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# Et Cetera

Since 1953, celebrating the *artistic* and *creative* talent at Marshall



MARSHALL UNIVERSITY'S ART AND LITERARY MAGAZINE  
2022 ISSUE

# Et Cetera



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Eric Dillon,

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*We are now in the mountains and they are in us,  
kindling enthusiasm, making every nerve quiver,  
filling every pore and cell of us.*

—John Muir

## **Once Again**

Baylee Weaver

I want you to touch me with the intent to rust,  
To infect me with your rot,  
So I will someday become immune,  
But not entirely like you,  
To where I oxidize,  
In the torrent of water and steam.

I could be reborn as your antithesis,  
Shell hardened, smoothed against those waves,  
Where it started was once a grain of sand,  
Itching,  
Stuck between my toes like a thorn,  
Maybe a rose for some other,  
But a dagger to me.

A fatal reminder of,  
The wound that can never be sealed,  
I can be the edge to cut the thread for others,

Like a wick plunged through milky wax,  
A flame will spark to life from the clash of my steel  
For the smoke and ash to rise once again.

To be reborn is a selfish wish,  
For a world constantly changing like the seasons,  
Where I feel stuck in Winter, once in Summer,  
Where I once crossed oceans with crashing waves,  
Typhoons that reclaimed the grit.

I forego my peace,  
In lieu of beautiful transformation,  
Rising out of the seafoam,  
A monolith of a dream once dreamt, a statue of sulfur and  
copper,  
Will become a eulogy to the person I once was,  
And a preamble to who I will be.

## **Bodies in the Lake**

Gabrielle Casey

Pontoon and fishing boats cut through the water in all directions. Where the water touched the land, piles of sticks and debris were stuck along the shoreline, trapped by the waves. Claire, laying on an innertube and stuffed in a life vest, was bumped up and down over the ripples. Her head was tilted back while her dark hair floated on the water. A few pieces of leaf were stuck in her locks. Her eyes watched her younger brother, Micah, on the dock swing. He was still soaked – large beads of water dripped from his hair that tap-tap-tapped onto the wood. In his hands, he fiddled with the gold chain he always wore. An inflamed cut was on the side of his chin.

“Micah” Claire began, “I wanna say -”

“Don’t. Just don’t, okay?” Micah replied. The sounds of an approaching motor still haunted his mind – the smell of iron and the crunching of metal plagued his senses. He forced his eyes up towards the lake house. The lights had been off for a while. No one stirred past the window curtains. From the dock, he could tell that no cars occupied the driveway.

“I’m sorry.” Claire finished after a beat of silence. She stuck the bottom of her jaw into the opening of her life vest.

“Do you think they’ll be back?” He asked.

“Soon – I promise.” Claire lied.

Sighing, Micah pushed the hair out of his face with a swipe of his palm. His heel beat up and down on the dock. The sun was starting to set, turning the sky a light orange color. A breeze swept across the lake and through the surrounding trees – the summer was quickly fleeting. Movement caught his eyes, as he watched his sister pull herself out of the water. She handed him her innertube, and Micah tossed it against the wicker table. “Goin’ somewhere?” Micah asked.

“Yeah, I’m taking the boat out again” She paused. “Want to come?”

Micah didn’t answer. Claire walked over to the lever to lower the boat back down into the water and pulled it. The boat tremored on the lift as the hull sunk deeper into the lake.

“Quit.” Micah said, appearing at the lever. He smiled weakly and took over while his sister hopped into the boat. Together, the siblings launched the pontoon into the water and rode out onto the lake. Micah took his place at the front, leaning heavily over the railing. The lake was crowded, with heavy-faced men at the wheels. There was an assortment of boats, but Micah noticed a lack of fishing gear, dragging floatables and children. As Claire drove them deeper into the lake, Micah peered into one of the many coves. Along the shore, a group of men with long poles poked through the brush and debris on the bank.

Micah glanced back towards his sister. “Are they looking for something?”

“Let’s find out.” Claire said after a moment. A fishing boat skittered past the siblings, almost swiping the side of the pontoon. While Claire glared after the men, Micah heard a

bit of their conversation. One man said to the other, “Tragic, absolutely tragic. What kind of a . . .” and his voice faded into the distance.

The pontoon bounced along the water, in-between other boats and their trails. Claire cut through the paths of other boats and received no reaction or acknowledgement from the other boaters. Finally, she turned down a familiar cove. A cove that they had been to several times every summer. Where the family would park and swim and picnic on the water. The cove where Claire had taken Micah and the boat out alone to days before.

A few boats had already beat them into the cove. One had *Coast Guard* written on it with large orange letters. Claire eased up on the throttle and the pontoon stopped, floating in the dark water. Crickets and summer cicadas spoke loudly to each other. The lap of the lake provided percussion. The sibling stood side by side, still wet as water beads fell onto the boat’s floor. They went unnoticed by the coast guards and other boaters. Two bodies were pulled from the lake. A young woman with long dark hair matted from the waves. The other, a young boy, with something gold that sparkled against the fading sun. They were wrapped into sheets, bloated and green from the water, already dead.

“Found us.” Micah whispered.

“Finally.” Claire replied.



**Illuminated in Shadow** by Kelsey Mills



## **Cicatrize**

Katlyn Worstell

My grandmother is a fish you wouldn't be able to catch. She is rare and for your eyes to be graced by her presence is what I would describe to be a breath of fresh air. Like walking through a forest in the early morning only to stumble across a lake as dragonflies were dancing across the water as flower petals swept away into the wind as it blew. My grandma is comfort. Like sitting on an old bench as the sun lays its head to rest on the earth as a pair of butterflies race desperately to catch it before it is gone. However, my mother would try to take that away. My mother is a shadow that erases that comfort I crave. My mother leaves me feeling stranded in the middle of the ocean, desperately calling out for help only to have it being echoed back to me as if mocking my words. My cries would be covered by the monstrous roars of her ocean, trying to get me to plunge into her raging waters with no hope of coming back out. When I am left there, it is lifeless. I'm in a dark room with curtains that block all light from shining against my skin. When my grandma is near, a brush of wind would kiss those very curtains, revealing that warmth I have longed to experience once more. She would call out to me, trying to engulf me in her love and embrace me, to never let me out of her sight again. I would never want to leave. I find myself carelessly running to her, breaking down the wall of the room as the strength of her

light gives me strength, helps me, guides me. I would not live in that darkness. Not anymore. Yet, it will never be that easy to get away. I could already feel the ground crack at my feet as soon as they hit the outside. I fall back into her pit. Her darkness, filling me with the ooze and muck of the unresolved trauma of what used to be home. Endlessly falling. My mother is relentless. Let me escape. Escape from the hell I once called home.

## **Sleep**

Alexis Cavender

What is sleep?

Is it a valley we go to and dream

For hours on end?

A nocturnal haven, perhaps?

It seems like a blessing and a curse.

So much to do, so little time,

Yet it is highly valued.

Why?

Demotivation—meant to plague the mind

—creeps in and ruins the spirit.

Can't do anything

Don't have desire to do anything.

It's sickening

This exhaustion

Lack of sleep and

## Suffocating world views

What's there to strive for?

The soul is weary, the mind is broken.

Nothing can save it, even if one sleeps

For eternity.

Sleep—a place where insanity dies—

Has a place in the shadows,

But we value it still. We value it because

It saves us from ourselves.

It saves us,

But at what cost?

What price does someone pay for

Sanctuary?

Sleep can be granted, but there is no escape

No escape from Hell.

The world falls apart, no matter how much

We cry for rest.

What is rest anymore?

The peace died too long ago and

Sleep is just distracting,

So we neglect to use it out of fear.

We fear damaging others,

But we also damage ourselves

Shattering like porcelain vases.

What a waste.

Alternatives for sleep are vile,

But taste good on the tongue.

Wishes to sleep forever exist,

But that will not change what is to come.



**Kaleidoscope Mind** by Trinity Rollins

## **Knock ‘Em Dead**

Gabrielle Casey

Three silhouettes sat around a table in the wings. Shrouded in darkness, the only light in the theatre escaped through the open-door backstage. Beyond the stage was an impenetrable wall of black void. We didn't dare move from our mismatched chairs. My mother, sister and I were waiting for the university's director to come play God and produce light on the stage. Feeling cheeky, my sister smiled and said,

“Macbeth”.

\*\*\*

Middle school bodies drifted around the theater. Their hands on their music cases or various percussion equipment. They were dressed in concert black – the staple for this kind of event. Parents and their musicians left for home, while others lingered to chat with their friends.

Four high schoolers stood huddled near the stage – the valedictorian, the future EMT, my sister, and I. We were conversing on how the concert went while the band director, our mother, was cleaning up the chairs and music stands we had set out the night before. I saw the

valedictorian's eyes move beyond us. Her brown reflective eyes stared out into the almost empty theatre. Without missing a beat, a small smile formed on her lips,

“Who's the dead guy?”.

Correction. This *guy* was a woman.

We all turned to look. Five rows away from us, an older woman was still sitting in her chair. Her eyes were closed – head tilted back. Mouth agape. A heavy silence settled on our shoulders as we stared at her. We took her in as if she was a piece of art. Our eyes touched every bit of her body. We noted her fluffy grey hair, how her wrinkles sagged on her face, and the peaceful expression that was stuck in her skin. We took it all in, as if trying to decide what this piece meant to us. What was the message behind that still woman? Behind that open mouth?

Movement caught my gaze, as a man ran over to her. With heavy hands on the woman's frail shoulder, he shook her several times, asking her if she was alright. Nothing. We continued to stare; our feet cemented to the stained carpet.

I blinked and her body was lying on the ground. The man placed his hands over her chest and pressed hard against her sternum, over and over again. Her guts sloshed around in her body, up and down against the syncopated rhythm. It



wasn't anything like TV. It wasn't anything like the dummies I had practiced on. I didn't know a body could even move in that way. Everything about it seemed unnatural. Nurses and cops and retired firefighters rushed forward to aid in the process, standing over her like she was something to behold. My mother ushered the remaining children and parents from the theater. They did not resist, but the children craned their necks to get a quick look before the doors closed.

I backed away and retreated further into the arts department. I felt nothing. My sea of emotions was calm, not shaken by a signal wave. We were in the theater after all. Everyone has a flare for the dramatics, and I had seen this play before. I could tell you the end before it even begun. The woman would be worked on by a cop or an EMT, and they would do five chest compressions, breathe into her mouth twice, do five more compressions and she would wake up. The ambulance would carry her tired but alive body out of the theater and her granddaughter would break through the crowd of people outside. She would grasp her grandmother's hand with large tears in her eyes, running alongside the gurney.

Her grandmother would croak in response "I'm alright."  
And she would be. Everyone would be fine.

*The show must go on*

And it did.

\*\*\*

I found myself back onto the stage. The wings were dark while a large pool of light rushed in from the open curtain. Someone had dimmed the lights. The wall of void had returned, covering the balcony seats and the exit to the auditorium. I slinked across the stage, but I doubt that anyone noticed. I was a pest in the shadows, hiding just beyond the light. I was trespassing, and I knew it. The circle of volunteers had grown smaller. Men and women in a semi-circle arched around the grandmother. Their eyes were dim, their arms crossed over their chests in frustration. She was lying in the middle of the floor. Had she been on the stage she would have made an even better presentation.

I slid into the wings, just behind the curtain and stood, waiting. I had somehow convinced myself that there was something on the stage that I needed, but the item was lost from my mind at that moment.

A voice then caught my attention. It was female – robotic and not quite human.

“Preparing shock, move away from the patient”, she said.

Silence.

“Shock will be delivered in 3 . . . 2 . . . 1 . . .”

There was a beat of silence. Following it was a long sustaining note. It echoed off the walls of the theater, through the semicircle of surveying people, and in my ears. I knew what that tone meant. I had heard it many times before, but not in real life. Was this real life or was it just an elaborate stage play? She would be present for the encore, right? The curtain would close, and the audience would clap their hands while simultaneously wiping their eyes. The cast would step through the curtain once more and bow, and we would see her standing among them smiling and holding her granddaughter’s hand.

My hands clutched the air around my mouth – it was open like hers, yet no sound escaped. Hidden behind the stage curtain, draped in the darkness of the wings, I knew I was a thief. I, a stranger, had stolen the family’s right to hear the news first before anyone else. What right did I have to this information?

Within the sea of red plush carpet and stained cloth seating, the grandmother was dead. Had been dead for a while, but no one had noticed. No one dared to try and wake her up for her granddaughter’s performance. Comedy and Tragedy, the-10-foot-by-10-foot mask sculptures on opposite sides of the walls looked down upon her and took in the sight. One laughed, as it had the best view of her, and the other cried silently with me.

**Poetry in Transit—Art in Reaction to Spatial & Personal Changes:**

**An Interview with Marissa Davis**

Molly O’Callaghan

**Marissa Davis** *is a writer, educator, and translator native to Paducah, KY. After leaving Kentucky, Davis has since lived in many places both nationally and internationally, from Nashville, to Paris, to Brooklyn as an undergrad, grad student, and writer. She has had poems published in The Mississippi Review, New South, Nimrod International Journal, Glass: A Journal of Poetry, and more. In 2019, Davis received the Toi Derricotte and Cornelius Eady Chapbook Prize for her collection of poems, My Name & Other Languages I am Learning How to Speak.*

**Molly O’Callaghan** *is a senior at Marshall University pursuing a degree in creative writing. Her short fiction has been published in Et Cetera’s 2020-2022 double-issue, and she has been the recipient of a 2<sup>nd</sup> place Maier Award for fiction in 2021 & a 1<sup>st</sup> place Maier Award in fiction in 2022. She currently resides in Huntington, West Virginia as she finishes her undergrad and serves as Et Cetera’s Editor-in-Chief*

**Molly:** Marissa, thank you so much for taking the time to have this conversation with me. It has been so wonderful reading your work and experiencing your artistic voice, which is both singular in its approach to the very old craft of poetry and dynamic in its range from poem to poem. I am excited to be able to dive further into your art and get a glance inside your process.

To get us started, was there any one book, poem, collection, or artist that inspired you to become a poet? What was the origin of your love for this craft if you can recall?

**Marissa:** I know it's not an entirely original answer, but one of the first poets I really fell in love with was Sylvia Plath, and particularly her poem "Lady Lazarus." There was something so mind-blowing to me about what that poem does to the self—the way it divides the single being into the elements of victim, aggressor, and survivor, all of which are co-existing, and at times battling, throughout the piece. This ability to wreck and redefine what "truth" means, and, in doing, to allow for many "truths," even contradicting ones, to exist at once; to meld life and mythology; to subvert conceptions of powerful and powerless; to permit the self to hold infinite nuance and fluidity of meaning—I could go on—but to come across that, and to witness it all being held in place by the influence of not just image itself, but the *music* of the language that gives birth to the image—it was positively bewitching. I felt like I would maybe never be able to understand myself without learning how to do that. Otherwise, my origins as a poet were at the Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts, a program which brings talented high schoolers from across the state to spend three weeks learning and refining their craft free of charge. I was accepted to their Creative Writing cohort on the basis of fiction I'd written, but GSA marked my first real exposure to poetry. All three of my instructors in the program—Mitchell Douglas, Kelly Norman Ellis, and Ellen Hagan—were Affrilachian poets, and they introduced our class to poetry and poetry writing in a way I'd never experienced

before; they taught us how to find ourselves in poetry and showed us poetry we could find ourselves in.

**Molly:** From what I can see, you are well-traveled and have made homes in many places, such as Nashville, Paris, and most recently Brooklyn. But you come from Appalachia, and your Kentucky roots poke through in poems like “Notes Left for the Ohio River to Read After It Tells Me It Has Forgotten Its Source”. How does your poetry connect you to where you came from?

**Marissa:** The short answer is: immensely! I didn’t grow up in Appalachia myself—I’m from Paducah, in western Kentucky—though all my family is from Appalachia; they’re from Ironton, Ohio, a small town not far from Ashland, KY and Huntington. In Paducah, though, I grew up out in the county rather than in the town itself, so when I imagine “home,” what I think of is the yard of the house where I was raised—a slightly wild-grown small hillside that led, further on, into the woods. I’ve mostly lived in cities since leaving Kentucky, but my poetry tends to be very grounded in my experiences of home—and in particular, the way in which the space I grew up in influences the way I think of the natural world and humanity’s relationship to it. Growing up in a humid subtropical, tornado-prone climate in a town on top of a fault line allows for a certain humility in the face of nature that is maybe somewhat less accessible when you’re living in a space in which nature is relegated to a handful of sickly-looking trees artificially arranged in a public square—and that humility is a sentiment that appears frequently in my poetry. Outside of themes and images, I think that connection with the natural environment of home

influences my work stylistically—I tend more towards lushness than austerity (sometimes to a fault).

**Molly:** You’ve mentioned having been mentored by Donika Kelly in a previous interview, and that influence certainly shows through in the mythological framework of “Self Portrait as Persephone” from *My Name and Other Languages I am Learning How to Speak*. Are there any other writers who’ve mentored you either in your early ventures into poetry or now that you see as being important to your artistic journey to this point?

**Marissa:** Most definitely; I feel deeply fortunate to have had great mentors and supportive figures throughout my artistic life, people who have helped me grow as a poet in immeasurable ways. Besides Donika and the GSA instructors that I mentioned before, Rick Hilles and Kate Daniels, two poetry professors I had during my undergraduate years at Vanderbilt who really helped me to understand myself as a writer in some of my earliest stages, were two of them. During my Paris years, I was in a small workshop group with the incredible American poets Carrie Chappell and Alison Koehler—their eyes were some of the earliest and most formative on a lot of the poems in my chapbook. My time with them also taught me a lot about not only writing as a craft, but also what it means to live in the world as a writer—seeking out and maintaining artistic community; carving out the time to write and engage with the world of writing regularly, etc. As a graduate student, Terrance Hayes was an absolutely wonderful professor and thesis advisor to me—the kind of instructor who really takes a lot of time with and puts significant thought into his critiques on any work you put

before him; and Major Jackson really pushed my writing forward, in terms of the way he encouraged me to look at my writing with a sense of playfulness and experimentation, to grow beyond my comfort zone and dip myself in new formal and thematic waters.

**Molly:** Many of your poems, though clearly following their own structural path, do not seem to follow the typical poetic forms of rhyme, meter, etc. How have you formed your own sense of structure as an artist? Did you begin as a free verse poet, or have you grown into it?

**Marissa:** I began as a free verse poet and have never left! Honestly, I'm ashamed of it, but I'm somewhat allergic to traditional forms—I don't think anyone could pay me enough to sit down and write a sestina. I spent a lot of my life being a fairly well-behaved child and teenager, and I think, to me, that writing was always the one place I didn't have to be rulebound. The only laws I had to follow were the ones that I myself decided to set. That being said, I do think in certain ways I've been a formally interested poet—I think a lot about the shape a poem takes, the way it moves across the page, etc (largely inspired by a very early poetry class I took, a form-focused course at Vanderbilt with Beth Bachmann that continues to influence the way I make art)—but these are a) often forms that I create myself, and b) tend more towards visual frameworks than any kind of set structures of rhyme or repetition.

**Molly:** Similar to the previous question, do you want to experiment with new forms in the future or do you feel your poetic voice is best suited to free verse?



**Marissa:** It depends on what you mean by “new forms,” I guess! I really love experimenting with form in some ways, and I think I always will. I’ve made poems written like Publisher’s Marketplace announcements, poems written like Bible passages, poems inspired by pottery and visual art forms, right now I’m working on a poem that uses an advent calendar as its structural and thematic framework—but traditional forms are a totally different beast to me! I’m sure there will be a time when I decide a given poem would be best patterned as a pantoum or a contrapuntal or whatnot, but I think I’m less inclined towards those generally. I like the freedom to say what I want to say unrestrained. I also feel like (maybe more so in my speech than in my writing, granted) I can typically be bad at making myself understood, so I’m loath to add more barriers for myself in figuring out how to communicate something.

**Molly:** You’ve existed in many different spheres and environments as a person. You’ve been a student, an educator, and of course an artist. You’ve moved from Paducah, to Nashville, to Paris, and finally Brooklyn. How has your poetry evolved with you through life and spatial changes? Has it been easier to create in one place over another? Similarly, how have life changes effected your art?

**Marissa:** Oh my, this is a big question (though also a very good question!). Definitely it has, though not always in ways that are immediately obvious in the moment. Sometimes it can take quite a bit of hindsight to know exactly the influences a given experience has had on me, or someone else pointing it out. For example, I remember

Donika Kelly once looked at a poem of mine I'd written while living in France and gave me a note about my frequent use of an unusual, redundant syntax—which, when I looked at it, I realized I'd accidentally patterned after French syntactical style, which tends to be somewhat recursive. That's a really specific instance, but I do think that living between languages has had a huge impact on the way I think of the music of the language I use, as well as on various nuances that words in my native language can have. When I moved to NYC, I was bringing all of that with me, in an environment where I was intensely focusing on my poetry (I had moved back to America for my MFA), and was also living in my native language *outside* of the South for an extended period for the first time in my life—which I think really made me pay a particular kind of attention to the rhythms of the accents I had come from, the languages I had lived in, and how those influenced my poetic ear.

I think it's been much easier for me to write in France than anywhere else. For one, at least my first year living there, I just had more freedom—I was working part-time as a language assistant in an elementary school, and I had absolutely no money but a ton of time on my hands. For another, for various reasons I can often feel freer and more myself there. Maybe most important, though, I write a lot about home, so being far from home allows for a different kind of vantage point. New York has been odd for me since I moved there not that many months before the pandemic; while I associate France with a certain kind of liberty of being, I think (though it's maybe not all the way fair to New York) I associate New York with an unpleasant constriction. That being said, the people I've had in my life in New York—from teachers to peers in the MFA—have

made it still a place where I feel like I've learned a ton about writing as a whole.

**Molly:** *My Name and Other Languages I am Learning How to Speak* seems to explore the black subject in relation to both how they've been seen and how they see the world. How has poetry created a space of self-expression for you as a black woman? How do you represent that experience on the page?

**Marissa:** In a lot of ways—and I think my answer here links back to my answer to your first question, about what first drew me to Plath's "Lady Lazarus." A lot of what I found interesting in it, I found interesting because of my experience as a Black woman. It showed me how poetry could be a space of reclamation, of argument, of holding multiple truths at once, of upsetting our conceptions of who holds power and who doesn't, of who is victim and who's holding the knife. It showed me that poetry could be a space to understand and dissect the things that caused me pain—things that weighed negatively on my understanding of who I was, could be, or had the right to be—without giving those things power over me. It also taught me the various ways in which a narrative could be complicated. I think living abroad showed me this, too—the intersectional oddness of lacking privilege as a Black woman, but having privilege as an American (rather than an "undesirable" type of foreigner); the kind of power my nationality gives me at the same time as my race subtracts from it—and then poetry gave a location to think about how I understand—and take accountability for, as the case may be—my place in that framework.

As to your second question, I think it depends on what I'm tackling. I think, visually, I've often done a lot of breaking; I crack lines, crack words, with the abstract goal perhaps of cracking their associated ideas and allowing for something different, larger, freer, to be built from the rubble. I also lean a lot on mythology, often Biblical and Greek—inserting my narrative, as a marginalized person, into the heart of the canons that have constructed the Western imagination; and also using these voices and stories to be more honest about and more profoundly understand my own.

**Molly:** Do you consider yourself an Appalachian poet, having been so long removed from Kentucky at this point in your life?

**Marissa:** Both yes and no, I think. Again, my “Appalachian-ness” is not a direct connection in the first place. I didn't grow up there, but the people I come from all did. I don't have much in the way of immediate experience of living there, besides stays with my grandparents, but the culture, the landscape, the speech patterns, etc. all are familiar to and part of me.

I guess more largely, I definitely still see myself as a Kentuckian, which is maybe the core of some of the things that bother me about New York. From the impersonal nature of interactions between people to the rusty, gray treelessness of the physical “landscape” there to the occasional ostentatiousness of wealth, I think it's made for an experience that's felt a bit distant to me. I would say I maybe never felt more like a Kentuckian than once I'd left and realized the things that I'd lost in the leaving. That being said, I do truly love being in urban spaces—I've

adored living in Paris and would do so again if I could. But it's true that home remains with me and in me, sometimes in more ways than I'm immediately aware.

**Molly:** Publication/stepping into the public sphere can be both exciting and add some pressure to the artistic process, I imagine. Has being published and, subsequently, receiving awards such as the Toi Derricotte + Cornelius Eady Chapbook prize, changed the way you see yourself as an artist and your artistic process?

**Marissa:** I think something like that can be a kind of paradoxical experience—at once confidence-giving and confidence-sapping. On the one hand—not that I'm saying we *should* relate our abilities as artists to what other bodies or institutions have to say about us, but the reality is all the same that we often do—it felt legitimizing, and helped me more comfortably feel like my existence in certain spaces (like the MFA program) wasn't just some fluke of numbers; that others truly could read, appreciate, and find something of value in the poems that I created. On the other hand, it was terrifying to put my work out in the world like that and have to wonder if people thought that it really deserved the honor put upon it. Plus, just given how much my own understanding of my writing changed over the course of my MFA (the chapbook was written in the late-Nashville and Paris years before I ever set foot in grad school), there was a part of me that felt that it didn't accurately represent the way that I wrote anymore, which created another sort of nervousness as to what its perceived quality might be. And the most horrifying part of all was knowing that my family would read it! I wrote a lot about home, the way I thought of myself, and the people I came

from, and not always positively. Even just last Thanksgiving, my grandpa took me in the living room to show me where he'd framed and hung my chapbook after reading it. He started cackling and said, "I saw the poem you wrote about your grandma..." (from whom he's been divorced for decades) "I sure am glad you didn't decide you wanted to write about me!"

**Molly:** What are some books or collections you're working through right now that you might recommend, for either entertainment or instruction? Maybe both.

**Marissa:** I'm reading Lucie Brock-Broido's *A Hunger* right now and am feeling inspired by the simultaneous tautness and wild liberty of language she has. I've also recently finished Desiree Bailey's *What Noise Against the Cane*, which absolutely took my breath away.

**Molly:** You've already accomplished so many wonderful things. You're a published and award-winning poet, well-traveled, and have received your undergrad and MFA. What do your hopes and aspirations look like from here?

**Marissa:** I'd love to have a full-length collection published! I'm submitting my manuscript here and there at the moment. I'm also interested in potentially testing out novel writing. I have a desire to perhaps return to live in France again, but I also have things that hold me here in the States. I work on translation as well, but haven't done as much since becoming

very busy with a job I began last year—I'd really love to get back to it, though.

## Where I'm From

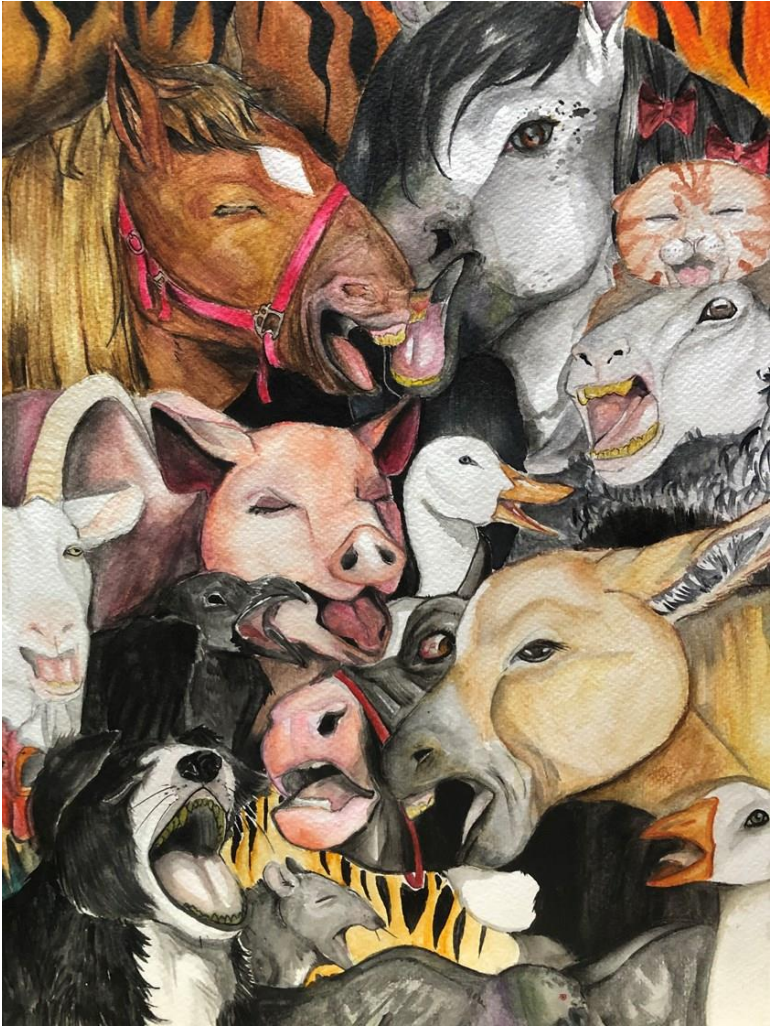
Gayla Flora

I am from bonfires,  
From Jif and Concord.  
I am from The Little House,  
(Overcrowded, dilapidated,  
Long since torn down).  
I am from the mulberry bush  
Whose fruits we ate straight from the limb,  
Without washing them off.

I am from fresh bread and strong will,  
from Cleo and Judith.  
I'm from Sunday dinners  
And shouting matches.  
From stop running in the house and tell your sister you're  
sorry.  
I'm from Hallelujah by and by  
in scuffed dress shoes,  
and never missing Sunday school.

I'm from Collis Avenue and Oleta,  
From fried chicken and sweet tea.  
From the first Easter after Aunt Leoris died,  
Eerie and uncomfortable, never to be celebrated again.  
The peacock, taunting us kids from the roof  
Until grandma shoos it away with the broom.  
Up in the attic, family albums sit untouched  
Gathering dust, no one knows the faces anymore.





**War Pigs** by Sidney McCoy

## **His 9 Things**

Abigail Grim

### **Worm Gets Bird**

May I present the social media trend of the month:  
“Would you still love me if I was turned into a worm?”

Him: yes

Me: how would you care for my worm-self

Him: put you in dirt

End.

### **Delightful Sin**

Many conversations spanning the past decade have influenced neither party. They remain at an impasse despite both excelling academically. The issue at hand- morality or facts. One believes an act of love to be sinful all the while willfully ignoring counterarguments. The two start a discussion calmly; however, this quickly escalates. One antagonizing the other and vice versa. Perhaps the real question belongs to the feeler rather than the thinker. Which will prevail in the end? Ethics or logic, and are the two more entwined than previously thought?

### **Pasta**

Is pasta basically boiled bread? He checks the first box. What else does he believe?

Check, yes

Check, no

## **Dependence**

I have depended on him for every necessity spanning over a decade's time. His range of availability remains slim thanks to work; however, he cares for me, nonetheless. My variety of needs has become second nature in our emphatic relationship.

I rely on him for my own life; he is my life in more ways than one, stretching deeper than anything physical. Perhaps I am too troublesome for him to let go. After all, I am what remains of his failed marriage. The only living proof it ever existed to begin with. Is it also true that he keeps me as a trophy to remember what once was but can never be again? Yes.

My lack of presence in his life would surely escalate his inevitable downfall. The meager elements that are left of his humanity will crumble like the rotted wood belonging to an insidious house. Maybe things were not set to end this way all those years ago, but it is the path that we have reached in the end.

## **Empty Pockets**

Emptying his khaki pants' pockets for the evening is a nightly routine. He takes out the items meticulously, individually before laying them out on a black marbled end table that sits across from his homemade bed frame. The white wood holding up the twin-size air mattress is worn and tired. Each item makes a noise as it gets gently laid on the furniture. Book. Thud. Keys. Clang. Pocket knife. Crash. Hand sanitizer plops softly against the pocketknife. The navy bookmark shines in the orange glow of the

overhead light, but makes no sound, safely tucked in between the yellowing pages of an old bestseller. Probably a fantasy or science fiction read, but definitely a thick novel with sensory details sprinkled throughout.

## **Fantasy**

He becomes immersed in what he's reading. So much so that any outside stimuli are forgotten or ignored altogether. Distantly, there is recognition of conversations occurring around him- some spark interest but none register fully as he remains in another universe. One with colors so vibrant the eyes are nearly blinded. A universe that exists only to him and doesn't extend beyond that. This remains a sanctuary from others.

The experiences of the world around him and the world inside cannot be the same. His mind, for instance, exists in his own universe. His body, on the other hand, is corporal, tangent. Both are of significance but are unable to gel. The worlds will never collide and yet they coexist.

In his created universe, there are majestic creatures similar to those in fairytales told to young children. Dragons and goblins and mermaids and unicorns alike have their own lives worth living. He creates the characters and their interactions, but does he realize what he's doing? Or does he let the magic flow within and bring the characters to life via spell book? Are his actions intentional and thoughtful or otherwise careless and unplanned?

There is pain to be felt despite the mind being separate from the body. The lives of those he has created oftentimes overwhelm his own emotions. He becomes distant again to the outside world, the real world as many call it, even though both are real to him. His somewhat

visceral reactions anytime a creation becomes gravely injured or ill alert the body to feel something, to do something. Maybe he can simply rewrite what has been done. Erase and start again, but that's not feasible in his case. Unable to sacrifice his moral code, the man simply mourns his losses.

## **Gaming**

Pixels light up the television by the thousands, roaring to life while quickly taking over the entirety of the screen. The constant humming sound of a generic console is calming to many, but not him. The added noise becomes irritating. In turn, the volume of the game gets raised until reaching an acceptable level, one that drowns out the incessant humming.

Violence has never been appealing to him; thus, a different genre is chosen. Although his brother has given him a multitude of handed down games with different styles, there remain a select few that are in a "favorite" pile. This designated pile has only seven games that are played back-to-back. Meanwhile, the other dozens of games lay haphazardly on the bookshelf collecting dust. Trying to convince him to donate the neglected games never fares well or in favor of the instigator. "They were gifts," he claims and leaves it at that.

Once both the volume and game are deemed satisfactory, only then will he begin to play. For hours at a time, he takes control of the characters, as if he had major stakes in the game's outcome. So focused on the tasks at hand, there seems to be a significant increase in the ability to keep level-headed during such stress-induced situations.

If only he had the strength to apply those skills in the real world.

### **Unspoken Words**

The following statement, though true, may not leave the page. Regardless, these words need to stop circulating in my head and yelling at me to speak them aloud. They're persistent and entitled, demanding I write them if nothing else, to make them permanent as if they've not already infiltrated my mind.

“I won't let myself forgive you, no matter how hard my heart begs for the relief, for the burden of hating you to be lifted. You wanted me to think it was *my* fault in a pathetic attempt to protect yourself from your own guilt-riddled conscience. We may share an intimacy that runs deeper than the blood around my core, but we are not lovers, and we never can be.”

The words are out, never to be taken back. Maybe now I can rest soundly at night. I'll be tucked under the weight of my comforter while you drown in your own pity. You'll be begging and pleading into the abyss like I have been for the last five years without him.

### **Mountains**

Vacation. Gut-wrenching hardships. Death. Lock screens and wallpapers. Nature. Harsh conditions. True wildlife. Strenuous exercise. Devastation. What do they have in common? Mountains.

People travel hundreds, even thousands of miles to reach the perfect get-away destination. One place many

gravitate to each year is the beach- sand in every crevice of the body and burning saltwater in the nasal cavity. On the other side of the spectrum, exists mountains.



**Random** by Ethan Willis



## **Smudged**

Eliza Manning

The wrinkled white void surrounds me  
It's just me here, only a pencil and an eraser to call my own  
It's nice here  
But it's lonely  
I need someone, something

Clutching my pencil, I let my hand guide me  
Graphite strokes lead to a new person  
Two-dimensional becomes three  
A sketch that stands on its own  
Lead flows through black-and-white veins  
Shadows exist without shading  
There is no sun, yet the light shines in its eyes

I admire the creation as it admires me  
Smooth, creaseless skin  
Soft to the touch  
Not a line out of place on its off-white face

It's beautiful

Then I notice how one eye doesn't match the other

It's flawed

I lift its chin, and it looks worried

"It's alright," I assured it

And it trusted me

I scrape its eye with the eraser

A scream rips through the paper walls

It doesn't listen to me when I try to comfort it

"It's for the best"

"It will only hurt for a moment"

"I'm doing this for you"

"You'd look better once you let me fix it"

"Just hold still before you hurt yourself"

Each word makes it more frantic, as if they were tearing through the creature itself

It won't listen to reason anymore

It tried to run away, so I grabbed it

It tried to claw at my grip, so I erased its hand  
It tried to kick my shins, so I erased its leg  
It tried to beg me to stop, so I erased its mouth  
Then it tried to look at me  
Pencil smudges all over its cheeks  
Desperation shown through one poor eye  
Tear stains start to form

So I erased its other eye

I'm standing there, in front of a giant smudge  
It's laying there, unmoving – unable to breathe  
Eraser shavings glittering the thin, torn floors  
There's a water stain forming underneath my feet

I put down the dull pencil and the warm, worn-out eraser  
Panting, breathing in the eraser shavings  
And I ball up the wrinkled page before throwing it into the trash  
I don't feel like drawing anymore



**Subconscious Reinventions** by Julianna Geyer

## **Empty, Except For...**

Trinity Rollins

It was empty, save for you.

Well, save for us, rather.

You handed me the key, and I fumbled with it because, when I thought about it right then, I'd never really unlocked many doors before.

And you were the one that pushed me in when I was too awestruck by the hard, wooden space before me.

“This is it!” And it was, and it was empty. “This is home,” but it wasn't until you squeezed my shoulders tight in your palms, persuading me to think maybe you were onto something. If you were there at the center of my vision, the void in my peripheral didn't matter, didn't exist. You took a picture of me so we could look back on the empty, and be proud of the full.

And then there were couches, and chairs, and tables. *A lamp would look nice in that corner. Maybe we should paint that wall blue. Yeah, let's do it.*

But then, perhaps, we chose one end table too many. Or perhaps the piano was overdoing it.

Perhaps it was too full, then.

Perhaps that's why you had to leave, because there wasn't enough space anymore. Yet, all too much space at the same time.

I sat in your chair, and I imagined you putting it all together, cursing at a missing screw under your breath.

And I stared at the blue wall and I thought about how I secretly wanted it to be cream, but you liked blue because it looked like my eyes and that was enough to keep me quiet.

And I looked at the framed photo that sat on the side table, because "you'd get to hanging it up proper with time," but now that time was up.

I remembered how I thought that room in the photo was so grossly spacious, intimidating. But now it looked so full compared to the one before me. It looked full because I was smiling, there in the middle of all the vacancy.

And there was someone to smile at.

**I had a dream about you last night, we were wearing matching dresses.**

Ashley Cline

They were flowy like water,  
and the color of the ocean,  
like,  
in the evening,  
just before sunset.  
when the sea is dark blue  
and kind of purple  
and the waves near the shore  
get somewhat lighter,  
and then the sun sets,  
everything's golden  
just like your hair,  
wrapped round my body,  
but to break the illusion,  
I didn't smell salt,  
I smelled your perfume and,



I felt your reaction  
to my lips on your forehead,  
me holding you close,  
breathing in your scent,  
it's hard to describe,  
not floral or spicy,  
I can't find the word,  
to me,  
it just smells like  
home.



**Lavender Fields** by Evan Abshire

## Adderall Crushes

Heather Ratcliff

Stepping through the front door, I was greeted by flashing lights and loud music. A few red solo cups littered the floor; two, very drunk, men leaned into each other beside the door. Stepping gently farther in the room, I saw several people I recognized.

“Hey!” Sean shouted, making his way over to me.

I smiled as he walked over, “hey Sean, what's new with you?”

He shrugged, grinning. “Same ole, same ole. Quit my job last week. Took up too much time.”

I rolled my eyes. “How can you afford to exist without a job you peanut-brain?”

“I have my ways. Anyway,” He chuckled and looked behind me, “where’s Marla? I thought you two were ‘swamped with homework.’”

“We are. I’m choosing to procrastinate instead.”

He sucked in air sharply. “Oh, how I miss those days. High school was so much better.”

I scoffed. “You didn’t even do anything in high school.”

“Yeah, but at least I didn’t get punished so badly for it.”

I shrugged.

“Where’s Ky?” I asked, nonchalantly.

Sean raised his eyebrows. “Dunno. Haven’t seen him yet.”

Ky, 5’10, flawless skin, wavy brown hair parted down the middle, and gorgeous brown eyes, was the epitome of perfection. He was the only reason I came to these parties. I often bought Adderall from him; not because I used it, but because I didn’t know how else to talk to him.

My smile dropped. “But he’s coming, right?”

Sean crossed his arms. “Wow, and to think you came to see me.”

My eyes narrowed. “You know what I mean.”

“Yeah, I know. He should be coming. You’ll get your fix, don’t worry,” he teased.

I looked down. “It’s not about the drugs. You know that.”

He sighed, his smile faltering. “Why don’t you tell him you like him? He’s not that mean, I promise.”

“Yeah, but... what if he thinks I only like him ‘cause of the drugs?”

Sean gave me a confused look. “I thought you don’t use them anymore?”

“I don’t, but I still buy them. I didn’t know how else to keep talking to him.”

He rolled his eyes. “Is a simple ‘how’s the weather?’ too good for you?”

I gave him a glare.

Sean grabbed my shoulders. “New plan: tell him tonight. When he gets here, go up to him and be like ‘hey... I think

you're really cute and we've known each other for a while so do you wanna get married?"

I scrunched up my nose and pulled his arms off me.  
"Yeah... No. I'm gonna go wait for him in the kitchen."

He poked my nose, "no alcohol. Underage drinking is illegal!"

"You're literally 19."

"And you're a minor."

...

"Guess who's here!" Sean teased, walking up beside me.

I perked up. "Ky? Where is he?"

Sean put his hands up. "Calm down there, kiddo. He's in the living room."

I shoved my cup into his hands and rushed out of the kitchen and into the living room. There he was standing near the sofa talking to a few guys. His eyes scanned the room, eventually finding my own. I softly smiled and waved.

Kyren grinned and nodded to the guys he was talking to before walking off towards the hallway. He turned around and nodded for me to follow.

Excited, I quickly walked after him. Once in the hallway and away from people, he turned to me and gave me a quick "hey."

I gave him a smile. "What's new with you?"

He shrugged and leaned against the wall. "Nothing really."

I reached into my pocket and pulled out two ten-dollar bills, reaching it out to him.

He gently took the money, eyeing me, then shoved it into his pocket. From the same pocket he pulled out a small bag. “You know... you’ve been coming a lot more frequently. You doin’ okay?”

“Yeah, I’m okay. Just been stressed. We have exams coming up,” I say.

Ky nodded, “ah I get that. Still, you gotta be careful. Don’t wanna overdo it.” He handed me the bag and ruffled my hair.

I scrunched up my nose and pushed his hand away, “stooop! It took me so long to curl this.”

He hummed, tugging on a string of hair. “Really? You curled it on purpose?”

I frowned. “Yeah. Do you not like it?”

“It’s alright. You look nice regardless. I prefer your normal messy hair. I guess it’s what I’m used to.” He smiled and his hand dropped. Pushing himself off the wall, he looked past me. “I should get back. Don’t want anyone to get the wrong idea.”

I gave him a small smile even though I was slightly upset. I could stand here all night to talk to him; I didn’t care about anyone else or what they thought.

...

*Will you come pick me up? Read 12:11 AM.*

I sighed and sat down on the stairs leading to the front porch. Drunk students stumbled out, mumbling incoherent words to each other. I glanced down at my phone, hoping my brother would respond.

I hissed in annoyance and typed out another message.

*I can see you read my messages. **Read 12:13 AM***

My phone buzzed.

*That party was more important than us, so figure it out yourself. **Sent 12:14 AM.***

*Are you serious rn? **Delivered 12:14 AM.***

I locked my phone and groaned. Hands grabbed my shoulders. “Ava! Whatcha doing?”

I jumped and turned around. It was Marla. “Oh, hey. Where have you been? I didn’t see you the entire time.”

She shrugged and moved to sit beside me. “I’ve been around.”

I didn’t know what that meant. I don’t think I wanted to know. Instead I looked down to the poorly painted steps and changed the subject. “I didn’t tell him.”

“You didn’t? Why not?”

“I don’t know.. I got scared I guess.”

Marla sighed and hugged her knees, watching as a car passed. “Well... I think you should tell him ‘Hey, Ky, I’ve been wanting to tell you this for a while, but I really like you and-”

I slapped her shoulder and looked at the shut door. “What the hell? What if he heard you?”

Marla gave me a stern look. “So what if he did?”

I looked away.

Marla leaned her head on my shoulder. “It’s all right. You’ll figure it out.”

“I guess so.. Oh, do you mind giving me a ride home? I texted Cal, but he’s mad that I skipped game night so...”

Marla hummed. “I would, but I’ve been drinking and I don’t think it’d be a good idea for me to drive. But...” A devilish grin formed on her face. She jumped up and went inside.

“What are you doing? Marla-” I called out, but she slammed the door.

Maybe she was right. He wouldn’t be upset if I told him, right? If anything, he’d be flattered. A dark car with red underglow flew past. Three cop cars were close behind.

A few moments later, the door behind me opened. “How much you wanna bet that’s Nick?” I heard a guy laugh.

“It’s possible.” I heard Ky say.

“What do you mean ‘it’s possible?’ He’s always speeding through town. It’s a shocker he still has a license.” Marla responded.

Marla? Why was she walking out with Ky? My body stiffened.



*She didn't... No, she couldn't have...*

The two guys walked down the stairs and paused at the foot. Marla stood beside me. "I asked Ky to take you home. That's okay, right?"

I looked up at her, panic filling my eyes. "W-what?"

She smiled. "Text me when you get home!"

She walked back into the house.

I looked at Ky as he turned to me, trying to remain calm.

He gave me a little smile. "I have to give him a ride home really quick too. You okay with that?"

I glanced at Aiden. He was swaying from side to side, staring at the road. A grin plastered on his face. My face dropped.

Ky noticed. "You can have shotgun. My cars over there." He pointed to a small black car sitting on the opposite side of the road. He began to walk up the stairs, dropping his car keys in my lap. "I'll see if someone else can give him a ride. Go start the car."

I blinked and watched as Aiden spun around and chased Kyren inside, "huh? Why can't you just take me?"

I looked down at his keys. The keyring was a simple silver loop with four keys. Two looked like house keys, one a car key, and the last seemed like a safe key. A black keyfob was dangling down too. I gripped the keys and stood up, then descended down the stairs.

Maybe I should tell him.

...

I fumbled with the radio, trying to figure out how to change the station to something worth listening to.

The door opened and a smiling Kyren climbed into the driver's side. I pulled my hand away from the radio as he closed the door. "Sorry, Aiden was being an ass."

"No worries."

He looked over to me, then to the radio. "You don't like 80's rock?"

I scrunched up my nose. "Not really."

He clicked on a small, black button that had a faded white A painted on it before reaching over my lap and into the glove box to retrieve a red aux cord. He plugged it in and handed me the end. "Play whatever."

I took the aux cord and slid it into my phone. The clicking of his seatbelt made me look over to him. "Are you sure you don't mind taking me home?"

He looked at me before grabbing his phone. "Nah, I don't mind. What's your address?"

"4567 Bigley Street." I responded.

He snickered and typed it into what I assumed was Google Maps.

"What's so funny?" I narrowed my eyes.

"Bigley... That's a funny name"

I rolled my eyes playfully. "You have a funny name."

He glanced up, thoughtfully. “Do I? Or do I just have a unique name?”

I shuffled my favorite Spotify playlist as he began to pull out.

We sat in silence after that. Not an awkward silence, but a comfortable one.

Ten minutes later, we were turning onto my street.

*I should tell him.*

I looked over to him. His side profile was breathtaking.

He pulled the car over in front of my house. “Your destination is on the right.” He mocked Google.

I smiled and looked down. “Hey, uh... I wanted to tell you something.”

“What’s up?” He asked, putting the car into park.

My hands began to feel sweaty as I fumble with the hem of my shirt. My face begins to feel hot and I feel dizzy.

*Maybe I shouldn’t...*

“Hey, you okay? You’re not gonna throw up, right? Oh God, please don’t throw up in my car.” Kyren asked, reaching over to grab my shoulder.

“I like you.” I blurted.

He looked confused. “What?”

I repeated it. “I like you.”

He moved back into his seat and started to fidget with his necklace. “I heard what you said.”

“So?”

“So what?”

I flinched slightly. “Why do you sound so mad?”

“I’m not mad... it’s just... you’re still in high school and I’m your local Adderall guy and-”

*He doesn’t like me.*

My eyes began to tear up and I quickly unfastened the seatbelt.

“Ava, wait.”

*I shouldn’t have told him. You’re an idiot, Ava. Did you really think he’d like you back?*

“Ava, wait.”

“You don’t like me; I get it.” I jumped out of the car, feeling tears run down my cheek.

“Ava, stop. You’re acting like a baby.” He called out.

I slammed the door and began to walk towards my front door, wiping my eyes.

I heard the car door open and slam. “Ava!”

I didn’t turn around. The little dignity I had left wouldn’t allow it.

I heard quick footsteps coming up behind me. “Ava, stop.”

I stopped and turned around. “What, Ky?”

“It’s not that I don’t like you... It’s just... weird, you know?” He gently said.

I looked away from him. “Wow, thanks. That’s just what every girl wants to hear when she confesses to her crush.”

He sighed and shoved his hands in his pockets. “Listen... You’re cute and funny and all, but... You’re just too young.”

My eyes snapped to his defensively. “I’m not that much younger than--”

He cut me off, “I know that, but it’s still weird. You’re a minor. I’m in college. I mean, hell, even if we did turn into a couple, how are we supposed to tell people we met? ‘Yeah he sold me Adderall at this college party I was at when I was 17.’ That’s not cool, Ava. That’s not how relationships start.”

“You don’t have to justify not liking me. If anything, it makes you seem like a bigger asshole.” I scoffed, using my sleeve to wipe my cheek again.

“I am an asshole. I’m sorry. I just don’t want you to get the wrong idea. If we met under different circumstances, or hell, if you were a little bit older, then maybe we could give it a try. But not now.” He concluded, swaying back and forth.

I stood there awkwardly staring at my shoes for a while. I didn’t know what to say to that. What he said was true and made sense, but it still hurt.

Finally, I looked back up to him. “I’m not gonna buy any more Adderall.”

He nodded, glancing down.

I fiddled with my sleeves and turned around, looking at my front door. “I should probably get inside. It’s kinda cold.”

He cleared his throat and pulled his hands from his pockets. “Yeah, yeah. I uh... I’ll see you whenever, then?”

I nodded solemnly and turned to go into my house. The first footsteps were hard; I didn’t want to leave him there. I wanted to stay and beg for him to change his mind. But I couldn’t. Reaching the first step, I paused and looked over my shoulder, calling out, “hey, Ky?”

He was back near his car door, reaching for the driver’s handle. He looked up expectantly.

“What about in a couple years?”

He raised an eyebrow confused. “A few years? Whatcha talking about?”

“Will you say you like me then?” I asked.

He cracked a little smile and looked down to the ground before back to me. Opening the door, he nodded. “Yeah, I’ll say it in a couple of years.”



**Just Studyin'** by Victoria Ferimer

## **Her Lamentation**

Amy Welch

In the heart of the valley Autumn was christened

Summer dead of fornication

Mother called and then you listened

Born of wild scorned elation

And you were adorned with sugar plum cheeks

And red delicious apple lips

And sorghum eyes like gold rush creeks

And olive oil hair drawn up like wild parsnips

Vandelia valleys birthed you, a little yellow buttercup

You had eggshell skin, like self-rising flour

With a milk and honey glow

And a smile like baking soda, breath of baby powder

Your little wrists were plump sourdough

You wondered why the Church ladies wanted to eat you up



But you crawled out of the valley, not waving goodbye  
You cut your buttercup hair into shreds and those who  
wanted to eat you up spat you out  
A golden labyrinth of stars and twinkling thread were too  
tangled to unpry  
Your legs grew out like tarantulas and your skin reeked of  
mildew and drought  
Mecurial was your fortune, distant were your thoughts

But as you wander the dew musk of the afternoon  
Dances with the wood on a nearby porch  
Their consummation like Tennessee in June  
When the weary traveler cries out, God will light a torch  
With nature's paper and quill, you write, your ink spilling  
in blots

When they read this, they should fold a corner on this page  
Because this chapter is important  
It tells the tale of the buttercup girl in the gilded cage  
That pretchitor taught to be concordant  
The red delicious spoils and the buttermilk rots

To the tempest the weary traveler calls about

The mountains don't know her anymore

The sugar plum cheeks rutted out

Her eggshell skin adorned with sores

The buttercup girl is the wanderer in an endless void

If you weren't born to be so supple, they would have never  
found you so vile

If you were so sweet as dough, they should have left you  
out of the oven

All that remains is a somber tune escaping from bile

Your lonely voice is a whisper in the wind

They valley exiles those whose innocence is destroyed

But when the valley casts out scorn after you broke the  
gilded cage

The tempest welcomes you in the glory of its gallows

So in a window seat you sit, alone in your old age

Counting sheep and telling tales of fairies rescued by  
siren's shadows



**Long History with Food** by Barbara Lavalley Benton

## **When I'm ready (I'll fly us out of here)**

Taylor Racer

It's been years since I last heard my brother laugh. I had never really thought, growing up, that it would be a sound that I would cease to hear. I am envious that my mother and his father get to hear it, that they get to watch the way he squints his blue eyes and his crooked teeth peek through a smile. It's hard to describe something that you miss because you never thought you would miss it in the first place.

It changed as he got older. When we were younger, six and three years old, I don't ever remember him smiling. He was a happy kid, jovial and chubby and smart. I just wasn't privy to that side of him. However, as we got older, and I made him peanut butter with pop rocks for breakfast and played Halo 3 with him, his lips would curl, and soft giggles would tumble out almost accidentally.

It egged me on to a certain degree. I felt protective of him. We were two kids born in a world that often made the next day unpredictable and scary. There was a certain obligation that I felt. It was to ensure that he was always smiling when we were around one another.

As the love that I was beginning to feel formed into something fierce, the more he laughed. It would fill up the room with how loud it was. It was like he tried to take up as much space as he possibly could. Almost demanding that his presence be known. His shrieks would slur when we stayed up too long into the night, his body shaking as he leaned his head against my shoulder. Sometimes his laugh

would sound like a hiccup, when he got too excited and flustered from doing something bizarre like wearing a monkey mask and dancing against the walls.

Sometimes the laugh would hang bitterly in the air, short and sour and low. When our mom got worse and she would ask me to fill her glass one more time, his laugh would slice through the air. It was cold, and it would sting.

My favorite, however, were the ones that would get stuck in his chest. Those were the ones that took him by surprise, like he couldn't believe that he laughed. He would choke on them, doubling over and slapping his hands to his knees. They were always at the worst times and the best times, like the world had decided it needed something to break the atmosphere around us.

I used his laughter as an indication to know how he was feeling, selfishly so. He learned, way too early and way too young and way too harshly, that our emotions were so often a tool used against us. So, we found other ways to communicate. To a certain, twisted extent, I'm grateful. It was a language that became solely our own, like it belonged to only us in our secret little world.

His laughter was a sign I was doing my job as a big sister. That there was something I was finally doing right in the world. It was a sign that he was okay, his laughter echoing like a beacon in the dark. It is when I think of him, that I keep him there. He is safe, and he is happy.

## How To Be:

Jaden Ellison

Put your head up to the sky and dissolve. Allow this. Allow this how a river builds a body, how a sun structures a glare. You deserve a moment of peace.

/

He puts his hand to your cheek and you say *thank you*.

/

Forget a past and any idea of a future; one should not live with such restraints. A cataclysm falls to your feet—a violent, squirming moment. You mistake it for Sunday coffee, *I'll clean this up*. The most American thing is complicity.

/

You forget about her birthday, *oh shoot, her birthday!* You get up from his desk and dial the number, *6367-what-is-it-6367-9-no-not-9-no-1*.

/

He looks in your eyes and notices his own, *You're welcome*.

/

Your nose starts bleeding. Red trickles down onto your face and you stuff your nostrils with paper towels—wet, wet paper towels that make you feel as if you're congested, like snot is stuck in your head. It is not stuck in your head; you are bleeding.

/

Your sister is in town, talking all about that restaurant you both visited her last time here. You drive by and realize the building's been sold. You have to find a new place for steak. *There's just something about living here; it's sad—not to say you're sad or anything.* You are not offended.

/

Maybe there will be someone at the grocery store.

There is not.

/

Work is tiring, hands grow stiff from typing, legs wobbly from sitting, standing, breathing. Maybe there's success in such pain, an accomplishment.

/

He says he loves you.

/

Her party is loud. You arrive and they think you're her, jumping out from behind counters and couches, screaming *Surprise!* You do not smile. They apologize and laugh, raising their bottles to the ceiling, a *cheers* at any chance.

/

The mirror is dirty, but you never looked in it, anyway; the reflection is too plain. There is a self-importance in preserving a clean mirror.

\

Cooking is an escape of sorts; steam enters your soul and warms you up, the scents of a broiling strong and satisfying. Your hands nearly burn from the open oven, fingers hot in old, stained mittens. Perhaps this is where you belong, where you feel most alive, most free and new and excited. It is too late to do anything about this.

\

Your mother is calm but shaking. Silence is normal, rocking is normal. *Vanessa, can you get me some pudding?* Your name is not Vanessa. Your name is—*please, I'm so hungry?* You have to get pudding.

/

He texts you, *I can't make it, tonight.* You don't remember having made plans.

/

You used to watch television when you could afford cable, sitting on the loveseat for hours before your brother would walk through, jacket half-on/half-off, shouting *there's something wrong, there's something wrong!* There seems to be a pattern here. *There's something wrong,* and you'd place your hand on his back before he'd swat it away like you're some member of whatever group is out to get him. No one is out to get him. No one.

/



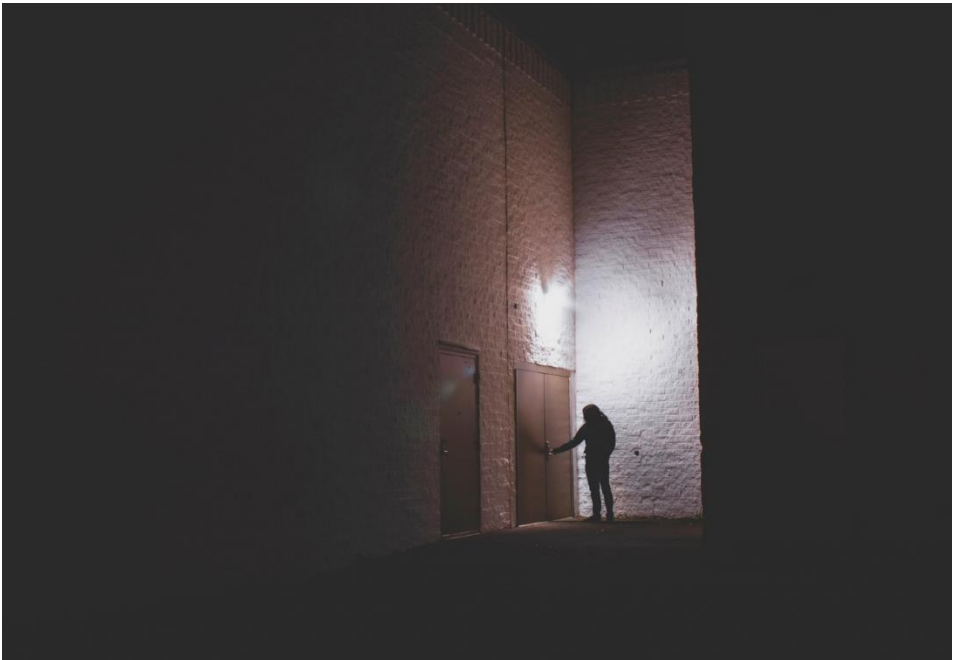
She arrives at the party, opening the door as everyone sits below brown tables, borrowing cups and sharing a hush. The room's almost dark, almost dark how everything is black, but a single glow, maybe from a flashlight or maybe from a phone, illuminates the wall. You're standing above everyone. It hurts to kneel. She walks in, seeing just the almost-black and you, your body, your silhouette. You panic. You don't know to hide or stand or wait or say *you're welcome* or *thank you*. You don't know if he's here, if your sister's here; you don't know if your brother called your mom just to remind her that he exists. You don't know if you called for the cake, *what-was-it-6367-I-can't-remember-6367-9-maybe-no-1-no-6367-no-1-no-1-no-1-no-Surprise!*

/

Put your head up to the sky and dissolve. Allow this. Allow this how a river allows a body, how a sun structures a glare. You deserve a moment of peace.

/

Your name is *Vanessa* now.



**Meanwhile** by Dawn Kushner

**Forget this Place**  
Ethan Nestor

Forgetting us -  
it's easy  
to be enraptured by all these  
pieces -  
of memories you want to keep  
with people you try to forget -  
it'd be intentional to leave,  
as it would seem, they've found things beyond me.  
and, in some ways - I can relate -  
and we love our mountains but intentions draw  
Far, as before the lungs  
set out their wings  
and break my ribs  
heartaches and eves to be  
pulled from green  
two letters away. ridden  
and grey.

I decided  
the fluid will build up  
like oils and their linseeds  
under shades of tulip trees  
so not to speak  
but break down  
the clerk with 3 kids and no man  
to help her,  
the dearest  
crippled widow -  
Have you met her,  
the man down

the street  
with his pipe  
Indian tobacco - indo gas smoked proud just outside  
old glass panes of older masonry  
and older floods of  
a younger river  
and 2 mortgages  
he's related to " " "  
a killer and a son, that's a Mitchell & Ness  
they said he got set up,  
so and so, right off of Carter G.  
in another barber's stool,  
like any Saturday,  
and their daughters will grow under  
shades of tulip trees  
with our elder's recipes - learning as much wrong  
as they did right -  
like how to fight  
or drown -  
drown into the hills -  
become swallowed by the hills -  
set roots into the hill face  
and debt your tree to river banks  
and get bought out by the typical  
debt attorney -  
or get a limb cut off by your third cousin - the surgeon  
and get anesthesia by your great uncle - Mike.  
The once-white picketing  
frayed, ajar  
leaning onto itchy bones &  
rusted storm pipes,  
where Hoffa jives  
off cardinal land,

cycling shambled pavement  
into funnels  
until the viaducts  
breach;

take it under.

the lines into grids  
then contours

perpetually ripping at  
our paths as they  
line up the matches in  
opium fields;

The sounds and  
raw knuckles full of grit  
that bleached a sense of urgency,

like preying birds before the cold  
it becomes too close for comfort.



**Nothing But Fun** by Barbara Lavalley Benton

## **Roses are Red...**

Chelsey Lilly

INT. HOTEL ROOM NIGHT

The room is undisturbed except for the bed. In the California King bed lays two individuals.

KATHRINE, a woman in her early forties, sits up and looks at the clock. It reads 7:00pm

Katherine wraps the sheet around her, grabs her purse of the chair and heads to the bathroom.

She looks in the mirror and frowns. She pulls out a comb and lipstick and begins to comb her hair and applying the lipstick.

DAMIEN, a man in his early fifties calls out from the bedroom.

DAMIEN

Where are you going, it's not  
even dark out?

KATHERINE

We fell asleep. You know Richard  
gets off at 8:00pm.

DAMIEN

So what? Come back to bed and I  
will make it worth your while.

Katherine ignores him and starts to get dressed.  
She puts on her dress slacks and a light camisole.

DAMIEN

Three months Kitty Kat, three months we have kept this up. When are you going to start listening to me.

Katherine places both hands on the counter and steadies herself. After a beat she walks back into the bedroom.

KATHERINE

Three months ago I was depressed and lonely. Richard was working late and never home. You walked into my office found me crying and took advantage of my sadness and like a snake made your move. One night...one goddamn night and now you are threatening to tell the office and my husband. What the fuck am I supposed to do, boss?

DAMIEN

Don't play the victim her Kitty Kat, I don't remember you saying no. You seemed to welcome the change. A



change from that suburban housewife life you lead. Grocery shopping, book club, soccer practice with the kids, the same thing on and on and on. I give you a break from that life. You play housewife and then once a month.....

Damien gets out of bed and wraps the blanket around his waist. He walks behind Kathrine

DAMIEN

You come  
back to me.

Damien begins to kiss Katherine on the neck. Katherine lets out a slight moan and then leans into his kiss. Suddenly her eyes open wide and she pulls away.

Damien smiles.

Kathrine rushes back into the bathroom and begins to button up her blouse.

DAMIEN

Deny it all you want Kitty Kat.  
You know I am right.

Katherine stops buttoning and hang her head because deep down she knows a part of him is right.

She moves into the bedroom, grabs her black high heels and slips them on. Damien is back in the bed looking at the room service menu.

DAMIEN

They have surf and turf. Are you sure you can't stay?

KATHERINE

It's my birthday. Did you know that?

Damien looks up surprised and smiles.

DAMIEN

Happy Birthday, Kitty Ka

Kathrine slams out the hotel door and leaves.

Damien laughs, rolls over and grabs his phone off the night stand. He begins an online search.

The light from the phone luminates his face.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY Katherine is standing at the elevator waiting to go to the lobby.

There is a young couple waiting beside her. They are holding hands and smiling. The elevator dings and the couple heads in.

YOUNG MAN holds the door.

YOUNG MAN

Ma'am, are you coming?

Katherine looks up and shakes her head.

KATHERINE

Umm no, .I'll get the next one.

CUT TO:

INT. KATHERINE'S CAR

Katherine is sitting in her 2020 Rav 4 in the hotel parking lot she sighs and turns over the engine.

She looks down and sees that she has a voicemail from RICHARD, her husband.

She clicks play and puts the car in reverse.

The voicemail begins to play over the car

speakers

#### RICHARD'S VOICE

Hey hun. I am on my way home. I know that you are working late tonight.. stinks that's it your birthday. I am gonna pick up takeout tai food from that restaurant you love and get the kids McDonalds. I love you baby. See you when you get home.

Kathrine puts the pulls out of her parking lot and starts driving home.

We follow her on her drive home as she flips the radio station over and over again

She pulls into her driveway, puts the car in park, grabs her purse and heads into to the front door. She notices all the lights are off.

She puts the key in the lock and opens the door and turns on the light.

#### LARGE GROUP

Surprise!!!

Kathrine looks around and balloons, streamers and all her friends and family.

JAMIE, her seven-year-old son breaks from the crowd and runs up to his mother.

JAMIE

Happy  
Birthday,  
Mommy!

Kathrine looks around shocked and then realizes she is at her surprise birthday party. She wraps her around around her son.

KATHERINE

What is this?

Richard walks to his wife and kisses her on the cheek.

RICHARD

Happy  
birthday,  
baby!

THOMAS, Kathrine's twelve year old son walks up.

THOMAS

Were you  
surprised,  
mom?

JAMIE

Daddy did it,  
mommy.

KATHERINE

Yes, very. Umm... hello everyone.  
Thank you for coming.. it's good to  
see everyone. I'm going to go  
change and.. come back to my  
party.

She chuckles softly but the laugh does not reach her eyes

Kathrine kisses Richard on the cheek and heads upstairs to  
the master bedroom.

She shuts the door behind her, crouches down while  
covering her mouth begins to sob. INT. KITCHEN

PAMELA, Richard's mother is standing the the kitchen  
with Richard.

PAMELA

It's a shame Katherine's father couldn't  
come. How is doing since MaryAnne's  
passing.

RICHARD

James and Katherine both took the death very hard. James said thanks for the invite, but no thanks. He sent Kathrine a check.

PAMELA  
Poor Thing.

Katherine enters the kitchen in jeans and t-shirt and a cardigan.

PAMELA  
There's my favorite daughter-in-law.  
How does forty five feel?

KATHERINE  
No different than  
forty four.

PAMELA  
Oh wait until you are my age soon  
you will be...

Pamela is interrupted by the doorbell

KATHERINE  
I'll get it!

Katherine rushes to the door eager to break away from the conversation. She opens the door and sees a DELIVERY BOY with flowers.

DELIVERY BOY  
Flowers for Katherine

Conner Katherine smiles and takes the  
bouquet of roses.

She hands the delivery boy a five dollar bill from her purse,  
shuts the door, smells the roses and back in the kitchen.

PAMELA

Those are beautiful. Who are  
they from?

KATHERINE

Probably aunt connie.

She takes off the plastic and begins to fill up and place the  
roses in a vase

RICHARD

I tried to invite her, but she said  
she would be too tired after her  
knitting class.

PAMELA

Looks like there is a stick and card Katherine  
takes the card of the stick and reads it.

Her eyes grow wild, she tears the card into a throws it in  
the trash.



She then looks up and realizes her husband and mother-in-law are staring at her.

KATHERINE

Ohh... just a bad prank from the girls at the office. Excuse me, I am going to check on everyone.

Katherine exits to the living room

PAMELA

My, that was weird, I wonder what brought that o-

Jamie enters the kitchen

JAMIE

Grandma, Thomas won't let me have a turn on the switch.

PAMELA

Ok, honey Grandma is coming

Jamie and Pamela exit to the family room

Richard stands there for a minute before he walks over to trash.

He pulls out the two pieces of the card and fits them together.

One the card he reads "Happy Birthday, Kitty Kat. Same time same place next month?"

BLACK OUT

## **to my grandmother's back porch**

Kelsey Mills

it is a feeling like no other,  
to watch a storm rolling in.  
to feel that hot, wet stickiness of static air  
cling to summer skin.  
flashing skies on the cusp of war  
with the cacophony of the cumulonimbus.  
sitting on my grandmother's back porch,  
wind chimes made of nails and skeleton keys,  
touched by cherub hands slick with dirt,  
sing out to herald the arrival  
of fat raindrops that drum against the garden stones.  
rustling leaves mimic the sound  
of the flitting pages  
of her old and well-worn bible.  
my mawmaw's hand surrounding mine,  
leathered and warm,  
as she talks of bowling angels.

“what about rain but no thunder?”

i my weight on the stiff and mildewed lawn furniture.

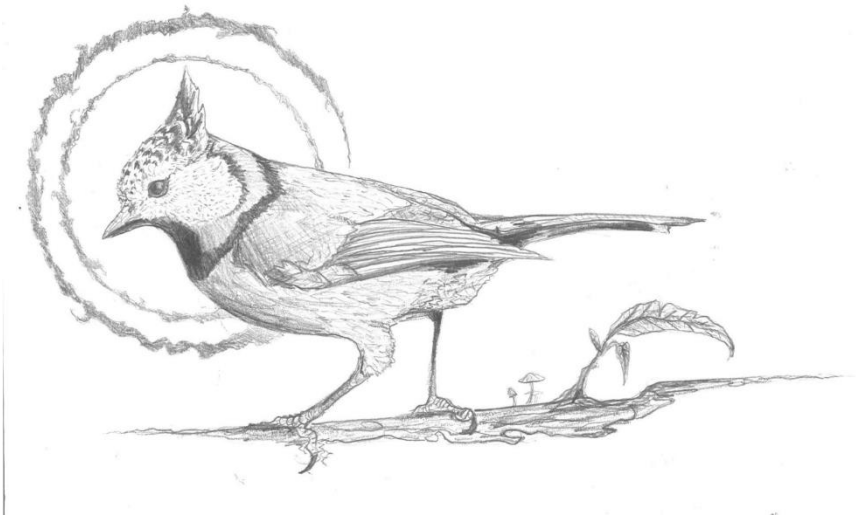
she looks away and pats my hand,

either absentmindedly or sympathetically,

“they’re god’s tears, baby.”

now i sit on that same porch alone, in a thunder-less rain,

thinking that i might finally understand what she meant.



**Little Bird** by Kayley Dillon

## **Dark Girl Self Esteem**

Ashley Moore

Darkness it's funny I'm scared of the dark so u would think  
I would understand the fear u have when I walk by yet I  
don't

Especially when my face says nothing but love and  
acceptance

Y does my darkness mean ugly broken and angry

Y don't I have the

chance to be beautiful period

I get cute for a dark girl I only like white girls and  
your just not my type

I guess it happens I don't know how someone could over  
look the soft plumpness of my lips

The curve of my hips the dimple on my cheek and the  
rarness of how I speak

But I'm just cute for a black girl a dark girl something that  
disappears when the lights go out oh that's original funny  
even the first time then it get discouraging

Put the smile back on your face your feelings r starting to  
show

No one wants to see that they want a comedian to laugh at

You've been made to hide everything from your heart to  
your face never your hands that's too

threatening that's how u end up on a dark corner looking at  
death

Black girls don't cry

We're too tough we been through to much for a comment  
from a so called friend that u will never be  
good enough for him to hurt u

Black girls cry all the time it's just sometimes the tears  
don't show through they hide from the disproving

and discouraging faces that loom  
Laugh it's what u do best hide your thoughts and all your  
secrets don't tell not yet they'll run with it  
Pull them in with your charming personality let them need  
u before you throw the towel in make them want to know  
but never show what lies beneath the smile the perfectly  
cracked mirror that guided them to you distracted then from  
the tar that is your skin just long enough to begin the sin  
that is being with a  
dark skin  
Don't forget no matter how rich your chocolate is it will  
never be enough to be chosen  
Tossed around by different men just for a taste " I've never  
tried black women" no offense  
So here we go down this road another man's secret another  
man's guilty pleasure never the main chick  
that's reserved for the light skin remember the girl with the  
curls that say just add water never needing that extra curl  
former and gel but it's ok because he risked it for me right  
until she finds out them guess  
who's out of sight oh well we should have known over one  
man is under another one this one  
doesn't  
talk he likes to use his fists practices boxing on your face  
and tells u that u did this but once again u don't  
get to be sad u chose him or did the sadness in your eyes  
the walk that said u believed you will believe  
all his lies when he said he wouldn't do it again whatever it  
was u pulled him in and your on the floor  
bleeding from your once beautiful dark skin but then again  
u were only beautiful for a black girl left with your dark  
skin

## CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

**Evan Abshire** is an aspiring artist based in Huntington, West Virginia. He is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Marshall University, and plans on getting a master's degree in mathematics from Marshall after he graduates. He enjoys painting recreationally when he has the time to do so. Ultimately, he wants his work to exhibit self-discipline and respect for the rich history of the craft.

**Barbara Lavalley Benton** is an emerging artist based in Huntington, West Virginia. She is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in art from Marshall University. Some of her previous works have been published notably in Etcetera.

**Gabrielle Casey** is a sophomore psychology student at Marshall University, with a minor in creative writing. She enjoys exploring themes of mental illness, nature, and her life experiences in her writing. When not in Huntington for school, she resides in Princeton, West Virginia.

**Alexis Cavender**, commonly known as Lexi to her family and peers, is a senior at Marshall University, and she graduates in the spring of 2022. Currently, she is in the Regents' Bachelor of Arts Program with an English minor. Her hometown is in Maysel, WV, which is just a two-hour drive from this campus. It's her first-time writing poetry.

**Ashley Cline** is a senior at Marshall University. She is majoring in General English and minoring in Creative Writing. She is an emerging writer based in Hurricane,



West Virginia. After graduating she hopes to publish her first novel and adopt at least 3 cats.

**Kayley Dillon** is a Junior at Marshall University. She is working towards her BFA in Visual Arts with an emphasis in ceramics. After Graduating, she hopes to open her own studio. She lives in Milton WV.

**Jaden Ellison** is a writer based in Huntington, WV. Awarded for both poetry and flash fiction, their work often explores queer identities in Appalachia, exploring gender, religion, sexuality, and more. They are currently a student at Marshall University, studying Creative Writing and Philosophy.

**Victoria Ferimer** is a psychology major at Marshall University, but has a passion for art. While pursuing her dream of getting her Psy.D. she says she will always have art by her side to comfort her through tough times.

**Julianna Geyer** is soon to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree with a minor in psychology and will attend Edinboro University next semester to get her master's in art therapy.

**Abigail Grim** is a current student at Marshall University majoring in Creative Writing. She hopes to obtain an MFA upon completing a Bachelor of Arts degree. Abigail currently resides in Huntington, West Virginia with her dog Elma.

**Dawn Kushner**, a Charleston, West Virginia native, is currently a junior at Marshall University. She is working towards a BFA with an emphasis in photography but enjoys

working with various techniques and media. Presently, Dawn is researching public perception versus self-reflection and how that affects our self-identity. She resides in Huntington, West Virginia, with her cat, Vagabond.

**Chelsey Lilly** is a resident of Hurricane, WV and recent Theatre BA graduate from Marshall University.

**Eliza Manning** is an aspiring writer from West Virginia. She is a junior at Marshall University, majoring in creative writing with a fiction focus while also minoring in film studies, theater, and German. After graduating, she wishes to move out of state to pursue a screenwriting career. She would like to thank her family, friends, and cats for always supporting her and her writing endeavors.

**Sid (Sidney) McCoy** is a sophomore at Marshall University. She is currently majoring in English. After graduating from *Marshall University*, she hopes to publish a children's book [that focuses on self-expression]. Currently she resides in Huntington, West Virginia with her rescue cats and three dogs. She is an artisan for Tamarack and a member of the BAC (Beckley Art Center).

**Kelsey Mills** is a native of Huntington, West Virginia, and has been an avid photographer for 7 years. She is a senior in the Natural Resource and Recreation Management undergraduate program at Marshall University. Her photography has previously been published in the Same Faces Collective Literary Magazine and has been awarded at state and local competitions.

**Ashley Moore** a psychology and communications major here at Marshall and these were thoughts I had growing up toward my own complexion. They aren't the prettiest thoughts, but they were reoccurring in my life one way or another and I want someone who may read it and feel the same way to know that they aren't alone in it. A previous work was my poem Her Poetry that I sent to the scholastics art and writing competition my senior year in high school. I got a silver key and I have always loved to write and I want someone to hear something I have to say.

**Ethan Nestor** is a poet pursuing his undergrad at Marshall University. He has had work in photography published in Et Cetera in years prior.

**Taylor Racer** is an emerging writer currently studying at Marshall University. She is a senior pursuing an undergraduate degree in secondary English education, with a minor in creative writing. After graduation, Taylor plans to continue with her higher education by pursuing a degree in English as a second language. She is based in Hurricane, West Virginia where she lives with her dog Jolene.

**Heather Ratcliff** is an emerging writer based in Huntington, West Virginia. She is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in Creative Writing and Literary Studies at Marshall University.

**Trinity Rollins** is a freshman at Marshall University and is majoring in Video Production. After graduating, she hopes to become a creative director and producer, helping others bring their creative visions to life through video and other

media. She is originally from Fairmont, WV, but currently lives on campus at Marshall.

**Gayla Van Horn** is a native of Huntington, West Virginia. A returning student to Marshall University, she is currently pursuing a double major in English and Secondary English Education. This is her first submission for publication.

**Baylee Weaver** is a Biomedical Engineering student in her Junior year at Marshall University. She is from Danville, West Virginia. While her studies are very practical, her passion is creative writing. Baylee's greatest muse is her pet cat, Tubby.

**Amy Welch** is an aspiring author from Charleston, West Virginia. She is 20 years old, a junior English major at Marshall working on obtaining her bachelor's degree in English with a minor in Professional Writing. She hopes to pursue a writing career and professorship in English after graduating, and dreams of becoming an author one day. In the meantime, she enjoys freewriting, reading romance novels, and drinking too much coffee.

**Ethan Willis** is an art student based in Huntington, West Virginia, as well as Bridgeport West Virginia. They are currently pursuing a Painting Degree, as well as a minor in history at Marshall University. Although their major is in painting, they do a lot of small and large work in traditional pen on paper as well as graphite on paper.

**Katlyn Worstell** is a junior at Marshall University with a major in English. She is originally from South Charleston, West Virginia. She soon hopes to become a creative writer,

travel the world and pursue her dreams with her cat,  
Ophelia.

## **POETRY**

Bailey Weaver, Alexis Cavender, Gayla Flora, Eliza Manning, Ashley Cline, Amy Welch, Ethan Nestor, Kelsey Mills, Ashley Moore

## **CREATIVE NONFICTION**

Katlyn Worstell, Gabrielle Casey, Taylor Racer

## **FICTION**

Gabrielle Casey, Heather Ratcliff, Jaden Ellison

## **DRAMA**

Chelsey Lilly

## **ART**

Kelsey Mills, Trinity Rollins, Sidney McCoy, Ethan Willis, Julianna Geyer, Evan Abshire, Victoria Ferimer, Barbara Lavalley Benton, Dawn Kushner, Kayley Dillon

## **HYBRID**

Abigail Grim, Trinity Rollins