

BeanSwitch

Literature and Fine Arts

Spring 2022

***We on the BeanSwitch Team would like
to thank our advisors, Dr. Maari Carter
and Tomi McCutchen***

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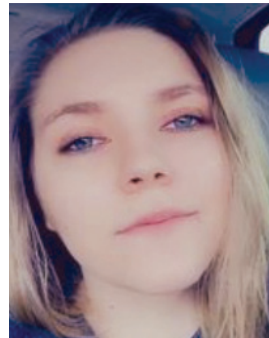
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**Michele Hughey
Photography**

Kennedy Williams
“U Up?”

Lust. Intimacy. Three fragile words that slither from a snake’s mouth. I love u texted Mr. Anonymous. But, god, how I’d love to see more of u. Mr. Anonymous, the man sending me texts from behind a screen, and Whatshisname from my past are two different people- both brought together through their selfishness and destruction. Mr. Anonymous- an unknown man digging himself into a hole in my Instagram messages. Whatshisname- a boy from my elementary school days of whom I once believed I would marry. Even now, they merge together in my mind, like two candle wicks slowly burning into one bitter, gray ash. That’s the thing with men; there’s a time span in their early twenties in which the sight of adolescent breasts is all that they crave. It must start in high school when the seniors hunt down freshman girls, trick them and corner them in their cave, bite their flesh, and then abandon them at their weakest point. Broken wings can be repaired, but a soul- animal or human- is a delicate, god-like creature that must be handled with care. But lust is an obsession, and obsessions are uncontrollable. They stem from the most animalistic part of the psyche, triggered by microscopic chemicals in the brain. Even the satiation of obtaining something cannot last forever, though, which results in the inevitable cycle of hunger and desperation. Men justify. Men falsify. Men kill portions of themselves that they envy in women. And most importantly, men waste what little time the universe has offered them in attempt to locate what it reserved for herself.

Women, goddesses of all things delicate, possess magic that men lack, and men presume that little girls can offer a taste of it. Afterall, women are intelligent creatures; they have learned to lock away the most sensitive parts of the body and mind or, in many cases, disguise/hide it from the public eye. Teenage girls are much easier. They are trusting, persuadable, impressionable, gullible, and easily intimidated. They will slide their blouse to the side, tease boys with the slightest bit of glowing skin, and kiss with a passion that tastes like cherry lip balm because they have a desperate need to feel loved. At least that’s what I envision myself doing as I, in reality, lay under my comforter with one leg sprawled out in the summer air. Thoughts of where I fall on the male’s version of a femininity scale keep me up at night, but alas, my alarm clock is too bright for me to sleep anyways.

12:52AM

It’s astonishing that, even after the most heinous act committed against me, I cannot remember my offender’s name. Maybe the memory is blurred from it happening so long ago, as I was merely a twelve-year-old. Perhaps it was actually insignificant and should not bother me as much as it did. Or maybe I intentionally forgot it, as he is not deserving of a place in my subconscious.



Dylan Schaefer
“Always Watching”
Digital Art

Whatshisname has probably changed, grown into a man of authority and respect. I know he has found a woman of pure beauty, and I know that she knows everything. She’s always been good at social manipulation. The public is only allowed to see what she portrays, and that’s exactly how the secret has been kept for so long. He probably laces her neck in the finest pearls, to which she ignores all of his wrongdoings, and he kisses the crevices of her collarbones.

I hope that just as his lips make contact with her skin, Whatshisname is haunted by flashbacks of his crime in which I was forced to be an accomplice. He deserves to be happy, as every human does, but he should also have to experience the same gut-trembling sensation that creeps up at the most intimate of times.

4

1:08AM

U still there? I was guilty of double texting, too, but never in moments of such delicacy. There's always the lingering possibility that the anonymous man had no intention of degrading my sense of self, but each plea dug deeper into my skin and threatened to make me bleed out every day in class. Would the blood pool around my feet? Would it stain the Converse my mother got me for my sixteenth birthday? Would the school janitor have to re-mop his freshly waxed floor? Were my classmates criticizing the notifications abruptly interrupting every lecture, or were they blissfully unaware? Maybe everyone's always known, or rather assumed, who I am- secretive, lustful, revealing, a tease. It all started so young, as I was freshly hatched and had taken a mere two steps from the nest when I learned to chirp a mating song. Whatshisname surely told everyone about the way my feathers looked beneath the hand-me-down jeans; the way the male teachers looked at me some days proved they, too, had imagined the curve of my back as I was pinned underneath them. They could never have as much fun with it, though, as they knew me personally. And what is the excitement in kissing one's lips when they have already spoken too much about themselves? Innocence and avoidance are the driving factors here. It's what makes men want you. They can't control themselves when they have full control of you. C'mon. Be a good girl. I know ur awake i can see ur active.



Stephanie Hopper
"Schlitz and Giggles"
Mixed Media

1:22AM

Whatshisname? What is his fucking name? It shouldn't matter, but god it does. He and my ex-best friend have been seeing each other the past few years, despite her knowledge of what he did, and it never fails to make my skin crawl. She was the first person to know the length of him, what cologne he wore and how it suffocated me, the exact video game that he beat me in, the way Wendy's curly fries lingered on his breath, and how my first kiss was tainted by his tongue that nearly choked me out.

She knew every erotic detail, down to the sound his belt buckle made when it hit the floor. Only the universe knows how many times Whatshisname asked me to go down on him, as it was too many for me to count, and how small he made me feel for neglecting to hold up my end of the deal. “You lost the game.” “What do you want? To be kissed? I’ll give you that if you just do it.” “Come on. Don’t be a fucking tease. You promised.” “I don’t have to finish. Please.” He whimpered while twiddling his thumbs, looking like whipped puppy.

1:25AM

Astrology could partially be to blame. Some miraculous, randomized formation of the stars and planets could have tugged the both of us into an undeniable spiral of hormones. Had I tucked black tourmaline into the confines of my sports bra, the negative energy could have bounced away from me. Instead, I wore a rose quartz necklace and welcomed any form of love that was gravitating towards me. Whatshisname told me it was beautiful once, and so I wore it every day.

1:27AM

The man in my phone and Whatshisname have begun to intertwine too closely together in my thoughts. They both wanted to play a game with my mind, to make me solve a puzzle while they held the last piece behind their backs. I have spent hours of my adolescence searching for the piece, peering in my brassiere and flipping through pornography magazines. Nothing fit. My body didn’t bend the way that models did,

such elegant back arches with delicate hand placements, and I sure as hell didn’t have the sexual attraction that the good guys wanted. But that piece has to exist somewhere. Would they still want me when I matured- when I had fuller breasts and an actual libido? That must have been the missing piece- maturity- and it makes sense that they would throw it away. Sarah, the dear ex-best friend, has never matured. With a five-foot tall stature, underdeveloped facial structures, and virgin hair that lacks heat damage, she is perfectly childlike. That has to be it. Whatshisname isn’t capable of love; he is merely responsible for twisting the narrative, reassuring others that he simply likes short women: Yes, her cheeks blush from the slightest touch. Of course, her humor is that of a twelve-year-old’s. Duh, she only listens to 5 Seconds of Summer and One Direction. Yeah, her victim mentality and controlling behavior is immature and disgusting. But he loves her for who she is, not because she is such a child! Damn you for thinking anything less than that. You need to sleep.

1:29AM

Ur mom won’t find out right? Mom knew about the assault. She knew the week after it happened, actually. I don’t remember how I told her, I just know it was nonchalant in an attempt to appear strong and unbothered. What twelve-year-old doesn’t want to appear impenetrable to their parents? Instead of marching her ass to his house, dragging him out by the hair, and beating him with the nearest tree limb she could find, Mom shrugged it off. “You learned your lesson.



Jordan Dodd
“Self In Pixels”

Don't be going to boys' houses unsupervised. Hey, can you hand me that bag? I need to throw these away.” Mom turned a corner, and we never spoke of it again.

1:31AM

I found a place we can hookup at near the railroad, kinda in the tree line. Nobody will know. U on birth control? Was my dad this vulgar when he was young? He's been married three other times, which could be due to his constant obsession with younger women. I'm a lot of things, but I am most certainly not stupid; the rumors were everywhere, uncanny evidence was sprawled throughout the house, and my parents' relationship was dwindling.

From my perspective, my mother hasn't aged since the day she turned thirty, but her eyes have slightly dimmed. But my dad surely saw it differently. Having a third child, and considering that I was much younger than my half-sisters, had solidified the fact that she was no longer in her prime and resulted in few noticeable physical changes. My father began to discard her, as he did with his past wives at the first glimpse of a gray hair. Someone else had caught his eye anyways, and she resembled my mother in every way possible. Her name sounded like windchimes, her body radiated youth due to an eating disorder, and she always wore the brightest red lipstick. Cheerleading uniforms, pictures of her father, and Taylor Swift posters decorated her room, barely hiding the mural of Chicago that my mother had hand-painted on her wall. The girl my father chose over my mother was my very own half-sister. If not I can get some Trojans. I have liquor to calm ur nerves too if u need it gorgeous.

1:32AM

Whatshisname will be turning twenty-one soon. He'll be at some bar, Sarah by his side, as he orders pint after pint from a waitress in skimpy clothing. They'll be so carefree and in the moment. LED lights will make Sarah's skin glow. Red. Blue. Purple. Red. Blue. Purple. Which color will Whatshisname think her dewy skin looks best in? Can't wait to see that necklace hanging from ur neck. It suits ur skin tone so well... Dad just turned sixty-one. He's celebrating retirement by kayaking every lake in a fifty-mile radius, only stopping to request a sandwich from his girlfriend. He always tells the same story of how he used to work on the railroad before marrying my mom.

My hand would look better around it though... Mr. Anonymous will be going into his mid-twenties. His Facebook is flooded with congratulations and celebratory posts. He just graduated college, and he cannot wait to begin his career as a children's pastor. Parents and former teachers praise him and request the date of which he will begin his teachings. Hellooooo? I will be twenty next month. And I am disintegrating.

1:33AM

Hey u still haven't responded but i saw ur post on facebook. Hope ur okay and i'm sorry ur feeling so down. Not sure what's going on but just wanted to tell u that ur beautiful and i miss seeing u in the school hallways. Growing up sucks lol, enjoy ur youth while u can. Graduation comes and goes and next thing u know, ur 21 like me and don't even have time to tie ur shoes. So don't dwell on things so much. Stress only gets worse from here haha. Anyways. I went ahead and got the trojans so u don't have to worry about that. Also got some wine coolers bc i know how lightweight i was when i was ur age. I can pick u up tonight if ur down. Just don't tell anyone. My parents think I'm going out to eat with friends and my friends think i am with my parents. Don't wanna get caught in a lie.

1:34AM

Panic attacks never get easier. My therapist recommends that I count backwards from one hundred while focusing on breathing, but I somehow always get stuck after eighty-two. The hardest part of it all is the knowing. Knowledge is brutal. Each breath is just another memory flooding back,

demonstrating even more examples as to why I should hyperventilate and disregard the truth of it all. I know in my heart of hearts that Whatshisname never wakes up in a sweat, whether he dreams of seeing himself in the reflection my necklace or not. I also know that my dad has probably outgrown his obsession with my sister and that she has never spoken a word of it. She and I haven't even had a conversation in nearly five years now, so there's no reason for my thoughts about it to exist. Mr. Anonymous is as well aware as I am that his secret is safe with me because I could never damage his career. He could take mine away if he wanted to retaliate, as the pictures of me reside in his phone are a looming threat above my head. At the end of the day, or in the middle of the night rather, it's just me and the stars. The universe has seen it all, every moment in history and each man's guilty pleasure, and my experience doesn't make a dent in human existence. For now, I will persuade myself that it is all irrelevant. The time on my clock is a façade made by men in order to wake before the roosters, and memories are nothing short of an electrical charge in my neurons. Nothing exists. Not obsession, not knowledge. Not bravery, not cowardice. Not quartz, not tourmaline. Not Whatshisname, not Anon.

3:15AM

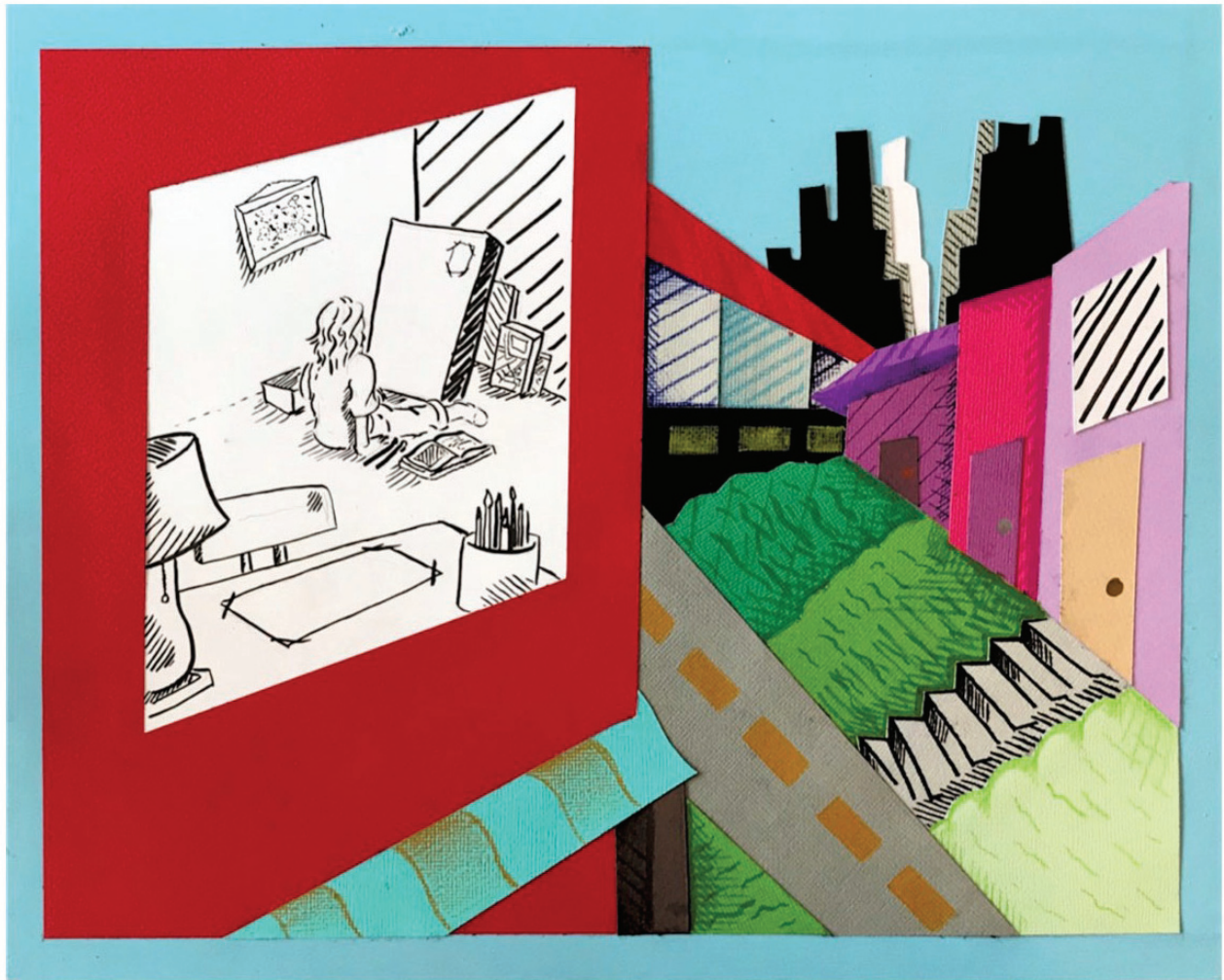
Hey, sorry I haven't responded. Just been busy with school and stuff. I think we need to talk, I finally responded. It all had to end.

3:17AM

U up?



Isaiah Kennedy
"A Battle upon a Grand Stage"
Mixed Media



Isaiah Kennedy
"Before the Bluegrass Blossoms"
Mixed Media

**Eli Davidson
“To the Neolithic Woman”**

A Goddess you are!
The child gestates in your womb;
From you we must not stray far,
From youth or when life ushers the
tomb –
 Life indebted to you.

Pain and labor:
A suffering that springs life –
 A child, an impressionable
 subject
The child sleeps;
The Goddess weeps.



**Jordan Dodd
“She”**

Grant Bivens
“The Garden”

Out in the sun
The first quiet day
Hoping to come back
And see what else god had made
She came running across
The fertile and lush fields
With a little red fruit
Held within her hand
“It’s so good, that
Fellow over there said
You could have some too!”
I bit into it quickly

As if it were to run away
He laughed as I swallowed
And then it occurred
A thousand years before
A thousand years to come
The fiery end
Men and women screaming
For a second it occurred to me all
God came back raging
“SMITE AND DAMNED BE Y’ALL!”
Thank you again, here’s the fruit which I bit
Some call it an apple I call it
Humanity’s fall



James Crowell
Photography

What a beautiful thing – to want, to start
To leave all that you once knew
To mend a broken, ’bused heart
To pick up pieces, however few

To escape your room, your cell, your cage
Whether bare or dutifully adorned
To turn over a tear-stained page
Into a crisper encore

But goodbye is harder than saying hello
To replace the old with the new
A tree can be planted and carefully grown
But break apart when torn by the roots

To laugh! To cry! To look up from a storm
To shiver! To call! To allow yourself to desire
To find your chilled soul becoming warm
To grow flowers where there had only been spires

To break! To falter! You are only a human
To scream! To swell! You can be forgiven
You are a pot that good things bloom in
You will die, but right now, you are living!

But goodbye is harder than saying hello
To trek on the track less traveled
But you are more than your highs and lows
You’re a being only barely unraveled

I know that scars on the flesh run deep
I know the heart can be cut ragged
But part of you isn’t dead, just asleep
Lulled by a promise most sapid

That it shall awake when the day is bright
And you beckon it forth from your soul
Finally stretching into the light
Like the sun to a newborn foal

Goodbye is harder than saying hello
But hellos are difficult too
That’s why this poem is so long
For being just to cry “hi” to you

So

If I may

I say

Hello.



**Michele Hughey
Photography**



Dylan Schaefer
"They're Coming!"
Colored Pencil

Daphne LaGrone
"Night Shift"
Digital Art



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Grant Bivens “A Dream of Us”

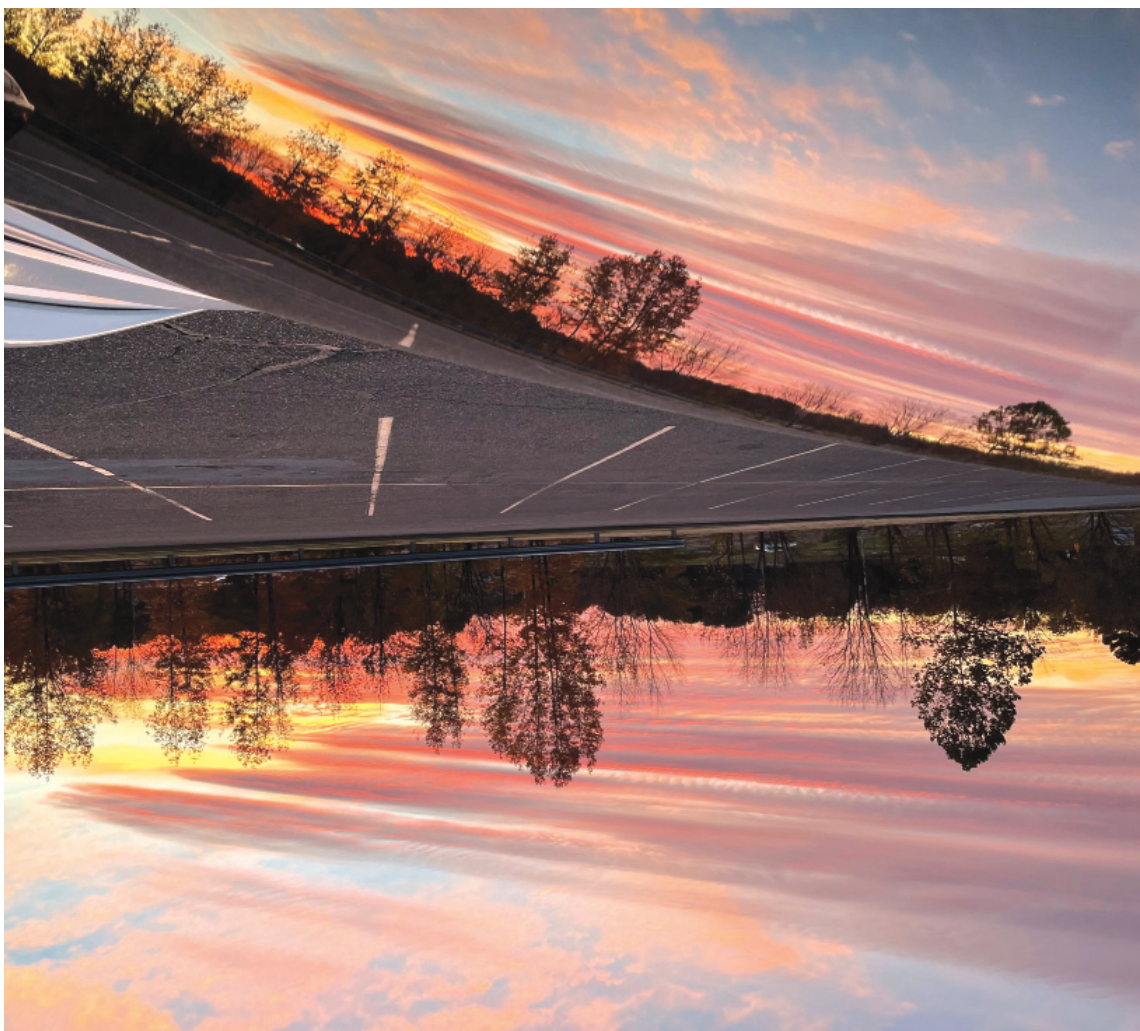
I wanna give you
A flowery crown
Put you in
A field of dreams
Mine forever
Washing away
Shorelines of gold
Not too far away
We can run away
To dream every night
We come back
Only to secure
A dimwitted sight

Grant Bivens “Dirty Teeth on a Wicked Head”

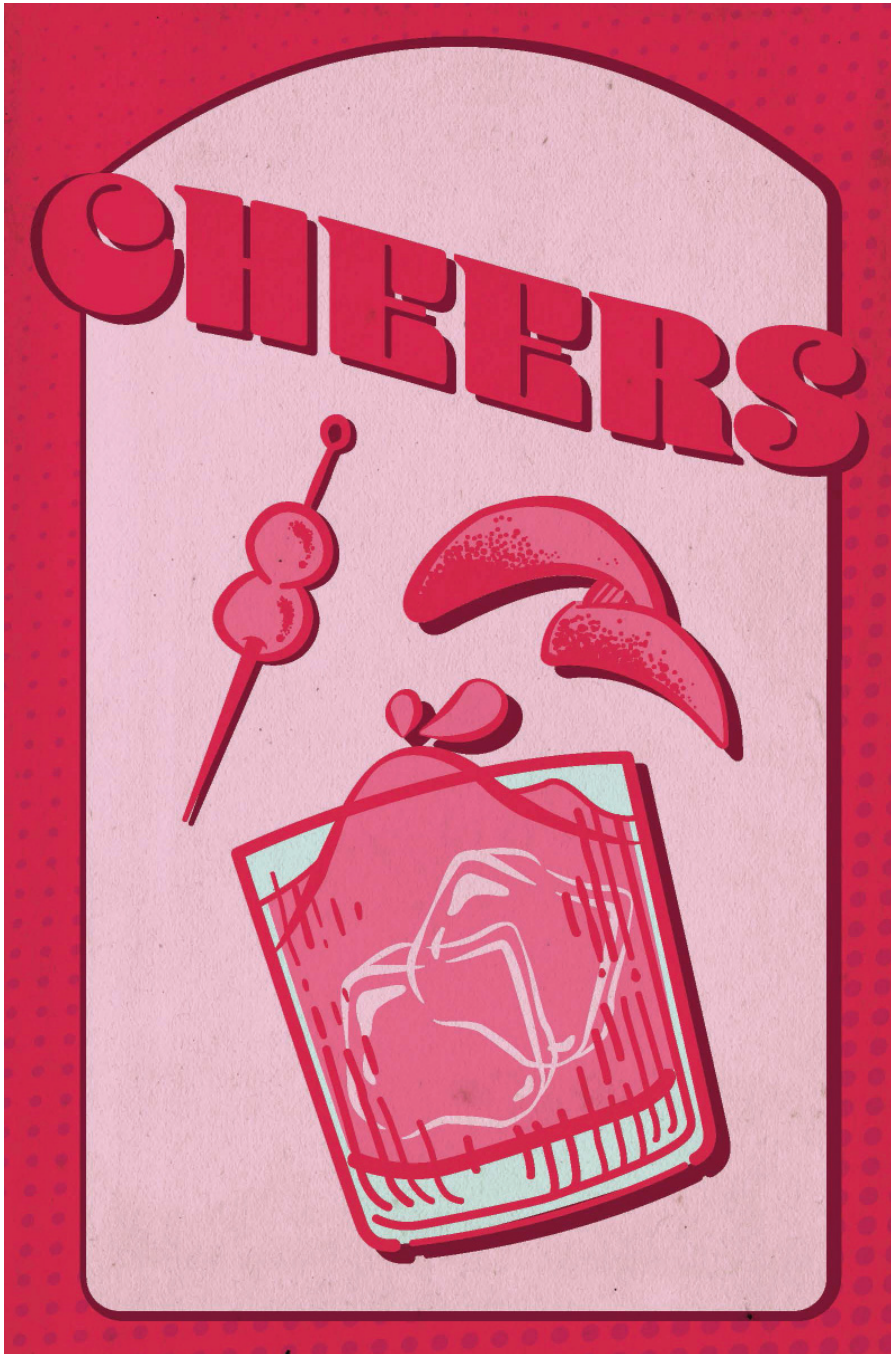
No end too noble
No death too slow
Follow it down
I still am not ready to go
Go away from my thoughts
You plague my wicked head
Brush your teeth at night
Pour water on your hedge

Grant Bivens “Spell to Honor the Day”

Sun dies each day
Moon born each night
Take a off beaten path
Thru a River colored twilight
Speak thru walls
Yell at trees
It would do some good
To spread the world a magik seed
Oil is cheap the old man spoke
But hash is all I can afford to smoke
Laugh away! Ye mothers of antiquity
Stand back to sip a little glass of tea!
Tea from China
Tea from France
Who the hell left those leaves for me?



Leah Whitwell
"Where's reality"
Photography



Mia Upchurch
 "CHEERS"
 Digital Art

Daphne LaGrone
"MyShebona"
Ink and Marker



Books are alive. This doesn’t mean that books are relevant or transformative or some other cliché, although clichés tend to endure because they are true.

Books breathe. They move. Anyone who has been in an empty library knows this is true. They won’t do this when there are a lot of people around. Not because they are shy, although some books are, but because some people can be very reckless and careless with books. They prefer to wait patiently to discover if you are a trustworthy, responsible human, a kindred spirit. Consequently, books have become rather nocturnal.

That’s why night is the best time to be at the library. Go upstairs, deep into the stacks, hold your breath, and listen for the books to wake up. You can block out the humming of the lights. They don’t have anything important to say; they are just trying to get your attention because they don’t like being ignored up on the ceiling. Sometimes the lights and the air vents will conspire together to spook you. Such childish pranks. Just throw them a sharp look and turn back to the books.

The books should be rather active by now. They’ll wiggle around and stretch their spines. Your back would be pretty stiff, too, if you were forced to stand up straight all day.

The shelves will groan and creak sympathetically under their shifting weight. Once they’ve stretched themselves out, the books will finally start to whisper to each other. The stories they know are simply too good to keep to themselves; they are just bursting to share them. Some people would refer to this as intertextuality.

Many of the books talk because they are lonely, like those dusty volumes back in Radio Technology (TK5101) or Postal Service (HE6000) or Heraldry (CR6305). They haven’t been held or opened in so long that they shuffle around on the shelf just to remind themselves that they are still capable of movement. Those poor, overlooked volumes rustle together just to hear the sound of their own words again.

After all, most books really don’t get a lot of company, not unless they are the latest romance or spy thriller with a glossy cover. A book is always crammed between two others of the same genre or the same subject or the same author. It’s rather like being stuck with nobody but your own family; you aren’t completely isolated, but eventually you start to long for fresh faces.

So, the next time you find yourself alone in the library, brush your fingers over the shelves. Slide a book off the shelf, read a few paragraphs, and slip it back into place. By call number order, please and thank you.

Be still. Listen. You will be among friends.

Katrina Pope
“A Queen’s Sacrifice”

If life were a dance,
the moment I saw you,
it all pivoted from
slow but strong ballet
to the electrifying energy
of an endless waltz.

What was it in the end?
The rush of rain, the cool
cave air pressing us together, the way the
warmth of your breath spread from my
lips to my chest then all the way down.
The moment you crossed that border, a
promise had been sealed,
fate had been set.

The world was made anew,
brighter, lighter, warmer.
You reflected my soul back, (stubborn,
tough, sharp) and for the first time,
I loved what I could see.
I wanted to consume
you, bathe in you,
breathe you in, taste
everything your skin offers.

But none of that was
enough
to keep you from setting sail in order to
search

for a home for your people
that I thought you’d found
in your arms.

And with you,
went all the warmth.

How am I supposed to
accept that as life?
That men can come or go
while women toil at home,
fiddling with their knitting,
and fending off monsters after their land and
their bed.
How can a man get a
meaningful conversation with the dead when I
can’t get a farewell
from someone who claimed to love me? How
can a single kiss
from a drowning rat
and a few streaky tears
turn me from a benevolent queen to a
heartbroken whore?

You tore a piece of me
and spilled blood down the stairs drawing
hyenas to a kill, taking a finger here, a handful
of hair, a gouged bit of chest,
everyone ignoring my guts
trailing across marble floors.
They want they want they want.

You will not take
everything:
my pride, my heart, my kingdom.
Am I supposed to play a game as armies march
upon me chasing my hopes towards you,
determined to slaughter me like a hog or force me
to wed a man
who can't even clean his nails.

I would rather
bury myself alive than
be another's pawn.
If I cannot be a queen,
if I cannot capture my king,
I will destroy the whole board.
Let it all burn.



Jordan Dodd
"Self In Pink"
Acrylic Painting



Michele Hughey
Photography



**Michele Hughey
Photography**

Katrina Pope
“Rain Drops On Your Skin”

As the audience's eyes turn to me,
out in the sunlit courtyard,
I find myself dissipating,
the flush of shame boiling inside,
turning blood and bones into mist
that hovers like an early morning fog
until a stray gust of wind blows,
sending me scattering to the edges
of the empty air.

As nothing more than tiny drops,
riding across air currents like the ocean.
I let myself dance through sun beams,
swirling through the ozone layer,
scraping snow-brushed mountaintops
and towering trees teeming with life.

Until I see you again,
then I'd let myself linger,
tracing after you as no more than
a faint streak of white across blue
just to watch the sun shine upon your face
casting a golden halo in your curls,
your eyes flecked with treasure.

And when the moment feels right,
I'd rain down to the ground,
let the world touch me again,
just so I could land on your skin,
puddling at your feet.
The next best thing
to kissing you.



Julie Mosley
"The Happy Place"
Soft Pastel

Katrina Pope
“Soap Bubble World”

I went out today,
walking through cloudy sunshine,
my earbuds full of chatter,
wondering if it all matters.

As I hopped across
forgotten fall leaves,
I happened to hear,
“We are one of the proof’s of the universe’s
existence.”

Isn’t that kind of
funny?

A universe that
made fickle, fiery stars full of
elements exploding from the depth,
made black holes born to
devour until their death,
made planets with acid rain
that never touches the ground,
made me.

And this is the clearest proof
of our infinite blackness.

Did you know
the only evidence we have of
the existence of endless universes
is the lack of evidence
that there isn’t?

The idea of our universe
multiplied in different layers
criss-crossing back and forth, over and under,
this way and that,
leaves me overwhelmed.
How many versions of me?
How many where I never had to be born?
I wonder if in one of these
worlds that overlap like soap bubbles in a bath,
I have found answers to questions like,
Where did this floating rock come from?
Where will we all go one day?

Did you ever really care?
I like to imagine
some god perched upon
the many rings of Saturn
scattering dice from Jupiter to Neptune
like the longest, most complex roleplay,
playing through all the campaigns,
plotting our courses like guests,
planning new monsters for us to face,
passing time until eternity.
Do you think perhaps

there’s a soap bubble world
where the dice landed just right
and I’m still here,
leaping between long shadows,
listening to my rambling podcast
but your calloused palms are in mine,
swinging back and forth,
watching the day slip by,
wondering at our wide open world.



Stephanie Hopper
"Obligation of Love"
Mixed Media



Daphne LaGrone
"Back road Omen No1"
Digital Art



Daphne LaGrone
"Back road Omen No2"
Digital Art

O brown cow, why must
they shame you? Are they
really that clueless?

When they drive past
you, do they not stop
to sniff the sweet alfalfa
on your slobbery lips?
Do they mistake it
for the tasty treats
Willy Wonka made?

When they see you
ruminating, do they
think you are chewing
wild onion flavored gum?
And when they see your
mate, do they think he's a cow too?

O brown cow, I'm sorry
they don't know any better.
It's not their fault. Technology
has taken them away from you.
Instead of learning about you, they
sit, scrolling on their smartphones
watching the newest TikTok trend.
Maybe if you learn their dances, they will
look further than a foot in front of their face.
Maybe then they will know the real you,

how your milk is whiter
than the newborn Charolais, how
your coat is redder than the
polished cedar chest, how the only
thing chocolate about you is your iris.

O brown cow, though they don't
see your sweet soul, keep your
head high on that hilltop
covered in clover and
hope that one day,
they will.

Ethan Elliott
“December Days”

33

The pale sun crests the mountain tops
As a layer of cool fog spread over the fields.
My father would rise at five each morning
To attend to the oxen, cows and
The rest of our animals.
I could hear him exhale as he
Rose from his bed and grabbed
His tattered overalls.
They were torn, frayed and
Held together with rusted safety pins.
I could hear the sound of his heavy
Boots pounding the floor
As he made his way down the hall.
I would watch him through the
Icy haze of my window as he stepped
Out into the blue-black cold.
The pale breath of the cattle could be seen
Leaking through the cracks of our barn.
The flame from a match glowed on my father's face
As he lit his cigar and blew rings of smoke into the
air.
They engulfed his head like a misty wreath
Before dissolving into the fog.
The frozen hills descended into
The valleys where the water ran cold
And the groups of twisted oaks shivered.
My father would lead two yokes of oxen
Down into the valley to plow.
My assignment, typical during winter,
Was to chop the firewood and have breakfast
prepared
By the time he got back.

The house was old.
A bare furnace divided the
Living room full of nothing
But dust and rocking chairs.
Most might miss or forget
Those that keep the fires blazing
And the cold outside.
But I learned at an early age
Who was responsible for that.
It was my turn to drive out winter for him.
For long after that evening sun had burned out,
The logs in the furnace were still burning.
They were burning bright, outlasting the sun.
All the while my father's bed was cold.
The labors of harvest sewed their marks
Into my father's sleeve, yet still
He awoke and went into the valleys.
He would come back cold,
Hands frozen and chapped, nose dripping,
Yet his mouth was ever smiling.
He took a seat next to the furnace
As I readied breakfast
And lit the kerosene lamps.
We sat and ate, and his smile was
Present through it all.
Always present.
Winter showed us no mercy,
For mercy is reserved for human hearts only,
And if we're lucky, our hearts
May also possess a bit of strength.
I would be lucky to have that strength inherited.



James Crowell
Photography



**James Crowell
Photography**

Maron Williams
“The Last Picture”

I don't know when you decided
you loved me, but somewhere along
the way you did. Maybe it was when
you asked me how my day was and I
told you every excruciating detail and
even played the Rock the Countries
song for you, just so you would know
what I was talking about. Or when I
would ask you a million questions while
you worked on your flatbed Ford, never
understanding a word you said,
but you explained it anyway. Or when
you drove all the way to my house to take
me to work because my parents were
both busy that day. Or when you shared
everything you knew about tomatoes with me,
from how to grade them to checking them for
anthracnose to noticing thumb bruises.
Man, how you loved your tomatoes.
Or those evenings when we would sit there,
you in your chair, me on the counter, talking
about everything under the sun.
You always gave the best life lessons.
Or when I finally got a boyfriend and you never
thought he was good enough for me. Or when I
walked across the stage at graduation and your smile
was the biggest in the crowd.

You were so proud.
Or when I told you goodbye before leaving for
college
and you hugged me, gently wrapping your arms
around me,
not squeezing because you knew I would crack.
I never thought that would be our last goodbye.
I don't know when you decided you loved me, but
I figured out you did when they checked your
phone
and found only one picture in your camera roll.



Stephanie Hopper
"Growing Pains"

Ryesa McGehee
“Calypso’s Rebirth”

“I didn’t know you knew how to weave,” the messenger god softly remarked as he inspected the golden loom.

“I know how to do everything,” Calypso called over her shoulder. “Would you like any tea, Hermes?”

“Yes, dear. Why weave of all things?”

Calypso shrugged in the window’s direction as she settled in her chair. They both looked out at the sea-straggled man sobbing on the shore.

“His wife does it, so I thought it might appease him, but all he does is cry. It gets rather annoying after awhile. I beckon the birds to drown him out.”

“Well, his fate is beckoning him. They’ve been punished enough. Athene and Zeus say it’s time.”

Calypso rolled her eyes. “Athene and Zeus this, Athene and Zeus that. Why do they care for a goat king so much? He already has a son; let him take his father’s place.”

“He’s not just any goat king, Cal, and this is more than just their wishes. It’s those three hags and their one eye down in the underworld.” he muttered irritably.

“Is that supposed to scare me? There’s a thousand little men just like him.”

“Exactly. So why do you care so much about him?”

Calypso twirled her hair on her fingers, attempting to muster up a wise and timeless proverb for her keeping of Odysseus. After a moment, she only sighed.

“I don’t know. I worked so hard on this place, and you know how tiring it can be for me to build it again. I committed so much to him, and I thought I could make him better.”

“That’s what every woman thinks. Look where it got the humans,” Hermes replied, sympathetic but bored. “How about, you have one last talk with him? I’m sure you’ll see he’s a lost cause then.”

Lost cause? How could a war general who tricked all of Troy be a lost cause? As much as she’d get annoyed at his stoic silences and ambiguous conversation, there was some lonely part of her that admired him. She liked to have him around; figuring him out was much more entertaining than listening to the birds or watching the waves. Calypso never gets visitors. When she does, they are pathetic and lazy seamen with no wisdom. Odysseus has been different from the very beginning; he knows when to obey and when he can defy. She rarely finds someone who is smart enough to keep up with her. She tried not to think about him someday overpowering her; he could, no, would turn on her when he senses her weakness. She assured herself that she would never let it get to that point, as the anticipated feeling of loneliness in his absence crept up on her.

Calypso suddenly shivered, drawn outside of her head. Hermes did something. The wind felt off, like a higher power was holding its breath.

“Fine,” she sighed dramatically. She sauntered out of the house and towards the man. Odysseus noticed her and stood up as she perched herself on a rock with her chin in her hand, drumming her fingers. He didn’t even kneel anymore.

She stared at him for a long time. The war general in him awoke, as he looked down at her with a dark defiance in his eyes. Slowly, he gets on his knees, a paranoid feeling crawls up his spine. Good, he still knows his place (for now).

“So,” she broke the silence as she pushed her doubts away. “Your precious Athene wants you home; a stupid wish, really.”

A small laugh escapes his lips. He attempts to keep his composure, but he cannot tame that ecstatic look in his eyes. It made Calypso's blood boil.

"I knew she would save me. You cannot keep me here forever," he victoriously stated.

"Would it be so bad if I wanted to? What is so tortuous about this place? I feed you, I clothe you, you have endless hunting grounds. I even created more goats for you. We have our fun at night. What more do you need?"

"My wife and son? My home? My old life?" he muttered under his breath.

"Here we go again," Calypso groaned, all too familiar with his usual emotional speech. "How many times have I told you that I can make all of that for you here?"

"I don't want you. I want Penelope." he snarled.

"She is a woman, and I am a god. She won't understand your tales from war, and you won't care for her weaving. Me? I've witnessed empires rise and fall in one day. I've seen men ruined in a thousand different ways. I know you and your pain. Besides, the initial reunion may be all sweet and lovely, but what about years from now? You'll just grow old and hate each other in Ithaca. Here, we can stay content and young."

"I am not content here."

"You will be. I can make this any place you would like, even dear old Ithaca."

With a lazy wave of her hand, the island morphed into Odysseus's home. A surprised shriek from Hermes was heard in the house, as the parrot he was petting turned into a goat on the table.

"Stop that!" he commanded, "You could never be her, and this place could never be home."

Calypso smiled a wolfish grin, leaning in, poised for the kill.

“And what happens when your precious home isn’t yours anymore?” She stared relentlessly in his eyes with this blow, “Your dear Penelope must have taken a new man by now. You’ll probably be greeted as a straggled, sea-struck stranger than the king you once were.”

Odysseus’s face turned white as the sand around him. Of course, he had thought about this, but he brushed it off as only his nerves getting to him. But a goddess proposing this? There was some divine confidence, like she knew what he didn’t. He couldn’t let that show, or else she would win. It took him a few moments to recollect himself and respond.

“She would never do that. She is loyal to me.”

“Weren’t you supposed to be loyal too? You’re more human than anything. If you have suitors hounding you for 10 years, you’ve got to wear down at some point. You wore down pretty fast with Circe, and that was one day,” she countered, carelessly picking at her perfect nails.

“That was different! You are goddesses, it was survival.”

“Well, you seemed to really enjoy your ‘survival tactics’ these past years,” she quipped. She turned her full attention on him, “Who’s to say she wasn’t trying to survive too? She’s a woman with no husband and no power. Her status and situation made all of those suitors gods she couldn’t fight off.”

Calypso knew she struck a nerve with Odysseus’s sober silence and clenched jaw. He turned his back to her and looked at the empty sea beyond.

After a long moment of contemplative silence, she spoke up.

“So, would you stay with her?”

“What?” he snapped, turning towards her.

“Would you stay with her if she had to survive like you did? Or, would you leave her to fend for herself, taking a new wife to restore power?”

Odysseus turned his back to her again and didn't reply. Calypso knew the answer, as Hermes's "lost cause" line rang in her ears. She saw their delicate future crash and burn, replaced with a more desolate and corrupting vision of biting words and malicious wit. He'd be a snake more than anything. If he turned immortal, he would only become worse, a rapacious god who would throw away more women than just his wife back home. She would not be responsible for that.

She narrowed her eyes at him and shrugged, disgusted. "You are not fit for immortality. Go."

She waved her hand and the island shimmered, an invisible layer of her defense gone. He started to utter a response, but she was already walking back towards the house.

Hermes smiled as he read the expression on Calypso's face when she walked through the door.

"Disappointed? He's a man, you should've expected it." he chimed.

"Of course, I did. I'm disappointed in what Ithaca will turn into when he gets back," she said, settling into the chair next to him.

Hermes and Calypso sat in the house, talking idly and watching through the window as the mortal struggled to build his boat. This was the most entertainment they'd both had in weeks. They gossiped about minor nymphs and various wars brewing all over the world, chuckling occasionally at Odysseus's blunders, including him tripping over various animals and breaking wood in anger.

Finally, the boat was finished. The two deities walked down to him. They gazed at the tiny boat and fuming man with amusement. To call it a boat is too generous; it was more of a simple raft. Both stood in silence. Odysseus kneeled, waiting for praise. The vibrant parrots circled him like vultures, anticipating his humiliation.

"Well," Hermes began. "It was a mighty ... attempt."

Calypso had nothing to say to him. She barely looked at the pathetic man.

Desperate to escape this overwhelmingly uneasy moment, Hermes considered his job done, kissed Calypso's cheeks, gave another glance to the Greek general, and disappeared with the wind.

Calypso stood tongue in cheek as Odysseus pushed his raft to the waves.

Before jumping on, he turned to her, his hands shielding his eyes from the scorching sun.

"I pray for the next person who gets trapped in your grasp," he exclaimed, triumphant in getting the final word.

"I pray for your wife's peace of mind once you return," she replied quickly, confident in never allowing him that satisfaction.

As soon as his makeshift ship went out of sight, Calypso smiled and muttered:

"Whore."

With that one word, the island burst into flames. The trees created a monumental wall of fire encircling her home. The sand hissed as she walked, scorching her feet. The ocean bubbled violently. The creatures living peacefully in the woods jumped and ran to her home for refuge, already familiar with the routine about to take place. The flames could not hurt them, yet it frightened them every time.

Calypso was unfazed by her own ritual, she had grown used to the sudden chaos long ago. Her walk to the house was leisurely, taking in the destruction around her, almost proud of it. The looming, empty mansion would be bare bones in a matter of minutes. She opened the wide mahogany doors and allowed the animals inside, even though they all knew the house would be engulfed soon. Calypso watched with mild amusement as her pots and pans melted under the heat; she could smell the wines and fruits burning. The golden loom was the most satisfying to watch of all: it melted and pooled into the floor, the strings burning in seconds. As she walked to the luscious Reflection Room in the middle of her home, she caught a glimpse of her bed burning. The flames licking her red velvet sheets, feathers burning in midair. The blood-red curtains caught on fire with a roar, and the whole bedroom was quickly engulfed in flames before she could revel in the full destruction of the bed.

The fire was at her ceiling now, scorching her curtains and wallpaper into nothingness, teasing her with the metamorphosis about to occur. She hated the chandeliers and frivolous decor around her home. The glossy stairs and marble floors screaming for worthless passion and prideful facades now cracking and splintering in harmony; she was happy to see it burn. The mirrors covering the room became distorted by the smoke, every different one depicting a reality not present. Her eyes gleamed with anticipation, and she undressed slowly, welcoming the tears in her eyes from the smoke.

Fully unclothed, she patiently beckoned the fire to her, and it engulfed her all at once with the obedience of a loyal hound. She looked down at her once smooth and silky hands, now marred with burns and blisters. Her whole body shivered as the flames lashed at her. She marveled at the charred skin running across her body. She felt wisps of her own hair fly around her as it landed on the floor as ash. Her irises on the verge of melting, and every breath filled with smoke.

As her own destruction reigned around and in her, she looked to her side at a mirror slowly melting and cracking under pressure. While it was still in one discernable piece, the smoke hazed over her reflection, morphing it into another woman's face. Calypso eyed her curiously, her expression less prideful and more calculating. She had an eternal look of loyalty, of grief. She recognized the woman, but before she could call out her name, the glass shattered and shards flew past her, scathing her tender skin.

Calypso pushed the woman out of her mind and took in the chaos around her. It is almost finished. The sounds of excited animals and her own laughter created dissonance in the cracking wood and raging fire.

With a wave of her hand, it all disappeared, and she was left with the remains of her cleansing. Exhausted from the ordeal, she walked to her bedroom and fell asleep in the pile of ashes that was once her bed; a bed she shared with Odysseus for 7 years now reduced to black, chalky smears against Calypso's body. The animals retreated from her house, unaffected by the fire and the loss of their homes. They had no reason to worry, as new ones would appear in the next few days.

On the first day, the house fixed itself. She awoke in an actual bed with white cotton sheets and thin blankets, differing hues of green piling on her like summer leaves shaken and scattered from their blooming trees. She sat up and looked around her new bedroom: a woven wicker chair sitting in the corner, sunshine pooling in from open windows, fine curtains billowing in the calm breeze, lazy vines steadily growing on her cream-white walls. Nothing left of her extravagant and gaudy house built to appease a king of goats and mountains; this was a home.

She dressed and walked through the rest of the home. It was considerably smaller than her previous one, as it only had to suit her. Sunlight covered every room in a warm, golden glow, and every room had large glass windows overlooking her island. The kitchen already smelled of spices and intoxicating aromas, her pantries filled with fresh fruits and vegetables. She passed the kitchen and walked through the library, perusing through books that hadn't even been written yet. New ones had appeared; she wondered what that meant.

She reached the heart of the home: the Reflection Room. Every single mirror is repaired and crystalline, waiting for someone to fill them. They cover the walls and ceiling. You cannot escape your gaze. The candles on the floor were new and perfectly aligned. This room never changed. Calypso stepped in front of the center mirror, marveling at the image she created – a burned and stiff figure surrounded by sunlight and rainbow reflections.

After exploring the house, she opened her front door in a flourish. A toucan cawed at her from her above. She turned towards her house and looked up, finding all her birds lining her roof. Their homes were merely reborn saplings now, but they would find them again in a couple of days as fresh new trees. The ash under her feet hummed with new life growing underneath. The other animals – the lions, fawn, snakes, hedgehogs – gravitated towards her home to patiently wait for their turn of restoration. Her charred hands pet each being as they walked past her and through the doorway. Not a goat in sight.

Calypso spent the next several days exploring her isle. She knew every path by heart, no matter how many times it burned away. She helped the animals get acclimated again. She cooked. She spent her nights staring at the ocean. Her own looks repaired on the final day. She never comes back the same. She finds a new scar or two. Her jawline grows sharper, her figure fuller. There's no method or explanation, as one never knows in what way they will heal.

After she ran her hands across her healed body, she decided it's time to finish the ritual as she walked in the Reflection Room.

Calypso sits in front of the mirror in the middle, and the candle lights with a snap of her fingers. As the smoke billows and looms around the glass, she covers her head with a silk scarf to center herself and her thoughts. She is no longer here – she is what is in the mirror. The candle's reflection multiplies, and hundreds of mirrors and reflections stretch back until it settles on one scene.

The same woman whose reflection cut her skin in the fire sits at a loom in black. The sounds of careless and pig-like men ruining her home are heard behind a door. Some of them try to break the lock, others pound on the door. They yell obscenities and threats at her. She simply sits, a glimmer of fear and tragedy dot her brown eyes. She looks like she deals with this every day, yet it never gets easier. She has that look of loyalty Calypso can't escape even in her dreams.

She can't look too long, so she shifts to the mirror's image to the right. A stunning woman sits next to an old king. The man has battle scars, a decade old at least. He is entertaining guests with a story of how his wife started the war; how vulnerably she fell into the terrible Paris's arms, and how her loving husband rescued her and destroyed a city in the process. He is making grandiose gestures, and tears are filling his eyes. Helen is simply sitting, feeling the weight of the mens' looks around her, as they either mentally undress her or blame her for their friends' deaths in that horrible war. The blush of shame dusts her beautiful cheeks.

Calypso moves to the mirror on the left of Odysseus's wife, the last one. A wisp of a woman floats around a tunnel, calling for her son and husband. She is a spirit caught between worlds; she may have said goodbye to her husband three times, but she wishes to depart from her son. Her son who needs a mother as his father builds Rome and crumbles inside himself. A look of determination marks her tear-stained face. All Creusa can think about is her son somewhere ahead of her and the memory of her beloved Troy burning behind her.

A familiar dread seeps in her bones. How can she watch men crumble from war with a nonchalant smirk, yet feel her heart crack with a wife's stoic gaze? If she could give Odysseus seven years in this paradise, she would give Penelope a hundred.

Calypso vibrates in anger and hopelessness. The urge to burn, to destroy, to protect courses through her simultaneously. If only she could burn down the thrones and crowns of their husbands, just as her house burned but with a primal ferocity; the flames no longer an obedient pet but a striking serpent consuming their beds and land. If only she could let these women live on her island, she would let them live forever and watch the kingdoms fall with her. If only she could let them live and be loved.

Her head lowers and the silk slips off her hair as the women around her grieve silently. For the tears they cannot show in public, Calypso lets run in the privacy of her home.

A woman comes in multitudes. She is all of the grief and suppressed longing of the women around her: her mother, her sister, her friend, the wife passing her on the street, the priestess on her knees at the altar of an absent god. She carries their experiences with her, and they shine through in her decisions.

If a woman carries all of these multitudes in one lifetime, how many does a goddess carry for an eternity?



Mia Upchurch
 "Good Day"
 Digital Art



Mia Upchurch
“Good Morning”
Digital Art

Mari Morgan
“A Different Neighborhood”

Nina del Sol – a slightly plump and cocoa-battered girl of fourteen years or so – was not in her tiny brick-red house when they came and arrested her parents. She was at her third high-school soccer game, shriveling herself like a wilting flower on the white plastic bench to avoid the dark eyes of Esperanza and the others. They noticeably did not appreciate that Nina was wearing a spotless white jersey with the small blue letters USJ branded on the front. Yet, she knew it was not her fault that she was wearing the wrong shirt. Her parents had forced her into it, repeatedly reminding her in their broken-down van that they pulled American weeds and bathed spoiled gringo children for her to be on the better team at the better school.

Nina, remembering those unpleasant words, faintly scoffed through her petite nose and slightly shook her head, causing her long black ponytail to sway lightly against the 50 on her back. She knew that her parents were right, but she also did not feel that she was on the best team for her. She understood why but did not want to think deeply about it, for it caused her eyes to wet and her lips to tremble. Instead, Nina shrunk more into herself, hunching over with her elbows on her trembling knees and her reddish hands under her chin. She did not expect to play and did not want to since she knew it would attract even more attention from the other team. So, she allowed herself to daze off, abstractedly recalling the town’s park until she suddenly heard the na in her name.

“Yes?” Nina responded blindly, straightening herself up and looking towards her coach – a lean and milk-skinned woman of thirty-five or so. “Do you know English?” the coach biting inquired, glaring her dark blue eyes at the girl from the safety of her red USJ cap. Nina internally flinched; she always hated when they asked her that, rhetorically or not. “I said that there are only five more minutes in the game. I want you to pick up the flags at the ends and get all the extra balls in the bag.” “Yes, ma’am,” Nina softly replied before getting up and lightly jogging to her team’s side of the unnaturally bright green field. She picked up their two dainty white flags and carried them in her quivering thin arms while hesitantly walking across the other side. The girl did not want to see her former friends and teammates; so, she attempted to hide by frequently glancing at the large crowd of parents on the recently polished bleachers. Yet, Nina eventually focused bashfully on the perfectly painted blue sidelines when she realized that her parents weren’t in the stands again.



Daphne LaGrone
“WorryWorryWorry”
Digital Art

She understood, of course. Her parents, who wore faded clothing and sat like a sigh, did not feel comfortable cheering with her team’s families. They claimed it was because they were new to the school and the team and the nice part of town, but Nina knew the real reason. It was because they were the only cocoa-buttered people in the group, quickly causing a lot of distant stares from the well-dressed blonde and milk-skinned parents. Hypocrites, she bitterly thought to herself and tightly picked up the first white flag on the opponent’s side. Then, she braced her delicate shoulders to hear the intentionally cruel jeers of Diana or Esperanza or Anita as she trudged closer to their cramped bench.

“Girl of the Sun!” Nina heard, intuitively jerking her head to that voice despite her body facing the flag. “Are they making you pick up the flags because you’re brown or the worst player?” Anita boldly taunted rather than asked from the sidelines. Nina shook her head for the third or fourth time that day and lifted the final white flag. “No, it’s because I’m the only freshman,” Nina flatly responded, forcefully striding past the bench full of chocolate-melted and cocoa-buttered girls. “Is that what they told you...” Diana stated matter-of-factly, shaking her dark hair in rhythm with her frank tone. “They just want you to pick up after them. That’s all they ever want, especially the rich ones. They did the same thing to my cousin.” Nina briefly paused at that remark but soon continued jogging towards her coach, who had already gathered the white and light blue soccer balls in the long stringed bag.

“Took you long enough,” the coach bluntly voiced, crossing her strong arms across her chest. “Sorry,” Nina murmured, “I got distracted – sorry.” The coach firmly nodded in return and pointed her head to the empty bench. Nina got the hint, laying the white flags next to the bag and shuffling towards her vacant seat. She was about to sit down but froze when she heard the piercing phew of the referee’s whistle. She immediately looked at the blinking black scoreboard and began to gingerly clap as her sweaty and chatty teammates sprinted to the coach. “Y’all did a great job,” Nina weakly enthused to no one in particular, wincing when she realized that she said that awful word. Y’all. One of the girls, a red-haired sophomore – Josie, she remembered, faintly said thanks in passing but did not progress the conversation.

Nina tried not to appear hurt from it but looked at Josie and her other teammates, who were hugging and high-fiving one another. She suddenly felt like an outsider. She hated that feeling and hastily shoved it out of her mind by gathering her things into her bag and silently stepping away. After a while, she began to absentmindedly wander around the field, privately debating if she should congratulate some of the girls on the other team. However, before she could fully decide, Nina heard the clear and steady voices of Esperanza and Diana.

“Nina,” Esperanza, who stood a few feet away from her, firmly asserted. “Yes?” Nina sighed out, coming closer till she was right in front of them. “We’re sorry for what Anita said earlier. Lo siento,” Diana tenderly apologized, knitting her dark eyebrows together. “But we are concerned for you. We don’t like the girls you play with; we don’t like that you live on the other side of town now.” Nina sighed again. “I know. It is a bit strange not being next to the park anymore.” There was a fleeting moment of silence. “You can still play with us there. It won’t be that weird after a while,” Esperanza offered with some hope in her voice. Nina shrugged, glancing away for a moment. “No. I live in a different neighborhood now.” Almost instantaneously, Diana shook her head furiously. “Those aren’t your people! We are! They act nice and welcoming, but they will watch you in their windows till you leave! They will write down your license plates and question your Americanism!”

“Okay!” Nina fiercely yelled back before turning away and storming off to the overcrowded parking lot. Once there, she stood stiffly, constantly yanking her head to every incoming car. Yet, none of them had her wearied parents in them, talking in rapid Spanish to one another. Nina soon became anxious, taking out her phone to make multiple calls to her father and then her mother. She did not want to be the last person in the parking lot, but it was becoming more and more likely that she would be. The mere thought of that made her turn red from embarrassment and anger. Nina went to make one more livid call but abruptly heard her name from a sleek and shiny black jeep.

Josie’s pale and flushed face shyly poked out from the tinted driver’s window. “Nina, right?” she asked sweetly. Nina gently nodded, feeling the red melt from her face. “Do you need a ride? I can take you,” she offered with a delicate smile. Nina returned the expression and swiftly ran around the car, getting into the passenger’s seat. “Where do you live?” Josie casually questioned, opening the GPS app on her sparkly white phone. “Um, 4 Brooklyn Boulevard,” Nina nervously answered, intertwining her jittery fingers together and gazing out the window. “Oh, wow, I live near there! My house is the circular white one with the large R on the front door. Do you know what I am talking about?” Nina knew what Josie was talking about. It was the grandest house in the neighborhood. She always saw it while going to school; she thought it was tacky, too American, too modern for her. “Yes, it is very beautiful.” Josie sparsely chuckled and awkwardly replied, “Yeah.”



Leah Whitwell
“Sherbet Skies”
Photography

It was silent after that, so Nina observed the outside world with its blurry trees and stoic gray buildings. She didn't really understand her town; half of it was old with decaying houses, and half of it was entirely new with pristine neighborhoods. She wasn't allowed to complain, though, since she lived in one of those neighborhoods. Her parents had decided to move into one due to its convenient location near her new school. Yet, they also picked the cheapest and most uncomfortable house to live in. Her parents claimed that it was because they wanted to save money, but Nina knew the real reason. It was because they were not rich; they were barely middle-class. They both had to work two jobs for Nina to enroll in the town's most prestigious private school.

Nina, realizing the irony of their circumstances, faintly scoffed through her petite nose. Josie quickly looked at her. "What?" she asked with a smooth grin. Nina shook her head for the millionth time. "Nothing. Just thinking about the town. I don't like it." "Me neither," Josie excitedly agreed, turning her wheel. Nina noticed that they had entered their neighborhood. "It's too small and too old. I want to move to Nashville or Knoxville; they understand the future." Nina naturally grunted at that statement; she thought them all the same. "I want to get out of Tennessee...out of the country. I think I want to move to Mexico. They work in the sun, so they look more like me," Nina softly responded, gradually acknowledging her lack of belongingness to herself. Josie was mute for a second but soon found her eager voice again. "Are you from there?" "No, my grandparents were. They were true immigrants. My family and I are natural-born citizens; although, we don't feel like ones." She did not say anything back, allowing a painful stillness to rest in the car. Eventually, Nina broke it by pointing at her tiny brick-red house. "That's it!"

As they got closer, Nina instantly noticed two black and white police cars parked on the sidewalk, blocking her parent's broken-down van from leaving. Her burnt and fatigued face swiftly became pale and scrunched. "Hey, can you please stop here?" Nina requested with a tremble in her voice. "Oh...yeah," Josie clumsily answered, parking her jeep in the middle of the street. Nina almost fell out of the car, forgetting her things and running towards one of the police cars. She saw a middle-aged white man, who was taking notes on a yellow pad, in the driver's seat and forcefully pounded on the window. He lazily looked up and rolled it down. "Yes?" "What happened? What's going on? What is this?" Nina demanded fearfully, shaking so hard that she had to lean herself against the police car.

"Calm down, miss! We got a report from someone in the neighborhood about illegal residency. They said that there were undocumented immigrants in this house, so we came and arrested them. They are at the town's immigration center, waiting for immediate deportation." Nina instinctively let out a guttural scream and dropped to her feet, scraping her knees and hands in the process. The policeman promptly got out of his car and lifted the weeping girl, pressing her wet face into his chest. He hushed her, trying to either comfort or muffle Nina. And even though Nina knew that he wouldn't be able to hear her clearly, she screamed, "No, no, no! They aren't immigrants! They are American! They are American!"

Dylan Schaefer
"Faces of the Tormented"
Digital Art





Dylan Schaefer
"Devourer of Worlds"
Digital Art

Kennedy Williams
“Lost”

A dove taps its small, delicate feet
As he pitter-patters down the street
The molded sidewalk he bids adieu
He turns to look at me in defeat

I sit and question from where he flew
His gaze now lost, no longer heureux
Oh, to see the world from up so high
I wish to speak, but my chest feels creux

Why, little bird, would you walk? Just fly.
Time is ticking, the sun's set is nigh
Are you far from home? Lost or unfit?
He waddles away from line of sight

I pack my bag, now ready to quit
Everything in place, so intricate
My day is done now, hypocrite
My day is done, you hypocrite

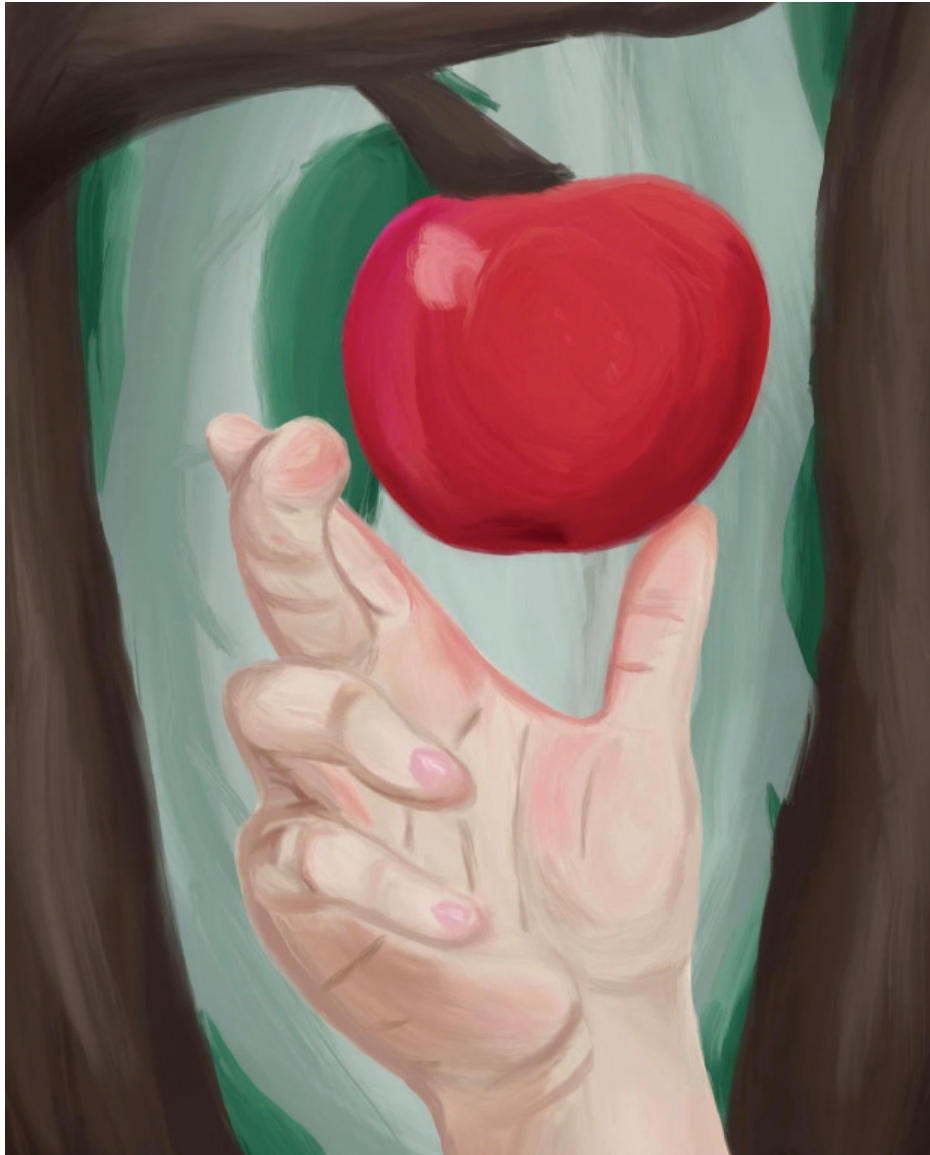


**Michele Hughey
Photography**

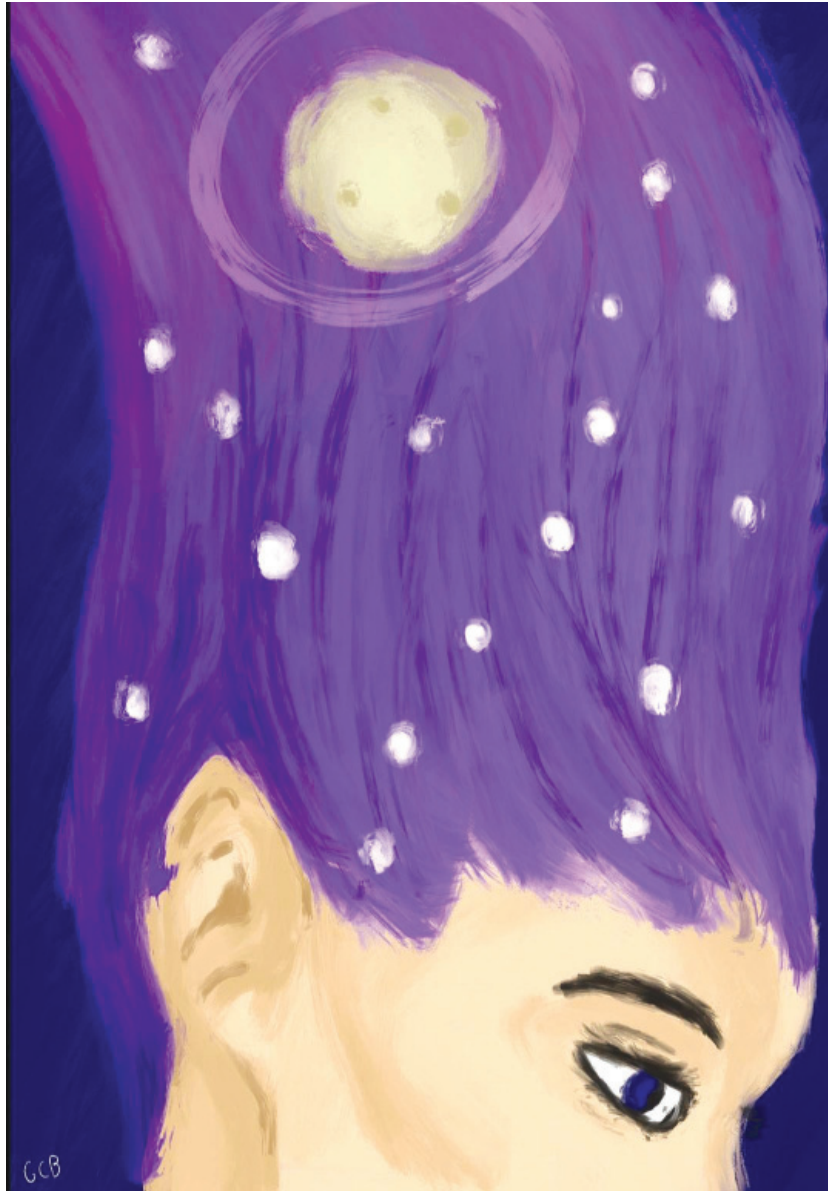
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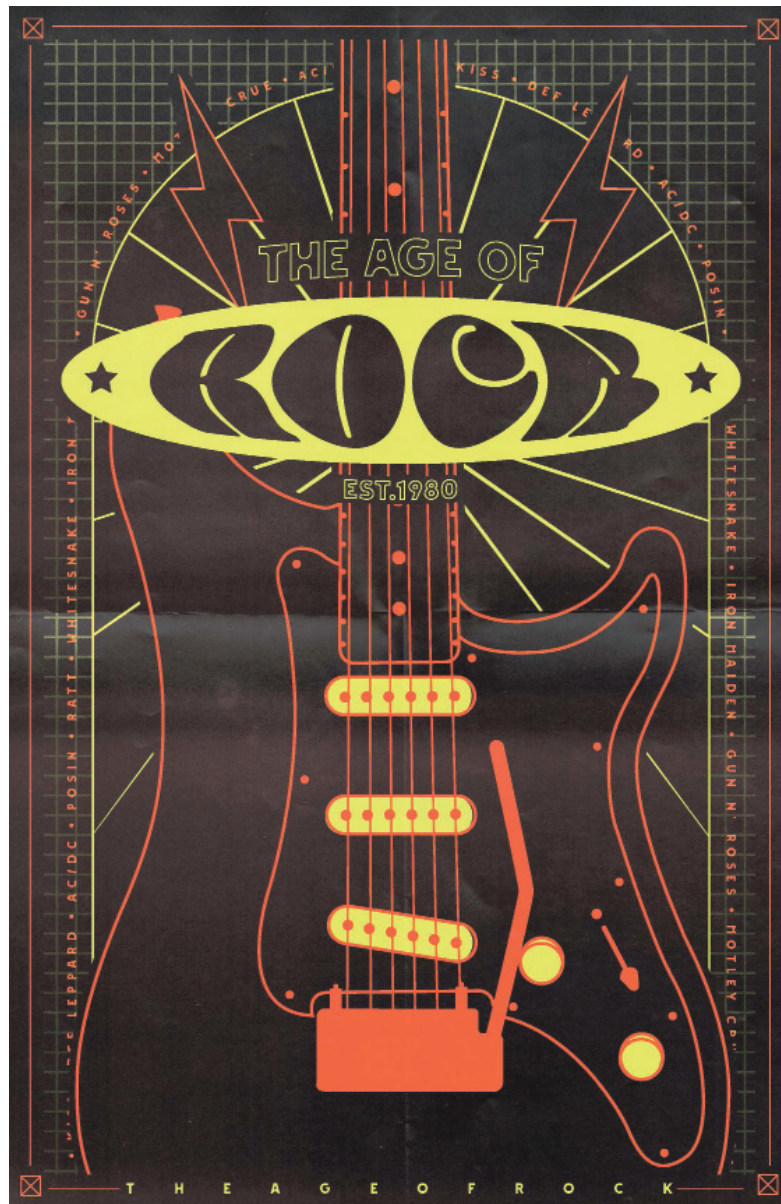
Grayson Buchignani
“1999”
Photography



Grayson Buchignani
"An Innocent Sin"
Digital Art



Grayson Buchignani
"Land of Infinite Wonder"
Digital Art



Mia Upchurch
"Age of Rock"
Digital Art



Julie Mosley
"Fat Bodies Are Beautiful Bodies"
Digital Art

Dakota Sanford
“Experiment 165”

Experiment 163 – 9/14

The subjects responded slower this time. Their mutations did not occur until approximately 5 minutes after assembly (look on record for more detail).

They do not look much different than their former selves, but that is not the point of the experiment.

Tomorrow, the truth will be revealed.

Experiment 163 – 9/15

DAMN IT! The subjects didn't even last the night! No point in doing this anymore. Should have listened to her.

“They won't last a week,” she had said.

“They will this time! I know it!” I had yelled back.

I was such a fool. Of course, their tiny bodies could not sustain such a powerful reconstruction.

I will have to develop a new ecosystem. Maybe try something new? What would create longevity? A dash of intelligence? Was it the blue powder or the red for breathability?

New figures will have to be constructed now. What design have I not tried?

“EXIS,” I shouted, announcing my presence to the being hovering over the Galaxy

Map, “you will never guess what just happened!”

The brooding figure sighed, “I have all the time to guess.”

“My subjects! They lasted longer than I would have ever anticipated! You should see them! They can walk and talk and think and –”

“Another one of your experiments, Tence? Are you not tired of failure after failure?”
“No, you don’t understand! This one worked.”

Exis looked at me with the same bored face she always wore. Only I could tell the difference in her emotions. Her eyes, for example, exuberated curiosity. Her dignity, however, caused her to feign uninterest.

“Come, come! See for yourself!” I urged, excitedly. I grabbed her hand and dragged her all the way to my new planet. I had placed it somewhere I never thought it would be able to thrive: next to a rather large ball generating heat. “You see! My subjects call it the Sun! How cool is that? They have so many ideas in their tiny little brains. Some of them have even thought of us by now! Well, not specifically, but still.”

Exis took a moment to watch my subjects. She noted when something drastic happened without us doing anything and how they started to form different groups. She gasped when she saw them fighting for the first time. “Why did they do that?” She asked.

“I have no idea! They each have their own reasons and some of them are the same as their opponents. Isn’t that strange?”

“Yes. That is highly irregular.”

“Do you – do you like it? I made sure to add everything you told me, but I had to take out the immortality piece. Their bodies couldn’t handle it.” I stared at my colleague and friend, waiting for an answer or some sign she was pleased.

She nodded in approval.

My excitement knew no bounds. I could continue my experiments! Being on such a tight rope all the time made it so hard to concentrate. Everyone was counting on me. I could create life in this galaxy. Maybe I could spread my subjects across the universe!

I watched the Sun as its flames flickered. My subjects seem to both love and fear the orb. I felt odd, watching them. Everything would happen so fast; I couldn’t prevent it. One minute, a small creature would be created out of nowhere and, the next, that same creature would be dead. Sometimes, I would feel an immense sadness after watching my subjects hurt each other and the world I created. Nevertheless, I knew that they were just living their small little lives as best they could.

I loved them all. Still, I felt something needed to change. They started sending more and more of themselves into the galaxy and, while they never got very far, I became worried. Some of my subjects did not care about the consequences of their actions. Some of my subjects cared too much. None of them were perfect.

“Tence!” my colleague stomped towards me and stopped when she was between me and my world. “Can you explain to me why I had to hear about your commission to own a new galaxy from Truth?”

“We both knew I wanted to make more of my subjects to see what they were capable

of, Exis. I don't know why it is such a big deal that I do so," I said, looking her straight in the eye.

"That is not the problem, and you know it! Obtaining a new galaxy will make you weaker. Expanding yourself like this will make you lose a part of yourself! I cannot be expected to pick up your slack every time you want to do something so reckless!"

I could tell she was hurt. Ever since I began my experiments, we haven't seen eye-to-eye on the things we once had. Even so, I had come too far to stop.

"I never asked you to 'pick up my slack'. You have always done that willingly," I replied.

The fierceness in her eyes once would have made me bow to her every whim. I stared at her blankly at that time, though. My experiments were my life. I lived through my subjects. I travelled and wondered through them. I could never give that up.

"I'll never make that mistake again, then," Exis said before marching out of sight. I sighed.

"She could never understand," I said to myself. "How could I leave my subjects? What if they need me? If I make more, they won't feel so lonely. If I could perfect them, they won't feel so helpless. If I could make enough, maybe...I can meet them." "Exis? Wh-what have you done?"

I entered my laboratory to find a horrific sight: my world was burning. My life was too close to the "Sun", and nearly half of it was gone. My shock slowly changed to anger – hatred.

"What I had to," her words thick, without remorse. "You would have been lost forever. You are needed here. Your fantasies have gone too far! These creations are killing

you and I – I...”

Tence shut out her words.

Perhaps a smaller heat source?

“I can’t lose you. You’re my other half, don’t you see?” She was crying, now, though this still didn’t register in the man.

Maybe...a different control? A sphere is the best bet, but could a cube work? No. No. I could do the spacing, though the creatures may be colder on the bottom.

“Tence?”

Same structure would be best. Worked perfectly. Just need a safer environment. He whipped his eyes up to meet Exis’s. The tears in her eyes were different than those of his subjects. Where theirs were of water and salt, hers were dull, colorless, lifeless. As quickly as the drops came, they disappeared. There was something wrong with such actions. Every emotion the beings felt was basic and whole. No complications within what they were feeling. When they were sad, they were sad. When they were happy, they were happy. Nothing intermingled or broke apart into emotion after emotion as fluid as the tears of the subjects. My subjects.

He moved rigidly. His hands and feet going back to work quickly. He was, of course, vaguely aware of the annoying being in his room.

“You may leave, now,” he said without looking back at her. He never heard her leave, but her presence seemed to disappear along with his irritation.

Slight setback.

70

Experiment 164 – 11/3

After a month's redoing my work, I finally have my subjects back. I managed to replicate the original. Exis hasn't talked to me, though the consistent helpings of refreshments upon my desk tells me she is still here...not sure how to feel about that.

The creatures are performing their beginning the same as 163. I added past lives and thoughts of certain recordings into the newer brains. I made sure to implant thoughts of the Sun, as well. The slightly smaller fireball should not be so easily smashed into my precious planet. I also added in another orb. They seemed so fond of the hot one the first time. How will the colder one be seen? I am more than excited to find out.

Experiment 164 – 11/19

New orb is being called the "Moon". Oh, how ever do my adorable beings come up with such names? They are travelling into space, again – the curious beasts.

Lack of drinks, noted. No sign of Exis, anymore.

Experiment 164 – 12/7

They are doing well. No signs of otherwise.

More violent than last time, though.

More fighting.

More death.

Have I miscalculated? The balance is being thrown in favor of destruction. Where is the beauty I once saw?

Experiment 164 – 13/11

I do not know if I can continue watching. My planet is falling apart! Maybe they will fix it. They have to...how else will they survive?

Experiment 164 – 13/24

Nothing is being done. A select few tried, but the masses were ignorant. What can I do?

How do I make my creatures live and want to live?

Experiment 165 – 14/0

I have decided. My presence is the only one that can save my world from annihilation. No alternatives. Not even Exis would dare talk me out of it at this point, not that I have seen her. It is as if she has disappeared.

No matter.

There is only me and my world to focus on, now. I must change their minds – alter their destination.

The minor drops of disasters I allowed in have only worsened my creatures' reactions. I will show them, though. They will listen to their creator...they must.



Ethan Elliott
“The Day Shift”
Photography

The old town where I was raised
Has lived a life so long
It's memories have started to dissolve
Into the glow of the stars.
The town was never a booming one,
The wartime skies had dropped a shadow
That lingered like wayward spirits
In the graveyard.
The town was never a poor one,
Just forgotten ...

The lonesome rivers whisper to me
As I walk along the banks,
The October sun fading into the gloom
Of the cold orange horizon.
And I'm just wishing,
Wishing I had stayed a little longer,
Just a little longer.
I can still feel the furnace heat
In the dime stores on December evenings,
While the lights outside twinkled red and green.

Now the town seems dried up and strung out.
Cracked leaves blow along like ghosts
Down the empty streets.
Those old dime stores now closed off and boarded
up,
Winter breathing through their broken walls,
The old white signs now permanently stained
With the redness of rust.
Folks came and went like the colors of spring,
Adding some color to things for a while
Then eventually drifting away.

I've drifted around too.
Had my fair share of blows dealt to me
And served my time as a voluntary prisoner.
I've seen the sun rise and fall on many roads,
But no matter where you roam
There's only one road you know by heart,
And it leads to the one place you are bound to.
The town's grown old, I've grown old.
I just wish I could have stayed around longer,
Just a little longer.

Zhariah Peaks
“In the Almost Box”

I come from a long line of Dreamers. Of people who think of doing stuff but only almost succeed. The Prayer Box was my mother's way to combat this genetic predicament. An old worn shoebox that held three decades worth of hopes and dreams.

It was the centerpiece of our kitchen table, the centerpiece of our lives, a physical representation of all my mother encompassed. It was a thing of legend, that box, and my sister and I quickly grew to love its mythology. It was magic to us, a wish maker – a direct hotline to Jesus.

But as I looked at it now, its wonder has soured, its mysticism dimmed, its romanticism bitter-sweet. All these wishes left unfinished, impossible to grant.

In the span of time it took the doctor to force his mouth to form the word “malignant,” its prayers were all at once unanswerable.

I reach into that box, force myself to read each slip of paper, each word in my mother's loopy handwriting

She only almost started a vegetable garden

Almost danced in front of a moonlit Eiffel Tower

Almost watched her children proudly grasp their diplomas

Almost cried at our weddings

Almost celebrated her 15th anniversary with my dad

Almost helped decorate her children's first dorm rooms and apartments

Almost saw her children's faces mirrored in their own little ones

Almost beat her cancer into submission.

See the thing about almos, is their inability to grasp their full potential.

They represent all of human failures.

Those failures piled up over millennia of human evolution,

And became such a pervasive dilemma,

That we made a word for it.

Almost

And here I held a box full of almos my mother was too human to overcome.



Leah Whitwell
“Who!?”
Photography



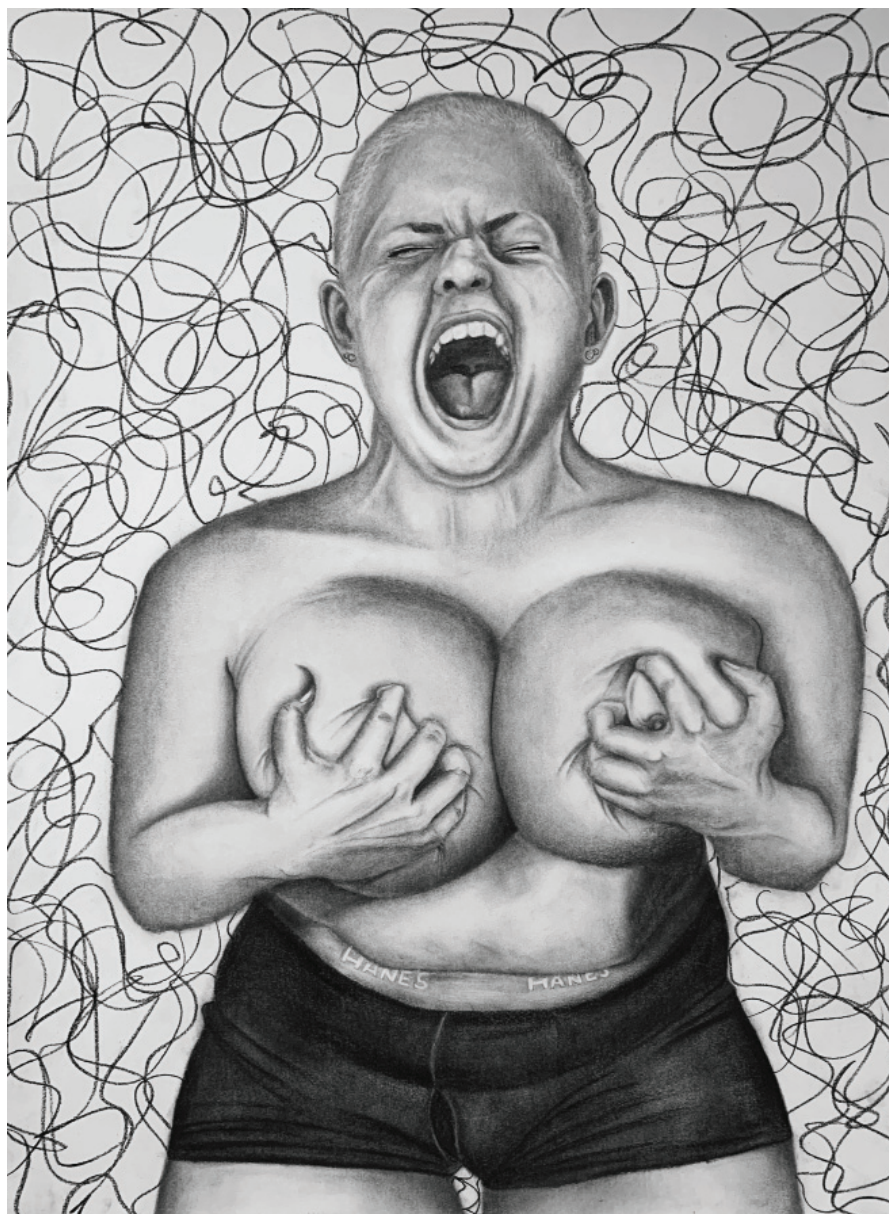
Leah Whitwell
“Bird’s-Eye View”
Photography

I thought about
Time today.
How there's so little of it.
How there's too much of it.
How it drowns me with its omnipotence – the fervor
of which it hates me.
– It's marvelous in its hatred –

I thought about escaping today.
But Time caught word and slowed to a crawl.
Its presence tar.
My ambition its target.
It would not let me leave.
I sit on the bay window,
wistfully, wistfully
and watch the bastard waste away.
And Time waves back like an old friend as it passes.

Her fingers tapped the hardwood in time with the
metronome.
Her body as calm as the eye.
Her eyes a lonely storm.
The Silence entered the room like a tired and weary
soul.
It permeated every nook but strayed from her heart
and fingers and their methodical thumping.
It forgot to close the door and inadvertently let
Winter in.
They settled together, ending the misery of the
hearth's fire.

Darkness soon followed with its friend the
Moon.
The Moon's rays fell on her face, illuminated but
not.
The Moon didn't seem to like her, its rays mock
her wrinkles –
Elongating them beyond the depths of reality –
To sour her face –
Gaunt and hollow.
The Silence, the Winter, the Moon, the
Darkness, all laughed at her brokenness.
“I am Tired,”
She introduces herself to them, but they ignore
her small voice in favor of their merriment.
She looks around in her empty heart and sighs.
Her soul leaves with her breath.
It seeps into the damp earth floor.
She was free.



Jordan Dodd
“Self in Need of Change”
Charcoal



Dylan Schaefer
 "Beamed up"
 Digital Art



Isaiah Kennedy
"Self portrait in a mirror"
Mixed Media

Zhariah Peaks
“The Turtle Dove”

I think I might be a turtle.
 Or at least, had been one in a past life.
 See, I’ve got this shell, apparently, that I need to
 break.
 Or so says my mom.
 She says she broke hers a loooooonnngg time ago.
 But I don’t really know if I believe her.
 I don’t think my parents are turtles.
 You see, I’ve tried breaking my shell
 – gotten a number of cracks in it too –
 And it’s so painful and it still hurts
 God – those chinks in my armor ache.
 I try to hide the pain,
 That wretched brokenness.
 But I can see it in my eyes when I have the
 misfortune of looking in a mirror.
 And in a world full of non-turtle people, I’ve
 become an expert at identifying my kind.
 I don’t think my parents are turtles.
 Neither of them looks dead in the eyes.
 My mom tells me that I have to break my shell, to
 spread my wings,
 And fly.
 She says it like a prayer.

So reverent,
 Like she truly believes breaking yourself from the
 inside out is the only means to the good life.
 Though I don’t think she, or I, for that matter,
 knows what that really means...
 She calls it “sculpting”
 This, self-immolative, reinvention of yourself.
 I think the correct term is “conformity”
 But
 When she says it
 – clutching my shoulders tight, staring desperate
 into my soul –
 I can see it in her eyes, so unlike mine,
 The hope, the belief, the unrelenting blind faith
 That I can be anything other than the grievous,
 pitiful, hard shelled turtle.
 “You must break out of that shell of yours to fly,
 baby girl,” she says.
 And I can’t bring myself to inform her that
 turtledoves exist.



Daniel Schaefer
“Fervency”
Photography

Inspirational Blurbs

Isaiah Kennedy – Born and raised in West Tennessee, the emulsion of traditional Southern background and the ever reaching cubist language is a convention that breathes through in my work. My primary focus is collage and illustrations. A process influenced by Japanese printmaking, the body of my work consists of found grounds with layers of paper with mark making decisions on top.

Jordan Gayle Dodd – I am a 19-year-old artist based in Tennessee. I recently transferred to The University of Tennessee at Martin, and am majoring in Studio Art. I am currently focusing on figurative paintings and drawings, particularly self portraits exploring ideas of identity, society, and femininity.

Kennedy Williams – “U Up?” was inspired by a class assignment in which we were told to write a nonfiction, lyrical essay. This piece is one of my favorites I have ever written and, in sharing it with others, I have finally released a part of me that was overdue to be let go. “Lost” was a poem written in the middle of the night when I felt my writing had come to a halt, that I was declining as an artist. I simply wanted to let other creatives know that they aren’t alone, and that the mind-block will pass. There is beauty in the pauses, too.

Ethan Elliott – The poems are a mixture of different emotions, such as love, appreciation, nostalgia and so on. However, I would not be doing my job as an artist if I were to answer questions about what the works are about and what they mean. I believe art becomes much more meaningful when that’s left up to the reader and the viewer. Suffice to say, they’re inspired from real life and real people, both of which I believe to be the most reliable muses.

Kathryn Brown – As I was walking through the library late one night after everyone had left, I realized it was much louder than I expected. I wondered what the source of the noise could be and, since it was nearly dark in an abandoned building, my imagination went wild. It is awe-inspiring to be surrounded by such a vast collection of knowledge just waiting to be picked up, and I wanted to recreate some of that experience for others.

James Crowell – Since two years ago, I have been very inspired by photography because I am amazed by everything that God has made around me and I enjoy being able to capture it with the camera. I also love going outside during the sunset to see the beautiful colors that are with it.

Dylan Schaefer – When creating a body of work I like to focus on the way colors work together to build contrast within the piece. I mostly use bright and vibrant colors when building up the layers of my works. With my art I use directions and movement that allows the viewer's eyes to flow through my works' content through the use of lines and shapes. One element that's important to me is to create a unique visual experience for the viewer through the use of interesting compositions.

Dakota Sanford – I challenged myself to write a fictional story about existence itself. I wanted to incorporate a scientific outlook with religion in mind. Nothing I wrote pertains to my personal beliefs, though I kept various others I have encountered in the past in mind while I wrote. My hope and inspiration is for readers to enjoy themselves as I make them think or connect with my little tale.

Katrina Pope – My first poem is inspired by my favorite things: science, nerdiness, and love. The second poem was inspired by someone telling me that love is like rain. The third is inspired by Orpheus and Eurydice, and the fourth is inspired by Dido and Aeneas.

Daniel Schaefer – The inspiration for my photos is finding beauty in little moments and capturing those moments to show others.

Daphne LaGrone – More often than not, my artwork is inspired by my surroundings and my own personal feelings. A lot of my work is colorful, whimsical, and a little weird – just like my personality. In other work, I like to explore the darker tones of my own personal aesthetic. At the end of the day, I am just in love with creating and I try to challenge myself with each new illustration.

Mia Upchurch – Inspired by music

Michele Hughey – Remembering an afternoon spent driving around with my first love

Stephanie Hopper – My piece titled “Growing Pains” is a chalk pastel self portrait I did to represent my growth throughout the years. The butterflies represent the seasons changing and me changing with them. My piece titled “Schlitz and Giggles” is a cubist collage and a play on the word *hammered* since it can have two meanings. My piece titled “Obligation of Love” is a collage. This is about the obligation to love someone despite being unhappy or feeling trapped.

Julie Mosley – I make art about myself and important people in my life to destigmatize sex and normal bodies.

Abigail Honbarger – I am a third-year English major with a concentration in writing. When I’m not writing ekphrastic poetry, you can find me gushing about the 14-20 vowel phonemes in English.

Maron Williams – These pieces were inspired by my life story, my passion for cattle, and my faith in Jesus.

Elijah Davidson – My piece is an ekphrasis of sorts, detailing how objectified the female body is in the Venus figurines of the Neolithic people. The poem begins as a praise of this figure, but progresses into a catharsis at the end, as the pressures of womanhood and motherhood manifest themselves through her exasperated outcry.

Leah Whitwell – I really enjoy taking photography of nature and these are just a few of my favorite pictures.

