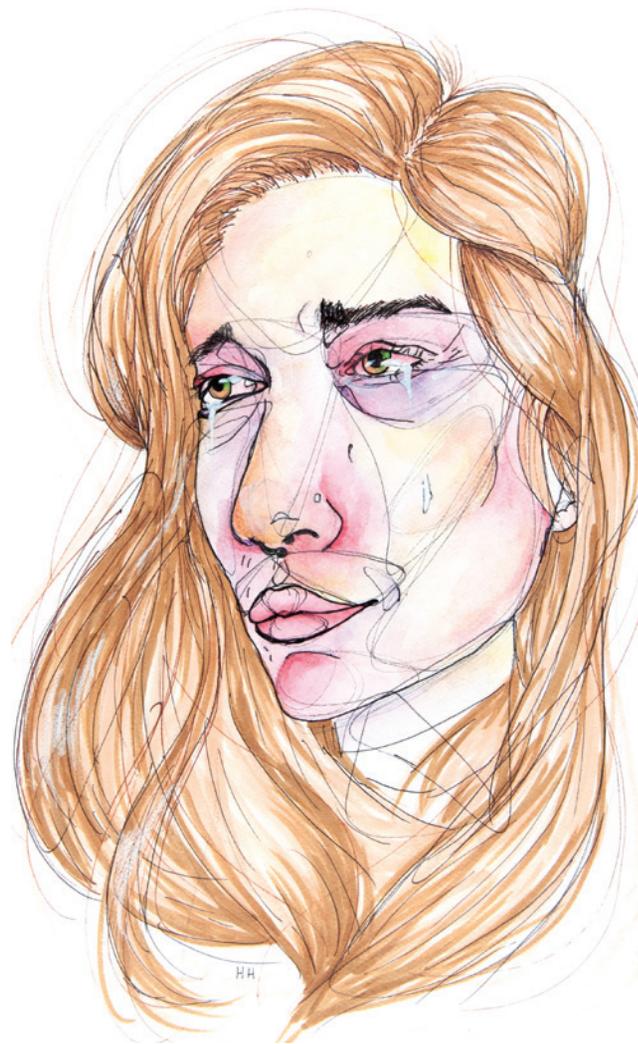




Mother has a tattoo
scrawled across her ring finger.
“Mine” it reads.
An archaic possession
to remind her
she is not her own.

In the shower,
skin does not respond to pleading
no matter how hard she scrubs.
Water boils
breath into sobs
as she tries to reclaim herself.

By day her hands wash themselves
compulsively.
Fingers twist,
lathered in imaginary soap
and elusive water.
She does not know she does it.



I hold the body of a
dead chicken up to the light.
Red juices ooze
out of its crotch when
I squeeze its pale-grey gut,
splashing onto my apron
as they land on the
cold metallic counter of the
industrial deli kitchen.

It weighs about the same
as a small child would.

I see a vision of
lemonade stands and
hot summer days --
piggy banks clanking
and clattering with change.

I tear open another
box of chicken,
choke down the fumes
of factory-farmed-death.
I consider the life this one
lived before it took its last breath,
compare it to mine as I stare
deep into the empty space
above its chest where there
used to be eyes,
wonder if my weight in gold
drops each time I handle
a new box of deceased flesh.

I don't even eat meat,
but you've got to make
a living
somehow ... right?



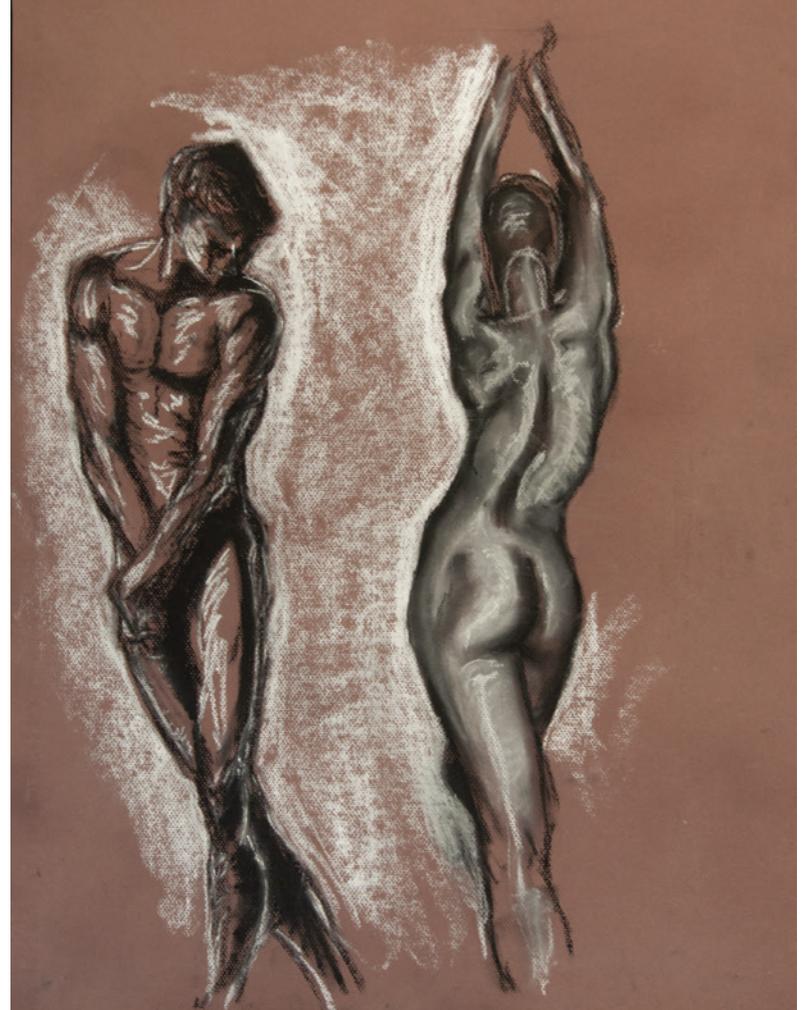
I have prayed each and every one
of the sixty-three days that I have been here and
not once has it been like
the hot and hurried prayer
I gasp against your lips.

And no number of workshops
about our own conception of a higher power
could prepare me
for finding it underneath my fingertips.
Reciting the Rosary as
My thumb traces the dimple above
Your rose-silk hips.

No need for the lord's prayer

Athletic leggings and cotton boy shorts,
that I find covering my hands aren't
gold rimmed pages
of a hymnal,
momentarily bookmarked,
as I listen to hushed chants of breath.
But something in the air feels
Rimmed with gold.
Shimmering off
the sweat gathered on your breast.
Fluorescents ascended, our warmest closest stars

And I know
I'm here
to learn how to be sober,
But all I want to learn is
how to be the person you fall in love with





You wake up in an unfamiliar room. You've slept pretty hard, you were quite tired after all, and it's that heavy sleep that dulls the reality of the bed you are waking up in. In the split second before you're fully cognizant, you start to panic, your heart beating almost as fast as last night-

Last night. The realization of where you are hits you, not like a ton of bricks, but rather like a flu shot. It stings at first, but as your foggy mind clears away the mystery, the needle comes out and you calmly and solemnly remember the train of events that landed you here, in this bed, in this almost empty and nondescript room. Then, the sadness creeps in, and it's almost too overwhelming until the nurse walks in, and the mask comes on. She says your name as if asking a question, and you give a quiet yes as a response also phrasing it as a question. The nurse asks you if you are aware of what is happening. You answer yes, yes is the answer she wants to hear, and it's not necessarily a lie. You are aware that you are in a mental health facility, and you are aware of the events that put you here. In a way, you aren't quite positive what is happening in your brain, you can't trust your brain, you can't trust that your brain is human, or that you aren't a robot, or that you aren't a sleeper cell agent like in that movie the Manchurian Candidate. You aren't sure what is happening, but that wasn't really the question the nurse was asking, so you tell her yes, because that is the answer she wants to hear.

The nurse asks you a third question.

"Would you like to come to the social room for some breakfast?"

You don't. You don't want to come out to the social room, and you certainly don't have the appetite for breakfast. You don't really want to be here; you aren't sure if here is really here. You only want certainty and they aren't serving that for breakfast. But, you know that the nurse wants a particular answer from you, and the sooner you get out of here the better-

"Well if you change your mind, feel free to come out and join the others. I'll come wake you up when it's time for meds."

You took too long to answer, and the nurse took that as an answer in itself and has left you in your unfamiliar room. You wince, knowing that this answer is

the wrong answer, and you may have to stay here longer than you want to. Alas, you were tired though, and mistakes are bound to happen when you are tired.

You glance around your unfamiliar room. There's not much about it to be familiar. To the right of your medical grade and nondescript bed is another one, just as medical grade and nondescript as the one you can't seem to leave. No one is in this bed; they have not assigned you a roommate yet. You consider this the first of very few blessings as you slowly take the sheets off your tired body. This reveals your unfamiliar clothes. For a split second that sense of panic creeps in, just like it did last night, until you remember that they took your familiar clothes last night, and you're stuck with these until tomorrow when you're permitted your first visitors. The clothes are as medical grade and nondescript as your bed, which you are still laying in. You decide two flu shots is as good of a breakfast as any, and that you would really like to wash down your meal with a good nap. So, you close your eyes as tight as you can, and you forcefully will yourself to sleep. You can be certain of sleep-

You wake up in an unfamiliar room. It's the third flu shot panic you feel today. The nurse phrases your name as a question again and tells you it's time for meds. The meds are not phrased as a question, as they are not optional. This bothers you, but again it isn't optional. For the first time of the day your feet touch the ground and you realize you are wearing unfamiliar socks. These socks are medical grade, and they are amazing. You count them as your second of very few blessings and foggily shuffle your way into the common room and await further orders. Instructions? Which sounds less militaristic? Why does that matter right now? You debate this silently as a different, unfamiliar nurse behind a wall hands you a tiny cup with two pills in it, and a less-tiny but still tiny cup with cold water in it. The unfamiliar different nurse explains that one pill is an anti-anxiety pill, for the anxiety. She explains that the other pill is an anti-psychotic, for the psychosis. This bothers you. In your mind, you aren't experiencing psychosis, you just happened to experience a very real and very terrifying vision last night and haven't figured out the proper way of explaining it quite yet. Whether this bothers you or not,

you take the pills because they weren't phrased as a question, and slump into the closest chair as you await further instructions.

As you are awaiting further instructions, you take in the unfamiliar common area. Next to the chair you are slumping in, are other identical chairs perfect for slumping in. These chairs do not feel medical grade but are more similar to chairs you might find in a higher end bowling alley, or a middle end waiting room. Perhaps in that way they are medical grade. Further down the room are high end bowling alley slumping couches. There are nondescript tables, one in particular is covered in an unfinished puzzle. How fitting. At the helm of the room is a desk with nurses at it, near the window where they gave you the pills to stop being anxious and psychotic. The most familiar nurse who keeps calling you by your question mark name is there, along with two newer unfamiliar nurses. The room all together feels almost familiar, like the movie "One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest", only Jack Nicholson isn't there, and none of the nurses seem completely evil. Suspicious maybe, but that might be a you problem.

In front of a middle end waiting room slumping couch, is a TV. This detail is surprising to you, as you weren't expecting such a familiar commodity. Near your slumping chair is a more perplexing detail, two old school payphones hang on the wall framed by wooden structures for privacy and garnished with plastic and metal chairs, the kind you might find in a junior high or high school. Beside the hallways where your unfamiliar room (along with many rooms that look just like it), is a meeting room, where the familiar nurse tells you to go. It wasn't phrased as a question, so once again, you know it isn't optional.

You go into the room expecting the stereotypical meeting, one with coffee, where you all say your name and explain what you are and why you're here. This idea makes you incredibly nervous, as you haven't quite figured a solid answer to either of those questions, and you weren't quite prepared to come up with a convincing story on the spot quite yet. Your feet feel incredibly heavy in your medical grade blessing socks and you march towards the gallows and are greeted by-



Coloring pages? And markers? And coffee? You were expecting the coffee, but you are still a little confused by the rest of the scene as people move past you and take their seats at the table. You hesitantly take a seat next to them and sit quietly. No one talks, not even the nurses, and everyone is completely content to just color away, as if nothing unfamiliar were even taking place. This is perhaps the most unfamiliar thing of all, even though all the pieces are things you can recognize. You sit at the table, not doing anything for a while, until you notice a nurse about to say something to you. Realizing you are not providing the answer they are looking for you quickly grab a random coloring page of, Spiderman? Out of the pile and begin working your way into assimilating with the group as to not raise any suspicion. The nurse seems to no longer need to ask you a question, and you consider the whole ordeal a miniscule blessing to be thrown in a pile with the socks, and whatever it was you decided was your first blessing of the day.

You finish coloring Spiderman a bit too early, as no one at the table is done quite yet. Not wanting to blow your cover you quickly grab another coloring sheet, this one of a young girl and a puppy, and continue trying your hardest to assimilate. You consider that maybe if you color enough of these sheets they might let you off early for good behavior, but shortly afterwards you realize that this is probably another ridiculous notion that you lump in with the ones that landed you here, in this unfamiliar building doing a familiar but liminary task at a mid-grade waiting room table sitting in a high school chair. Eventually as your halfway through your third coloring sheet someone else at the table gets up and shuffles their way out of the room, and presumably back to their room. You can't quite be sure because you don't see them complete this task, but you take this as a symbol that you can do the same and not raise to much suspicion from your handlers.

You were right. You successfully make it back to your unfamiliar room and lie back down in your unfamiliar bed. You heave a heavy, heavy sigh. You are alone again. With nothing familiar in your surroundings, and nothing descriptive enough to stare at your thoughts begin to drift to last night. You think about the ambulance ride, the look on your parent's face. The look on your terrified boyfriends face when you asked him to kill yo-

You begin to panic but can't quite muster up the right recipe. You took a pill earlier that they told you was for this exact purpose. The ensuing emotion is somewhere between survival anxiety and numbness and is all together uncomfortable. You close your eyes and force yourself into slumber again. You do not dream.

You wake up in an unfamiliar room as the familiar nurse softly shakes you and asks you a question.

"What?"

You reply

"Are you hungry? We're about to have lunch."

You aren't hungry, but you figure you can only skip a few more meal before the staff starts to become suspicious, and you aren't in the mood to be bothered.

"Sure."

The nurse leads you back into the common area, which feels quite empty. The nurse can tell by the confused look on your face, that you are confused, and ascertains that you are wondering where all the people you colored with earlier are. She explains to you that they are all at the mess hall, a privilege that you have not been given yet. She also explains that after you eat you have an appointment with the resident psychotherapist. This bothers you. She tells you to sit down at the table next to the table with the puzzle on it. She sets a high school tray in front of you and on it is a lukewarm burger, a bag of chips, and a container of juice.

You eat the burger. You eat the chips. You eat the juice. You are killing it at being as unsuspecting as possible. The nurse grabs your tray and places it back on a kitchen grade rack where she grabbed it from. She grabs another tray, and for the first time you notice John.

John is much older than you, he's perhaps around 40 maybe 45? He sports a long gray beard, not as long as a wizard, but just a hair longer than a lumberjack. You notice the tray the nurse has grabbed from John still has a fair amount of food left on it. The nurse puts the tray back on the rack and returns to John. She phrases his name as a question. John does not respond. She does it again. John does not

respond verbally, but you can see in his eyes he wants to. The nurse asks John if he knows where he is.

"Yes."

The nurse is pleased. The nurse follows up and ask John to tell her where he is. John laughs timidly and smiles.

"Computer land."

The nurse is not pleased. She sighs a little and goes back to her desk and writes something down. From where you are sitting it is impossible to read what she wrote down, but you already know. You are also not pleased with John's answer.

You are not pleased because you understand John's answer completely.

The therapist asks you some questions.

"Can you tell me why you're here?"

"Has this ever happened to you before?"

"Have you ever mixed hard liquor and cough syrup?"

You try your absolute hardest to spin a story about any of these questions to remain unsuspecting, but the fact of the matter is you can't answer them. The therapist jots this down on her legal pad and sets you free to lie on your unfamiliar bed, and you forcefully will yourself to sleep once again. You do not dream.

You wake up in an unfamiliar room. It's dinner time, and the nurse wants to know if you are hungry. You are not in the mood to remove the mask anymore. You blow her off, and for the last time today will yourself to sleep. You dream.

You dream of a village in Vietnam. You are the American soldiers burning it to the ground. You are the Villagers. You can see through everyone's eyes so vividly, like a memory, though it is 2016 and you are not even 21. There is no logical reason for you to have this memory, yet you do, and it's vivid, and it is you and as you are both burning alive and witnessing your own murder from the eyes of your murderer you-

You wake up in an unfamiliar room. This time the panic rushes up to fill your chest like a helium balloon, and it's a tad harder to pull the flu shot out and calm down. You look around the room, see an empty bed next to you, and almost

nothing else in the room to use as a landmark to recognize your location. That is until the familiar nurse comes in and phrases your name like a question. How fitting.

“Yes?”

“Are you hungry?”

You don't want to be hungry, but you are, and it is going to be much, much harder to will yourself to sleep this time so you take the nurse up on her offer. Better to remain unsuspecting anyways right? You eat your breakfast near John, who tells the nurse that he is in computer land. This bothers you quite a bit more upon hearing it this time.

Instead of coloring this morning a doctor is teaching everyone how to do yoga with a bath towel. You are not very good at it, but John is significantly worse. Perhaps there isn't a way to be good at this. You manage to will yourself to sleep again, and the familiar nurse (you've learned her name is Amy) asks if it's normal for you to sleep as much as you have been. You contemplate this question. If you say no, this will alert Amy that something is abnormal, which you don't want. If you answer yes, this will alert Amy that something is abnormal, but has been for a long time. You decide that the second option is better, and you lie to Amy and tell her “Yes, this is a normal amount of time that I spend sleeping per day” and she leaves you alone. You do not see her document this, but you know she does, and that makes sense to you.

Your mother and father visit you during lunch. This is awkward for several reasons. For one, you are in a mental hospital and you have not really come to terms with the series of events that have transpired to warrant that. For two, your parents are not married and have not been for several years, and this is the first time you three have been in the same room since you were required to go to a group therapy session for children of divorce even though you were 17 and totally cool with it. For three, you are in a mental hospital, your parents are divorced and your totally cool with it, and it is a lunch time at the mental hospital and John just told the nurse he is in computer land and you are totally cool with it. Not much



conversation happens between you and your parents. You hold your head in your hands, and your father takes a picture of you doing so without you being aware. He will show you this picture months in the future and you will find it to be inappropriate. Your mother witnesses him doing this and shakes her head because it is inappropriate. You are unaware of all of this, because you are holding your head in your hands wishing everything that is happening wouldn't, and trying to piece together why you are having Vietnam flashbacks without deserving them. Your therapist asks you some questions.

“Can you tell me why you're here?”

You tell her what you can muster. You tell her that you are here because you abuse substances, and one of the many substances that you have abused is acid. You tell her that the other night you managed to take 7 (and a quarter) tabs of acid in the course of one night because you didn't really know what you were doing, and you started hallucinating things. This should be of no surprise because hallucinating things is a big reason people take acid, but you describe your hallucinations anyways. You tell her about the village in Vietnam. You tell her about the North Koreans who were watching you on the internet, and the mean comments they were making. You tell her how your friends might all be undercover CIA agents. You tell her that you are having trouble deciphering whether or not you live inside of a computer land. She coldly jots a few notes here and there and asks you more questions.

“Has this ever happened to you before?”

You tell her that once, you took a large dab of hash, and figured out you were a werewolf. You tell her you were sent back in time to stop the JFK assassination. You tell her that one time you took some mushrooms and punch your friend in the face because he wanted to bake you into a pizza. You tell her that one time when you were walking home you saw a kid on a sled go over the hill, but when you get to the bottom the kid wasn't there. She coldly jots this down and ask you more questions.

“Have you ever mixed alcohol with cough syrup?”

You tell her you haven't. She doesn't say that she doesn't believe you, but

you get that vibe. You tell her once that you took too much Dayquil in a day, and then took a lot of hash and thought you were having a heart attack. She coldly jots down a few things, but you start to feel like she isn't really listening. She hands you a packet of therapists. Their headshots are listed next to all of their credentials. She asks you to study this during your stay here and to chose one of the headshots and schedule an appointment with them using the payphones.

You sit at the table with the puzzle. John is on the other end. He does not help you with the puzzle, but in a way, you find comfort in his presence. As you find the corner piece you realize it has been almost 48 hours since you put any sort of smoke or liquid or powder into your body that you weren't supposed to. You can't remember the last time you went this long without doing that.

That night they up your anti-psychotic dose. They give you a third pill, to help you sleep. You take it, even though you know that you won't need its help. You don't dream.

You wake up in a more or less familiar room. You pick a headshot from the packet at random. She's an older Lady. You figure she might be Mormon. They make you schedule weekly visits with her. You have to promise to attend at least five. You promise this. John is on the other phone. He does not tell the person on the other line that he is in computer land. He tells the person on the other line that he loves them, softly.

Amy asks if you'd like to join the others at the mess hall. She doesn't say it, but you realize she is telling you that you have gained the privilege to do so. Your cover must be working.

It has been over 72 hours since you did drugs. You are putting together a puzzle. On the other end of the table is your boyfriend. It is only as awkward as it must be, being that you are in a mental hospital. He makes a joke about the pajamas your parents brought you being inside out. You tell him that Amy made you, because there are skull and crossbones on it. You do not talk about the events that brought you here, but you both understand. Its small, but you smile for the first time.

Amy says in a few days we can evaluate whether or not you would like to leave. You think you would.

You wake up in a now familiar room. There is now a body in the empty bed next to you. This would bother you more, but tomorrow is your final day here anyways. The body isn't moving much, its sleeping pretty hard.

You say goodbye to Amy. You cannot figure out how to say goodbye to John, but you do make eye contact with him before you go. He tells Amy he is in computer land. How fitting.

You wake up in an unfamiliar room, but its yours. The panic sets in but fades away quickly. The one helpful thing they taught you was how to stay grounded. Name three things you can see, three things you can feel. What can you smell? You look around your room. You name three things you can see. Bong, Lighter, Weed. You name three things you can feel. Bedsheets, Fan, Blessing socks. You calm down.

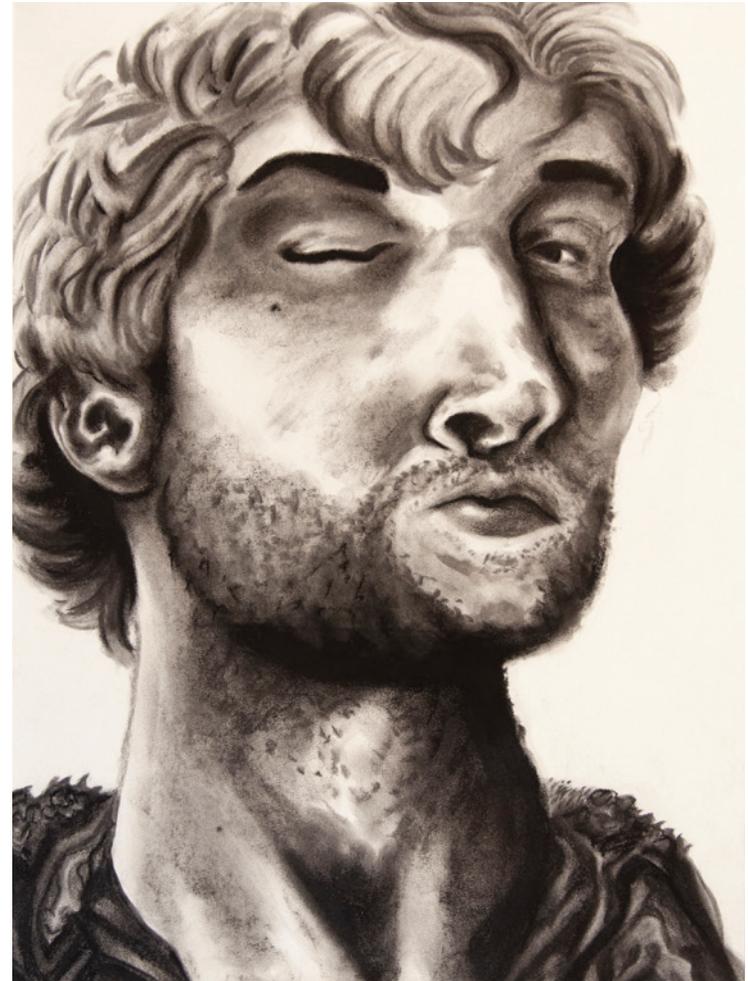
You meet with the Mormon lady. You try your best to explain everything, but she doesn't understand. It seems like she doesn't even care, but honestly neither do you. She asks if you have any hobbies. You lie and tell her that you enjoy cooking, which you might if it weren't your job. She tells you you should aspire to visit France. This would seem charming if you had that kind of money, but you don't, and she knows that, or at least she should, so it's just insulting. They put you on anti-psychotics, even though you probably don't need them. It has been 2 weeks since you took any drugs.

You take the anti-psychotics. Not as in take them, but you are holding the bottle containing them. You dump them into the toilet. Next to them you dump the weed out of a Ziploc bag. Then you dump the mushrooms out of a different Ziploc bag. The acid was gone a long time ago. You flush all of these things; you don't need them.

You dream. You dream of a village in Vietnam. It feels like memories, but you know they aren't yours. Johns there. You make eye contact. He laughs.

You wake up in a familiar room. You laugh.

You feel fine. ■



Youth reeks of
Kentucky bourbon
Self-loathing and lust.

The acrid bite of week-old sweat
Dried in salty circles
Faded olive-drab Army surplus
Pilfered from Flea Market
Tables of Time's
Slow burn.

Sold your soul
Ah, but here it is again!

Half priced hatred
Housed on the
Clearance rack.

Third-rate
Second-hand store.

Pink paper tag

\$1.11.

Right hip pocket a
Faded
Five.

Quick (glance about)
Slip it off the
Rack &

Into
Your
Breast
Pocket.

need that Five for

coffee.





That Old Man Time
is working
the register again.

There is always a wait in his line,
and he never
gives me my change.



You choose to stand rather than sit.
Hovering temporarily in the musty warmth
of too many people.

The woman standing across from you leans
close and whispers,
Do you want to see my art?
Her breath is cigarettes and something sickly sweet.
Before you can remove your headphones,
she has opened her sketchbook.

A man, pink and blue, stares out a window.
He is sad, the woman tells you.
She turns the page.

The road stretches to the horizon,
lined with yellow and covered in dark spots.
She does not flip the page and you look at her,
Sometimes we all feel like roadkill.
A sudden motion causes you both to lurch,
catching yourselves on railings.

She drops her book to the floor.
A waxy mess of colors flash,
before she grabs the book and leaves.





Dust covered everything in my space other than the bed under the stairs and the box filled with some notebooks I had been given. The colors were dark and dry. The deep grey stone walls contrasted the dirty brown stained cement. It smelled like an old treehouse. There were webs weaved all throughout, trapping innocent red bugs until the spider got hungry. The only light I had would come through the small stained-glass window on the far end of the basement. The only connection I had to the outside world was this window. As much as I appreciated the beauty I could view from it, I couldn't gaze for too long. Every day, I get two slices of bread to eat, one for breakfast and one for supper. The slices are left for me on the top of the stairs. I don't talk to the ones above, but I don't think I'd want to even if I had the chance. I think they feel the same. I hear them leave in the morning after giving me my slice, and they're gone until late at night.

"Dear Papa, I try to keep busy all day like you taught me. I've been practicing my handwriting. I wish you could see how much I've improved. I'm sure it could still be a lot better. I hope you're still thinking of me. I think of you, ma, and Lena every day. I miss when we would work together on my schoolwork, even though I complained all the time. Once this is all over, we can work together every day and I promise I won't complain. The only thing I have with me now are the lessons you taught me on how to write. I write little stories every day. Most of them are a little crazy, but there are some I'm excited for you to read. I hope I'll get to see you soon."

That was one of the first letters I wrote while in the basement. It's been 104 days since I started keeping track. Everything happened so fast at the beginning. My Mama met me outside my school, and we were walking home like we always did. We were just down the street from our house. Some people on the

street started running, and then a dark black automobile pulled up beside us. The driver and my Mama seemed to argue, before I heard her say that she needed to get the rest of her family. Papa and Lena. Mama opened the door for me, and I got inside, but she shut it and ran up the street to get the others. I remember hearing loud popping before the driver told me to get down. He told me he was going to go back for them after, but he didn't. It was a long drive before we reached the house. The driver gave me a pillow, some blankets, and a bucket and told me to stay downstairs and never come up or look out the window or make any noise. I thought I had been abducted, but why would my Mama let me get in? Ever since, I've been down in this basement. I would cry almost every day thinking about my family and how lonely I am, until the new girl arrived.

She was frail. Her messy Brunette hair laid gently on her sunken face. Her eyes were sore, and her skin was cracked. She wore a clean maroon dress and had a bandage wrapped on her left forearm. However, there were cuts all over her arms and legs that weren't bandaged. The first two days after she arrived, we didn't talk. She sat in the back-left corner across from my bed. She tried to keep quiet while she cried, but some whimpers would slip through. I assumed she also had been abducted but did something to upset the ones above and was abused for it, until one morning she told me her story. A story about a place called Treblinka. My family lived about a mile from a train station with the same name. She told me about how her family tried to find refuge at a school, but the people there took her and her family to the train station instead. It was a trap. She told about how they were packed into one of the train cars and brought to a camp. Horrible words came from her mouth. Things I couldn't even comprehend. I asked her if she had seen my family, but I didn't even know my parents' real names. She said it wouldn't

have mattered even if I did. She unwrapped her bandage and placed it on the ground beside her. However, there wasn't an injury underneath. Something worse. Little black numbers on her pale skin. She told me how her father helped her get out of that camp, and how she ran for hours until she couldn't anymore. The driver who took me from my mom must've found her too. After we shared a hug, I went to the stairs to find that the bread wasn't there. This was followed by an unusual pattern of footsteps above. I looked under the crack of the door and saw multiple heavy black boots walking down the hallway towards the kitchen. I slowly and quietly crept down the stairs and told the girl. "It's them," she whispered. We huddled together underneath the stairs and used the blankets to barricade ourselves. There was a tiny opening where my eye could peek through. After some time, the basement door opened as we heard the heavy steps right above our heads. It sounded like thunder rumbling. The men dispersed around the room. One man came into my line of sight. All I could hear were a bunch of words I couldn't understand. However, one of the voices was familiar, the driver. I could feel the girl's heart beating against my side. I kept my eye locked on the man in the back corner. He had some kind of prop fastened in his hands. He was wearing a dark green, almost grey uniform, and had a heavy helmet on his head. He moved his head to his boots when we both noticed something. The bandage the girl removed from her arm. I could feel my heart sink to the cold concrete beneath us. He looked at the bandage for a while, before turning his attention to the other side of the room, then back to the bandage. He used his heavy black boot to push it forward about an inch. It felt as if my heart was beating so hard the men would be able to hear it. Every minute felt like an hour. The man stepped forward and placed his foot directly on the bandage. Only one corner of it was exposed under

his boot. The talking stopped, and after a period of silence, one of the men said another word I couldn't understand, and the footsteps headed back up the stairs. The man standing on the bandage followed, but before he escaped my sight, looked down at it one last time. The multiple steps going up the stairs couldn't even match our heart beats. We heard the basement door close, and after some more talking, we could hear the engine of an automobile pulling away from the house. We stayed under the stairs for an hour after they left. The girl slowly approached the bandage and was hesitant to pick it up as if it had become infected. We sat in complete silence for the rest of the night. *The spider wasn't hungry today.*

We shared 57 more days together in the basement until the driver came down and told us the war was over. Together, me and the girl walked up those stairs, through the house, and out the front door. For the first time in 163 days or more, I was able to let the outside air fill my nostrils. It smelled so fresh and clean. The warm Polish September heat massaged my skin. I could see the wind coursing through the large maple tree in the front yard. I got on my knees and ran my fingers through the slick green grass. I felt something tickle my finger and noticed a ladybug crawling up my knuckle. I looked up at the girl and saw the sun shining on her maroon dress, making it look a brighter red. There were tears dripping down her worn face that curved around her smile. *This is where a ladybug belongs.* ■





Odors, of the honeyed lavender
remain in my memory
diluting those of past companies

I lie awake
watching the concrete
walls run down endlessly
as a close relative to my indulgence

I lie awake
to the slow tone of the Denver streets
sing almost to a silence
in the moments of rest

I lie awake
where thoughts of oblivion
ever wake
to the sound of your breath

motionless.
the hum of the world ceasing
as love,
itself, lays to placid rest.





homecoming. why here? why now?
my girl,
looking angelic as ever.
totally don't know how
i'm her date.
the corsage and boutonniere
smelling fresh and gardeny.
the perfumes of both girls and boys
polluting the air..
i look different, I'm brown
They are white.
i am outnumbered,
i am
not the same.
it came as
fast as it went.
sharp and cold,
like a blade
but right to my soul.
"shouldn't they check if he has papers before he can get in?"
my fist needed
to make a
connection with his
pimple infested chin.
the rage
and anger
burned feverishly
inside of me.
i did nothing.
i couldn't do
anything.
I would
fall
down to his
level of stupidity.
why here? why now? homecoming.





The Lucky Spirit was a deep violet and amber, the less-than-half-light was squint inducing and headache causing. Shadows under shadows moved slowly at booths and high-top tables and in quick vapors from behind the bar as servers navigated through the almost-dark with instinct as their pilot. The collective sound of chit-chat and glasses hitting tables droned at a low but continuous roar, served over a bed of alternative hits from the '90s. Body-like shadows swayed with the music, some were animated mid-story or mid-drink or mid-flirtatious-head-cock. Most emitted their own pocket of Old-Fashioned breath or the wafting musk of American Spirits. Stepping into the bar on that Friday night, Buddy knew he had made a mistake.

He crammed himself through the forest of people, all of them giving side-glances before stepping a few reluctant inches away to let him pass. His head was up, attempting the impossible task of finding Clem in the permanent dusk inside the Spirit. As his eyes adjusted, he could see women draped in sundresses or swimming in high waisted bloomers, all laughing back and forth in thunderous volleys. He could make out some blobs of blazers, hoodies, checkered shirts, perfectly managed high-and-tight coifs, foot-long beards, and SUPREME beanies. He caught his own reflection in the mirror behind the bar, his face in a collage of other faces. *One of these things is not like the other*, he thought, feeling underdressed and overexposed and undeniably shabby. His unshaved face, muss of unkept hair, and gawky posture drifted like a specter through the crowd. If they could get a good look at him in the dim lighting, the mass of merry-makers might have ejected him back out into the street.

There was a thirst he could feel in the air, a draining force that had its arms around everyone's shoulders, begging for a sip of their souls. These people seemed fine to give it a little taste. He wanted to give it the slip, head out the door and forget the entire thing. *Why do I agree to these things?* he asked himself.

He heard his name calling out from the void.

“Buddy!” It was coming from the end of what looked like the bar, two fingers held themselves in the air and flicked for him to come hither. Clem’s face became recognizable in the gloaming, as if unveiled. With a target in mind it became easier for Buddy to find his way through the crowd. He nestled into a cramped space next to Clem, who was already half-way down a pint of Smithwick’s with an elbow holding his body on the bar.

Clem was dressed in one of his trademark discount suits, wrinkled at the cuffs and two sizes too loose. His sandy blonde hair looked freshly trimmed and styled, his coarse beard brought into line with a sharp border dividing his chin from his neck. His beer-glazed blue eyes were puffed and raw, but his face still felt fresh and had a playful glint of someone who was outrunning all of his yesterdays and fire-bombing all of his tomorrows. He looked just as out of place as Buddy but, unlike him, could give a shit what these people thought of him.

“Nice of you to show up,” Clem shout-slurred above the cacophony, “I was about to send out a search party. Let’s get you a drink.” He waved down at the bartender, who took his sweet time to work his way over to the two misplaced souls pinned to the corner of his bar. As new drinks were doled out, Clem peeled off towards an anteroom that was only half full and motioned for Buddy to follow. Once they had positioned themselves at a table and left the loudest parts of the world behind, they were free to catch up.

“So, how the hell are ya?” Clem asked after a healthy swig of his fresh beer.

Buddy had to give it a few good seconds to think of the answer to that one.

“Honestly?”

“Yeah, give it to me.”

The music was much louder in this room than in the main hall and Buddy heard the opening riff of “The Sign” by Ace of Base come through an invisible

speaker somewhere overhead. He felt his neck tense and his stomach felt like a ball of needles.

“Well...” He was having difficulty pulling out the truth, “Ellen and I are getting divorced.”

Clem’s face stretched in a violent contortion of shock, his body gasping, then collapsing into a fit of equally violent laughter. The exaggerated patting of his knee punctuated squeals of delight. Buddy should have known better than to tell him this while he was drinking. Alcohol became truth serum in Clem’s veins.

“Oh, wow, I mean,” he finally gasped out, “it’s not really all that surprising, is it?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Well, it means, ‘WAKE UP BUD!’ Did you really think none of us saw this coming?”

Buddy made an honest attempt at looking wounded, his eyes drowning their gaze into his beer. He caught sight of his ring finger, empty of the golden band that had been stuck under his knuckle for so long. The ring sat inert in the pocket of his jeans, a useless trinket he couldn’t bear to part with, even for a night. He really wished this song wasn’t playing.

“I just thought I could change her mind,” Buddy muttered into the table. There was something about hearing the words coming out of his mouth, out loud, in his voice, that really hammered home how lost that cause really was. Clem replied with a slightly less bawdy fit of giggles.

“Wow, man. Just...wow.”

In the pale light Buddy lifted his sight to anywhere but Clem. He stared at the glowing neon tubes that ran in ribbons around the tops of the walls, all of them a trail leading to a flashing neon cartoon of a ghost wearing a fedora and smoking a cigarette. With every blinking flash it alternated between a devious smile, a joyful wink, ending with a tip of its hat as the words LUCKY SPIRIT illuminated below. All Buddy wanted was to punch that smug ghost in the face. As Ace of Base was proclaiming how the sign had opened up their eyes, Clem was snapping his fingers in Buddy’s face.



“C’mon man, let’s get a grip,” Clem said as he reached for Buddy’s pint glass, pinning it in his palm like a life-saving elixir. “Yeah, so this sucks, I get it. But look at it this way, it’s not the end the world. It’s the beginning of the new adventures of Clem and Bud.”

Buddy couldn’t help but snort a small laugh at that. The old adventures of Clem and Bud were a few lifetimes behind them, or at least three failed marriages total between both of them. The one between Ellen and Bud was the first and only for him and the longest of any of his friends. He saw five years of a deteriorating world in his rear view but was always too focused on the road in front of him to notice the decay that would eventually swallow him. He was content to drive on and ignore the problems, but the car had come to a halt and he was being asked to get out.

“Are there any new adventures left for us?” Buddy asked, perplexed at the possibilities Clem had in mind. “Bar-hopping until last call? College house parties? Oh, wait, we don’t know anyone still in college! And if we did, I don’t think they would want two almost thirty dudes hanging around.” Clem slowly blinked as Buddy got this out of his system. “The only adventure I can handle at this stage in my life is switching from almond milk to oat milk. Or trying out a new brand of boxer-briefs.”

“That’s because you’ve been trapped in ‘marriage land’ for five years,” Clem countered back, “those are adventurous to you because that is all you’ve ever been allowed to change. This is the time for you to really become the best Bud you could possibly be. The Bud I know you really are.” He took a heroic chug of his beer, draining it with stoic grace like it was a natural reflex. An errant stream ran through his beard and down his shirt. He slammed the now-empty glass down in front of him, a bubble crested ring oozing down where the beer once was. He looked Bubby square in the face. “I’m going to help you do that, right here, right now.”

With that pronouncement, Clem disappeared with his empty glass into the main room, leaving the dread of what he had in mind to hang over Buddy’s head. In that haze of dread was the faint pulse of excitement, something he hadn’t felt

in a long time. He felt like Clem could return to tell him that this bar was actually an airplane and they were going skydiving, get your parachute ready, Bud. He was always fragile putty in Clem's hands, and at that moment he was in no state to tell him no. When he returned after a painful long wait with two more beers and two shot glasses, he felt mild relief and slight disappointment.

But trailing behind him were two women, each with a beer and a shot and Buddy knew what Clem had in mind.

"Look who I found," shouted Clem towards the ladies, "it's my recently single friend Buddy! And his oh-so-charming if rugged face!" They each emitted the awkward, shrugging smiles of sober people in the company of a drunk, and in polite handshakes introduced themselves as Beth and Sinead.

"Sinead?" Buddy asked, a little too over-eager, "Like the singer? Sinead O'Connor?" The woman rolled her eyes upward in coy faux-annoyance and nodded. "Yeah, it's a pretty popular name where I'm from," Sinead explained, her Irish accent clear and musical. "You can throw a rock and hit, like, five Sineads anywhere in Belfast at any given time."

"I don't think I've ever met a Sinead," Buddy pontificated.

"Well, I've never met a Buddy. Is that a common name in the states?"

"Not really, I guess we're both rare animals here."

They shared smiles across the table and a spark ignited in Buddy's head. Sinead wasn't Buddy's usual type, especially compared to the strait-laced, uptight Ellen. Her hair was a rainbow mix of blue, red, and green, full of bobby pins and pulled tight across her forehead. A patchwork of tattoos ran trails in and out of her clothing. An eagle that stretched all the way across her collarbone looked pinned down by the straps of her tank-top, wings with golden feathers chained against her skin. Her make-up had a well-orchestrated precision; her wide, green eyes were the main attraction, encircled with a glimmering gold and burgundy shadow. Whatever was behind those eyes initiated Buddy's fight or flight reflexes; he felt danger and exhilaration tempered by the guilt of being attracted to someone who wasn't his soon-to-be ex-wife. He felt the ring in his pocket grow heavier and heavier, burning itself into his thigh.

"Let's get it down us!" cried out Clem, raising his glass of whiskey. "To freedom and new friends!"

With resigned reluctance, Buddy raised his glass and after the ceremonial clinking with his three companions, he brought it to his lips. Clem had chosen his go-to whiskey, Jamison, and Buddy almost retched as it fell down his throat, burning upward and outward. *Fire in the hole*, he thought, and that was the last moment of clarity he would feel for the rest of the night.

The Spirit sauntered on through the hours and the quintet poured more and more alcohol into their proceedings. Clem and Beth had switched to scotch and sodas, while Buddy and Sinead drained pint after pint of Smithwick's. The later the evening grew the fewer people they had around them and the louder their conversations became. At a blurred point Marc Cohen's "Walking in Memphis" became a personal dance party for the two couples, each one of them stumbling in horrible off-beat bobs and failed twirls.

Even though they were sharing a table they had paired off into separate spheres. Clem showed Beth some of the bigger scars he had attained through his career as a journeyman carpenter and shared disgusting stories from his time with the Navy. She had scars of her own to compare, deep trenches from her time working the family farm in some unpronounceable village in western Wales. They looked more like Quint and Hooper aboard the boat in *Jaws* than a flirting couple, and as they got more drunk they played a prolonged game of one-upmanship. She had a crooked smile and hearty guffaw that billowed to fill the volume of the room, both of which Clem devoured as a well-traveled people-pleaser.

The content of Buddy and Sinead's conversations had revolved around their shared pop cultural heritage, ranging from Silver Surfer comic books to the importance of Leonard Cohen's "Death of a Ladies Man" to the beautiful gore of John Carpenter's "The Thing." She had an enthusiastic, wide-eyed fascination for the violence of Italian horror films; enough fascination that it would have flagged

concern in Buddy's sober head, but that concern was quickly shooed away to the forgotten recesses of his inebriated mind.

She let only a few scraps of her personal history scatter within the conversation, leaving Buddy with few hints of her origin story. All he had to go on was that she was from North Ireland, she was close to his age, and her father was in the IRA during what she referred to as "The Troubles." His conclusion was that this mysterious woman was undeniably cool and interesting; far too cool and interesting for the likes of him.

By the time one o'clock came they were the only four in the bar, their table littered with empty glasses and crumpled cocktail napkins. The respective conversations had hit a lull, as each couple were exhausted of topics for a moment. The bartender ran his rag in and out of pint glasses and tumblers, watching them and waiting for them to close out their tab and be on their merry way. Beth gave Sinead a look across the table, an eyebrow cocked with a crooked smirk. Sinead seemed to understand this secret telepathic message.

"Anyone care for a smoke?" Sinead asked the group. Clem nodded with lazy, drooping-eyed carelessness. Buddy wasn't a smoker and was content to sit in the still of the empty bar by himself.

"C'mon," Sinead coaxed him, not taking no for an answer. "One cigarette won't *kill* you. I *really* want you to come with us." After a moment of hesitation, he finally relented. They all filtered out through the front door, Clem announcing to the bartender in a loud slosh of words that they would return shortly and to not worry about them running off and to have another round ready, thanks so much.

Once on the street, however, there was a quick division of the couples. Beth took Clem's hand and lead him to an alley that ran along the Spirit and their stumbling figures disappeared into the darkness. Knowing Clem, Buddy wasn't surprised by this turn of events, imagining some lurid and fumbling embrace between two unruly sets of hands. What surprised Buddy was finding that his own hand was being wrenched and dragged into the alley on the other side of the building. Sinead had locked on and was galloping him along into their own corner of the night.

"I'm not so sure--," Buddy started, his protestations jumbling in his throat as the alcohol mangled his speech center. "I—I—I don't usually do this sort of—," is all he heard himself say as she pulled him into the dark.

She pushed him against the bricks and wrapped her arms up and around the back of his neck, an awkward position due to her being almost a foot shorter than him. She reached her head to meet his and jammed her mouth on his with a vicious force, her tongue searching like a spotlight in his mouth for his. Once he understood that this was happening, that he wanted this to happen, he let go of his shock and let the tension in his body relax. She moved a hand down from his shoulder, passed a tender fingertip down his neck and chest, and then it was gone. When it came back up, it held the shining glint of something silver and jagged, and with her still in his mouth she brought the blade up to Buddy's throat. He felt the sharp point on his neck, scraping past his stubble as she withdrew her face to only an inch away.

"Terribly sorry about this," she said, her voice low and childlike. "You really are a sweetie. Now, don't move or this is going in your neck. Don't say a word or this is going right... into...your...fucking...neck."

Buddy gave a careful nod, realizing the mistake of this as the knife dug little nicks into his skin with every movement. His arms were stretched back against the wall, the rough brick catching on his shivering knuckles.

"Now, darling, just reach into your pockets and get me everything, nice and easy. Easy sleazy, now."

Buddy brought his hands down, suddenly unsure how pockets operated. The mixture of alcohol and adrenaline coursing through his veins was crossing circuits all over, and he couldn't remember what he had on him. *Keys? Phone? Wallet? Gum? Did she want the gum too? She needs it, that's for sure.* He rummaged and came up with all that he had, realizing that in the handful was his former wedding ring. *Shit.*

"Good, now, throw them over there," she said, motioning to her right. He tossed them and heard the ting-ting-ting of the ring bouncing on the asphalt. He

secretly hoped that it would keep bouncing and roll into a storm drain, out of the reach of her violating hands.

He looked her in her sparkling green eyes, the eyes that he had been looking into the whole night and felt like he couldn't find the same woman he had been bonding with over horror films and troubadours. She had flipped a switch; the projection of the sweet Irish girl turned off to display a thuggish brute in stylish flats.

"Is this a usual thing for you" Buddy finally found the words to ask, "or is it that you liked me that much?" She stared deep into his eyes, and years of unrelenting and incontrovertible sadness marched their way from her soul into his.

"Don't take it personally," she said in a dead, quiet voice, "you were just the lucky asshole this time."

Sinead released her grip around his shoulder and started to back away, the knife still jutting out of her other hand. It stayed pointing towards him as she squatted down to grab her ill-begotten goods, including the ring, which she twisted in what little light there was. She gave Buddy a little satisfied grin. As she reached the opening of the alley where they had started, the knife returned to the secret hide-away in her jeans, she became only a silhouette in the streetlights. She stood for a moment looking in at him, a small bit of pity in her posture. She gave a little wave and was gone into the night.

Buddy took a few minutes to recover, crouched down against the wall of the alley. He took stock of his stupidity; the stupidity of losing the ring, the stupidity of coming out that night, the stupidity of Clem for making the worst possible choice of drinking partners. The shame of being mugged by someone so lithe and unassuming sat uneasy in his stomach, almost as much as the mixture of arousal and fear he had felt when she had held him there only moments previous. In that haze of confusion and agony, it became difficult to come out of that alley.

When he finally gathered the courage to emerge from the dark, he staggered in slow, cautious steps around the corner back in the direction of the bar. He had

a feeling that Clem's encounter had gone more or less the same, so he walked past the doors to where he saw the two disappear only few moments earlier. When he peered down the alley, he saw Clem's slumped body against the wall, all his clothing stripped away except for his boxers. Buddy ran down to him, imagining the worst.

"Clem!" he shouted, "Clem! Hey, you okay man?"

Clem lifted his head in the same lazy, drunken way that he had been moving most of the evening. He gave a dopey smile, his eyelids low and shadowed by his brow. He looked down at his bare chest, where Buddy saw a fresh red gash that ran down from his left shoulder in a diagonal slant, stopping at his right hip. The blood dripping down came in little streams that were dammed in some spots by his chest hair.

"She—she gave me a new scar," Clem stuttered out, his head rising up and laughing a tortured laugh. "Beat this one you—" He stopped and tried to keep a sob from bubbling out. Buddy stooped down and took his head into his arms, not knowing how else to keep his friend from falling to pieces.

"Let's get you out of here," Buddy told him, lifting Clem up and lumping his arm round his shoulder. Not knowing what else to do, he soldiered him back into the Spirit. Upon seeing the arcane tableaux of the half-naked, bleeding man being half-carried through the doors, the bartender came rushing around to help Buddy lower him into onto a stool. Buddy filled him in on the loose specifics of what had happened before asking if he could use his phone to call the police. The bartender obliged and Buddy was told by a very polite dispatcher that a patrol car would be there as soon as possible.

Once that was sorted, he stared down at the bartender's phone and knew that without his own phone, or keys, or cash, he had only one hope for rescue from this evening. He also only knew two numbers off the top of his head, and one of them was his home phone number from when he was a child, which would have come in handy if he was twelve. As he dialed, he wasn't sure if Ellen was in any mood to grant him any favors, but he had no other choice. It took a few times, but she finally answered, groggy and less-than-slightly pissed.

“Wait, what happened?” she asked, perking up after Buddy’s sheepish detailing of the events, give or take a few key parts about flirting, dancing, the disastrous kiss, and the loss of his ring. She sighed into the receiver. “Okay...I’ll be there in a bit.” She hung up and Buddy felt the release of knowing this night was almost over. He gave the phone back to the bartender, who had gone back to his normal closing duties. He had given Clem a Lucky Spirit hoodie and mentioned he would be adding it to the tab, which he had run on Clem’s credit card that was still behind the bar. *I guess he didn’t lose everything*, Buddy thought, regretful of the bitterness he felt about it.

“Did you still want these drinks?” the bartender asked, motioning to the four glasses on the bar that he had poured before the fiasco had begun. Buddy looked down at them and grabbed one of them without a word, wandering off to the table where they had been sitting the whole evening.

He hunched over his drink, his elbows angled around the glass, his eyes plastered blindly at the middle distance. In his view was that blinking neon ghost, going through its rhythm of *smile, wink, tip*, over and over and over. Buddy stared on...*smile, wink, tip, smile, wink, tip, smile...*

A half-full tumbler of scotch and soda went flying at the neon tubes and in a bright flash of glass and powder it lit up in a quick shock of electricity, shattering the face of the ghost as liquor dripped down in waterfalls from mangled wires and metal.

Buddy stared it down, breathless, his arm outstretched in follow-through. After a moment of realization at what he had just done, he looked at the only squiggle of illuminated neon tubes that remained untouched and blinking. In his chest began a low, wicked, broken laugh. On and off, on and off; the broken sign lit up its last word in a ceaseless echo.

LUCKY...LUCKY...LUCKY...LUCKY...LUCKY...LUCKY...LUCKY... □



You like my nakedness,
until I like it too.

Hips chiseled in stone,
bare stomachs reflected in marble.
Throughout history,

breasts painted in pastel and
displayed as artifacts in museums.

It has always been fine for you to stare
but when I say

How beautiful
She is,

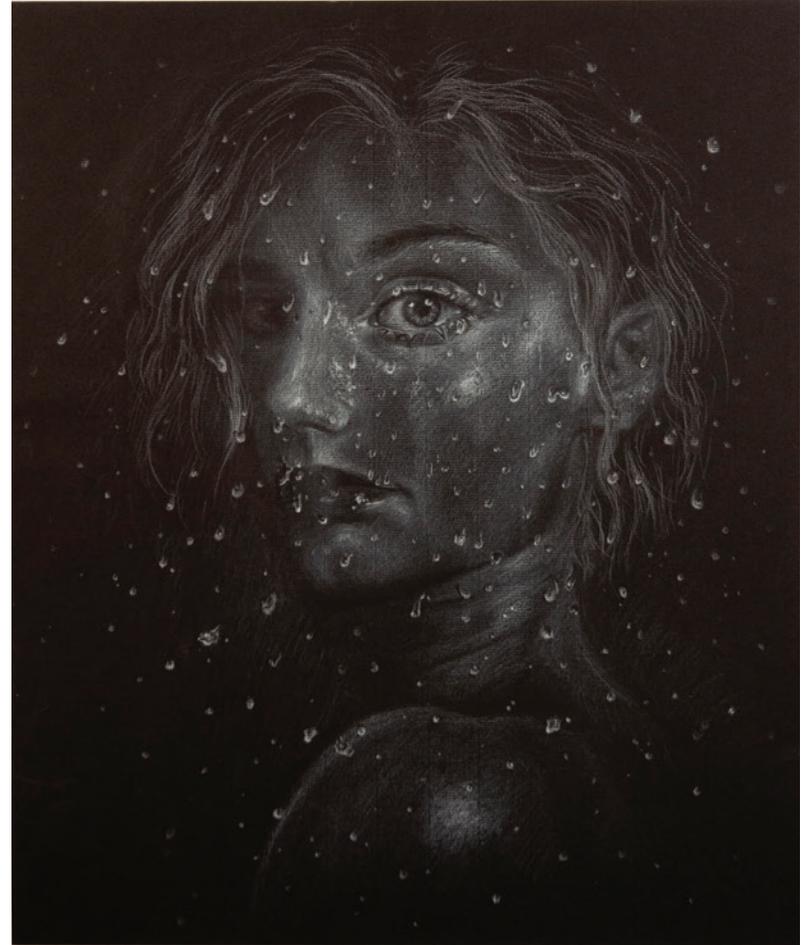
You scoff.
I am unafraid in her presence.

And unafraid in mine.
Willing to embrace myself for all the depth I hold

underneath my silks of ancient tradition.
Depicting myself like the work of Homer.

You call it vanity.

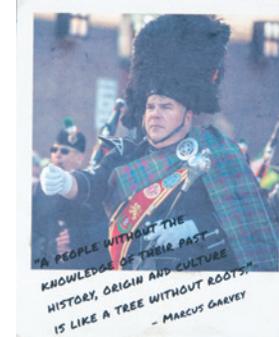
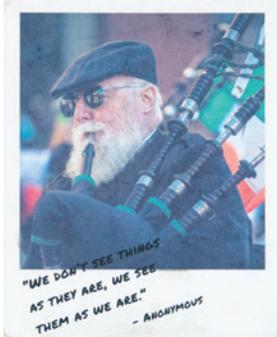
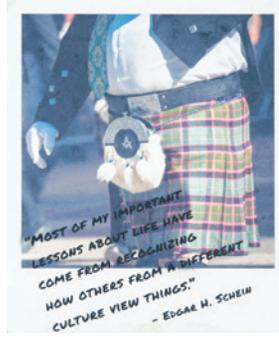
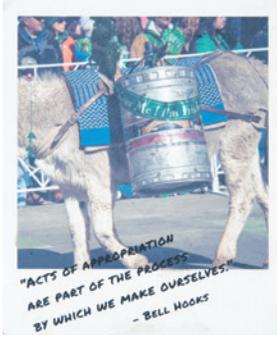
As if only you could see her beauty, as if,
in the entirety of the world, it was only there for you.





If I say no, how will it end?
The whisper dripped into her ear.
Pausing,
The woman bent down
As salt suffused with lacritin,
Softly spoke, he nodded
his eyes piercing through the glass,
the snow fell in October.
It wouldn't be long.
We all sat with him,
imparting memories of
Montauk and sunrise over the Atlantic,
As flakes blessed the Earth.
So they took us down
to the Serenity Suite
with all the pamphlets,
tissues and sounds of running water.
The outside world devoured by niveous haze.
Sitting.
Waiting
for her to call it.
It was a Sunday,
at 9:35.







Author's Note

Let it be known to anyone reading or performing this one act that the characters portrayed in this one act are makes of pure fiction. Any characters in this one act that may or may not resemble real life people was not at all intended and if that is the case it is pure coincidence. The author of this piece would like to thank Lucy Logan, Bridger Myers, Time Brown, and Laurel Grosz for their contribution to the piece by proofreading it for spelling/grammatical errors. The author would also like to thank Logan Steel, David Gurzick, Bridger Myers, and Lucy Logan for their plot point contributions to the piece.

Character Synopsis

Teen: The teenage character can be played by either a boy or a girl. This role should be cast as an older teenager, one who could still be in high school or could pass for a high schooler. This character is wearing black suit or a black dress with dress shoes. These articles of clothing are to make this character look more mature.

Child: The child character can be played by either a boy or a girl. This role should be cast as a younger person, one who could pass as a middle schooler. This character is wearing colorful clothes that contrast the black clothes of Teen. These articles of clothing are to make this character seem youthful and pure.

Woman: This is a bit role who comes in as the penultimate line for the show. She will dress like the boy, in a black dress.

Tech Notes

- The lighting for this one act has two light queues. One at the beginning once Teen is already on stage and the last one once all characters have left the stage.
- There are only two props in this show. Three props, a toy airplane and a worn ping pong paddle, for Child and a few folded pieces of paper which Teen will have.
- The set will only have a couch on stage left, throw rug stage center, a door that opens to the audience on stage right, a night stand with a lamp on it to the right of the couch, and one more door stage left that opens to center stage.
- Little to no makeup would be used for this one act. If it is played by boys then no makeup but if played by girls then whatever makeup they'd wear throughout the day, if any, would be fine.
- No mics would be used for this piece as it is meant for smaller audiences.

The scene opens in a small room with a large couch on stage left, a closet door on stage right, a throw rug in the center, and a nightstand with a lamp on it to the right of the couch. The lights open to a teenager, who is wearing a black suit, pacing back and forth before he sits on the couch and takes a beat, he then pulls out a piece of paper from his suit coat and looks at it. A small Child then comes out of the closet playing with a toy airplane:

Child: (Making the appropriate noises that come from an airplane, wanders around the room before settling down center stage and “landing” the plane on the ground)

Teen: Hey, do you mind doing that someplace else?

Child: But I want to play here.

Teen: Well I don't want you to play here. I'm busy.

Child: Alright. Hey, just know that I appreciate what you're doing ok? It really means a lot to me and-

Teen: Don't mention it. Now please keep it down.

Child: I'll try.

(Child then starts to tap loudly on the ground and makes noises with his mouth until Teen interjects)

Teen: Yo, what did I just say!

Child: Is that annoying?

Teen: Very.

Child: I'm sorry. I'll stop.

Teen: Thank you.

(Child turns toward Teen sitting on the couch and looks at him for a bit before wandering behind the couch and starts looking at the Teen's papers)

Child: Wow, did you really write all this for me?

Teen: Yeah.

Child: Aww, I always knew that deep down you cared about me.

Teen: Whatever.

Child: Why is it so hard for you to say you care about me?

Teen: Because you were a pain in the ass that's why!

Child: What? Wh- what do you mean?

Teen: You were such a stupid and obnoxious kid that's why, you were always doing stuff that's immature and annoying! Like making your stupid noises that you did just now, or talking to me while I'm trying to work (Teen then steps on the airplane left by Child) Oww! And always leaving your shit around for other people to step on! It's easier to avoid land mines than it is your useless toys! I mean was it wrong to ask for a little maturity? Just once?

Child: I was just a kid.

Teen: So? I wasn't as annoying as you when I was your age! I was actually mature. You'll always be just a stupid annoying kid!

Child: Oh...
(beat)

Teen: Look I... I didn't mean any of that.

Child: Yes, you did.

Teen: No I didn't.

Child: You said it, which means you meant it.

Teen: That's not what that means.

Child: Then why did you say all that?

Teen: Because, I... (beat).

Child: Why!?

Teen: Because I don't know ok! I don't know!

Child: That's a crappy excuse.

Teen: I know it is. *(beat)* I guess I've just had no one to blame for anything and I guess I felt like taking it out on you would make it easier to deal with. I know I shouldn't have but-

Child: Are you serious?! It's not my fault that dad left us for that weird woman.

Teen: I know. I-

Child: And I'm not the reason grandpa extorted money from mom when he got into gambling debt.

Teen: I know, and-

Child: Or the fact that we can't afford to put you in college anymore, or the reason we had to move from our home to a small rundown apartment, or-

Teen: I said I know ok?! I recognize I'm in the wrong! What do you want from me?

Child: Why was any of that stuff my fault? Why did you blame me for all of it?

Teen: I di-...I mean...*(sigh)* None of it was your fault. You never did anything wrong. All of that misguided anger should have never been directed at you. I'm sorry.

Child: I still don't get it.

Teen: It's hard to explain.

Child: How can it be hard to explain?

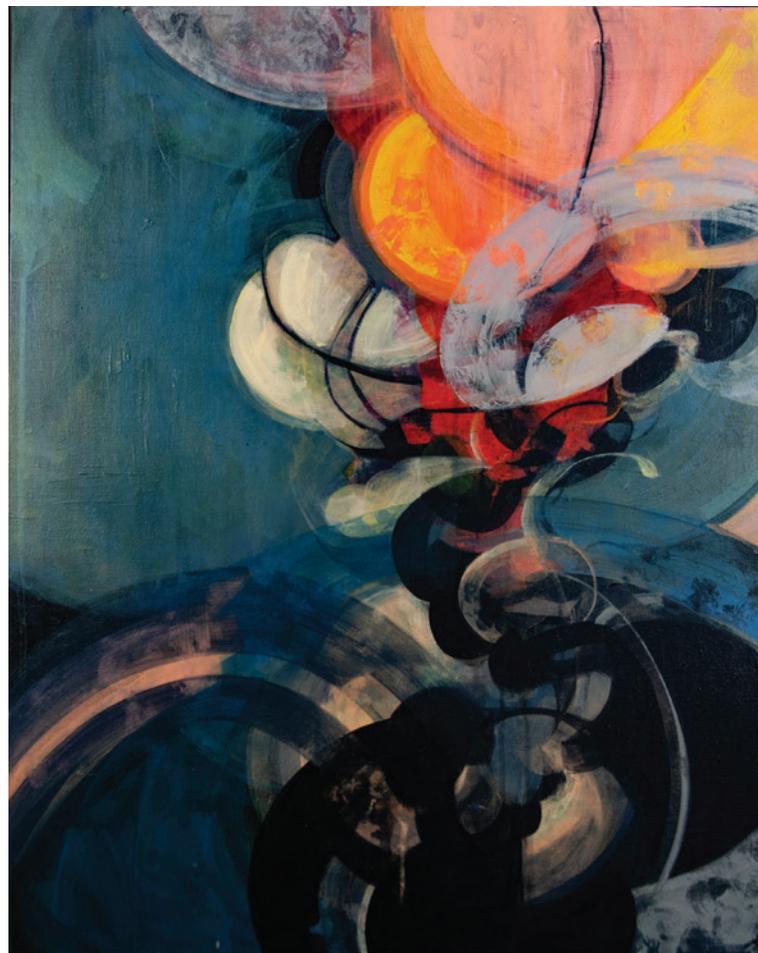
Teen: Because, emotions are hard to explain. I know that at the time blaming you felt like it would help me, but it didn't. I only wish I knew what made me think it would.

Child: Is that what all adults say to people they hurt? They blame their emotions?

Teen: Maybe, but I'm not an adult yet.

Child: You have facial hair though.

Teen: That's not what makes a grown up. Mom doesn't have facial hair and she's still a grown up.





Child: Oh. Ok. Point taken.

(The teen then takes out and unfolds the papers from coat pocket and looks at them)

Teen: God, I feel like a barely know who you are.

Child: That's because you don't know who I am.

Teen: Don't say that. I'm your brother, of course I know some things about you.

Child: Then tell me somethings about me.

Teen: Ok, you...you like Yu-Gi Oh.

Child: I haven't liked Yu-Gi Oh sense the Third grade. It's for kids.

Teen: But you're...Ok uhhh, you like basketball.

Child: Baseball.

Teen: That's pretty close.

Child: They're two different sports.

Teen: Ok ok. Umm, your favorite food is waffles.

Child: That's Mom's.

Teen: Give me a break, everybody loves waffles.

Child: Yeah but it's still not my favorite food.

Teen: Ok well, *(Teen walks to the airplane on the floor and picks it up)* you wanted to be a pilot. And that's why you like planes so much.

Child: Ok that's one thing. But I bet you can't name anything else.

Teen: Hmm, I got one *(Teen and Child share a look)* you're my little brother.

Child: That doesn't count.

Teen: Why not?

Child: Because you haven't acted like an older brother to me. My whole life you've been mean to me. Mocking and insulting me, bruising me, abandoning me, blaming me for other people's mistakes, pretty much everything an older brother shouldn't do, you did.

Teen: Ok, first off, I said I was sorry that I blamed you all these years, second, all siblings mock each other in some way. Ask anyone at our school that has brothers or sisters and they'll say the same thing. And as for the bruising, that was just playful roughhousing. It's not my fault you bruise easily.

Child: Not all people are the same though! Your "roughhousing" wasn't roughhousing to me. Your beatings hurt, a lot. And your words were even worse. Did you know that despite how often I was around you I actually hated being near you? Yeah. But even though you sucked and being near you hurt me I still wanted to trust the hope that one day, maybe you'd actually treat me good, it's like that thing you talked about from your brain class, I have Sherlock Holmes Syndrome or something.

Teen: It's Stockholm Syndrome.

Child: Is that really the thing you're gonna take away from what I just said?

Teen: No... Jesus, you hated me? I... I don't even know what to say.

Child: Of course, you don't. You never knew what to say to me. You were never there for me either.

Teen: Ok, clear points you made aside, if I was anything, I was there for you.

Child: You would know that I liked baseball if you had come to any of my games.

Teen: Pfft, mom's taken me to see you once or twice. You were so great, you were...so fast?

Child: What's my jersey number?

Teen: Oh, come on I don't remember things like that. Ask me something else.

Child: What's my number?

Teen: I... I know your jersey color is red. Red with white lettering.

Child: What's my number?

Teen: You would always protect second base. Mom said no one could get past you. You were like a wall.

Child: What's. My. Number.

Teen: (*long beat*) I don't know.

Child: Like I said, you were never there for me.

Teen: So I didn't make it to your games. I was still there for you for other things.

Child: You would never walk me home from school.

Teen: I did a few times.

Child: No, you and I would walk to your friend's house and either you told me not to do or touch anything while you and them did stuff or I'd have to walk back home alone.

Teen: I would have let you do stuff with us if you asked.

Child: I wanted to, but I was scared that you'd say no if I did.

Teen: I see...

Child: You also didn't help me with my homework when I needed it.

Teen: You know I barely did my own homework, so how could you have trusted me to help you with yours?

Child: You couldn't do basic middle school math?

Teen: (*long beat*) More like I didn't want to...

Child: Well at least you're admitting your mistakes on your own now. So, when were you ever there for me?

Teen: I taught you how to play ping pong.

Child: I guess.

Teen: What? You seemed to like it at the time.

Child: I only liked it because for those moments I felt like I had a brother.

Teen: Oh...

(*beat*)

Child: Well I should probably go.

(Child, looking sad, begins to slowly walk out of the room when he is stopped by Teen)

Teen: Wait.

Child: What?

Teen: Just... Just sit here a little longer with me.

Child: Why?

Teen: We had some good times; I know we did. Just let me think about it some more. I can prove to you that it wasn't all bad.

Child: Ok

(Child walks back to Teen and sits)

Teen: Hey remember that time we got into dad's matches?

Child: No?

Teen: WHAT?! How can you not remember?

Child: I just don't ok.

Teen: Well let me remind you: remember that day we had that half day from school, but when we got home mom and dad were still at work, and we were home alone. So I snuck into their room and got this matchbox that dad got from the MVP's bar that closed down last year. I was so excited, and I got you so we could play with them.

Child: Yeah, I'm starting to remember now-

Teen: Hang on there's more. So after I got those matches we talked about what we'd use them on. I suggested toilet paper but-

Child: But then I said the candles because it'd be less dangerous.

Teen: See I knew you would remember. Yeah, we lit up the scented candles in mom and dad's room and just watched the wax melt. It sounds so lame now, but at the time it was so much fun.

Child: Then mom came home...

Teen: Yeah. She did...

Child: And we didn't put out the candles and mom saw what we did.

Teen: Yeah...

Child: Then I tattled on you and mom grounded you for it.

Teen: Yeah...

Child: Then after that you ignored me for two weeks and kept pushing me away when I tried to talk to you.

Teen: I was mad at you. I mean you had a hand in it too and you only blamed me. Mom wouldn't even hear my side of the story. How is any of that fair?

Child: I tried to say I was sorry, but you wouldn't let me.

Teen: How was I supposed to know that?

Child: I don't know I guess, but if you wanted to be a good brother to me you would have let me talk to you about it.

Teen: You're right...if it's worth anything, I accept your apology now.

Child: It doesn't matter if you accept it now.

Teen: Mom always said It's never too late to forgive.

Child: If you say so.

Teen: Jesus. It couldn't of all been bad could it?

Child: I don't know. Maybe it was. Maybe today you're just being hard on yourself. *(beat)* Here, let me help you. *(Child rolls up his sleeve to show a scar)* You see that?

Teen: A scar? What about it?

Child: What, you don't remember?

Teen: I guess not.

Child: Well then let me jog your memory, stand up. 5 summers ago, right before dad left, he scored Uncle Ted's camping stuff and said that our summer surprise was to go camping.

Teen: Yeah, so far, the only thing I remember about that is you didn't want to go.

Child: I did too want to go! Just shut up and listen. Anyway, a week into camping dad said he was gonna take us to his secret fishing spot in the campground. So we got our rods and worms and went to Stark's Lake. After dad found us a spot he went back to camp to make sure that our camp didn't get raided by bears and trusted you to keep us safe.

Teen: Yeah, and after forever and a half of not catching any fish I got bored and wanted to sword fight with you with the fishing rods.

Child: Yeah! And there was no way I was gonna let you win! Next thing we know it was like a scene from Star Wars and I was Obi-Wan.

Teen: And why wouldn't I be Obi-Wan?

Child: Because this is my story. Anyway, after a while you started running around the Lake and I was full sprint chasing you, but you had longer legs than me so I couldn't catch up.

Teen: Haha, and you stopped to catch your breath. And that's when I pulled back with my rod and flung the hook at you.

Child: And that's when it sunk right here into my arm.

Teen: Man, we were both flipping out bad.

Child: Right? So, in an effort to get it out of me you pulled the hook as hard as you could out of my arm and it just made it worse. Then you got the idea to soak it in the lake to clean the cut. But it wouldn't stop bleeding.

Teen: And that's when I remembered the basic first aid stuff that dad gave us to read on the way to the campsite, and it said that in case of emergencies that you could use certain plants as temporary bandages to stop bleeding until you had something else.

Child: And then you mistook poison ivy as that plant and wrapped my entire forearm in it.

Teen: Oh, and remember what we told dad so he wouldn't get mad at us?

Child: Do I? "Dad you won't believe this, but a huge fish came out of the river and smacked the fishhook back at us and it went into his arm". What were you thinking?

Teen: I was thinking that it wouldn't incriminate us. I mean come on; I was twelve.

Child: But that's not the end. Before dad really let us have it, the poison ivy started to really affect me and my had gotten really itchy, really swollen, and really red, so dad had to get the ivy off of me and disinfect my arm.

Teen: And the next day, your arm looked like a lobster or something.

Child: And then after I realized that my arm grossed you out, I started chasing you around the camp yelling "I'm going to get you!"

Teen & Child: Hahaha.

Teen: Man. I can't believe I forgot all about that.

Child: Well there you go. One good memory, courtesy of me.

Teen: Thank you for that. I'm happy that we actually did have some good times.

Child: Me too.

Teen: Especially since I also haven't thought about any good times with dad since he left us. I forgot that at one-point dad wasn't a waste of space.

Child: Hey I know that dad did some bad things but he's still our dad.

Teen: Are you kidding? He abandoned us.

Child: But...he was our dad, that means he has to come back eventually.

Teen: No, it doesn't. Why don't you understand that? Dad doesn't care about us anymore. He knew that the three of us depended on him and he left us anyway. We don't even know where he is right now. What kind of man just uproots his family?

Child: But he left us that letter saying he'd be back for us one day. He's going to come back. He left us that letter!

Teen: No, he's not! Why, why don't you get that?! He was an asshole and he wanted to get away from us!

Child: But, didn't he love me?

Teen: Yeah. He loved you...

Child: What do you mean?

Teen: What, you really never thought about it?

Child: Thought about what?

Teen: The fact that you were always dad's favorite.

Child: But dad said he didn't have favorites.

Teen: Well, that's a huge lie.

Child: You know dad loved us. He loved you and-

Teen: Can you name the last time Dad and I ever did anything together?

Child: The camping trip-

Teen: Other than camping.

Child: Then I don't know.

Teen: You and I both know dad never really loved me, not as much anyways... it was always you!

Child: How can you think that?

Teen: Think about it, while you and him played soldier in the yard I was the one who had to make sure all my chores were done.

Child: Mom and Dad said chores are our own responsibilities so it's your fault.

Teen: Not convinced? How about this: on your tenth birthday he took all of us to Six Flags for a day of fun. You want to know what I did? I ate cake at home with mom and three of the neighbor kids while he worked overtime.

Child: Well, dad had, uh, a better job by the time I was ten. He was doing it for us.

Teen: For God's sake. How about this then: The park visits and the ducks.

Child: Is that a riddle? I don't get it.



Teen: You and Dad would go to the park on nice days and feed ducks.

Child: Yeah? So? What do you mean?

Teen: When I was younger that was our thing; going to the park to feed ducks. I looked forward to it. Every Saturday after lunch time no matter where I was or where he was, he'd always find me and ask, "Hey kiddo, wanna feed the ducks?". You know, I hated those birds? The second time we went a duck bit my finger. Then another one bit my ankle. They were vile and disgusting birds, but I loved that time with dad more. I thought if I put aside my hatred for those birds then it'd be worth it. For the most part I was right. I loved that time with dad. But when you were born, we went less and less. I would ask and he'd just say he couldn't, but next time. Or "later, when the weather is nicer". Eventually, the answer was just "no". But then he started taking you. It became your guy's thing.

Child: I... I never even...I didn't...I always thought it was just ours and ours alone. He said he did it with you a few times but that I liked it more and-

Teen: Do you even know what it's like? To love a person who won't return the same feelings? I loved dad, and every time he did an activity with you and didn't think to include me it broke my heart. And when he took you to our park to feed our ducks my heart more than just broke! Do you know what that's like?

Child: Yeah, I do. I loved you remember? And you didn't return any of my feelings!

Teen: That's completely different!

Child: How is that different?!

Teen: Because I didn't steal anyone from you! You, you stole dad from me! And now he's gone! That bond I had with him will never come back! And as mad as I am for him for leaving, I'm more pissed that he loved you more. I mean, what was so wrong with me? Why wasn't I good enough for dear ol' dad? Why wasn't I good enough? I tried hard in school. I made honor roll, but it wasn't enough. I did whatever he asked without question and yet I still wasn't good enough. Why?! Why was I never good enough Dad?! Why...?!

(beat)

Child: I get it now.

Teen: Get what?

Child: After all this time I thought you just liked being a jerk. Then you told me that you weren't thinking right, and you wanted someone to blame, and even then, I still didn't truly understand. But after hearing you talk just now; I think it's because of Dad. How dad, in your eyes, loved me more than you. And it made you jealous, so you hurt me to make you feel better. But it wasn't working was it? *(beat)* And when dad left it just made your feelings worse. Am I right?

Teen: Oh my god, I... I think you are. Jesus, all this time I was just trying to get back at Dad? How could I have not known. How could I have been so stupid!

Child: Hey hey, it's alright. I understand now.

Teen: Do you though?

Child: Yes. I do.

(Child walks over to Teen and gives them a hug while Teen breaks down in Child's arms)

Teen: I'm so sorry.

Child: It's ok. I forgive you.

Teen: I'm sorry I wasn't a better brother to you. But I'll try and change that now.

Child: How are you gonna do that?

Teen: I don't know. But I'll find away. *(Teen gets up, gets the toy plane, and give and the paddle back to Child)* I promise.

Child: You've never promised me anything before.

Teen: That's how important this is to me.

Child: Thank you

(The two then share a meaningful hug)

Teen: What happens next?

Child: You know what happens next.

Teen: Does it have to happen?

Child: Yes, yes it does.

Teen: There has to be a way.

Child: I'm sorry, but there isn't one.

(Child begins to exit)

Teen: Please don't go. Stay here with me.

Child: I have to go now. Besides, you're going to be late.

Teen: I don't care. Let me have this. Let me get to know you more. Let me be your brother.

Child: You have to take care of this. *(Walks over to Teen and takes out the papers from their coat pocket)* You made a promise to mom that you would.

Teen: *(Takes the papers as Child starts to exit again)* Wait.

Child: I can't wait anymore.

Teen: Please.

Child: I'm sorry.

Teen: But I can't do this without you!

Child: Goodbye.

(After Child shuts the door Teen rushes over to the door and opens it quickly to find only darkness. The door is kept open as Teen slowly backs away)

Teen: No no no please. Come back! I don't know how I'm gonna do this without you. I can't *(Teen walks to couch)* I can't... *(Teen sits in couch)*

(A woman enters the room and begins to speak)

Women: Sweetie, we have to go soon. Family is starting to arrive.

Teen: But I'm not ready yet. There's still so much I left have to do and and-

Women: Shshsh, it's ok. I'm here for you. Whatever you have written in this eulogy I'm sure is perfect.

Teen: Ok, *(Start to break down)* I just miss her so much mom.

Women: Me too honey. Me too. Are you ready?

Teen: *(looks over at open door)* Not yet. *(Get up closes the door, beat)* Ok, I'm ready now.

(Teen begins to walk off stage and after Teen says his final line the lights start to fade to black) ■



"Sometimes when we are generous in small, barely detectable ways it can change someone else's life forever."

MARGARET CHO



"At the end of the day we can endure much more than we think we can."

FRIDA KAHLO



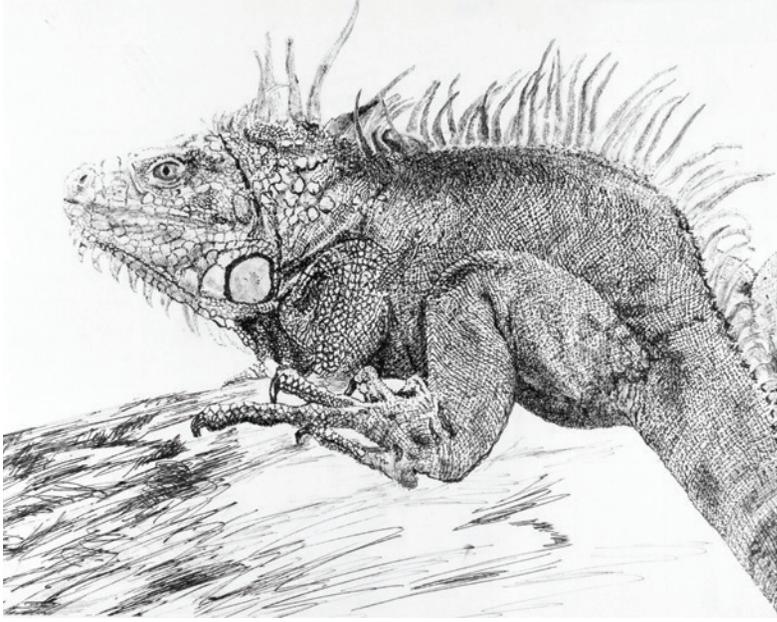
"I'll tell you what freedom is to me. No fear."

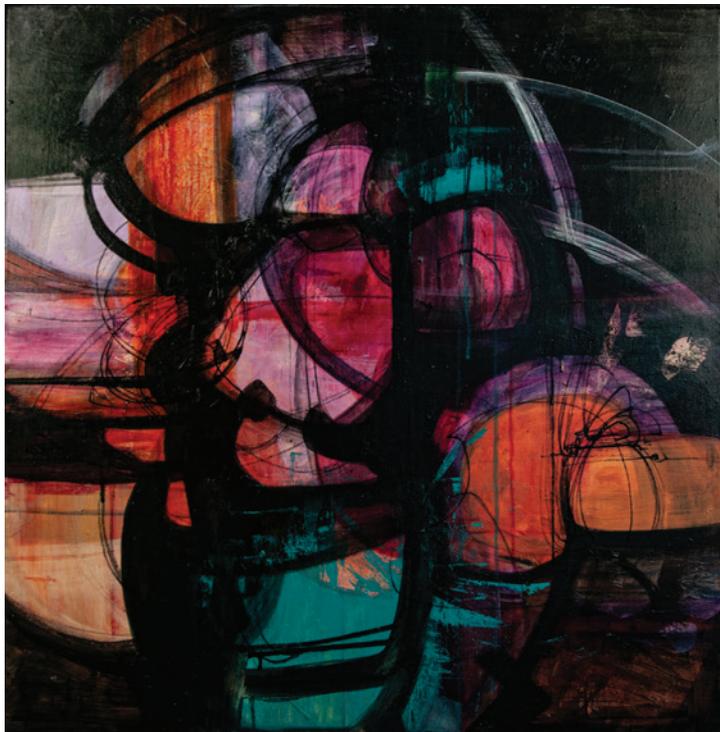
NINA SIMONE

"I know that like every woman of the people, I have more strength than I appear to have."

EVA PERON







CCD CREATIVE WRITING

CCD currently offers ENG 221, Introduction to Creative Writing, a GT (Guarantee Transfer course).

ENG 221 *Creative Writing I*

This course examines creative writing by exploring imaginative uses of language through creative genres (fiction, poetry, and other types of creative production such as drama, screenplays, graphic narrative, or creative nonfiction) with emphasis on the student's own unique style, subject matter and needs. This is a statewide Guaranteed Transfer course in the GT-AH1 category.

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This program allows you to pursue your interests in creative writing while earning your Associate of Arts degree. We offer smaller classes that operate under the assumption that would-be literary artists must do what all aspiring writers must: read and write. In addition, our program focuses on providing a solid foundation in the study of multiple genres, broad academic preparation in literature and other arts, and exploring literary models from diverse cultures, races, and contexts.

This guaranteed course transfer only applies to the University of Colorado-Denver.

To find out more about our program email jeffrey.becker@ccd.edu.

CCD ART COURSES

ART 121

Drawing I

This course is an exploration into Drawing as an expressive medium for human creativity! As a human mode of communication, drawing and 'mark-making' have been part of our collective experience since our ancestors inhabited caves. As part of this class, you will enjoy projects that investigate various approaches, techniques and media needed to develop drawing skills and visual perception.

ART 131

2D Design

This course provides introductory lessons and explorations in the basic elements of design, visual perception, and artistic form. It is an essential course for anyone wanting to be an artist, a designer, or an architect!

ART 139

Digital Photography I

Free your inner photographic genius! This class will deliver the fundamentals of photography in a fast-moving, creativity-focused, workshop-style class using state-of-the-art workstations and software to bring your photographic ideas into reality.

MGD 101

Introduction to Graphic Design

If you want to improve your skills with the Adobe suite or start learning to be a graphic designer, this is the class for you! This course will introduce you to the computer system and software used to develop graphics. Just think, you will learn about the hardware and software components for publication and multimedia production through execution in various vector, raster, page layout and multimedia programs!

MGD 116

Typography I

Type is an essential way that we communicate. This is true not only because we use it to type messages but because the design of it has emotional, instructive, and informative elements. This course introduces the history and concepts of typography as applied to graphic communications. You will have the opportunity to appropriate typography in a variety of design applications, emphasizing the basic design principles of typographic compositions and typesetting!

OUR TEAM

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