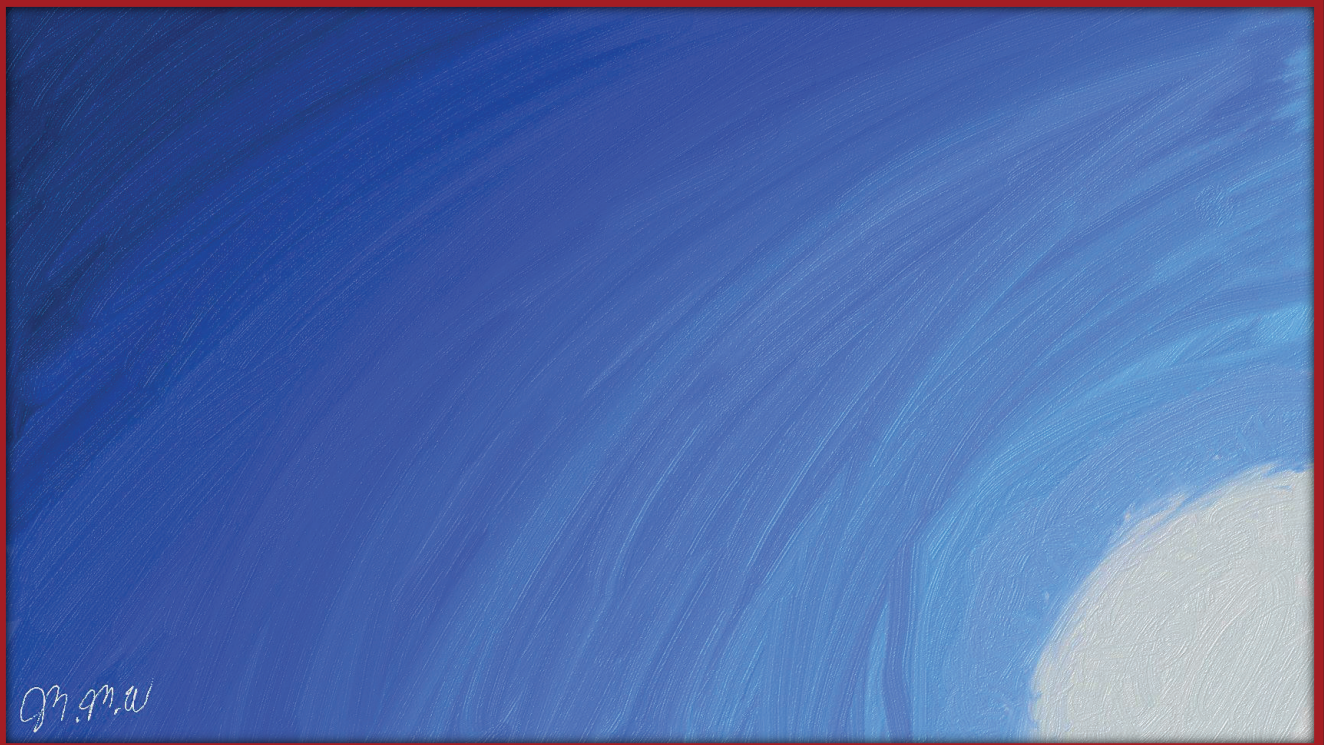


THE RED HAWK REVIEW

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Works of poetry, prose, and visual art from Gateway's best and brightest writers, painters and graphic designers.



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*Cover art is "Moonglow" by Matthew Wilson

PROSE

Mr. Rockwood
by Christian Calderon

The journalist trotted away from his rented Mustang as the parking meter kept blinking, “*expired.*” Sweaty, with his heart pounding, he tipped over and fell. His right shoe hit a sidewalk hole. McClain stared at the viscous green matter on it as he speedily picked up a notebook, a pen, and a several quarters. Drops of effervescent green matter were left on the sidewalk. Insensitive to his right foot’s pain, he crossed the street. At a coffee shop, McClain stopped and fixed his hair and shirt. He walked in, the aroma of coffee flowing throughout the cafe. Its beans were burned. Its smell was all over. They were only a few customers inside. McClain noticed an old man who sat alone. He was observing the traffic through the café’s windows. McClain approached the table. He put on a calm face, but his heart was pulsating wildly. The old man without even looking at him, overturned a little package of sugar between his fingers and exclaimed, “Traffic! It is man’s synchronization. Isn’t it? Mr. ... sorry, what was your name? I forgot to write down your name.”

“Oliver McClain.”

The old man, now facing McClain, identified himself, “Pleased to meet you, McClain. John Delevan.”

“You were Mr. Rockwood’s *best* friend?” The journalist asked and sat. That name, Rockwood, attracted the room’s attention towards him.

“Rockwood? Indeed I was.”

He caught on something in his throat and interrupted himself again. He picked up several napkins and rubbed his nose repeatedly. Before folding the napkins, he observed the jelly-like dark green matter. “Ew! Oh boy, my age! It’s like having it all at once.”

“Having all what?” McClain asked.

“What do you mean by what? Diseases, Sicknesses, maladies, my boy. What was your name again?”

“McClain,” McClain, a journalist for *New York World*, politely answered as he held the menu and asked, “What do you recommend?”

The old man eagerly scanned the extensive list of pastries with his greedy pupils.

“Ha! Look, Raspberry Broolee.”

“Have you tried Raspberry *Brûlée* before?” McClain asked, pronouncing the French very slowly.

“Of course not, but it looks good in the pictures.”

“Well, it tastes good, too,” the journalist answered, raising his eyebrows. He began tapping his fingers on the wooden table. His right leg was shaking underneath. He kept glancing at his notebook, hoping to add something useful. Not a single word written. It was full of little drawings. Each picture represented a word, and if arranged in certain order, formed complete sentences, like a rebus puzzle.

Mr. McClain’s 23 years of journalism had taught him an elemental lesson: a secret is power that fades away as soon as it’s shared. Wise journalists drop their bombs at the right moment. On an empty wall in his living room, he proudly hung an original front page of *The Washington Post*’s Watergate expose. When he would walk out of his house, he would stop and glance at the Woodward and Bernstein picture. He had been promising himself for so long, “I’ll drop my own bomb someday.”

Mr. Delevan deliberately waited for his espresso to be cold. He sipped it. He gargled it in his throat before swallowing.

“Rockwood was a simple guy. We drove a lot, for fun and work. For God’s sake, he really talked weird sometimes. He stared at the clouds through the windshield. He called them, ‘cotton candy.’ That heaven was ‘holding its sugary despair.’ He did it all the time when we were kids. In high school, girls loved it. He used it to his advantage.”

The old man laughed, but paused quickly. He took another sip of espresso, again. He rinsed his mouth with it and then swallowed it.

“He was a good fellow. I miss him ... they were just heavy white clouds. If you ask me, they looked like disturbing Christmas ornaments—hanging. I was always the one who drove. It gave him the chance to run his mouth. He’d say, ‘The earth is rotating at a speed of 1,037 miles per hour. It’s orbiting around the sun at about 66,666 miles per hour, and also moving in an orbit around the Milky Way galaxy at 420,000 miles per hour.’ It was odd! It was odd hearing all this as we drove 70 miles per hour on the highway. We would just go for drives the whole time we knew each other. The last time we drove to Chicago. It was three days before I noticed he was gone.”

McClain glanced at him. “I heard you say he was a simple man?”

“Did I say that? Well, I guess not, right? I meant he was a working man. I knew him very well. He was living in the old green house by the east shore of the lake. That’s it. That’s all he possessed.”

McClain had visited the house two days before he met Delevan. Classic 1800s Victorian architecture. He parked in front. He took his sweaty hands from the steering wheel. He opened the glove compartment and middle console and pulled everything from them. He couldn’t find what he was looking for. Irritated, he smashed his sunglasses against the windshield. When he reached into his pocket for a cigarette, he found it—a photograph. “Here it is!” he shouted as he IDed the house, and then walked around it. He climbed onto the front porch. The house had huge windows. It had an open backyard. As McClain kept walking around the building several times, a gelid breeze froze his eyes. He looked like a beast ready to attack its prey. He looked at the fissures in the rotten wooden siding. Wildflowers were sprouting from them. For a moment, the wood seemed like skin erupting with acne. Instead of pus, it erupted weeds. They were climbing the house. For McClain, these weeds seemed like an octopus’s tentacles: attaching all over the house. The weeds were nearly crushing the house.

McClain’s nose started itching, a tick he felt when he sensed news. He went back pulled a crowbar from his Mustang. Even the doors and windows were covered with thick plywood. McClain’s boots, nervously, knocked the sidewalk driveway. As he walked in, he stroked, rhythmically, gently, the crowbar in his left hand. He paused in the middle. He tasted his own sweat that his forehead drooped. Then he held tight his crowbar and swung—*crack!* The wall sounded and broke like an eggshell. McClain was astonished as he realized that the eight by four plywood had already decomposed.

A few hours before invading Rockwood’s home, he learned that, 20 years ago, an anonymous letter had ended up in the hands of the town’s district attorney. Since then, a series of elected officials had ordered the house to be sealed. All of them had used the same excuse: to protect it from squatters. All of them had carefully specified that, every 90 days, new plywood would be replaced to block access to the house.

The journalist pulled each layer of wood off like he was peeling a banana. He thought that the faster corrosion of the wood could be caused by the lake, but it was much more damaged than he imagined. How could that be?

Inside, it was dark, icy, and wet. He stood in slippery green matter. The plants accordioned out like earthworms. The house stunk. A sea aroma conquered it. He turned on his flashlight and realized that the wormlike plants were seaweed. There were small moss

clusters all over the floor. The house was overrun by objects of different shapes, sizes, and uses. All were submerged in green moisture. An unctuous liquid impacted his chest. Pointing his flashlight everywhere, he noticed that the trembling plants crawled the walls from the inside, too. Hanging from the ceiling lamps, they leaked an oily substance that fell slowly. Each drop stretched like melted cheese. The sticky matter descended on to his body, terrifying him.

Shaking off the memory, McClain blinked at Delevan.

“Are you okay?” The old man asked.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Delevan, please proceed. You said that you felt odd when you drove with him.”

“Yeah, yeah, I did say that, but it was five minutes ago ... where have you been?”

“Excuse my distraction.”

“It doesn’t matter much to me. I am not the one who flew all the way here to find the whereabouts of a ghost.”

“Ghost? Did they find a body?”

“Twenty years. I knew Rockwood well. Enough to tell you that he couldn’t survive away from his town. Some folks belong where they belong. Pulling them out is like pulling a fish out of the river. That’s what I’m talking about.” The old man paused, and then emphatically stated, “Rockwood *never* left Melville.”

McClain suddenly leaned forward intending to point at the old man, but instead tipped over his water glass—wetting his pants.

“I need to take a piss. My age, I’m telling you.”

“Wait!”

“I don’t want to end up like you. I will be right back.”

Alone at the table, McClain repeated the old man’s words in his mind. *Some folks belong where they belong. Pulling them out is like pulling a fish out of the river.* He drew a lightbulb on his notebook as he remembered how he felt captivated by a radiant blue light coming from Rockwood’s basement.

It was 80 degrees outside, but the journalist was in a cold sweat. As he descended the stairs, a sudden hypothermia nipped at his skin. With each step down, he felt more and more like a sinking ship. It was hard to breathe down there. The air pressure felt so strong that it compressed his lungs. Approaching the bottom, the journalist finally saw the bright blue lights. There, lying at the center of a wet mossy surface, a huge transparent rock shone. McClain stood, paralyzed. On his chest, he felt a floorless hole. Built into the basement’s walls were shelves, all overcome by green wet matter, too. They held small examples of the same kind of polished and smoothed rocks as the one that lay on the slab. The basement was full of unique, smaller pieces of sea glass in a variety of colors and shapes. They radiated lights that imitated the Aurora Borealis.

The sea rocks’ illuminations escaped from the envelopment of its green viscosity. It reminded McClain of one large piece of misplaced coral. Being in that basement was like being inside of a huge fishbowl. It was a fishbowl from where the wet weeds emanated. As they reached out, they pulled the entire house into its center. But McClain couldn’t understand exactly why.

McClain drew an electric vacuum on his notebook.

As Delevan returned to the table, slowly, supporting himself by the walls, the journalist closed his notebook. Delevan had not even sat down on his chair when McClain asked, abruptly.

“Your friend . . . he was a collector. Wasn’t he?”

Delevan stopped biting his dessert and intently stared into the reporter’s eyes, “Yes, he was. You’re asking me a question to which you already know the answer. Like this one: trespassing at a crime scene is against the law. It’s a serious thing nationwide, right?”

“Mr. Delevan, I know what I did. Melville’s police department and the district attorney have so vehemently denied access to Mr. Rockwood’s home. Why?”

“We are reserved people. Is it so hard to respect that?”

“Privacy is one thing, but we’re talking about a human being that is no longer here. Someone knows what happened. No man’s memory can be just sucked from the earth!”

“Don’t raise your voice at me. You squeeze your way into my friend’s house like a weasel—and then you have the audacity to use that tone with me?” The old man shouted, stamping his cane on the floor.

“I was searching for clues!” McClain shouted also. Everyone in the cafe shifted to see what the noise was about. Recomposing himself, McClain continued, “People always leave traces. You saw the very last trace of Rockwood—Rockwood, who you called your friend. If he was your friend, let’s jog your memory. Just say what you know, and let me do the rest.”

Delevan shook his head. “Ah, the media . . . masters of persuasion.”

Mr. Delevan told him the story—most of it. He told everything he knew for sure. He saw McClain’s obsession growing and wanted to be a Good Samaritan. He thought that describing the tragedy might prevent another one.

McClain left his business card on the table. He heard a whispered, “Good luck,” as he crossed to the café’s exit. He clicked his lighter, lit a smoke, and inhaled. He approached his Mustang. Several tickets were pressed by the wiper. “Whatever.” He grabbed it. He jumped in the car and drove away—*fast*.

Finally, in his motel, he laid his notes on a nightstand. His eyes were fixed on a sentence’s picture: a bottle of beer, a lightbulb, and a vacuum cleaner. As he reviewed over and over his drawings, he felt the same sensation as when he was awakened a year ago in an emergency room. Sixteen minutes of his existence taken away. He was astonished with disorientation.

McClain picked up his notebook from the nightstand. He recalled what the old man had said. Delevan told McClain that Rockwood was a collector of antique objects. Rockwood hoped to profit from his finds, so he sought out rummage sales, open houses, and auctions. He searched demolished houses like an oceanic biologist who searched for bioluminescence life. Rockwood was spending hours, even entire nights online, too. “Online!” McClain thought as he walked uneasily to open all the room’s windows. He almost fell on the grimy carpet. He sat down, turned on his laptop. “Mr. Google talks, always.” His fingers attacked the keyboard. He clicked, lit a cigarette. As his smoky exhalations enveloped the screen, he contemplated, slowly, an antique Barbie doll. It was packaged in its original box. “Three grand! Here—here’s a penny,” he said silently as he remembered Delevan’s recounts. “At least in the beginning, he was after the big score, but at some point, Rockwood started giving his objects a mystified treatment. This doll, Rockwood would hold it high in his hands, and said: ‘It represents the lived life of a family. It resembles them because a moment was still sustained in this toy. Christmas or birthday celebrations, you name it. They are not dead. A *flash* moment is preserved in this doll. My objects possess the unseen original owners’ touch. They are their ghostly fingerprints. I can feel their souls. Here, in this basement, their history is safeguarded.’”

McClain clicked another cigarette, “Yeah, Rockwood really talked weird sometimes. No kidding.”

McClain, contemplating the glass bottle that he drew in his notes, thought about Rockwood’s focus on sea rocks. They had become a new obsession for Rockwood.

McClain, still confused, walked to the tiny bathroom. He turned on the faucet and let the warm water run. Rapidly, it filled the washbowl. His face was translucent in it. He stared through himself. He tried fishing for a bit of reality. As he held the water in his hands, he remembered that he had kept an example of a sea rock in his pants pocket. He had stolen it right from Rockwood’s basement. As he extracted it, he mentally rewrote the second symbol of his sentence—lightbulb. Submerging the phosphorescent glass into the deepest of the washbowl, he relived the sensations from Rockwood’s basement.

He felt again like a fish swimming in a fishbowl, but now the fishbowl was perpetually growing. He panicked that its thick glass would never let him cross over to the dry, morphed world. His anxiety increased when he heard a drowning voice that repeated Delevan’s declaration. *Some folks belong where they belong. Pulling them out is like pulling a fish out of the river.* He heard it over and over as if this voice were a waterfall, falling from the faucet. He abruptly turned the faucet off. McClain walked out of the tiny bathroom and sat on the bed.

He crossed the limits. The limit was his realization. “I never left Melville,” the drowning voice spoke into McClain’s mind. The sea rocks of Melville’s lake shore possess an undiscovered capability. They transform anyone who become fixated with them. The victim will be mutated into a sea rock, the same way the lake transforms broken glass.

The lake assimilates outside components. First, it dragged things in. Its large and undulating arms pulled you slowly, down, and down. It tows you gently, pulling you into its soft obscurity. McClain now remembered his black shoes, one footstep, two footsteps, three footsteps, and further down into Rockwood’s basement. The conversation in the coffee shop, the old man’s babbling lips: once the lake lays you there in its depths of semifluid matter, it touches you. At its bottom, its mouth digests everything. There, the lake mutates its alien intruders. It rolls them with wind and sand, up and down, up and down. At its dark bottom, it rubs them gently as the spring wind cradles a feather. It polishes them with its butter fingers.

“An obsession is like having a rock in the mind. Broken glass altered into sea rocks, and sea rocks transformed him—that’s it,” the journalist concluded. There it was in the center of that basement, McClain realized, the concrete realization of one human being on earth. It was his metamorphosed success. Thereafter, McClain stopped chasing his own concern.

“There, don’t move, yes, fragile winds. Stay right on it” McClain whispers as he adjusts his camera’s lenses. “Beautiful! I got you now ... flash!” The nervous butterfly flew away as he gazed at her going up, up, and up into the cotton candy clouds. “I’m flying with you,” he said it loudly.

One drizzly morning in Manhattan, a garbage man became perplexed as he read the date of an old framed newspaper, dated June 17, 1972, the release of the Watergate scandal. The garbage man thought to himself that is an odd thing to have hung on a wall.

Imaginación como Escapatoria

by Arely Juarez

La imaginación es algo que a muchos los libera de sus problemas. Es la única escapatoria para algunos y para otros es una zona de paz y tranquilidad. Para Ofelia, la magia y la imaginación eran la única escapatoria para su soledad, ansiedad, y desesperación. Aunque tenía a su madre, la niña se sentía sola, sentía que nadie la entendía, y ya no tenía en quien confiar. Cuando descubre el laberinto del fauno su vida cambia un poco. Aunque aún tenía problemas y se sentía sola, el laberinto, el fauno, y las hadas eran su escapatoria. Cuando usaba su imaginación sentía que tenía un propósito aunque sus aventuras no eran las más seguras le daban a su vida un poco de sentido.

Ofelia perdió a su padre, y su madre estaba embarazada de un capitán que no era muy agradable. Cuando se mudaron Ofelia y su madre a casa del capitán la vida de Ofelia se complicó más. Lo único que le dio un poco de ánimo fue una hada que encontró en el camino a su nuevo hogar. Ofelia era una niña llena de inocencia a la cual le encantaba leer historias mágicas. El dolor que le causó saber que tendría que llamar padre a alguien desconocido la intimidaba aún más dejándola sintiendo atada y sin poder hacer nada. Aunque ella le rogaba a su madre que no se fueran con el capitán la madre creía que era lo mejor, pero no miraba más allá de la simple inocencia de su hija. Una vez llegando a su nuevo hogar, Ofelia rápidamente entiende que no es agradable ni muy bienvenida por su nuevo padre. Esto aumenta el sufrimiento de Ofelia y la acerca aún más a depender de sus creencias en las hadas.

Mientras Ofelia continúa siendo invadida por la soledad, el miedo, y la ansiedad, trata de encontrar un refugio donde se pueda sentir segura. Durante una caminata que da por el terreno del capitán encuentra un viejo laberinto que había sido abandonado ya hace varios años. Su curiosidad la lleva por un paseo dentro del laberinto donde conoce a un fauno. Las palabras del fauno hacia Ofelia son que ella era la princesa Moana e inmortal, pero tenía que pasar algunas pruebas antes que hubiera luna llena para así morar con su padre en el reino y para nunca morir como los humanos. Ofelia aceptó la oferta del fauno y emprendió una nueva aventura. Desde meterse a un árbol y matar al sapo que detenía el crecimiento del árbol hasta usar una poción mágica que puso debajo de la cama de su madre enferma, Ofelia hallaba consuelo en sus aventuras. Aunque Ofelia trato de seguir todos los mandatos del fauno cuando fallo por comerse un par de uvas se siente decepcionada una vez más, pero el fauno decide darle una segunda oportunidad. Su última prueba fue entregar a su hermano, lo cual nego y prefirió entregarse ella misma. Este último acto demostró su valentía e inocencia.

De la misma forma que Ofelia dependía de su imaginación para encontrar consuelo, yo cuando era pequeña igualmente usé mi imaginación. Cuando yo tenía la edad de dos años, mis padres se mudaron a los Estados Unidos dejándome a cargo de mi abuela. Yo crecí sin ver a mis padres por casi seis años. Cuando iba con mi abuela al pueblo yo caminaba por el terreno imaginándome como sería el día que volviera a ver a mis padres. En el pueblo no tenía ni familiares ni amigos de mi edad así que solo podía jugar con los animales o en esos tiempos con mis amigos los duendecillos, en los que yo creía. Ya que varios de mis compañeros de escuela se burlaban de mí, especialmente en fechas festivas donde los padres asistían a celebraciones escolares, porque nunca conocieron a mis padres, los que me consolaban eran los duendecillos. Yo sentía que los únicos que me entendían eran ellos porque no se burlaban de mí. Según mi imaginación ellos me decían que todo estaría bien y que algún día me reuniría con mis padres y seríamos muy felices. En un mundo donde yo a veces me sentía muy sola y sin alguien que me comprendiera, ir al pueblo en el campo donde había varios árboles, animales, y donde vivían mis amigos los duendecillos era mi

lugar de escapatoria. Era el lugar donde podía correr, gritar, reír, llorar, y desahogarme mientras sentía que alguien me entendía y no se burlaban de mi.

En momentos de dificultad, soledad, desesperación, o inseguridad muchos acuden a la imaginación como escapatoria. Con la imaginación se puede crear un mundo donde todo es mejor. Se hace la idea de un mundo donde no hay problemas, donde se puede sentir tranquilidad y seguridad. A base de la imaginación se encuentra alivio de los problemas y al mismo tiempo se encuentran fuerzas para seguir adelante. Ofelia con su imaginación llegó hasta la muerte, pero hasta su último aliento creyó en su imaginación y pudo descansar en paz. Después de que fallece podemos ver que Ofelia mora en un lindo castillo con sus padres, un castillo donde era la princesa y ya no sufriría más. En mi caso, mi imaginación me dio las fuerzas para poder enfrentar a mis compañeros y a la misma vez la soledad y el vacío que sentía. Por medio de la imaginación pude llegar hasta el día que volví a ver a mis padres. Así que, yo creo que al igual que para mi y Ofelia, para otras personas el uso de la imaginación es el mejor método de escapatoria.



“Harley” by Robb Smith

Treasured Pieces of Life

by Molly Mowery

Popping the truck into reverse and slowly backing up, the anticipation of what's to come builds up inside of her. Her nerves are on fire with excitement. Everything else in the world cannot compete with the utter bliss of being out there. She continues to back up the truck, hearing him telling her to stop. She throws the truck into park and hops out. Looking pass everything she sees him standing there. That smile on his face, that pure joy that he also feels when they are out there. The sun shimmers off the lake as they both unhitch the boat.

She hops into the boat, "When did you perfect backing up my truck?" he said to her as she begins lowering the motor into the water.

"I don't know, just so excited to go out, didn't even think about how well I was doing." She smiles back at him and starts to rev the engine. She sits down and begins to back the boat off the trailer, while he runs to the truck and pulls out to go park.

The sunlight shimmers off the lake creating a mosaic piece of art, she tries to snap a picture with her phone, but the quality of her shitty camera doesn't do justice for the beauty she is witnessing first hand. Unconcerned, she pops the phone back in her pocket and drives closer to the pier so he can hop in.

"Can I drive?" he says to her, as if he would let her be the one to drive for the first day of fishing season. She laughs, shrugs her shoulders and scoots over to the other seat.

"Think we will get a bite?" she asked him as he was pulling past the ravine into the alluring lake in front of them.

With a smirk, he looks at her, "Who cares, just as long as we are out here. I've missed the lake so much."

He drives the boat into deeper water and they begin to gain speed. The beauty and peacefulness of the lake has always drawn her in... there's just something about its exquisiteness that makes her forget everything else going on in her life; good or bad. In that moment, her body relaxes, her mind goes to a place where it's nothing but a blank slate. Feeling the breeze brush her hair back, a slight splash of water grazes her cheek, she closes her eyes and holds on to his leg. He always goes way too fast on the lake, but the adrenaline rush is addicting.

They approach one of their spots on the lake. There are three spots they go to each time they go on the water. It's their routine, whether they catch anything or not. She hops up to the front of the boat lowering the trolling motor into the water. Taking her time, not to disturb the fish below. He turns the boat off and she can feel his eyes on her. Pretending not to notice she sits up and takes off her hoodie. Exposing her pale shoulders to the warmth of the sun, craving her first tan of the year. She places her foot on the pedal and starts the trolling motor; the boat slowly moves through the water.

He pulls the fishing rods out of the boat buckle and starts to attach his new lures he purchased the day before. She turns off the trolling motor, so that they can drift right where they are. The water is still, so they won't move too far. Excited she grabs her rod and attaches one of the jigs he bought her for Christmas. It's almost like a competition who can get their lure in the water first. They each have their own side of the boat they cast off of, she darts over and casts her lure into the water. The lake is so silent she hears it splash into the water. The feeling of casting is intoxicating to her.

In that moment, she realizes that nothing will ever replace the euphoria of being on the lake; fishing or not. Everything bad that could ever happen to her, can be silenced by the lake. A temporary solution to mute the sadness and anger that she has ever felt.

“I never want to leave.” She says as she’s reeling in her line. “I want to buy a house on the lake, just so I can spend all my free time here.”

“If you lived on the lake, you wouldn’t enjoy it as much.” He claims as he casts another line into the water.

“I don’t think you realize what the water does to me. It’s intoxicating, its euphoria. I will buy a house by the lake with or without you.” She said as she began to laugh, as if it were even possible to purchase a home on the lake with her salary.

She reels in, pops the lure off and puts a hook on. It’s time to crack open a beer and let the worm do its thing. After casting her line back into the water, she sits down, props her feet up on the edge of the boat. “This is heaven on earth.” She said, looking back at him.

Sitting on the lake listening to the birds fly over, the slight splash of water as the wind picks up, the sweetest silence one could ever experience. Hours pass as they both are just there, in the moment embracing nature at its most peaceful state. Suddenly she hears the engine rev again, realizing she had fallen asleep and it was dark out. Where had the time gone.

Arriving back at the pier is almost heartbreaking to her. She slowly climbs out of the boat and mopes over to the truck, already planning her next visit to the lake. It takes them twice as long to load the boat, dreading every moment of it. “I’ll be back.” she whispers to the lake, as if it were her closest friend she’s ever had.

Crossroads

by Kathleen Leitzke

There is a place where the peaceful fields open to the occasional commuter, and seem to murmur their warnings of caution in the breeze. Every day I travel a quiet rural road that leads me to this place. And as I pass through, my mind is disconcerted by its beauty and tranquility for in the space of a quick breath it becomes a place of agony and chaos. In that moment, I will be a participant working to gain some semblance of calm and control which is not to be until nature says it is so. This means pain, suffering and maybe even a life lost prior to the quiet and calm that ensues. Nature and I have become companions on the journey, and I have accepted her dance of life although we clash from time to time. Since 1994 I have fought nature in the emergency medical services and have made it my life's commitment to try to control her when she rears her ugliness. Today will be no exception.

It has been hard to focus on laboring this beautiful early summer day but alas, I am free to enjoy what is left of the evening. My destination takes me down a two-lane country road that leaves me alone to savor its serene two miles as I drive along with the windows down and the sunroof open. The skies are clear except for the occasional wisp of a cloud with a warm breeze rustling through my hair. The road is nestled between farm fields that seem to run on for eternity in all their splendor...my cares and worries flow away with them. I arrive at a familiar stop sign where the traffic to my right and left does not stop. There is a sprawling working farm all washed in white to my right and across the road from that is an old one room schoolhouse. The corners to my left are met by emerald fields that seem to meet the horizon. As I peer both ways to ensure my path is clear, I take notice of the way the sun's rays play on the lush green fields and the summer breeze making them roll out like gentle waves in the ocean. There is this sense of solace that overcomes me.

Moments later, I arrive at home as the sun sets. My heart is heavy as I know all too well the absurdity of how sudden the beautiful peace-filled fields can change to a place of sadness and pain. It isn't long--perhaps an hour--when I am summoned back to the very same intersection I passed through earlier this evening. The moon seems to be anxiously guiding me quickly along to where the happy sunshine is now replaced by flashing lights that pierce the darkness. What is left of a motor vehicle is partially submerged in the field and there is another auto on the side of the road near the farm. There is wailing and people are running in every direction; chaos abounds.

"I need help over here!" Somebody shouts.

"There is another one over here!" Another person screams.

The tension in the air is daunting. The night wears on as my brothers, sisters and I wage battle with nature again. We pull people from the clutches of her terror that she leaves covered in blood shining in the moonlight like a victim of a horror movie. Some do not survive her wrath while others their bones she leaves protruding through their flesh and they scream in agony. When nature surrenders and retreats subdued, the fields appear like an injured cat licking her wounds and the flashing lights begin to dissipate into the night. Quiet blankets the fields.

When the chaos is over and the last flashing light is gone, all that remains is the wet surface of the roadway that glistens in the silvery light of the moon. There is stillness and a sense of surrealness in the air, and I can almost reach out and touch the remains of the motor vehicle that is no longer there. There is a gritty taste of suffering in my mouth and the acrid stench of twisted metal, flesh, blood and death clinging to me. The fields stand witness to a tragedy and whisper of sadness into the ears of my heart. But the land seems to heal quickly and appears untouched by the events of the night which has wounded my heart. As I turn to

leave this place, there comes a sudden sweet scent in a light breeze seemingly off the fields that speaks of hope and thus begins a healing in my heart.

In the morning, the emerald fields sway gently in the summer breeze unscathed by nature's fury in the night. All that remains are a few scattered pieces of shattered glass shimmering ominously like diamonds in the reflection of the bright summer sun. There is a peacefulness in this place.

Nature will rear up again and I will be ready to wage battle with her once more. I am an Emergency Medical Technician and it is in my blood; it's my life and I will never turn back. Nature shall not prevail.



“Dog” by Desiree Edge

El Facimo

by Robert van dar Kam

La película de 'El laberinto del fauno' fue ambientada en cerca de 1939, después del fin de la Guerra Civil Española, cuando el ejército del 'Generalissimo' Francisco Franco trataba de encontrar y vencer a los últimos grupos de guerrilleros de los 'Republicanos'. Francisco Franco fue un contemporáneo de Benito Mussolini y de Adolf Hitler. Todos fueron fascistas y gobernaron como dictadores. Es interesante y educativo ver cómo ellos establecieron sus dictaduras. Es educativo porque los principios a menudo son bastante inocentes e inofensivos, pero el desenlace puede ser una dictadura. Como se dice, la democracia no es una forma de gobierno ideal, pero es lo mejor. La dictadura es lo peor.

El fascismo fue inventado por un italiano que se llamó Gabriele D'Annunzio. En el principio él fue un escritor – y un contemporáneo de Ernest Hemingway – y un orador que fue utilizado para dar discursos a las tropas italianas en el Primera Guerra Mundial. De hecho él fue el dictador de una ciudad italiana en la frontera de Yugoslavia por eso de un año en 1919.

Ambos Mussolini en Italia y Hitler en Alemania empezaron sus carreras políticas como políticos normales. En 1912 Mussolini fue un miembro del Partido Socialista Italiano. Más tarde fue el líder del Partido Nacional Fascista, antes de que 'fascista' tuviera una reputación mala. Él se convirtió en el Primer Ministro de Italia en 1922 por elecciones democráticas, pero 3 años después él se volvió en un dictador. En una manera similar, en 1919 Hitler fue un miembro del Partido Obrero Alemán. Ese partido se convirtió en el Partido Nacional Socialista de Obreros (o el Partido Nazi), y Hitler se convirtió en su líder en 1921. Hacia 1933 ese Partido Nazi fue el partido más grande de Alemania, lo que resultó en el nombramiento de Hitler a Canciller de Alemania.

Esos partidos políticos fascistas ganaron poder a través de elecciones legítimas cuando los tiempos eran malos. Los países en Europa todavía no se habían recuperado de la Primera Guerra Mundial. El desempleo fue alto en todos lados. También la inflación fue muy alta. De hecho en Alemania gente usaba carretillas llenas de monedas para comprar una barra de pan! Esas carretillas valían más que el dinero que estaba dentro – y entonces cuando dejabas esa carretilla alguien descargaba todo el dinero y desaparecía con la carretilla!

El capitán Vidal fue un ejemplo perfecto de un personaje que florecería en una dictadura – un prototipo de un dictador en su mismo batallón – vanidoso, cruel y asesino. Un proponente de tortura. Para él los muertos fueron inútiles, pero los heridos fueron candidatos excelentes para extraer información a través de la tortura. Él denigraba los minusválidos – como su víctima que tartamudeaba. Él trataba mujeres como inferiores, aún su hijastra y su esposa. Y también su gobernanta Mercedes – lo cual afortunadamente y por último siguió a su caída. Quiquiera él considerara debajo de su clase él podría maltratar y aún asesinar – como los dos campesinos en la película.

Durante tiempos malos, los países empiezan a mirar adentro, y entonces el nacionalismo florece. Con nacionalismo ejércitos se fortalecen. Los preparativos están hechos para la eventualidad de la guerra. El gobierno también empieza proyectos de obras públicas y reconstruye su infraestructura a fin de que los desempleados tengan trabajo. Exactamente lo mismo que Hitler fue en Alemania. Y a menudo el gobierno y la gente buscaban los chivos expiatorios para culpar por su miseria. Los dictadores a menudo promovían intolerancia – como contra los judíos en Alemania, o contra los emigrantes ilegales hoy día en los EE.UU. En guerras civiles el lado perdedor está dejado a sufrir, y el lado ganador recibirá privilegios – como las 'cartillas' usado para racionamiento en la película.

Los dictadores a menudo silenciaban la prensa. Guardias civiles son empleados para mantener el orden. El gobierno podría establecer estaciones de radio y televisión, para llenar las ondas con su propaganda. Estaciones privadas son desmerecidas (“noticias falsas”) primero, y censuradas más tarde.

Hoy día vivimos en un tiempo peligroso y espantoso – muchos de los aspectos de una dictadura y de nacionalismo se puede ver y oír en las recientes campañas electorales presidenciales en los EE.UU y ahora en las Órdenes Ejecutivas del presidente Trump. “Haz América grande otra vez” suena demasiado similar a “Alemania sobre todo”.

Advice on Getting a Man and Keeping Him

by MeMe Myers

Girls like me have trouble communicating with the opposite sex because of my sheltered childhood. My father forbade me from having any contact with males who were not related to me. Finally, when I moved out of my dad's house, I started dating, since I was now free. As you may know, getting into the dating world was a rude awakening, considering that I knew nothing about dating or relationships. I'm going to be honest: I'm not hot, outgoing, or cool. I am one of the biggest dorks you can ever meet. However, dorks need love too! With these tips I will show you how even dorks like me can obtain a man and keep him.

First thing first: be yourself. Do not change anything about yourself just to get your dream guy to like you. Love yourself first (unconditionally). If he doesn't like you for you, then move on and find someone who will. Don't feel pressured to be someone you are not. Remember, true love is unconditional. If a man seeks to change you, then he doesn't really love you.

Another thing: stay in your league. I learned the hard way that trying to get a man that was obviously out of my league was unrealistic. Deep down I knew this, but I was madly in love with him. He was everything I wanted: cool, handsome, friendly, charming, and social. But there was one big problem: I'm none of those things. Even though he knew I liked him he still had no problem being friends with me. I waited almost a year for him to ask me out, but he never did. So I finally decided to move on and found somebody that I knew would date me: a nerdy boy. Yes, nerdy boys find me appealing because they too have trouble communicating with the opposite sex.

Now that you know how to get a man you must learn how to keep him. My relationship may be still fresh, but I learned how to keep him by watching informative YouTube videos and reading articles. One tip I've learned (and am very successful in) is spicing it up in the bedroom. Let's be for real, every man is attracted to looks. One way to please him is to try to wear something sexy to get his attention, such as a low cut shirt or mini-skirt. You can spice it up in the bedroom by wearing some sexy undergarments or even something see through. My man loves that. Even us dorks can look sexy sometimes.

Also, men love to feel needed. I tell my man almost every day how important he is to me and how much I love him. I sometimes tag him in lovey-dovey post that he enjoys seeing. Sometimes I even show him off by talking about how good he is to my coworkers. He told me that he loves it when I brag about him, even on Facebook.

Even though men love to feel needed they also love personal space. My man told me how women he dealt with in the past were so clingy they would have an anxiety attack when he needed to leave to go do something. Girls, do not do this. Give your man some space. Yes, be affectionate but tone it down when you're in public (trust me I learned this lesson the hard way). Also, cool the jealousy. I'll admit that if I feel like another woman is trying to steal my man, I act a little crazy because I'm scared of losing him. However, he told me that he is not going anywhere. Deep down in my soul I know this but I also know that there are better and more attractive women out there than me. But know this ladies, if he truly loves you he will not let any woman take him away from you. So far, my man has been faithful to me and I know deep down in my soul he will remain faithful.

So you see girls, even the dorkiest women can find true love. Follow these tips and I guarantee that you will get a man in less than a year. I learned from my own personal experience that these tips work because I'm madly in love with my boyfriend, and I know he loves me as well. I believe there is someone out there for everyone. Just accept yourself for who you are and the right person will love and appreciate you for you.

Proud

by Savannah Storck

I was never very good at track and field...or anything really. At least that's what my parents thought. Cross Country would be proud to have me on their team if they could see me right now. I run as fast as I can with only the moon as light. I listen to the soothing sound of my feet snapping twigs, almost like the sound of breaking bones. I feel alive in this forest. The cool autumn breeze is at my back. I can't help but laugh as I listen to the sirens get farther and farther away from me. I slow to a walk as I hear the sound of water crashing onto shore. I strip my clothes and wade into the icy water. I feel the slime oozing between my toes and grab gooey handfuls of scratchy seaweed. I take my last breath and smile as a rock takes me to the bottom. I finally succeeded at something. I hope mom and dad are proud.

Being a Foreigner

by Chrystelle Sachse

Linguistics differs from being a linguist. One can only learn so much before the inevitable is needed: practice. As neither a linguist, nor American born, to me, English was indefinite. This language involved different sounds I heard on the radio and fancy terms like "has been" that made it difficult to grasp the correlation between definition and use. Not only was I not aware of all grammar rules, accent differences, or vocabulary varieties; I never experienced them in their original context. As I submerged myself into American culture, understanding and being understood required knowledge and apprenticeship.

I was born and raised in France. At the time, second language education was only taught in middle school. I was about 12 years old when I attended my first English class. I can recall some of my first teachings on the English language. "Where is Brian?" the teacher would ask. "Brian is in the kitchen," we replied like robots. As memorizing these lines was sufficient, I managed good grades with very little understanding. For me, comprehending the meaning, as opposed to word-for-word translation, was highly confusing.

Almost 10 years ago, at the age of 20, I set foot on American soil for the first time. A small step for mankind, one giant leap for the youngster I was. I had a mind craving for anything new. Traveling to the United States was realizing my heart's desire of being the multilingual person I wanted to be. I became an Au Pair (a live-in nanny) and chose a full immersion path as my internship for English.

I can recall, like it was yesterday, my first time at the drive through of McDonald's, the first of many similar occurrences. "And for your drink?" she asked through the microphone. "I would like some water," I answered, or so I thought. Confused, "Some what?" she replied. I repeated myself a few times before she kindly, yet eagerly, said, "How about you come around and you can show me what you would like." It was both awkward and puzzling. I did not comprehend her confusion. After exchanging smiles, I pointed to a water bottle. "Oh, water" she exclaimed, pronouncing the word as if the "t" did not exist. This is when it really hit me: we spoke different Englishes. Mine had an incomprehensible accent. I learned British English, not American. Then, like today, I found meaning in using the terms "American English" and "British English" to point out that they are differences.

I needed some readjustment in order to be understood in America. Eventually, I took an Accent Reduction English class, which proved to be useful. Approximately 6 months of practice later, I was more aware of some of the differences. For instance, I will not say anymore: "It is a beautiful day; let's go to the bitch!" Neither would I say, "Can I please get a new shit of paper?" Only regular rehearsal of "do"s and "don't"s helped me improve. I

learned to hear and pronounce words differently. I became knowledgeable of some of the language complexities of American English.

Years passed, and I am now still in America where I have played the roles of French and American for almost a decade. I experienced and learned a lot. Although important, knowing how to enunciate was not sufficient by itself to fully communicate. Consider table manners. In France, best manners include putting both of your hands on the table and using your knife. Little did I know it was not the same in America, where pretty much knives are put on the table only if meat is involved, making one hand on the table common behavior. At first, even my best manners were not enough to blend in; time trained me to use only a fork. This was a little thing; yet, it meant effort on my part. But, greatly satisfying has been the reward of blending in.

Nevertheless, sensitive topics are still a problem. My opinion is regularly perceived as from an outsider or a form of attack on American society. I have been living on American soil for all of my adult life, learning and integrating the culture, as one of my own. I have a hard time when my views are strictly perceived as coming from a stranger, as if hiding my French identity would change how my interlocutor understood.

Certainly, learning is a two way street. As a foreigner, I have found pleasure in sharing my perceptions and knowledge. When I talk about French vocabulary with Americans, they often interject “Ooh, la la!” as a sexual innuendo. I explain that in French that saying is not used the same. Walking around Paris, one often hears things like, “Ooh la la this Cathedral is majestic!” or “Ooh la la” this guy is handsome.” The meanings in French range from feelings of admiration, deception, or surprise.

Only time and practice have helped me make the right correlation between the knowledge I had of British English and American English. Never would I have been aware that there was more to learn than the British English idiom. My experience has had a greater effect than simply becoming bilingual. I am now grasping the variations between different English dialects as well as between American and French alternative behaviors. It appears that within the eyes of the people I connect with their perception of the French language has evolved too. I will continue to practice and understand all of these “word games,” so I can confidently go to the drive through and be understood.

POETRY

Cambio*Scarlett Perez*

No pude ser antes lo que soy ahora.
No puede valer mi arrepentimiento más que mi honestidad.
Ayer quizás negué cosas que ahora prefiero.
Pero el querer no es suficiente para otorgar.

Ahora mi cometido es no arrepentirme de lo que mañana me juzgará.
Porque quiero pensar menos, y sentir más.
Aunque la razón bofetea mi avidez,
Y el sentimiento encadene la sobriedad del momento.

Triste mortal, presagio de vida.
Después de la derrota se pierde la cautela,
Y la valentía al saber que ya no hay nada que perder resurge,
tan intacta, tan perfecta, que el círculo de vida se conecta.

No pude ser antes lo que soy ahora.
Pero tampoco podría ser lo que soy ahora,
sin lo que antes fui.

Cuadro*Scarlett Perez*

Abecés, solo abecés,
se estanca ese sentimiento que hace malabares de esta frágil cordura.
Imposible de interpretar estas sensaciones que tiñen de rojo mi sangre.
Y, aun así, cuestiono el propósito de existir.
Uno vive como puede, algunos dirán que uno vive como quiere.
Y esta última especulación me convierte en una clase de masoquista.
Sufrir es una opción, muchos dirán.
Pero, opción es cuando te ofrecen una alternativa.
En cambio, la muerte es una calle sin salida.
¿Entonces cual es la alternativa?
¿Olvidar? ¿Recordar? ¿Crecer? ¿Revelar?
Desintegración de paradigmas,
no fui yo quien escogió, fue la muerte, fue el tiempo,
fueron las circunstancias, fue... el destino.
Y en medio de esta revolución de cambios
aún queda energía para el cinismo.
Nadie es culpable, las cosas son como son.
Volvemos al principio otra vez.
Buscando el propósito de esta exquisita tortura, que
penetra como un clavo en la pared
donde su único propósito es detener un cuadro.

What Does Mental Illness Look Like to You?

Amy Madison

Just because I look happy on the outside
does not mean I am not suffering.
I may look like I'm complete, but on
the inside I feel **So** weak.

I am **fighting** a battle **w**ithin my soul.
Some days I feel as if the world is so
cold. I cannot **G**rasp why people are so
cruel. Is it just **M**e? Or is it just my **brA**in
playing tricks on me?

I just do not understand why no one
can see, the devastating effect that this mental illness has with the
control over me. I just wanted to be loved and make new friends,
but instead I get laughed at and made fun of. All I ask is to
walk in my shoes, and see how some days I just don't want to move.
Sometimes, just sometimes, I really need someone who
can listen to me, with graceful and understanding empathy.

Escaparate

Scarlett Perez

Delirio encontré en el refugio que tanto busqué,
Para solo descubrir que sería mi celda perpetua,
Tracé esa ilusión bella y perfecta,
En hojas que el otoño no perdonaría...

Soledad

Scarlett Perez

Las noches se estrechan negándose a mis brazos,
No alcanza mi alma para abrazar este silencio.
Palabras pronuncio para golpear este espacio,
Tan lleno de vacío y falto de presencia.
La risa mitiga la tristeza.
Como en una Mona Lisa,
La soledad se sospecha en la mirada,
Y en esos labios que hablan sin pronunciar palabras.

Untitled*James Bell*

Today I'm letting go of all my insecurities
 I will no longer let others dictate my emotions
 I've become a shell of who I once was
 And allowed my heart to be continuously broken
 So fragile, so delicate - My soul has become depleted
 I've given you the best of me - And the rest is left in pieces
 So, as I lay my head upon my pillow - With tears streaming down my cheek
 I try to convince myself tomorrow will be better - As I cry myself to sleep
 Afraid to close my eyes - because you haunt me in my dreams
 Your love, or lack thereof - accompanied by feelings of defeat
 You've left me void and empty - broken and abandoned
 Once again exposed and vulnerable - loneliness my true companion
 But tomorrow is a new day - and as sure as the sun will rise
 I will emerge from these shadows - and break these ties that bind
 I will escape the confines of my mind - and once again smile from my eyes
 No longer feeling helpless - stumbling blindly throughout the night
 I'm able to find my way - without the guidance of your light
 Because we are all our own main characters - in these novels known as life
 And I've just now come to realize - I can write the ending how I like

Her Love*James Bell*

She was my favorite.
 Of all the things I've ever known on this earth, nothing more did I covet than her love.
 It was like the first snowfall of the year, loyal and beautiful
 bringing about a childlike wonder that had ceased to exist in me long ago.
 I no longer questioned my existence.
 The very first time I saw her, I knew that God existed - and that he was good.
 Through her smile I could see his plan for me.
 Everything made sense, and was perfect. Instantly I knew all.
 And maybe for my own selfish reasons, I dedicated the rest of my life to seeing that smile.
 Her joy and happiness had become the very foundation for which I would build my life upon.
 I had tasted her love through her kiss, and became completely helpless against it.
 Not that I wanted to, but there was no point of resistance.
 Her love had conquered me.
 It was undeniable and could not be defeated.
 She planted her seed in my heart, and before I knew it, the roots took hold.
 She grew strong,
 and I could feel her flowers blossom inside of me as she brought back to life my spirit.
 Her love resurrected my soul, and for this I am eternally grateful.
 I had never known anything like her love
 Her love was greater than me
 Her love was all things wonderful
 and through her love she had restored my faith, and it became clear to me
 her love was God.

Tiempo*Scarlett Perez*

Cinco meses fueron ya desde que la tierra cobijó tu féretro.
Aquí, afuera, en la superficie no ha pasado mucho.
Seguimos sujetos a la determinación de un mundo
que se limita a regresar lo que se le ha entregado.

Con esta conclusión, seguro no existe mucha esperanza.
Bailaremos esta danza, al compás que se nos toque.
Cinco meses han pasado sin tu energía.
Y el tiempo como tal ladrón,
seguirá acumulando distancia entre el ayer y el ahora.
Ayer podía hablarte, ahora ya no.

Comprenderás mi resentimiento hacia el tiempo.
Aun, cuando este borrará aquellos dolores más profundos.
Pero, a cambio también empañará con neblina
recuerdos que estuvieron presentes con tanta luz y claridad.
Recuerdos que alcanzaban a tocar una realidad.

Ahora, solo nos queda la mitad de un recuerdo,
y queriendo salvarlo con tanta desesperación,
le acoplamos la otra mitad con ilusiones,
y una que otra mentira que nos deje satisfechos
ante la impotencia del olvido.

Vows*Christian Calderon*

When recounting her elapsd relationship
she thought of it as 47 Christmases
Those Champagne bubbles and their waterfall drops of unfilled seconds.
Dolores Vargas' bleached fingers
folding and unfolding,
accommodating snow lemon clothes

It was planned to be consensual
and this agreement meant to be ongoing.
However, Mom never told her it meant to be a free pass;
she never imagined that it meant implied consent!

So when Dolores rejected him,
she was jostled with butter strength
as Mom's ghostly voice unbuttoned her bra,
"Take care of your man.
It is Okay if it doesn't feel like love."

She wishes to talk about it,
but instead she had been holding it in
because in what holy stoup would float
that she had wished for a truck
Full of bodybuilding men.



"Busy Bee" by Sarah Rojas

Goodbye Letter*Sarah Nocek*

Even before our paths first crossed, I lost so much because of you.
How can I have so much hate for something that I never even knew?
Was there something I was missing? Was there something I didn't see?
Why were these people I love putting you in front of me?
Maybe I was quick to judge, perhaps you're not so bad.
Could it be my own fault that my life became so sad?
They just couldn't let you go, and I was tired of fighting you.
So I put that needle in my arm and that's when I finally knew.
The feeling you sent through my body is unlike anything I can explain.
You took away my sadness, you numbed away my pain.
I was desperate for an answer and you showed me a world I never knew.
You took me by the hand and made me fall in love with you.
You're grip quickly began to tighten and I wanted you every day.
Before I knew what hit me, I couldn't stay away.
You made me do some awful things, I would steal and I would lie.
Any crime was worth committing if it meant feeling that high.
I became the very person who led me to this hell.
While trying to pull him out, I'm the one who fell.
This person I've become isn't who I want to be.
This isn't who I really am, you stole my life from me.
So I'm writing this to tell you, your slave I am no more.
Heroin, you may have won some battles, but I will win the war.

Stream of Consciousness*Scarlett Perez*

I believe I am an accomplice to my own misery,
One step at a time she said,
and then, when silence came,
a cloud of emotions gathered a storm that will not let me escape.
One minute proclaimed a free mind, the next a slave of my own thoughts.

I renounced simplicity, the dualism of man.
The eternal dilemma of staying still and by doing so,
Committing to nothingness.
I relate to water more than I do fire.
Water is strange; capable of physical change,
capable of lightness, and heaviness,
responsible for life, or the absence of it.

Looking for rewards, little pleasures to man.
On guard trying to dodge pain.
One drop of blood and we are addicted to this feeling.
To feel human, to endure suffering, as if it were a competition.
But it gets too much and we regret the consequences.
We wish to be normal again, even if we know well we never were.

Solidarity to our soul, a gap that feels an emptiness
that no earthly pleasure can fulfill.
The need for something or someone, who really knows.
We say what we know, and by doing so,
we realize we don't know much.
We'd rather have questions.
And then, we embrace insanity.
A theatrical act to disguise stupidity.

Frustration of the imagination, when certainty is forever absent.
But the river doesn't dare to ask why you drink from it.
It limits itself to nourish and provide what it will.
If only the mind were that oblivious of reasons,
one would live as the river.
Flowing without restraint and serving one's purpose.

Something*Marissa Eveland*

The dark moon rises,
the woods go silent,
but something comes alive
in the evening silence.

Something moving quick,
Snap goes a branch!
Leaping from the tree tops,
then down again, it lands.

The swiftness of a cheetah,
it had these ape-like hands.
The growl of a tiger,
the face of a familiar man.

I'm screaming as I'm running;
I'm running as I'm screaming.
His yellow eyes locked on me,
as forward he keeps on keeping.

One second I'm dodging branches,
the next I'm on the ground.
I search the landscape frantically,
and I can't hear any sound.

I slowly rise to my feet,
and back up ever so slightly,
but something blocks the path;
the image is still so frightening.

I could smell its fowl breath,
my skin against its fur.
I touched it with my hands,
and felt a cockle bur.

I slowly turn around,
and look something in the eyes.
I smile a frightened smile,
and it looks a bit surprised.

I tried to hum a tune,
thinking it would soothe,
but he just growled at my song,
and again were on the move.

I'm screaming as I'm running;
I'm running as I'm screaming.
His yellow eyes locked on me,
as forward he keeps on keeping.

The swiftness of a cheetah,
it had these ape-like hands.
The growl of a tiger,
the face of a familiar man.

Something moving quick,
Snap goes a branch!
Leaping from the tree tops,
then down again it lands.

Then the sun begins its rise;
its brightness shone around me.
I open up my eyes,
but it's my bedroom that surrounds me.

Today*James Bell*

I wasn't strong enough to face to world today - and it scared me.
 It scared me because it was a revelation.
 I say it was a revelation because if faced with temptation, I would have succumbed to it.
 I would have betrayed myself today, in fact I have betrayed myself.
 I've always pride myself on being honest, but I've been lying to myself, lying to myself for years.
 The truth was forced upon me today, and my only response was tears.
 They were warm and comforting, and all too familiar.
 My tears like loyal friends, I can always depend on them.
 They've helped me cleanse my soul - flowing with life, rejuvenating my spirit.
 I needed help today.
 I needed love today.
 Once again, I put my faith in you, and once again you let me down.
 Today I was embarrassed, today I was ashamed,
 today I let them get to me, and today they broke me down.
 I was exposed and vulnerable today, and you were nowhere to be found.
 I called out your name, but apparently you did not hear.
 I asked for compassion, I asked for mercy, but all you sent me was more tears.
 Falling freely down my face, with each tear I grow stronger.
 Replacing my fears with hope
 no longer dying inside, at least when I cry, I know I'm alive
 these tears of mine, blessings in disguise.
 Filling a void inside of me that at one point was empty,
 so today lord I thank you for these tears that you sent me.

A bird preparing for take-off,

A butterfly basking in the summer's heat,
 A snake shedding the skin it has come to know,
 A cricket chirping out in search for a mate,

Examples of being,
 Examples of existing,

A human accepting a job offer and preparing for the take-off into the unknown,
 A human reading their favorite book for the first time in the quiet library,
 A human saying goodbye to a loved one,
 A human asking another human out on a date because their heart skipped a beat at first glance,

Not all that different,
 Not different at all,

I think we should try to see,
 The beauty we press on other objects,
 Other living things,
 Reflect onto us,
 The human race



“To Be Here” by Sarah Rojas

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