

An abstract painting featuring several circular forms, possibly representing spheres or shells, rendered in vibrant colors like green, blue, pink, and yellow. The forms are surrounded by thick, textured brushstrokes. The overall composition is dynamic and colorful.

sphere  
*Sixty Seven*

# sphere

*Sixty Seven*

a collection of literary  
& visual works



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# Angel

*Madeline Kinnison*

My mom hit an angel with her car when I was five years old.

I remember the thud on the windshield interrupted what my mom was saying—and the bright flash of white before the car swerved into a ditch, my mom repeating *shit, shit, shit* like a prayer. As she got out of the car, she continued to mutter curses to herself or to whoever was listening. It was winter, and I was bundled up tightly. My chubby face peeked out from my hat. Meredith, my sister who was a few years my senior, said it made me look like a dumpling.

There wasn't much to look at outside besides snow and billboards, so during drives I usually played with my Barbie or talked to Meredith. The second option was always risky, though, as mom got annoyed if we talked too much in the car, and Dan would get angry, which was always worse than annoyed.

"Mer-deth, I think mom just hit an angel." I said, my voice barely above a whisper.

"How do you know it was an angel?" Meredith replied.

"We've only been to church, like, three times."

Meredith had a point, but I knew what I was talking about.

"When angels come in front of people, there's a bright light. When that angel told those shepherds about baby Jesus, there was a big shining light, and I just saw one." I said, waving my Barbie around for flair.

Meredith sighed. This was a newfound hobby of hers. Where some kids had taken up roller skating or video games, Meredith had taken up sighing at everything I said to her.

"Plenty of things are bright lights and aren't angels. The sun's a bright light."

"Mom didn't hit the sun, duh. The sun is a billion miles away in space, plus it's way too hot. It's made of lava. If she hit the sun, we would be dead and on fire." I positioned Barbie's arms above her head.

"I'm not saying she hit the sun. I'm just saying you shouldn't be so quick to assume it's an angel."

"Well, what else would it be?"

Meredith had nothing to say to this, as she just sighed again and rolled her eyes. I smiled triumphantly, having won the debate.

"Do you think the angel's okay?"

“I don’t think angels can get hurt, Jane.” There were some points where the air in Meredith’s lungs needed some time to regenerate, and her responses to my questions took up a low grumble of annoyance. It made her sound like mom.

“The thud sounded really bad. When Mrs Dowell’s dog got hit by a car, he got hurt so bad he had to go live on a farm a-a-a-ll the way in *Michigan*.”

“He wasn’t actually sent to a farm, Jane.”

“That doesn’t have anything to do with anything. You should stay focused, Mer-deth. I think we should go check on him.”

“Or her.”

I looked out the window at mom, who was talking into her flip phone now with her hand against her forehead. I looked at Meredith, then down at my restraints, and realized that this was our chance for escape.

I had recently figured out how to free myself from the restraints of my car seat. I had loved the feeling of not having to ask my sister to unbuckle me, so I swatted her hands away when she reached over and tried to help. The most difficult bit was the big red button on the buckle between my legs, and it required the combined strength of all ten fingers to get it to make the little click sound.

I quietly opened the car door and stepped down onto the road. I tucked Barbie into my jacket (a pink cocktail dress with no shoes was hardly weather-appropriate attire), with her head peeking out just under my chin so she could get a good look at things. Meredith followed close behind me. I could hear my mom more clearly:

“No you—listen. It looks like its stuck, but—couldn’t you just, I just need you to come look at it—call the fucking, don’t fucking call them yet, just—”

I could tell she was talking to Dan. Whenever she was fighting with him over the phone, her voice got all high and breathy, like a cartoon character having a panic attack. I could never tell if he was interrupting her or if she was interrupting herself, trying to quickly correct her last sentence as if it never happened. A vocal white-out.

I surveyed the area, scanning the black asphalt and fluorescent snow for any signs of fallen heavenly bodies. It was then, on the side of the road, I spotted something small and slightly bloody.

There was only one other time in my life I had seen an angel:

I was four years old. The radio was on, playing songs that weren’t old enough to be cool yet. They make weightlessness on TV seem like something spectacular—you’re flying through the

air or swimming in the ocean or floating through space—your body isn't constrained by gravity. That feeling you've known your whole life of being stuck to the earth isn't there anymore. Maybe that's why humans are so obsessed with it.

My weightlessness was brief and there wasn't anything spectacular about it. The feeling of pressure around my neck was more concrete—then it was the brief weightlessness, then the cartoonish bump against the wall, then the deep throbbing in my head and all over my body. I wasn't able to cry. Not because I was tough or particularly used to being thrown around like a rag doll, but it was like the shock of what had just happened created roadblocks in my tear ducts. All I could do was let out short little hiccups from the back of my throat, remnants of my body knowing what it was supposed to be doing but forgetting its lines in an act of pure panic. Whatever was playing on the radio sounded like it was underwater. I looked up at Dan, or the blurry silhouette who was shaped vaguely like him, and I heard him muttering shit, shit, fuck, oh shit. A prayer to whoever was listening. He knelt down beside me and picked me up, and the sudden change in altitude made my head throb harder. Dan was praying right by my ear: sorry, sorry, sorry. Please don't tell your mom.

It was then, in my delirium, that I had looked directly at the bright, holy light coming from the ceiling. Its wings spun quickly around it almost violently, barely holding back its rage. Two pieces of jewelry dangled below it, and I was sure that they had to be little crosses or little fish or something else Jesus would want the angels to wear, if he had control over that sort of thing. I stopped listening to what Dan was saying and stared right at Gabriel, or whichever one it was supposed to be, and I realized I should ask it for its name.

“Who are you?” I said in my head, hoping it would hear.

“I'm on fire.” It said in a deep voice.

“I can see that. I kind of assumed it since you're so bright.”

“Tell me now, baby, is he good to you? Can he do to you the things that I do? Oh, I can take you higher. Woah, I'm on fire.”

“You don't have to do that. I've got my whole life ahead of me.”

I don't remember the rest of what he said. I fell asleep in Dan's arms and woke up on top of my bed, placed on the covers with my head propped against the pillow. I could hear mom had just brought Meredith home from school, and all of them were talking. I didn't tell mom that Dan got me Barbie for my birthday a week after he threw me across the room like I deserved it. Maybe I did, I couldn't tell you, but I still haven't told her.

My second angel was on the side of the road, small, white, and bloody.

“Look, Mer-deth, there’s the angel.” I said, pointing at it.

“Is it safe to get closer, you think?”

“Probably. Do you think dead angels are poisonous?”

“They shouldn’t be unless God makes them out of rattlesnake venom or something.”

“But then there wouldn’t be any for the rattlesnakes.”

I got closer to the dead angel. Its tiny body laid in front of the dirty, plowed snow, painting a stark contrast, its wings spread out like a little fallen Icarus. No halo, I noted, it must have been knocked off in the collision. It stared up at heaven with a wet, black bead of an eye as if it was waiting for God to do something. Its pink, hard mouth, with a bit of blood pooling out from it, was open slightly as if I had just interrupted it. A tightness in my throat had started to grow and spread up to my cheeks.

“Jane, that’s a dead bird.” Meredith’s voice was flat, her delivery like a sitcom character waiting for a laugh track.

“No, it’s not. It’s an angel.”

“That’s literally a dead bird.”

“We should still bury her. ‘Cuz she’s dead.” The pressure in my throat had turned into something hot and heavy, growing into the mature and rational emotion of anger.

“When did you decide that it’s a girl?”

“Shut up. I hate you.” I snapped at her.

I didn’t like telling Meredith that. As soon as the words entered my head I felt guilty, and hearing them leave my mouth had left a rotten feeling in the pit of my stomach and deep in my chest, the anger retreating shamefully back to the recesses of my brain. I picked up the dead angel off the ground and I was sure to be as gentle as possible. Like holding a newborn baby, I thought, even though I’d never held a newborn baby before. I cradled her close to my chest and to Barbie, wiping the blood off of her white feathers with my gloves. She seemed even smaller, now, and I rocked her a bit, because I figured when you’re holding something beautiful and fragile you’re supposed to rock it, even if it can’t feel the swaying anymore. I continued to rock her, and I made my way toward a patch of untouched snow on the side of the road, perfect and sparkling from the sun. Holding her in only one of my arms, I started to dig, and I kept digging until the grave felt deep enough to hold her. I placed her down, carefully, like she might break more if I put her in too quickly. I sat down, criss-cross-applesauce. I heard the crunch of someone stepping through snow come up behind me.

“I’m sorry.” I said, not turning around.

“For what?”

“For saying shut up and I hate you.”

Meredith sighed as she sat down next to me. “It’s okay, Jane, I don’t care.”

“No it’s not. I don’t like it when people tell me to shut up ‘cuz it makes me feel awful. I don’t want you to feel awful. I don’t hate you either ‘cuz I can’t hate anyone.” I looked down at the snow, too ashamed to look at her face.

“I’m fine. I really don’t care, Jane. I’m sorry for calling your angel a dead bird.”

“Thanks, Mer-deth.”

We sat in further silence for a few moments.

“Do you think she has a name? Your angel?” Meredith inched closer toward me, the snow crunching beneath her body as she moved. We weren’t ever very physical with each other, hell, we still aren’t, but her body was close enough to mine that I could feel her warmth through all our layers of fabric.

“I don’t know ‘cuz I don’t know any of the names of the girl angels. I just know Gabriel, and he’s a boy, I think.”

“You could give her a name. I’m sure God wouldn’t mind.”

I thought for a moment, scanning through the list of names that I saved for important things like goldfish or dolls that weren’t Barbie. “It would have to be something pretty, like Sunflower. Or Jessica.”

“You could put them together. Sunflower Jessica.”

I scrunched my face together. “No, that’s stupid. It would just have to be one. I think Sunflower is good.” Sunflowers are big and bright and beautiful, I thought, so it was perfect.

“Sunflower the angel.”

I buried the angel Sunflower in the snow, and her body laid there, surrounded by powdery heaven until it all melted come spring. As I stood in the snow with my sister, three-foot-nothing and losing something I didn’t know existed, I said goodbye to my angel, knowing I’d never see another one again.

# Fruits of thy Womb

*Isabel Stitchick*

I remember when you washed and peeled  
The orange from your countertop Horn of  
Amalthea.  
You meticulously separated each amber half  
moon  
And placed the juicy grub on my tongue in  
reconciliation.  
Your other hand was indelibly steady on my  
shivering frame.  
Your mouth moved to form your usual raspy  
warble:

“I’ve seen it all, *mija*.  
When my father died in the accident,  
I had to mourn his body as it laid  
Beneath the mound of mangled limbs  
On the scarlet tracks.  
That’s why I don’t wear red  
And why I hate to be called Rosa.  
Me and all four of my siblings worked in the  
fields.  
The mornings were so cold. A warm cup of  
maté always helped  
And so did the whiskey.  
In the evening when the work was finished I  
was free—  
It was then that I would climb the plum trees and sing as loud as I  
could.  
I didn’t care who heard. I didn’t care who  
saw. I was free!

And when I came to this country  
Wearing every handmade item of clothing I  
owned on my back  
I learned English first, and then Croatian.  
English was for work of course  
And the Croatian was for standing up to the  
*chismes*

How cruel they were to me!

“How are you feeling *sabelita*?

Eat another piece of orange

I am going to get my

crochet I am making you a

hat

Which color would you like?”

••••

Abuelita, I am so old now

But we are still so alike

And I still cry when I drink *maté* without

you

But you were right, the whiskey does help.

I wish I could feed you an orange slice

And climb to the top of the highest plum

tree

Where we would screech like joyous, feral

banshees

And devote ourselves to freedom.





**Leo Arkus**  
*The Plant Mug*  
acrylic paint  
16" by 20"

# Switchblade Comb

*Benjamin Ervin*

Anyone who knows me well, knows my comb. An example being Jacob, who was my presentation partner in Intro to Shakespeare. We were preparing to present a section of *The Simpsons* that retells Hamlet. My mustache curled up into my mouth. I pulled out my comb, clicked the button, and it swung out. The woman in the front row was shocked.

Jacob laughed, “It’s a comb, isn’t that cool?”

••••

I bought my comb at the Jacksonville Parade. It was a few dollars for a novelty that ties together the best parts of vanity and punk threat into a singular kid’s toy: a switchblade comb.

The guy was selling five yellow boxes bearing the red text “Switchblade Comb.” The graphic design was rudimentary, evoking a Pulp comic image.

I often wonder where he got the combs. I imagine he found them. A suitcase dropped by a vagabond, boxes falling out like contraband bananas, bright yellow on a stained floor. They must have been volatile, so he decided to sell them. In reality, all I know is that the man smelt of cologne and spoke little more than “thank you.”

I opened the comb in my room, and it swung on a hinge from the handle, the force nearly pulling it out of my hand. Something about the comb had caught my eye. Be it camp, subliminal, masculine, or dangerous. I could see myself reflected in the polish, and I was left with a brief buyer’s remorse, which was overtaken with an interest in knowing its purpose.

••••

My father was first. He asked to see it. I was standing in the archway, comb askance. He took it, folded it, locked it, unlocked it, pressed the action, and ran it across his knotted head like a potato brush, combing his rough topography.

The comb worked a knotted story out of my father, “I once knew a kid with a switchblade comb. Peter Hawk. Bought it in D.C. Everyone ate at this buffet and got food poisoning but not me, so I went around tying everyone’s shoes together as they slept it off, which was hard in a school bus—not a charter bus like you had.

“Anyways, next time I saw him, he had pulled the comb right out and put in a flimsy-ass knife blade. Glued it,” he folded up the comb.

“Do you know anything about switchblade combs?”

“I know you can hold people up with them.” In his best tough face, which looked like a red-faced uakari, my dad turned the comb on me and pressed the action. I took the comb and kept looking.

••••

I showed it to my old boss. A six-foot-four veteran with a habit of cooking and a former profession of caber tosses. Aaron was sensitive to any kind of stress. He was the Cowardly Lion. The simple smoke and mirrors of “state” and “shut-down” from Oz was enough to stop him in his tracks.

On a slow day, I produced my comb from my pocket, and it got a laugh. “That for combing your hair?”

“Mostly facial hair,” I did my mustache trick, and Aaron held out his hand. I passed him the comb and he opened it up, a wide grin spreading across his face. A memory seemed to unfold in his hand.

“Have you seen one before?” I worried a little about him holding the comb. His hands made it look like a twig between his fingers, though the care he handled it with reflected a childlike interest. Aaron was never given the chance to be a child, from a demanding father to a life in the Navy. He’d become weary of the world, and in his attempt to find some of the peace he’d lost, he ended up working with us, gently holding a switchblade comb.

“I’ve been around the world, and I haven’t seen one of these.”

••••

When my friend John saw my comb, he thought I was breaking some code. “That’s got to be against some rule. Look at it, it should be considered a threat.”

“I use it as a comb, though,” I passed him the toy. He held it a moment, feeling the weight before passing it back. He didn’t dare open it in class. It was too threatening.

••••

The cult classic *Better Off Dead* follows Lane (John Cusack), a high schooler contemplating suicide after being dumped by his girlfriend. In the film, Lane is strong-armed by a young paper boy for two dollars, and when he can’t cough it up, the paper boy pulls out a switchblade comb, undermining the threat of the weapon with a comic effect. Audiences would have known switchblades as the weapon used in *12 Angry Men*.

I have no memory of seeing the film, but that doesn’t mean I haven’t absorbed it through passing images—through a zoetrope of channel surfing that imprinted a subliminal idea that “switchblade combs equals funny.”



When I was young, I wanted a knife. A child with a knife is the greatest fear of all parents, since the knife is one of the oldest tools and weapons known to man. It's primordial in its design and reminds the wielder or the subject of the near animalistic flight or fight response of the Neolithic era. It doesn't help that science has shown that knives consist of several small teeth arranged in a line, like a comb, reinforcing the idea of easily getting cut.

My knife envy began when my friend got his own Swiss Army Knife. It was a small folded blade that could open a box of cookies and cut through a curtain line, but posed little threat to its owner. The cuts it made were superficial, labored efforts. This being said, my friend sat in his room all day whittling spears (possibly inspired by his reading of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*) that he piled on the floor. They were pointed, with a few notches on them that gave the tips texture.

When I told my mom I wanted a knife to whittle my own spears (for reasons lost to me now) she told me no. In time, my knife envy took the better part of me, and I imagined scenarios where I would need a knife. For someone turning thirteen this was mostly opening up gifts on Christmas and eating apples.



In the *Simpsons* episode "Boy-Scoutz 'n the Hood," Bart Simpson accidentally joins a scout troop. Worried he'll be the subject of bullying, Bart attempts to leave, only to be drawn back in by the promise of a knife. He has a similar crisis of knife envy as I did, and the show belabors the point with ever escalating moments of knife necessity beginning with a package of cookies to a highly explosive appendix. In each case, the knife is lauded as the universal tool and solution.

I often debated going out and buying a knife myself, with the meager allowance that I had. I imagined buying something cheap in a polyurethane hilt that I could brandish and show how "cool" I could be. Something deeply masculine is rooted in the idea that I could produce a knife at any time and solve any issue. I never followed through with a purchase, and instead pushed knives from my mind.



When I attended the parade in Jackson and found those boxes of combs at a random stand, I had mistaken the combs for true switchblade knives. It was in this curious state of facsimile that promised to fulfil a deeper satisfaction in owning a knife. The ownership of the blade would form the bridge to cross the thin line from boyhood to manhood. Owning a knife could reinforce this division. Yet, the realization that the knives were combs came

as an equal surprise and quite possibly a separate revelation. I could retain the safety of no knives while also carrying that wonderful threat of primordial masculinity that I had been seeking. In reality, I found something truly eclectic. A toy from a bygone era that had appeared as jokes in cartoons like *The Powerpuff Girls*. The concept of a comb existing in the threatening case of a switchblade hilt was inherently jocular.

I was afraid to carry the comb at first, not wanting to lose it, damage it, or get in trouble for brandishing it. By college, I felt it was a key part in reinventing myself—to imagine myself in a new light that wasn't trapped in specific conventions of masculinity. That owning and showing off a comb was chic in a way that was regressive, and in some ways subversive. Though a switchblade comb brought up more questions than answers, the curiosity it created was one of a kind.

The unfurrowing of the comb from the hilt shows off the dull teeth of a blade, too weak to comb the thickest of hair, to cut a hand if pressed to it, or to whittle a spear. Though, there is something to the comb that is intrinsically important to me. It has become a key item of myself, an item with a ritualistic quality, a totemic piece of chic fashion that serves to be ironically or unironically cool.

Carrying a knife in your pocket is mundane, while carrying a comb is vain. In tandem, they create something that is an awkward arrested development that proves to be both childish and adult, threatening and friendly, useless and necessary. Through the click of a button the conceptual dichotomies become a reality, and in this lies the appeal of the comb. Knowing or not knowing its purpose is not the root of the interest, or the subject of investigation. Instead, it's the idea that something exists in two camps, two separate purposes, and has bonded into a singular object that finds a way to draw our attention inward as a comb flips outward from a hilt in a strange subversion of expectations.

# To Be Whole

*Eli Shaban*

I resent girls of ponytails, of crop tops, of Friday night football,  
the loss I must accept to identify myself as *other*,  
the experiences I have taken from myself,  
the life I have been *denied*.

I long for the relationship I will never share with my mother,  
the *brother* I could not be and could not have,  
the walk my father and I will never share,  
the family that cannot *embrace* me.

I mourn the granddaughter my Nana will never have,  
that I will *lie* to her for the rest of her life,  
that I will not allow her the privilege of rejecting me,  
that she will never know her youngest *grandson*.

I must abandon you or abandon myself,  
I will not be a *prisoner* of my own life,  
I will tear myself to pieces,  
I will construct my body of *scars*.

To finally find home,  
To be *whole*.

# Joni

*Rachel Townsend*

You could call your town a cathedral,  
Coming home from an unimpressed beach,  
Smiling when the wind puts on the orange peel  
You tossed from the car window—

So the train's horns ricochet through the streets  
And you feel the deep cadence of it,  
Like an instrumental track erupting when your mouth is  
Embroidered with a song—

Murmurs of swallows poke at yellow houses in your mind,  
Etching their way into some clean, bluesy reverie  
With the scent of lemon soap and mint gum,  
When did you learn to never throw anything away—

You have always been incandescent,  
Lit up in a love cage,  
Constantly writing, immediately erasing,  
Watching wind scars form on the lake and shifting clouds—

I wish we could have more time.

# Bless the Unbelievers

*Clare Hickey*

I was surprised when I looked around enough to realize it was October. The month held most of its usual idiosyncrasies: leaves taken with warm tones and chipper chills. Autumn skies are the bluest against the crimson dying shade. The season is a stranger I know with sad eyes. She sweeps summer into her foliage, hiding the fairer season from the stalking winter. Fall makes the melancholy easy. In October, the gray days are followed by blue ones, February cannot say the same. Temporary sadness can be obligingly romantic, but I wasn't particularly sad today. I was standing, staring at the gilded aspen tree, wondering how a dying thing could be so vibrant. I had wandered aimlessly along the creekside path to this point. My lungs had been crying for air that moved after spending listless days indoors. A cool breeze danced through the yellow leaves as they tangoed with late afternoon sunlight. They fell in with the soft flow of the creek to their fate downstream. My eyes were anchored to the tree—it was the only thing keeping my head at sea level.

There were no footsteps at her approach, just a whispering through the littering foliage. My disconnect and surprise swirled around and stayed any feelings of fear. We stood there staring at each other, or rather I stared through her.

“I'm sorry.” I didn't know what else to say.

“What for?” Her voice lilted emptily. Her question had no answer.

“It's daytime,” I answered stupidly. “I thought it had to be dark.”

“I can't be dead during the day?” A trace of a smile appeared in her transparent features.

“Yeah,” I drawled. “I suppose you are right.”

She shifted in her own weightlessness. Her jeans had faded before she did, and she was wearing a T-shirt for what I assumed was a band. She was around my age, and we could have been peers in a life where she lived longer. A singular question was burning in my suddenly focused mind. But it seemed rude to ask so I said something arguably worse.

“I don't believe in ghosts.” Despite her laid-back demeanor, the unknown was beginning to creep up my back with cold hands.

“Would you rather believe in ghosts?” Her eyebrows arched. “Or your own sanity?”



She smiled at me like all people do when they ask questions they know the answer to. Taking her query under heavy consideration, I walked to the base of the aspen tree and sat down. She remained where she was, perfectly content to wait for me to come to a conclusion. She was right. If I accepted a reality where she was not a ghost, then I had to believe that I was crazy. But, if she was a ghost, then that meant I was a crazy person who believed in ghosts. A terrible predicament for a lovely October day. I turned my head to the right until she was just out of my peripheral vision, choosing instead to watch the creek. The air had such a lovely rotting smell and the sun was warming my face just enough. Time was nothing of consequence to her anymore—I could take as much as I needed.

I thought that I had made my mind up on my disbelief in ghosts when my mother and I first moved to the town on the river. It had been a similarly fair October two years ago. This small town was hardly distinguishable from the last. The same ranch houses and rusted cars owned by the same flannel-toting folk. They were there when we arrived and would continue to be there when we inevitably left. I feigned indifference to my mother about the move. Lying to her made lying to myself easier, and I was lying to her all the time. I lied when I told her I didn't mind so much that we couldn't bring the outside cat. I lied when I told her I didn't see my father standing as a shadow in corners of the house. In reality, I was constantly meeting a man I had never known. He never said anything, the house was always too quiet, and he just stood there. I only spoke to him once. It was the 10th anniversary of his death. All day my mother had seemed more dead than him, drifting from room to room in a cloud of sullenness. The lights stayed off that day and the curtains closed, it was no surprise when she went to bed at 8 pm. I was watching television on the couch. Dad stood to the right of the TV staring off into the ether. Mom came into the room and petted the top of my head. She looked at Dad for a while. When I craned my head up to look at her she was frowning half-heartedly. After she had left the room I worked up the courage to talk to him. I needed an answer to the one thing my mother had never told me.

“How did it happen?” I sounded five years younger than I was.

He didn't answer. He showed no sign that he had even heard me. No lamps flickered on and no vases crashed into walls. I decided then that I would no longer be haunted by my mother's ghosts. She couldn't say the same. We moved from town to town in her desperate search for a house without shadows. All the time she never bothered to turn on the lights.

With my thoughts a bit more categorical my mind went back to the present moment. The light of the afternoon was beginning to fade. I turned back to where my new ghost was standing. I got up and walked over to her, putting on my best smile for the occasion. I tried to iron out the shaking in my legs.

“Sorry, you’re only my second ghost.”

“I thought you didn’t believe.”

“I just didn’t want to.”

“Me neither.” The permanent wistfulness of her voice became more pronounced. A stray golden leaf breezed right through her. The creek gurgled, sounding more alive than either of us.



**Rachel Hall**

*Silk Snapper Wild USA, \$14.99/lb*

oil on canvas

30" by 40"

My work is a celebration of the cycle of life and the sublime experience that is nature. I cannot consciously see images in my head, a phenomenon known as aphantasia, so I collaborate with randomness by placing instinctual marks and finding meaning and form in them as I paint. I believe that the work already exists before I create it. My creation process is simply finding the work through meditative exploration. My work is done in a flow state, where time melts away and I am only left to work from instinct. I enjoy work that envelops the viewer in the same way that the vastness of nature does, where every stroke and every line is felt by the viewer. It is this connection that I strive for, it is this connection that art so readily brings—an unspoken whisper to the human soul, a calling, a yearning for more. My work explores these abstractions as a metaphor for life and the sublime. This state of flow is so natural, animals exhibit this primal trait. My work speaks to the viewer on this primal level and reminds us of the most exciting mystery known: us.

# i walk into the bathroom and

*Emma Bhatt*

there is a hundred-legged terror ruling the corner of my shower  
*i smell like mildew now*  
but shoe raised,  
ready for the kill,  
i decide that the centipede is a prince  
and his legs hold all the secrets of his people.  
their mouths are so small they can't speak  
my ears are so big i couldn't hear them if they tried  
but they know all about war and peace and the way it feels to be  
small,  
the way it looks on a summer morning/afternoon/evening,  
when the earth is ready to swallow you whole  
and you've got to pry yourself out of the ground  
even though you know you'll be coughing up dirt for weeks  
*no one else in the world knows about that but me and them.*  
and, knowing this, i can't make myself look at the terrible thing in  
the corner of my shower.  
and, knowing this, i can't make myself look away.  
so, i stand there,  
shoe raised,  
frozen in place with the bathroom tyrant,  
hundred-legged liege,  
tiny, terrible god,  
small thing who knows me well.

# The Door

*Jenna Brown*

At the end of every sentence, there is a period—a finality. But in this story, there is no end.

It began with a door. An old door, one of those dark, rotting Victorian doors with a brass knob. It stood on the top of a large, grassy hill off the side of a dingy cemetery. The air was thick with the pungent smell of rotting corpses.

Jane liked to spend her afternoons here, which was rather unusual for a sixteen-year-old. Normal sixteen-year-old girls enjoyed shopping and gossiping about boys—who kissed who, who likes who, and so on. Jane had never been interested in those sorts of things. In fact, Jane hadn't ever really been interested in anything at all. She wore her grandmother's clothes and thought boys were immature and nonsensical, and if one piqued her curiosity even slightly, just a small crumb's worth, it usually dissolved after a day or two. Her grandmother called her a "late bloomer."

Jane begged to differ. She called herself mature.

As for the cemetery, Jane spent her time there primarily because nobody else did. Children her age steered clear of it, and the only other regular visitor was Gerald, an old man who was deaf in his left ear and required others to yell to hear them properly. Secondly, Jane spent her time here because this was where her father was buried. Her father passed away four years ago on March sixth at nine in the morning due to "extenuating circumstances," as her grandmother called it. However, Jane had learned from the coroner (who contacted her directly on her way to school and said, "Rhubarb, it sure is a nasty thing") that these "circumstances" were ingesting too much rhubarb out of her grandmother's garden. To die of eating too much rhubarb, one would have to eat several pounds of it in one sitting. To Jane, this was quite strange. If her father had wanted to die that badly, there surely were much smarter ways to go about it, although "smarter" was a word to be used delicately here. Nevertheless, Jane sat at her father's grave in front of his peculiarly small headstone which read, "Joseph Clark, 1976-2018, Father and Loving Citizen, gone but never forgotten." In Jane's eyes, Joseph Clark was about the blandest name on the planet. The whitest of all white names, and surely to be forgotten. So was her own name for that matter: Jane Clark.

Now, to the elephant in the room—the door. Jane had never

even bothered to open it, or to glance in its direction. She was not a curious girl. She was probably the most incurious girl on the planet. When she heard strange noises at night, she simply ignored them and went back to sleep. If she wanted an answer to something, rather than looking it up or asking someone, she would simply forget about it. This was how she had lived her whole life, and she was content in her incuriosity. The way she saw it, curiosity was a fault. People died every day of curiosity and grew miserable because of it, and she was not to be one of them.

Despite this manner, Jane did very well in school. She received straight A's, a rare B every now and then, but her teachers always felt as if something was missing. They would write notes home at the end of every semester: "Jane is doing very well in her studies, but she doesn't seem to be very interested." And for the most part, they were right. Jane didn't find a whole lot to be interesting. Her life was not. The things Jane learned in school were trivial and unimportant to her sixteen-year-old brain. She had no use for the quadratic formula and the periodic table, and even less for Shakespeare. Her life was one big bore, and she expected adulthood to be mostly the same, aside from making money and living by herself. Living with her grandmother was almost like living by herself anyhow, as her grandmother spent most of her time asleep in her recliner with a mug of cold tea by her bedside. The house itself was cluttered and dusty, and the only cleaning done was by Jane. Overall, life to Jane was a pain (that rhymed!) and she had yet to find a single thing interesting enough to look into more.

Jane could tell the universe resented this, if the universe in fact was a sentient being. Her teachers resented it, her grandmother did when she was awake ("You are just too plain"), and the girls at school did, whispering and conspiring about her constant visitation to the cemetery ("Don't get too close! She's possessed!"). And just as everyone else resented this, so too did this door. It perched on the hill as if it were angry. Jane didn't know how a door could even be angry, but she knew it was. And so, as an angry door craving curiosity, it sent forth something to incite it. Out of the corner of her eye, Jane observed a tall, ghostly man wearing a suit and a top hat carry a briefcase right out of the door. He hadn't walked through one side to the other, just the side Jane was on. He had materialized out of nowhere. The tall man proceeded to pull a full-sized apple tree out of his briefcase and plant it in the ground a good ten yards from the door, shovel and all. Jane thought this was a noble attempt, a good starter. However, it was not quite interesting enough to keep her gaze. She went back to staring at her father's grave, which looked the same as it did four years ago, albeit a bit dirtier. Then she decided to go home. She was feeling hungry.

Jane picked her school bag off the ground and began the walk back to her home, ignoring the door's efforts to grab her attention. The path to her grandmother's house was short, only just a few blocks away. Nothing much could be said of it—just houses and more houses and shattered beer bottles on the sidewalk. Her grandmother's house was wedged between a similar line of houses that was only distinguishable by one thing: its splatter of bright blue paint on the white front door. Jane assumed this was her father's doing. He had always been full of nonsensical ideas, as all men are, which she assumed to stem from his vehement curiosity. For example, one summer afternoon when Jane was ten, he wrestled with the question of the ages: Could man fly? And he was determined to make the answer yes. Tree branches, bedsheets, feathers, metal utensils and everything under the sun went to waste on his project, which ultimately ended in a fractured hip after a jump off the roof and a pathetic flap of the arms. Overall, it was in Jane's belief that these curiosities led to his death.

Jane's mother was also plagued with bouts of great curiosity, so much so that when Jane was two years old, her mother saw a picture of Paris in a magazine and decided to travel there on a whim—at least according to her grandmother. She had since not come back. These bursts of familial curiosity had now landed Jane with her grandmother, whose curiosity laid in seeing which surface was best for sleeping on. By far the strangest place she had found her sleeping was face-first on the front lawn. Second to that was inside of the kitchen sink. Jane figured this was something she should get checked out at the doctor, but every time she began to suggest this, her grandmother fell asleep.

It was no surprise when Jane came home to find her grandmother asleep on the living room carpet. Jane simply stepped over her as if she were a large branch on a hiking path and resumed her walk to the kitchen to make herself a grilled cheese sandwich. This was one of the only things Jane knew how to make, and so this was what she usually made. Its taste was fine the first few times, but had since grown bland, as everything did eventually.

Her grandmother's kitchen was very old and outdated—to what time they were in style, she had no idea. The countertops were an old, washed green with white flecks like dandruff and the cabinets were a hideous orange, the color of prison jumpsuits. The cabinets squeaked on their hinges with fervor. The rest of the house was just as worn. Jane's mattress was lumpy with holes where stuffing flew out. A particularly wide hole on the right side of her mattress was where her grandmother's "skrunkly" dog, Chester, liked to sleep. He did this so often that Jane made sure to check before she went to bed so she wouldn't squash him flat.

At this point in the story, one may be thinking, “What a bleak story this is. How terrible Jane’s life is, how sad.” And this is where the door comes in. See, while Jane had ignored its first attempt, the door did not intend to stop anytime soon. The following day, she found herself at her father’s grave once again, staring into nothingness and allowing time to pass by. That was what life was about, Jane thought, allowing time to pass.

The door balanced on the hill as usual, ready to send out a second attempt—an elephant. This was quite a step up from before, and it wasn’t just any other elephant either. It was a purple elephant with a blue and white polka-dotted bow tie and red rain boots. On top of the elephant sat a small poodle with a lifeguard’s whistle around its neck and an orange life vest around its torso. The elephant proceeded out of the door like normal elephants do, with heavy footsteps and a series of trumpeting every now and then. “Now try and resist this,” the door seemed to say, snickering atop the hill. Jane had to agree, this attempt was much better, but the best it achieved was only a head turn and a few rapid blinks of the eyes. Afterwards, she resumed looking back at her father’s headstone. The door had expected this, however. It wasn’t to fail like last time. Out the door came a second elephant, but this time it was bright blue with a parrot holding a flower bouquet riding its back. A third opening and closing of the door revealed a yellow elephant and a tap-dancing otter. Every minute, the door would open once more, and a new elephant would emerge. And where were these elephants going, one may ask? To have a meeting about the new elephant king, of course. See, the previous elephant king had passed away of old age and had no children to precede him, so the notion was that the throne would go to his closest friend, Lilac, the red elephant with a lizard. The elephants were to all put it to vote, via trumpeting the loudest for the elephant they wished to rule.

Now this, thought Jane, was much, much better. It was so over-thought on the door’s part, however, that Jane rolled her eyes. “How predictable,” Jane thought to herself, “how plain.” The elephants could have thrown a party, or had a ball or an extravagant feast, but an election? That was so bland. Had it been a party or something of the sort, Jane would not have attended, but the thought itself was already much more interesting. And a ball would have required fancy elephant clothing and music, which was much better than a circle of elephants making heinous trumpets.

With that, Jane decided to head home. She dusted off her school uniform and bag and lifted herself up. She could feel a metaphorical rumbling underneath her feet. The door expected



triumph, it expected victory. Its very existence was Jane's fault, though she didn't care. The world itself was full of spasms of curiosity, doors of possibilities, and windows of opportunities. However, Jane's plain existence had hitched a step. It tumbled that curiosity down the steps, down the unexpected path that life ought not to take. Jane's hindrance on the world's cyclical process of curiosity disrupted human nature. It disrupted the hallways and aisles of human imagination. It stole its very cash out of the register and ran right out the store.

So—what to do with his hindrance, that hindrance being Jane? Its first solution was to make her curious, to provide things so unnatural that she would have to look, would have to want to know more. But it simply seemed as if Jane was to forever live her life in shades of gray. And so, what now? How could a problem so vast be so simply fixed?

It pondered. It wondered. Schemed, thought deeply. But nowhere in its vast worldly imagination could the door think of a solution. If not elephants, would spaceships and aliens master her incurious mind? Perhaps, but likely not. Would rats trapped in bottles on a flying conveyor belt pique her interest? No, it was too out there. Flying reindeer were too mainstream. Giraffes crashing skateboards had been thought of before. So, what was the answer?

And the answer was this—a light pink teddy bear. The most normal of children's belongings—one a child is given at birth. It was an item to reside in a crib as one slept. Jane had long forgotten her teddy bear, but as it sat outside the door, she remembered. It was a memory no one would remember at that age, only Jane. She remembered her mother's soothing palms as she cradled her newborn self, cries escaping her body in short bursts. Her father sat nearby and held the light pink teddy bear, a teddy bear he had named Beary, a bland name, a name given before his bursts of curiosity. The bear turned in his hands, dancing for Jane. The first laugh Jane had ever given to the Earth came next. A giddy laugh, a bubbly baby laugh. A laugh of curiosity. A laugh that knew no pain, no abandonment.

Jane dropped her school bag. Her face remained blank, but her eyes held onto the image. It seared into her mind. Jane, I'm gonna get you! She remembered her mother calling. She envisioned her one-year-old self running on stumpy legs as laughs gurgled in her throat. Her father scooped her up and threw her in the air. I got you! I got you! Or once, at night, when her father read her a bedtime story. Once upon a time, there was a little girl named Jane. Jane was the most creative and special girl in the universe. Jane was a star.

Jane began to cry. Her vision blurred into self-made tree branch forts and sandbox hotels, cotton candy puffs and soapy bath bubbles. Her childlike squeals as the ice cream truck pulled around her street.

Jane found herself cradling the teddy bear, sobbing into its worn plush body. Her school bag laid at the bottom of the hill, strewn by her father's tombstone. The door laid just behind her. It shook slightly, as if laughing. It had finally succeeded—even to such an incurious girl as Jane, it had succeeded. The world was now in balance once more, the obstacle titled, "JANE" now being displaced. And in its victory, it sucked her in.

# Nubs

*Macy Colbert*

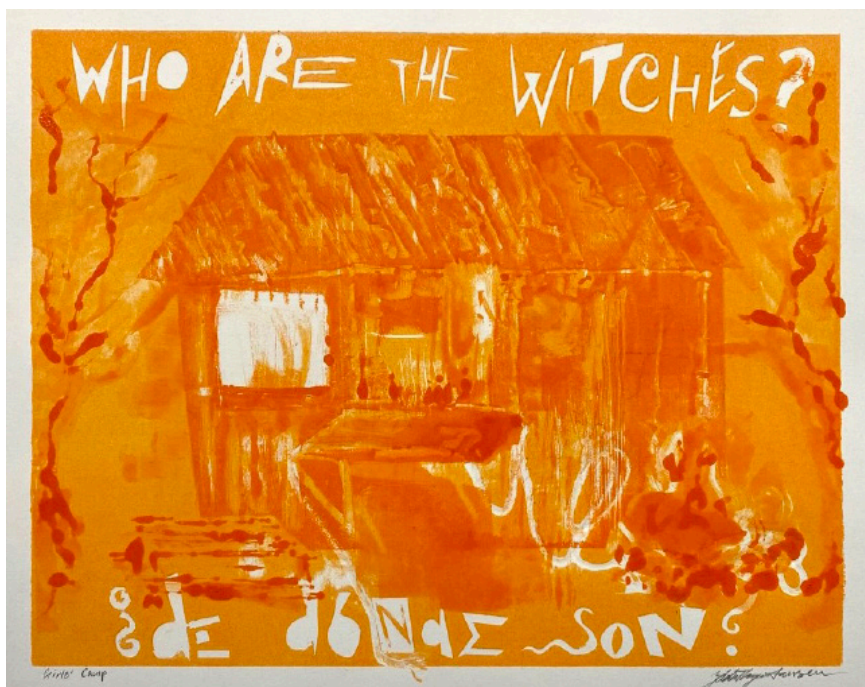
I came to the shelter with a wound that I planned to stuff full of cat hair. The warm little bodies twitched their tails and welcomed me as a newcomer. They pushed past their roommates to gather intel. Circled by a clowder of cats, I felt as though I was a discovery of a team of mini researchers, determining whether they had concluded anything monumental. Groundbreaking or not, they allowed my introduction into their world. Over time, I became less of a jarring intrusion, and more of a timely one. Some cats grew tired of my attention, and some grew in their need for my attention. The animals who fancied me spoke through purrs and grunts, and I made more friends than I had ever had in my life.

Eventually, I was corralled into the starlight of a sharp, hazel eye. A small cat that was impossible to miss among the menagerie of other animals, Nubs was undeniably unique. I asked about her condition, and her story was relayed to me by another frequent volunteer. The kitten was discovered by the housekeeper of a nearby motel. Why she was left could be concluded from her back legs, which produced round stumps that resembled a puppet's fingerless hand. I was told that her deformities were a result of nature. A cruel nature indeed, but one that never seemed to have reached her understanding. I had only gathered that her origin had been one of a pleasant home, with toys and with warmth. She must have forgotten that she was unwanted as she was met with the love of so many upon arrival at the shelter. Cageless and unbound, her home became weaving among tapestries of canned foods on shelves and newspapers in boxes. I asked if she was able to maneuver well with her unfortunate disposition, and they told me she managed. An unlimited vessel of perseverance she had grown into. She was able to climb efficiently, if not traditionally, to the formations of her desires. A sunshine shape with caramel drizzle, she rounded her body in any setting it seemed appropriate for her to lie. Occasionally, this location was my lap.

Often in kneeling down to clean a surface lower than my gravity, an invitation of intimacy was interpreted on her behalf. Unable to walk distances that suggested struggle, she became a communicative cat. Not through the vocal tendency to meow and plead, as other cats do, but rather through suggestive eyes. She was skilled in the art of telepathy, I am convinced. Between the subtle

reaching of her body and the pressing energy of her almond eyes, there was no question as to what she wished. And an honor it was to be wished for. Her love was the tenderness of a balcony in a rainstorm, shielding me from the inevitable condition of human pain. Purring in gratitude, she adored gentle hands. Signaling for a scratch behind the ear, she would animate her leg in the air and recreate the movement of scratching. Of course, there were no claws to satisfy her itch, therefore, she so appreciated fingernails. Failing to realize her own leg hovered inches away from her ear and it was not her own motion achieving successful scratches, she would continue to move her leg as if she was. Perhaps, it allowed her to feel a sense of independence. Perhaps, she was just a cat, unknowing the fact that she lacked independence, enjoying the scratching of her ear.

One afternoon, as she sat in my lap, I asked her how she healed. How did you accept that you had been left? Asking rhetorical questions often suggests that you already have the answer, and I did. Whether she remembered her past or not, she had people showing her they loved her every day. The hours of motel memories were so outnumbered by present affections. How brave it is to act as if the world had never been unkind to you. What a beautiful reminder that trauma does not define your path, and neither does a lack of paws.



**Zelda Thayer-Hansen**

*¿De dónde son?*

monotype print

20" by 18"

I am a non-binary, mixed-media sculpture, and performance artist studying the intersecting worlds of print and sculpture media through Ohio University's Honors Tutorial College Studio Art program. Whenever I need to work through or solve a problem in my life or the world around me, I turn to my art, to my ritual practice, to any spiritual opening. I find joy in working to understand myself through the pieces I create; I learn to come to terms with my rough external relationships, whether they be to my own physical bodily acceptance, the politics governing every waking second my life, the ups and downs of my interpersonal interactions, or the many humanistic struggles we all seem to deal with, yet seem to be unable to communicate openly about: mental health, grief, trauma, sex, self-love, trans healthcare and livelihood, etc. When a message or a symbol can be represented with a certain medium relating to its own intent and internal nature, everything within the piece lines up and can make sense to both myself as the creator, and others.

# Bicycle Burglar

*Kathleen Johnson*

When the news reached me  
I was instantly converted  
To plague him so simply  
Frogs, pestilence, and locusts  
Do not hold a candle  
To your wrath of  
Tandem torture

In the sweet golden break of morning  
I am the bird singing your praise  
In the labyrinth of night  
I am the damned bowing at your grace  
To my deity, I hear only your sweet commandments  
O Goddess, I am your truest believer

I plead to you in your Parthenon  
Conjure up proof that I have devoted  
My heart and soul to a Divinity  
Who hears my song of worship  
I am a mere penny  
Tossed in your fountain of Grace

How you have enshrined me  
Enraptured by your conviction My  
tongue drips sweet honey when I  
call your name  
Hark! Thief of the Schwinn!

How you answer my prayers  
In loving ways I never could imagine  
O merciful God,  
Your scorn is my delight!

Now I am bending on my knees  
So saintly cheering your name  
Bicycle Burglar, I love you

# No Sleep for Stolen Horses

*Clare Hickey*

With my knees pressed against my chest, I hold the old bridle in my hands so tight it brands my palms. The hayloft proved an effective hiding spot, just as long as I ignored the memories hiding in the shadows. The only soul I'd seen for hours had been the yellow-eyed tabby. Yellow like ribbon and the flowers of open plains. Yellow like the last days of September. The cat had twitched its tail in knowing disapproval before slipping off. Yellow like early dawn.

The barn hands left about an hour ago. I'd listened as gruff familiar voices rose and fell in companionable tones. There was a younger stable boy among them, the pitch of his voice above the rest as they moved around the belly of the barn. Finally, they left for their quarters, pulling the barn door closed until the inside latch fell.

Now, I could unknit the fear from my tendons enough to creep down the ladder, its wooden rungs worn smooth. Barn air whips into the velvet dark, and moon-eyed calves murmur as I walk past their pens. I wind my way through the barn, hardly daring to let my feet touch the ground. It's a light dance I've never forgotten the steps to. My hands twist the leather bridle. An anxious thumbnail traces the groove of my father's initials. The metal bit is warm with my nerves.

I stop outside the bay mare's stall. A metal plate is nailed to the front with her name inscribed, Antonella, the same as mine. She's lying in the middle fast asleep, her nose pressed against the floor. Her exhales form small craters in the dusty ground. The latch of her stall offers no resistance, but the metal and wood groan when the door rolls open. Icy chills rush through my face and down my arms. The mare raises her head at the sound. In the lightless barn, her eyes are voids. I whisper nothings to her with an outstretched hand as she presses her cashmere nose into my sweaty palm. The metal bit slides into her mouth as the leather slides over her ears. Pulling gently at the base of the reins, I urge the horse to stand. Her weight shifts in flexing muscles as she rises to steady legs. A huff of warm air is her only display of resignation. She's not the best horse owned by the Sumners, but the gray stallion terrifies me. The beast is Eric's pride, and his fury would fuel his search for it to no end. From the conversations I overheard in the hayloft, the mare is a forgotten plaything of Eric's new wife. The searches will quell.

Leading her from the stall, I close the creaky barn door behind me. The wooden walls soften the hoofbeats clicking against the stone floor. The mare's head hangs low as though we are conspirators in the crime. Her head picks up again when we pass the calves, their eyes still full, yet devoid of stars. When we reach the expanse of the west door, I let the reins slip through my hands and lift the latch.

"Where will you go?"

Turning with a start, I face my discoverer. The scruffy barn whelp sizes me up. I say nothing and shrink behind the anonymity of my mask. I know that he knows. The mare flicks her ears, uninterested. I back myself into her shoulder for a breath of faux security. The boy and I are the same height now, which isn't saying much on his part. His face is still cow-eyed and round with youth.

"You can't take her," his chest puffs all starling-like. "She's my favorite."

"You shouldn't pick favorites." My voice strains into a lower register.

"Can't help it nothin'."

"You could help me leave."

"If you take her, I'm going." He stands a bit taller as his resolve firms. "It's my job to take care of her."

"Horse thieving's a hanging crime."

"You know enough about running away to not get caught," his growing voice breaks off. My heart begins to twist. "Trying to run off and leave me again just like Ma, it's not—"

"Sam—"

"We best get going now, Nella."

When I last saw my brother, his head barely reached my shoulder. He still held out milk teeth to me with a wide grin every time he lost one. Now, Sam looks over his shoulder with all the skills of a practiced thief. I've missed so many things I should have stuck around for. I wasted so much time searching for our mother. I should have known she wasn't the family that mattered—yet I just tried to leave him again. Even when I couldn't find her, the worst parts of her always found me. The guilt that's stalked me since I left follows us still as we creep around the property. The Sumner's barn is visible from the back of their large white house. All the windows lie dormant and dark except for the ones in the study. The silhouette of Eric's shadow haunts the room. He'll be too engrossed with numbers and charts to see our escape. We trace the wooden fence that marks the property line. An obsessive project that Eric inherited.





“Theseus’s Fence,” Eric called it one time. We were watching my father replace boards from our spot by the oak tree. Eric was still sweet with boyhood in those years. He could still spit out his father’s anger. The sky that day was as blue as all the best beginnings. I had finished all my chores and Eric had stolen me away before his mother could give me more. He hid it well, but we shared the secret of knowing he was lonely. Most boys weren’t friends with their housemaids. He grabbed my soot-covered hand, the mark of a sin I hadn’t committed.

“Let’s go for a ride,” he spoke through an impish smile.

“You’ll wanna race,” I pulled my hand back. “And I don’t feel much for losin’.”

“You could try winning for a change.” His smile widened.

“Ajax’s the fastest horse in the county. I never stand a chance.”

“Picking that old crowbait mount every time isn’t helping you.”

“Charlie never gets picked. He needs to get ridden as much as the rest of ‘em.” I gave his shoulder a light push. “Sides, he’s my favorite.”

Eric was as adept at winning arguments as he was at winning races. We were riding side by side in the family’s apple orchard before the sun rose much higher. Eric sat tall on his big gray colt, and I rode next to him on the fraying chestnut. The steady rhythm lulled me. The world was so much bigger atop a horse. Roads felt shorter and any destination they might lead to was possible. Being five feet higher in the air turned the expanse of the property into a promise rather than a prison. The apple trees were in a full green display, their fruit still young.

Eric was demure since the start of the ride. I was pretty sure that he was hoping I’d forget my hesitancy about a race. I became very sure when his signature sly smile crept back. I gave Charlie a light squeeze to get him alert. Eric started to open his mouth, but I didn’t wait around to listen. I dug my heels into the horse’s side and let out a holler.

We stretched out into the infinite summer, seamlessly joining the wind and everything that had ever moved. Eric thundered past, but I paid him no mind. I never raced for the win. I let the reins fall and held out my arms. Eyes closed, I dreamed that I was flying, and then I was. For a briefly never-ending moment, I was weightless. Then the ground was holding me in the hardest embrace I’d ever known. I opened my mouth to scream or breathe, but I could do neither. Charlie was crumpled on the path behind me breathing hard and fast. Eric had turned back and jumped to the ground as soon as he reached me.

“Are you alright?” He cried. I tried to sit up, but the dirt held me down. A feeble hand clawed at my chest, trying to help my lungs escape the choking.

“Antonella, please.”

*Please what?* I wanted to ask. What the hell was I supposed to do? All I wanted was to sit up and breathe and be okay. He could be so goddamn useless. Finally, my head broke above the water. My chest expanded and collapsed in all the natural manners again.

“What’s wrong with Charlie?” Talking hurt.

“It’s just a horse,” Eric reddened. “You could have died.”

“You need to see if he’s okay.”

“You could have died, and it’d be my fault.” He was yelling, and I was too unfocused to hear the fear.

I pushed myself up until I could rest on my scraped knees. My dress was torn at the elbows, and my hands felt separate from myself.

“Go get my dad,” the plea came out in a wheeze.

Happy to have a task, Eric leaped onto Ajax and galloped off. I crawled over to where Charlie lay. His eyes rolled back into his head as his hard breathing continued. His back leg was angled, crooked, and useless. The initial shock died off and was reborn as aching sobs. I cried for every bone the horse and I had broken until my father appeared. He held my head against his chest and let me be comforted by his unbroken heart. When I saw the metal of his revolver flash I protested through thick tears.

“I’m sorry, baby,” he soothed. “You can’t pick favorites.”

••••

Two nights of hard riding had eased the worry in my heart about getting caught. Sam is an adept groom with all the skills of our father and twice the compassion. The mare would have jumped into fire had he asked. We sit around a fire I had been feeling bold enough to kindle. The mare’s tale swishes contentedly in the glow of the fire’s amber shades. We’d set up camp in a crook of the forest hardly large enough to call a clearing.

“Where we headed?” Sam asks for the first time.

“Nebraska.” The word is a promise. “A fresh start. Just like we used to talk about.”

It had been our father’s dream. The promise of land he could call his own, it was the only thing he’d left for us to inherit.

“You would’ve gone out there without me?”

“Still thinking about it,” I crack a smile that breaks when I note its poor response. “I’m just—I would have written. You’d’ve been welcome to join me as soon as I got my footing.”

“You think they would’ve let me go?”

“You wouldn’t have had to ask.”

“Why’d you leave?”

“Wanted to find Ma.”

“That’s not reason enough.” His cow eyes swallow me.

“Eric was getting married. He wanted me to stay around and act like he wasn’t. He got to thinking he owns anything that’s inside of that fence of his.”

I’d spent so much time mourning the person I used to know. It makes no difference. I can’t blame the smoke for the tears that come stinging. Looking at Sam, at every place I failed him, makes the tears come stronger. I was a horrible sister. I reach my arms around his narrow shoulders and hold him tight. Initially, he resists stiffly, but when I don’t relent, he softens.

“I’m not leaving you ever again.”

Dawn rises in golden light. The light drives into our eyes, forcing us awake. The mare silently watches us rise, morning reflecting in her copper tones. I pack our few belongings while Sam unhobbles her legs, Nebraska is a long way off. A rustling sound comes from the trees, and a big gray stallion emerges. Eric looks awfully tired, his shoulders sitting lower than they used to. He must not have slept in search of the missing horse. Eric is staring down Sam with fierce anger. He hasn’t really looked at me yet. Ajax lets out something akin to a scream. The bay lifts her front feet up in a half start.

“Easy Nella,” Sam murmurs to soothe the shaken horse.

Eric’s stare turns to me, and he gives his head a small, sad, and surprised shake. I open my mouth to say something, feeling inclined to an apology despite myself, but he drops my gaze. He wheels Ajax sharply to the side and gives him a kick, and they’re gone before any words can leave my lips. I turn to Sam, who hasn’t stopped petting Antonella. I stare at them—the horse with my name and the brother I abandoned. After a solemn minute, we head off, desperate for the rest of our lives.

# No Wake Zone.

*Sidney Stephens*

As the distant, jeweled headlights lurch in both size and proximity, my stomach whirls with ecstasy and ruin. In an instant, they swell to a flash, blinding, then recede down the pavement, the tires dragging, snapping—the whip of an ocean reaping all it'd managed to grasp.

The neighborhood kids whoop and holler; and, reveling in their own courage, they romp along the curb toward the steady ember of their respective homes, leaving a lingering faintness to mingle with the diffuse murmur of faraway engines.

I lay in the dark, the soft cartilage of my ear begging the asphalt to submit to its touch. Bracing. Another light swells, and echoes—whips to a sting then reverberates down the street.

I wince, gripping against the tide.

//////// / / / /

“I just have FOMO for death,” Aza shrugs, adjusting her tits in the passenger mirror.

Her blue eyes, which pierce white when unthreatened by daylight, glinting at me now—fear of missing out on death. Reflexively, she shuffles every song saved on her phone, the screen flickering, her face fully illumed. From her vape, she drags a plume and sends us wading in a miasma of artificial berry. Shy, symmetrical lesions tessellate across the thick of her thigh, outwitting the barracks of her tattoos. Aside from the occasional unassuming doe, we navigate desolation.

I am firmly manning the wheel when her free hand slips across the dash and pools in my lap—our eyes meld. Allured by a torrent, I swerve on the vacant road. Aza, once buoyant, draws her limbs back into her frame and rests her head against the window.

“You’re silly,” she giggles, shuts her eyes, then turns idle. Only she knows where we’re headed, so I stay the course, trusting her to dart alert when the time calls for it. Upbeat synths and electric strings warble from the stereo, euphorically lulling—

“You try to read my thoughts,”

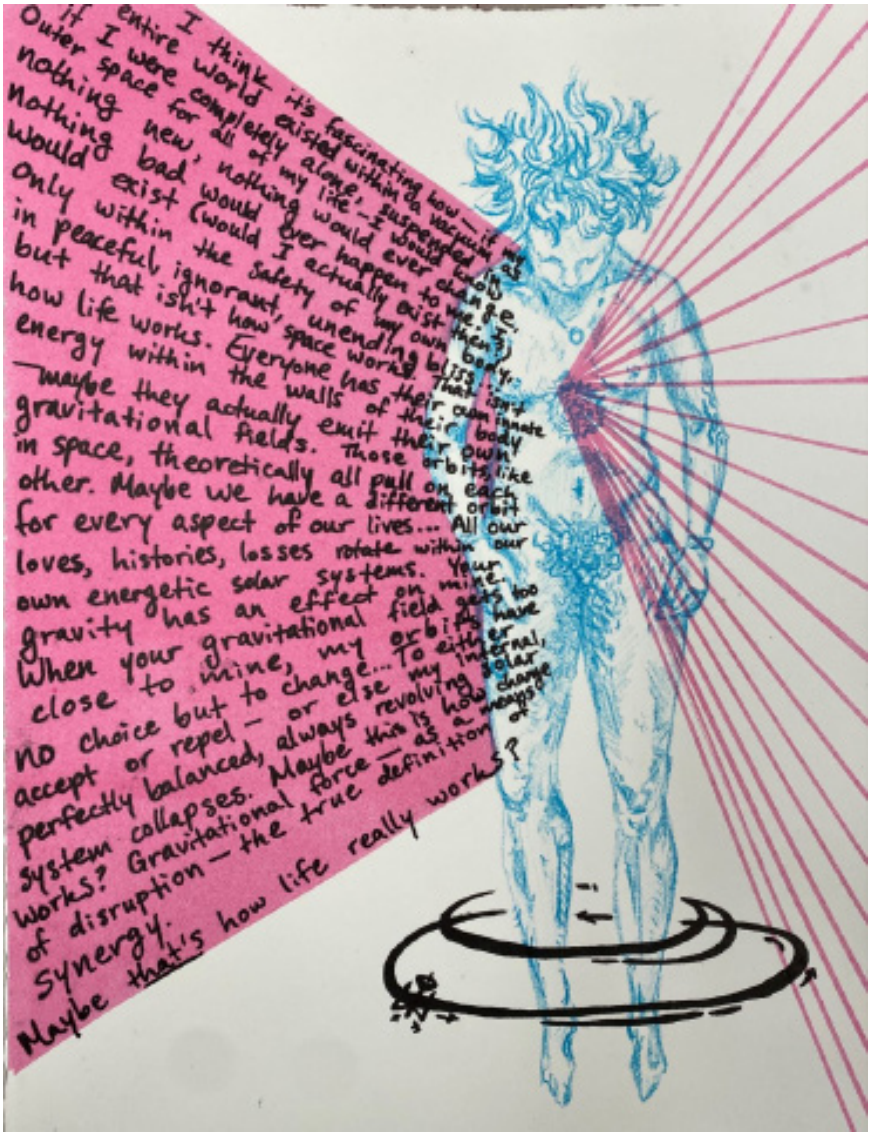
The beach is parallel and just out of sight.

“I hope you don’t get close,”

I know because of how the breeze carries us.

“Promise it would hurt you more than you know,”

I ease up on my erect neck, and coast.



Zelda Thayer-Hansen  
*multi-body problem*  
photo-lithography print  
7" by 9"



**Zelda Thayer-Hansen**  
*3-body problem*  
lithographic print  
10" by 9"

# Panic

*Aurore Byrd*

Upward fall, suspended in the ether.  
Blood-rush stains, blotched cheeks.  
Corners of vision with lost circulation;  
Purple, Vignette Vision.

Sideways walls, Ceiling floors.  
fluorescent bulbs burst,  
Stomach acid splashing,  
burning up heart holes.

Bones shaking, scraping, aching  
Under skin;  
“Calm down.  
They’ll rip their way out.”

Bee stings, pin pricks.  
Buzzing, lungs bubbling.  
Crimson flames of shame  
in frozen fingers.

Rub the flesh raw,  
to keep it in.  
Bleach-scrubbed skull,  
To keep it in.



# Pin Bone Penance

*Isabel Stichick*

The dead raccoon perished  
With its flesh and rot  
But not before gifting me  
A milky pile of weathered pin bones

I wish I could have held it as it died  
And lifted its eyes to the moon one last time.  
For now, I take the rusty bottle cap  
Out of my breast pocket  
For a goodbye kiss.  
I lay it before the ravished creature  
And hope my offering is accepted.  
This is my penance

For the cigarettes I smoked last night  
And the time I told my Mom I wished she was dead  
For the quiet grudges in my desperate grasp  
And the contempt I hold for strangers

On my walk home I wished someone would  
take me  
So I could empty my lungs into their ears  
And they would have no choice but to listen  
And then, maybe they would forgive me.

Soon, I am disappointed to find myself  
Alone in my shadowed bed where  
I think about the way my Mom cries at the end of every sad movie  
And how much she loves me.

I wonder if the racoon had a Mother  
Who sent her love along to the abyss  
As her child slipped into sleep  
One last time.



# Starlight

*Acadia Hansen*

*The stars. Look at the stars.  
Tell me, why do you love the stars? They are so very far away.  
I long to die in their beauty.*

Thebe can feel the world turning beneath her. Or so she imagines. She lies flat against the earth, still like a corpse, her spine pressed against the soft curve of the ground. Above her, the stars are burning.

They burn with fire. They burn to ash. They burn until they burn no longer, but she can still see them, bright and perfect and lovely.

Thebe imagines that she is like the stars. She imagines that she is dead, but still burning. Is it terrible, she wonders? Dying is always worse than death. Dying is when you can still feel the fire.

*The stars. Look at the stars.  
I am, Seren. I'm looking.  
Can't you see how beautiful they are?*

Thebe tries. She tries to see the stars, the beauty that Seren always saw, but now they are blurring, turning to silver streaks and smudges against the soul-black darkness of the sky. Irritated, Thebe wipes at the tears, scrubbing them from her eyes with her fists. She will never be able to see the stars like Seren saw them.

*They're beautiful,* Thebe had said.

*No,* Seren had insisted, *you're not looking at them right. See them? Aren't they terrible?*

Thebe turns over now, the tears rolling across her cheeks, over the bridge of her nose as she curls on her side, pretending that she can still see Seren beside her.

"Tell me how terrible they are," she whispers.

The Seren in her mind smiles, not looking at her, but looking at the stars above them. Her black hair is swept away from her brow, her pointed chin lifted as she stares up at the heavens, at the cobweb of planets and suns.

*We reach for the stars, but we will never touch them. They are thousands of light-years away. It is a lie. A glorious lie because our eyes are unaccustomed to such beauty.*

Thebe had thought for a moment that her eyes indeed were unaccustomed to such beauty, and then she'd asked: *but aren't we made of the stars?*

Seren's smile had disappeared, slipping away like the moon at sunrise, but then it returned a moment later. She laughed a delighted laugh, the kind that made Thebe's heart lurch.

Yes, she had said. *Yes we are.*

At last, Seren had rolled over to look at her, eyes dark in the night shadows. Lightless.

*I am made of the stars, she had whispered. I bear their glory and their grace. I will burn until I am no longer.*

And Thebe had almost stopped breathing.

She does now, for other reasons. Her breath clogs in her throat and she raises up onto her elbows to cough violently. Red spatters the ground, darker than it should be in this light. Tears stream from her eyes and she spits, more blood and mucus and something black and bitter speckling her freezing hands. She gasps for air, her lungs damp and ragged, and then she collapses to the earth again, rolling back over to look at the stars.

*Oh.*

She can see them now. The way Seren had always seen them.

They're brighter than they were before. Huge and silver and radiant; the bones of true beauty's corpse. Lovely and brilliant and final. They are terrible.

Thebe laughs weakly. She wants to turn to Seren and shout that she can see them—really see them—but she can't. The coughing fit saps the last of her strength, and Seren isn't there anyway. She stopped burning a long time ago.

Thebe smiles, and sighs, and watches as the stars begin to fade.

Then she can't see them at all anymore.

The stars are gone.

The world is completely and absolutely dark.

••••

"Can you see the stars, Thebe? I can."

Thebe opens her eyes. She isn't lying down anymore—she seems to be drifting in a glimmering current, matter ghostly and quiet around her, like water—and she isn't alone. There is a girl in front of her. A girl made of starlight. Only her eyes are lightless and deep.

"I can see them," Thebe says, and her voice is clear again, and unbroken. "I can see them now."

Seren smiles a starlit smile, and she takes Thebe's hand. Her fingers are cold and gentle and fit perfectly against Thebe's own.

"Good," she whispers, and there is nothing more to say.

They look at the stars.

# Rose-Colored Glasses

*Lauren Wloszek*

I love my mom, I truly do. But right below that love, resentment sits. My mom has done everything she could possibly do for me but holds it against me—like I'm the one begging her to do all this. It's even harder now that she's losing herself. Suddenly, I'm not me, I'm my sister, my brother, my aunt, the dog, anyone or anything except myself. I'm not appreciative of her anymore. I don't deserve what she's given to me. And when she calls out a name, asking for help at the end, I just can't bear to come.

So now, sitting in my childhood bedroom, I decide to leave. I chose to come back for mom, but I can also choose to leave for that same reason. I know my sister will step in.

From my bed I can see the single window in my room. The stars and moon fill up the space around me with light, telling me I wasted my time getting up to turn the overhead light off. They're so bright, they're almost blinding me. My eyes start to water, and at first the stars think it's because of them—and I do too. But then they start to spill over, and the constellations know it's not about them. It's about my mom.

They're telling me to put sunglasses on, to protect my eyes from the brightness and the tears. To save me the embarrassment of the moon knowing how sad I am. And so I do. But the ones I choose, they always seem to get a bad reputation.

Rose-colored glasses. I wonder why they're seen as naive and so often frowned upon. I haven't put them on to stay childlike, I put them back on because my mother forced them off so quickly. I put them back on because I needed a little hope.

What's wrong with being optimistic? It reminds me of ignorance. If you can't see the horrible things happening all around you, you're safe from them. Those glasses form a bubble, anything unwelcome plinking off and getting redirected. When they're inevitably flung back, the redirection has done its job—things are so warped they end up not looking as bad.

But hey, at least I'm honest about my glasses, right? Can they really manipulate me if I'm aware of the manipulation? Right now I think I hope so.

If you're not forced to see anything horrible, rose-tinted glasses seem too optimistic for you. You shake your head, mumble at us about how we're unrealistic and immature, walking away with a 'better than' aura. But you don't know these glasses are the only thing I'm holding onto. I'm gripping these glasses so tightly my hand has turned white, losing feeling. I wonder if it'll hurt more if I let go. I wonder if it will hurt less if I let go. Maybe I'm ready to try.

# The Funeral

*Acadia Hansen*

“The rest of our family doesn’t process things very well. It’s okay to cry if you feel like you need to.”

I think she’s wrong. We just process things differently. That doesn’t mean it’s wrong.

Does it?

••••

A week later at the funeral, I feel like crying but I can’t. My eyes are dry. I’d used up all of the tears yesterday.

I can hear everyone else crying. Their sorrow wraps around the building like a weighted blanket, dark and formless. I hate weighted blankets. I’m trapped beneath them, dying.

But I’m not the one who’s dead.

He’s lying in the casket, the wood polished to a bright shine, the flag draped over in all its murderous glory. I can’t see his face anymore, but that’s okay. They’d gotten his smile all wrong anyway.

My gaze travels over the tear-stained faces, the pink cheeks, the red eyes with dark circles beneath them. The mourning garb. I clutch at my cardigan, digging my fingers into the soft, forest green knit. It’s too cold at this time of year for just my sister’s hand-me-down dress, and I had nothing black to put over it. Did he know that I wear this to school every day? There’s a peppermint in one of my pockets, a little ball of string in the other, along with a game piece from Risk. Cavalry. The rest is just an assortment of tissues, used and fresh.

Someone is talking. I can see his mouth moving, his gaze damp, his face arranged in the way that mourners often look. I force myself to focus again on the words, but they’re all the same as the ones that were spoken yesterday.

I wonder why I’m not crying.

Someone hugs me—my mother, I think—and I hug her back, but when I make no move to lean closer, to collapse into a pile of worn black fabric and soft green yarn, she moves to my sister instead.

My sister who is crying. My sister who is sad.

I want to comfort her, to wrap my arms around her, and cry with her if I can’t fix what is wrong, but I’ve never been a comforting person. I never know what to say.

And I’m still not crying.

“Three shots, for duty, honor, and sacrifice.” He warns us that it will be loud. I know what gunshots sound like.

I still flinch at the first one.

There’s the soft pinging of bullet shells as they fall onto the stone.

The second shot.

Then the third.

No more.

My mind wanders up, drifting with the chill spring wind. I’m thinking about some kind of monster, one with spindly legs and the body of a beetle. A large gaping mouth. I wonder what I would use to draw it. Should it be a sketch or a painting? I’ve always been far more drawn to creation rather than destruction.

Voices murmur and I blink, tugging myself back down to the pavilion. Sometimes I feel like a balloon, floating above everyone else, having to be drawn back down before I am lost completely. A guard offers me a bullet shell. I hold out my hand.

The metal is cool, not cold, and it’s a dull bronze. The open end has an edge and I run my finger over it, feeling the metal catch at my skin. It’s not sharp enough to cut, but when I apply pressure it leaves a circle of red.

I stare at the mark. Press another one into my fingertip. I dig it into my skin until I can feel the pain, but it’s still not sharp enough to cut. It doesn’t even make my eyes water.

I’m still not crying.

The funeral is ending. This means that it’s almost over: the mourning, the clothes, the hoard of relatives.

I look around me, digging the sharp edge of the shell into my skin again and again. I realize that everyone is in pairs. Parents, sisters, cousins, aunts, uncles. They’ve all found someone to hold them up. To cry with.

Why am I not crying?

My tongue presses against the roof of my mouth. I bite my tongue. There’s no pain.

I’m standing in the middle of everyone, but somehow I’m separate. Is it because I’m not really here? Because my helium-light mind is overseas, in another city?

Is it because I’m not crying?

My sister is crying. She’d lived with him since she was eighteen. My mother is crying. She drove him to his treatments and cut his hair when it got too long.

I’m not crying. I wrote stories for him.

Even now, my thoughts take the shape of a story, weaving themselves together to set the scene before me.

There's a casket under the pavilion. It's closed now, but it was open yesterday. His smile was wrong. There's a flag, and the National Guard, and other people in uniforms all pinned with badges. There's a bullet shell in my hand.

I think I'm supposed to be crying.

Maybe there's something wrong with me.

••••

When the funeral is over, we drive back to my uncle's house. There's a sketchbook open on my lap and the rough form of a monster stares up at me. It has spindly legs and the body of a beetle. There's a pencil in my right hand, the bullet shell in my left. There are more red marks on my skin now. The little cylinder of metal is the only thing tying me here, present, and not letting me float away like a balloon.

There's food at the house in foil trays—Italian, from some restaurant nearby. The Italian history book that he gave me is on my bookshelf at home. I never read more than the first page.

I eat with my cousins, sitting in a corner at the far end of the room, my back to the wall, a deck of cards in front of me. Fifty-two cards. Black and purple. Cyberpunk. My brother got them for me two Christmases ago. I play them out, one by one, counting up the lost points.

Then I turn on my phone. Turn it off. Turn it on again. Text someone. Turn it off.

I don't know where I am. It's not here, not in this corner, not in this crowded room. If I was here, I would be crying, and I'm not.

I'm not crying.

Someone asks me if I'm okay. I say yes. What else is there to say? Maybe I should ask them if I'm supposed to be crying.

I take the bullet shell out of my pocket. Make another mark on my skin. I've always had a high pain tolerance. These marks don't last long enough.

I should be crying. Why am I not crying?

Later, we say goodbye. We drive back to the grave and the bullet shell is in my hand the entire time. My grandmother cries. I dig another ring of red into the pad of my thumb.

We go home. We take off our dark clothes and feed the animals. Life does not pause for death. We keep on going until it's our turn to stop.

••••

The next day, I have school. I ride in the passenger seat with a bronze bullet shell in my hand, turning it back and forth between my fingertips.

My mom turns on the radio. “Wagon Wheel” is the first song that plays; the Old Crow Medicine Show version.

So rock me mama like a wagon wheel

Rock me mama anyway you feel

Hey mama rock me

Rock me mama like the wind and the rain

Rock me mama like a south-bound train

Hey mama rock me...

I’ve heard it a hundred times before, but this time it breaks me and I don’t know why. I finally begin to cry.





**Leo Arkus**  
*Rivertown*  
acrylic paint  
16" by 20"

# Stroke of a Boulder

*Benjamin Ervin*

My father has become a boulder in my life that I am constantly pushing back up a hill. When he struggles with the remote, his computer, or the tenuous bonds we call family, I have to sit down with him and explain it all. I have to keep coming back to these trodden paths to guide him up our hill, only for him to roll down the far side.

My task may sound Sisyphean, but I am more of an inheritor of my father's boulder than the outright persona of his character. In a way his issues have become mine, inhabiting this stage known as home. It's a simple two-character play:

Me: By eighteen, I was classically geekish, infatuated with film, comics, games, and eventually novels. In time, I had developed a personality as eclectic as it was encyclopedic at bar room trivia.

My father: By eighteen, I was a jock who balanced my brain-damaging activities between full-contact football games and binge drinking. I became a full-fledged alcoholic straight out of high school, as I hid beer around my land in hopes I would forget where it was when I was drunk, so I could have a drink the next weekend. This escalated till I woke up black-out drunk in the streets of Cleveland and decided to change my habits.

My father traded his addictions like someone trying on suits, wearing them long enough to see the fashion rut they fell into, before switching it up. He moved from drinking to snuff, which supplanted drinking until he caught me imitating him. Then he made the transition to alcohol-free beer, a move the doctor "encouraged," then back to beer again. He never reached the drunken highs of his childhood, but the threat was enough that he stepped back again and embraced food.

Food has become a rut in his life in which he chooses to walk. Over-eating saturated foods has changed his body in my short life from healthy to troublesome. It didn't help that those years of football had destroyed his body and that exercise was a distant reality, masked by embarrassment. Instead, he lived the moments as an

overeater, his obsession with food expressed through lamentations of the kitchen being “the best room of the home.”

For me, seeing the changes in my father was like a flipbook of Sisyphus, moving the rock from mountaintop to mountaintop. Any progress he made from an obsession was soon supplanted by a new one.

The sound of a stone moves like a pendulum between hilltops as my father’s interests switch on a dime. This week he is a cook, the next week a writer, the next week a knitter.

In a way, my father’s ever fluctuating habits had been internalized. He couldn’t be sedentary—beyond the physical sense, that is—instead, he had to be ever rolling towards a final goal. Often, I am caught in his path as the person who instigates this new interest.



I was lying in bed hoping he would shut up long enough for me to fall back to sleep, only for the overworked blood vessels in his brain to burst and run out like the broken egg yolk on his plate. His food habits had gotten back to him, years of overeating salty foods had left his blood-pressure permanently elevated.

Elevated enough that doctors told him to change his habits, or he could die, only for him to laugh it off. Elevated enough that he would have sharp pains, struggle to move, and describe loss of feeling in his limbs that he refused to bring up with a doctor. I felt guilty for wishing my father would shut up for only a moment; it felt like a new hill in my father’s life.

I was kind to my father for a year after his stroke. I did everything for him and sat on each word like a nurse collaborating with him as he wove his speech into bubbles of sentences that I caught and examined with each passing moment. Though, this soon became old hat as he started to talk down to me, verbally antagonizing me to a point that I formed a wall between us so that I could block out the cyclical sounds of his needs and complaints. The violence he had internalized in a stroke rolled back on me like a stray boulder crushing the parts of me too slow to move out of the way. Although, the violence of his words felt like the summation of my efforts, the constant caring and doting actions had only given his boulder the potential to strike out at me with harsh sharp words as it rolled back.



I wrote an eight-thousand-word braided essay on how my father made me cry as a boy, and how I have often internalized my tears until recently. I have soaked up years of tears and the retention has left me waterlogged, malleable in the grips of others. As his nurse, I hold the drenched sponge, looking to wash my father’s

hands of the grime accumulated from years of pushing his own boulder. Instead, he grips it between his hands, and kneads it between his fingers, criticizing the quality of the sponge, my timing, my actions.

In a way, the stroke has only compounded my fathers' issues, and in turn compounds my own. We have become interlocked in a constant fight that stems from my father's beliefs in his "inability" and my constant support. The conflict does not stem from my punishment of his Sisyphian stone; rather, the conflict stems from my help. It is my choice to stand in the way of his boulder, to help him in the mundane that irritates him. It's my belief in something beyond the absurd fate of the Sisyphian trial that creates conflict. It's my hope to help, to better him, to be something beyond a son that bothers him, since all expression of emotion is alien to a man who only knows his boulder.

# Tantalus

*Lillian Barry*

LADIES, LOOKING TO TRIM THAT BELLY FAT?

Let me tell you MY SECRET!

I tore a hole in my abdomen and dug my nails into my intestines,  
ripped them out slow so I could FEEL THAT BURN

It's like desire

DOCTORS HATE ME!

I took a knife and carved out chunks of my flesh,  
separated the FAT from the bone and let it melt, soft, through my  
manicured fingers

and for a moment I wanted to TASTE it,  
to shove it in my mouth and CHEW and CHEW and not  
COUNT,  
fill my STOMACH with something other than shame.

But I RESISTED, GIRLS!

And for \$99.99.99.99 SO CAN YOU!

MY PROVEN\* WEIGHT LOSS FORMULA

will make you grieve for the BODY you never had  
and always you will CRAVE and CRAVE but never reach.

I LOST IT ALL IN JUST 30 DAYS

CAN YOU HANDLE IT?



**Rachel Hall**  
*Flow*  
oil on canvas  
48" by 36"

# Dirty Dreamer XXX

*Isabel Stitchick*

The sunlight is fading  
And shadows are traipsing  
It's 4 o'clock sharp  
Weary students wane in their waiting.

Slouching slovenly in their seats  
Shackled to monotony in an afternoon class  
The spent scholars fight sirens of sleep.  
Luckily, I'm easily influenced; it's time for me to dream!

Thoughts percolate toward the basin of my head  
I think back to the forest floor that we made our bed  
Sinewy shoulders flashing Portra 400 in variegated light  
Your backlit body above me is such an indelible sight.

What about that time in my childhood bedroom?  
My parents weren't home, my house was a tomb  
To be consecrated with the essence of our sweat mixed together.  
You make me blush like a middle school crush:  
u + me = Sever.

Do you think about that day at the lake?  
All goosebumps and chatters in the back of your car.  
You loosed the knots on my hips and kissed  
Like it was your *devoir*.

Remember Easter Sunday? Our dismissal of god?  
Your mouth was so reverent and I was your deity  
Oh, to be moved by the fervor of your piety.  
You spurned eternal salvation so that you could have  
me.

A snort slips loose at the thought of you  
As religious, thumping your bible and praising me as prestigious.  
A glance of surprise brings me back to the present  
But for only a second. My thoughts of you are indulgently incessant.





# Colophon

*about* sphere is the oldest undergraduate literary journal at Ohio University. It gives students opportunities to publish their writing and artwork, and to gain valuable experience as editors and designers.

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*cover art* Reagan Settle  
*what you lookin' at?*  
Acrylic and Oil Paint on Wood Panel  
16" by 20"  
Reagan believes that the current moment is always decaying and being destroyed by time, so the only logical thing to do is to find joy and pleasure in every moment you experience. Reagan's art practice is capturing the moment in time when the piece was created, which then serves as a physical memory of the past.

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