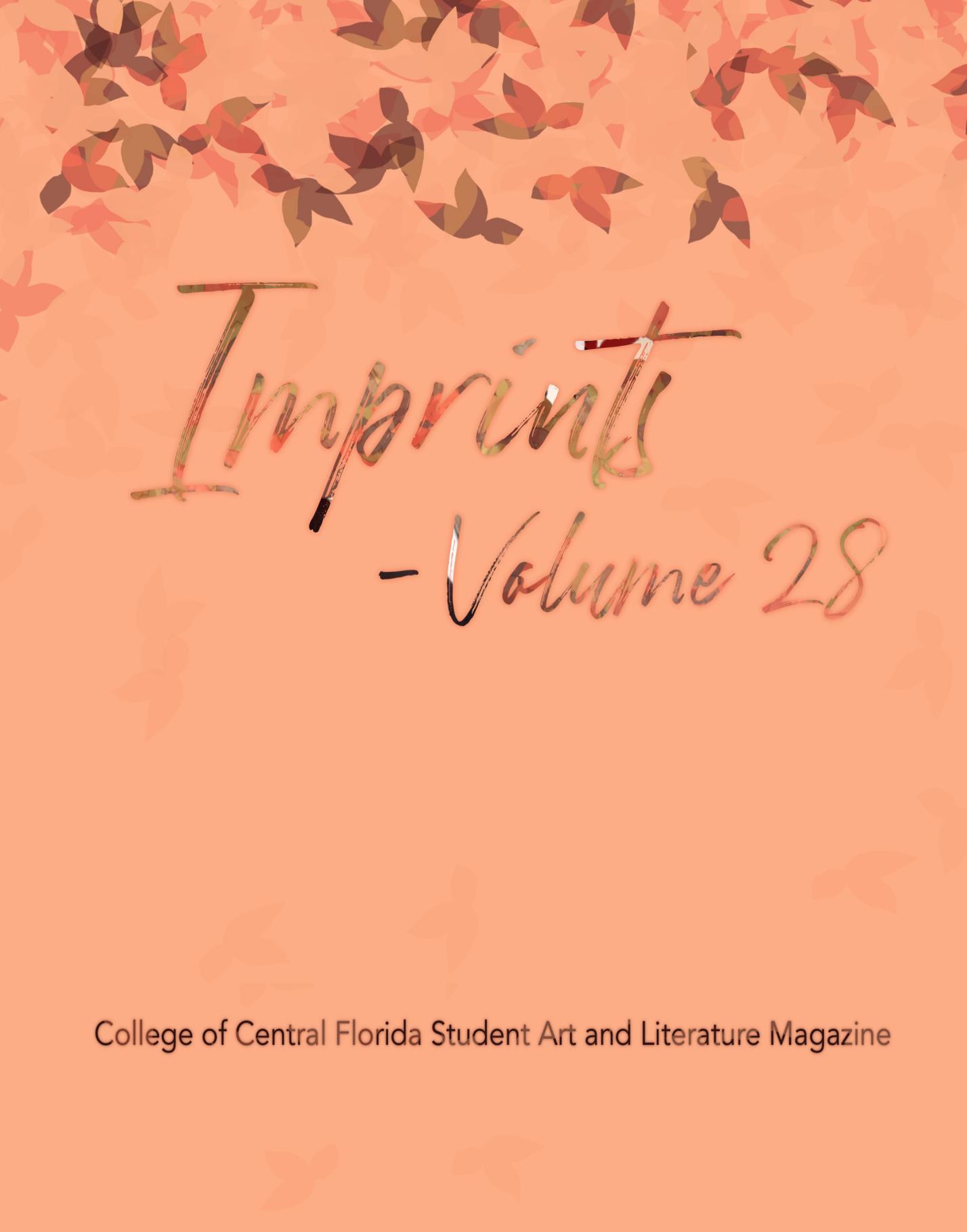


Imprints

- Volume 28







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College of Central Florida Student Art and Literature Magazine



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Dear Reader,

As we face new experiences each day, we broaden our perspectives. In our adulthood, we may outgrow our understanding of the world from our adolescence. In our adolescence, our sense of reality may be challenged. We continue developing each day in mind, spirit, and body with expanding awareness to appreciate more things. As a way to celebrate life, overcome events, nurture thoughts, and create discoveries, people turn to art. Our logic and emotions may help to guide us in our every day lives; but the artistry we come to appreciate is how we form a deeper sense of community. Regardless of what stage of life we may be in, there will always be something for us to enjoy and become fascinated with.

Imprints Staff

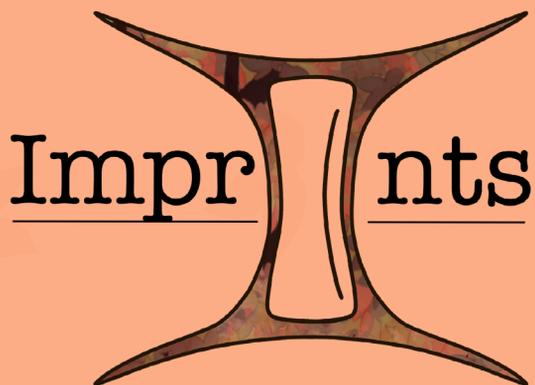


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Burden of Growth by Lyla Palomino

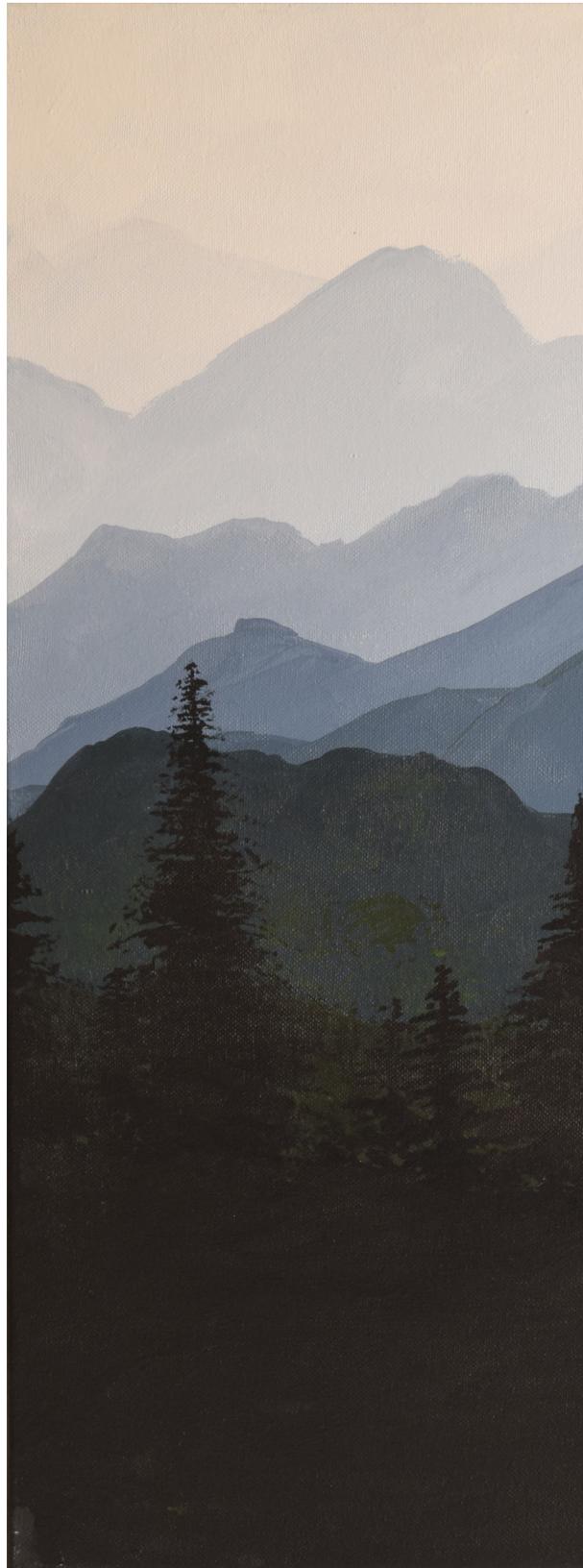
Looking back on our age of immaturity
Were we immature,
or were others filled with impunity?
Changing from one mindset into another:
When did we grow to believe we were a bother?
A burden of naivety, or a burden of truth?
What were we?
What did we see in our youth?

Small things that we were,
Smaller things we did see.
Larger things that we were to become,
But larger problems we never thought we'd be.
"Simpler minds for simpler times,"
Such a famous little rhyme.
But as we progress through this life,
Our minds evolve –
we can no longer skirt that shallow line.

"Weak and fragile,"
"Snowflakes," they say.
Little do they know that we must fight every day.
Against those that claim our sweat as privilege.
Against all those that lay claim to our fame.
"Fight," I say, "until your last breath."
"Fight," they say, "and it may be your last breath."

Trapped between coward and courage,
I am set free when I express my rage.

Wrapped in words,
I gift this to you—
A refreshing dose of melted snow.



New England - Katie Luckern





Blessing from heaven - Leanna Brooks

Down To Sleep by R.A. McDonough

Matthew Morgan laid stiff in his bed, humming to myself a drowsy lullaby. His room was awfully dark tonight, the little lad could barely see an inch in front of his face within the inky pitch. It was kinda frightening, but Matthew knew that his mother would be there to comfort him in the morning, once the sunshine shone through the curtains, and all those nasty shadows dissipated like dust in the wind.

Mommy had gifted him a new bed. He thought the bed was rather fancy, with foundations made of smooth pinewood. It really must have been expensive, as Matthew had heard his father arguing with mom about its cost. She said she wanted only the best, and Matthew was grateful for it.

He wasn't, however, a big fan of his new pajamas, they just weren't as comfy as the last pair, they also lacked the glowing stars he grew to favor. These newer ones were tight and had a few layers. Matthew understood, his room had grown colder these past two weeks, mother always knew best when it came to keeping him well.

The young boy missed his mommy, he wished he could have seen her more before going to bed on such a long night. Instead, Matthew had stayed with his kooky babysitter. She was nice, but she wore funny clothes, kinda like a doctor. That was his best guess anyway, she did make him take a bunch of icky medicine, he had to swallow so much, daddy usually just stuck with a spoon full. She could have been a dentist too, Matthew wasn't really a big fan of going to the dentist, but she seemed to have done a good job installing these weird braces of his.

The last time he saw mommy she was throwing some kind of party. He thought it was his birthday at first since everyone that arrived would come to greet him, but they seemed so sad. Especially mommy, she was crying so much. Matthew hoped that she wasn't still upset with him for playing on the streets again, mother had always told him to stay away from those roads, that it was dangerous for him. He would apologize for disobeying her, but the funny metal in his mouth made it nearly impossible for him to speak.

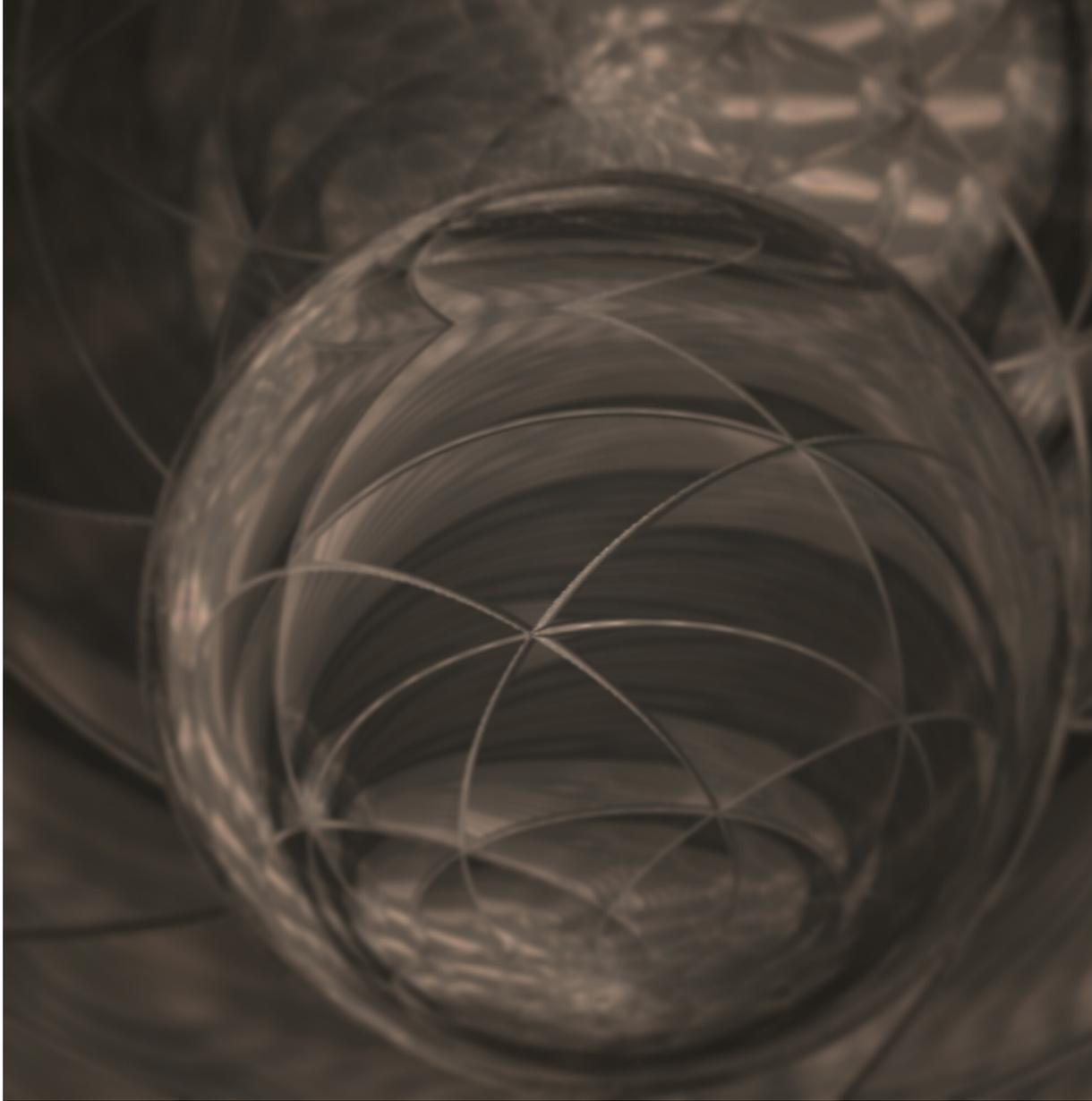
It was small in his new bed, with little to no wiggle room, it was made even more difficult by the way his babysitter had tucked him in with his arms crossed. But Matthew didn't want to complain, father did hate that, besides it wasn't like he was alone. After the first week of bedtime had passed his ceiling began to leak.

Matthew didn't know that it was possible for it to rain dirt, but he was happy to learn. The soil came flooding with tiny crawling things, worms and beetles mostly. Matthew was glad to see them, and they were glad to see him too, swarming up and down his body in excitement. Mother always said never to let the bedbugs bite, but there was no fuss, it didn't hurt, not once. Father wouldn't allow him a pet, but now he had hundreds! He kept them warm with him, he could feel them writhing under his clothes, or maybe the movement went deeper than that, like butterflies in his belly.

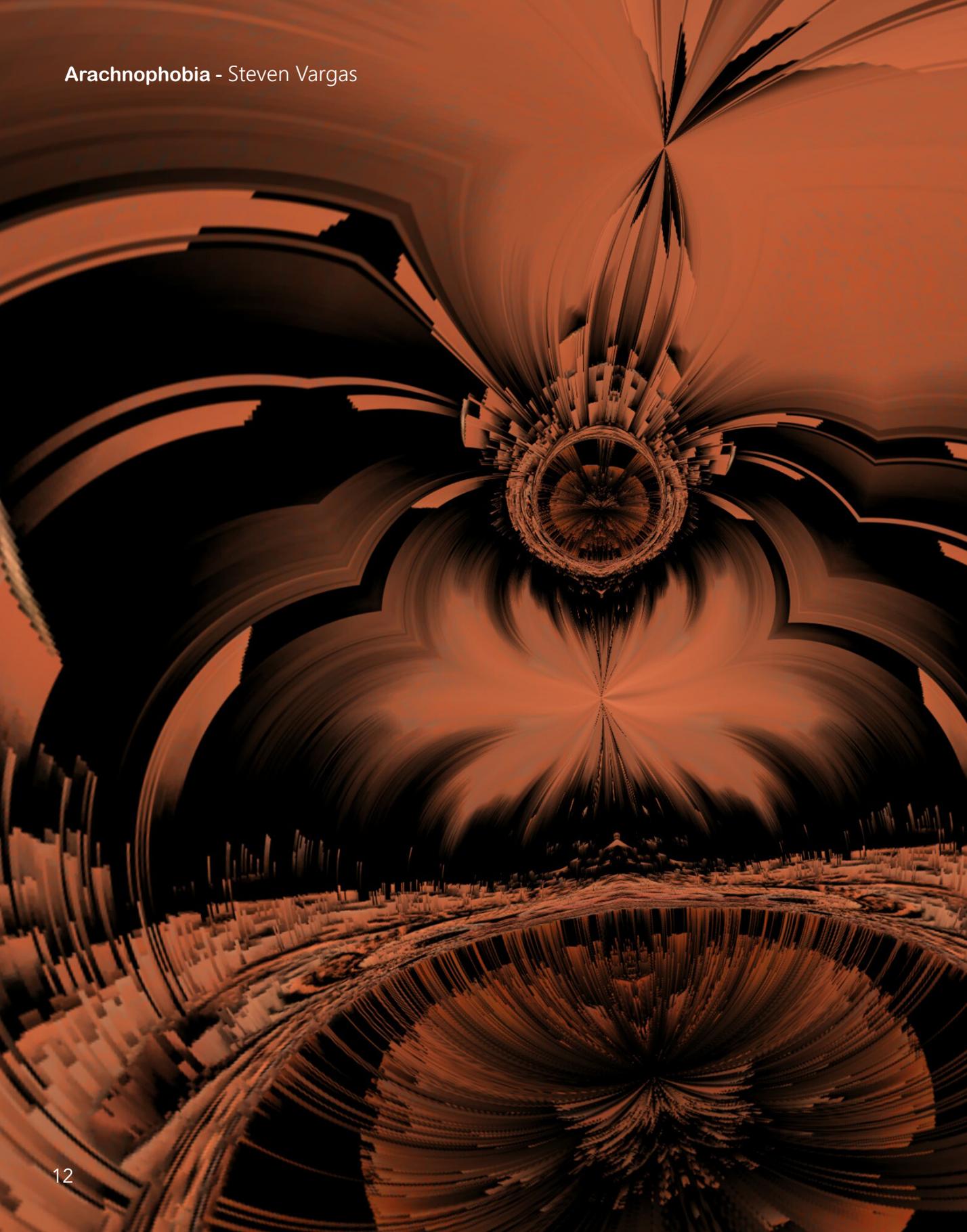
But that didn't matter, the boy trusted his mother, trusted in her guidance. She'd open the curtains any day now, and let the light flutter free. She'd give him a loving hug and warm breakfast, which would be welcomed, Matthew had gotten really skinny, but that's mostly due to the bedbugs. The sun will come, he just had to good boy, and show patience.

Untitled – Santiago Traverso





Shame and Praise – Steven Vargas





The Floor is Lava by Steven Vargas

"The floor is lava,"
children scream

They scamper across
tampered flooring

coated with imaginary
stone and lava

Five children in all
two of which are siblings

The one with weight to spare
sat on a low dresser

knocking debris onto lava
to save themselves from death

The dresser creaked
and threw them onto lava

Two who are known to bicker
fight over a mobilized throne

and bent it over
claiming neither as king
as they were sacrificed to lava

The twins laughed and laid
on a bed with comfort

A roar rose from across the horizon.

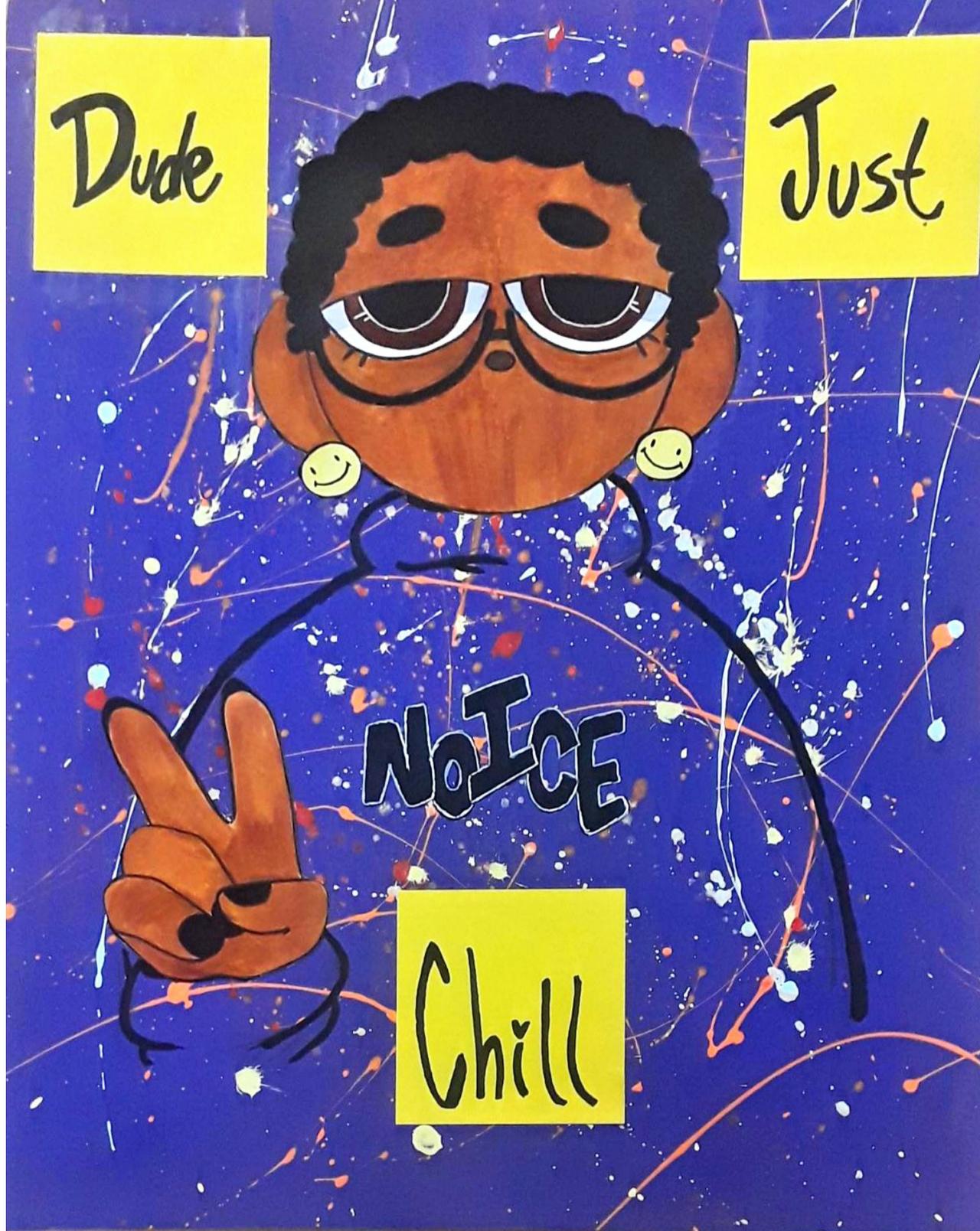
A terrifying echo stirred the waves
unearthing the corpses to land unscathed

Seeing mystic power so mighty
the twins quake in fear

A dragon peaked into the lava-filled room
and set the room ablaze

Soon after the eruption
would there never be lava again



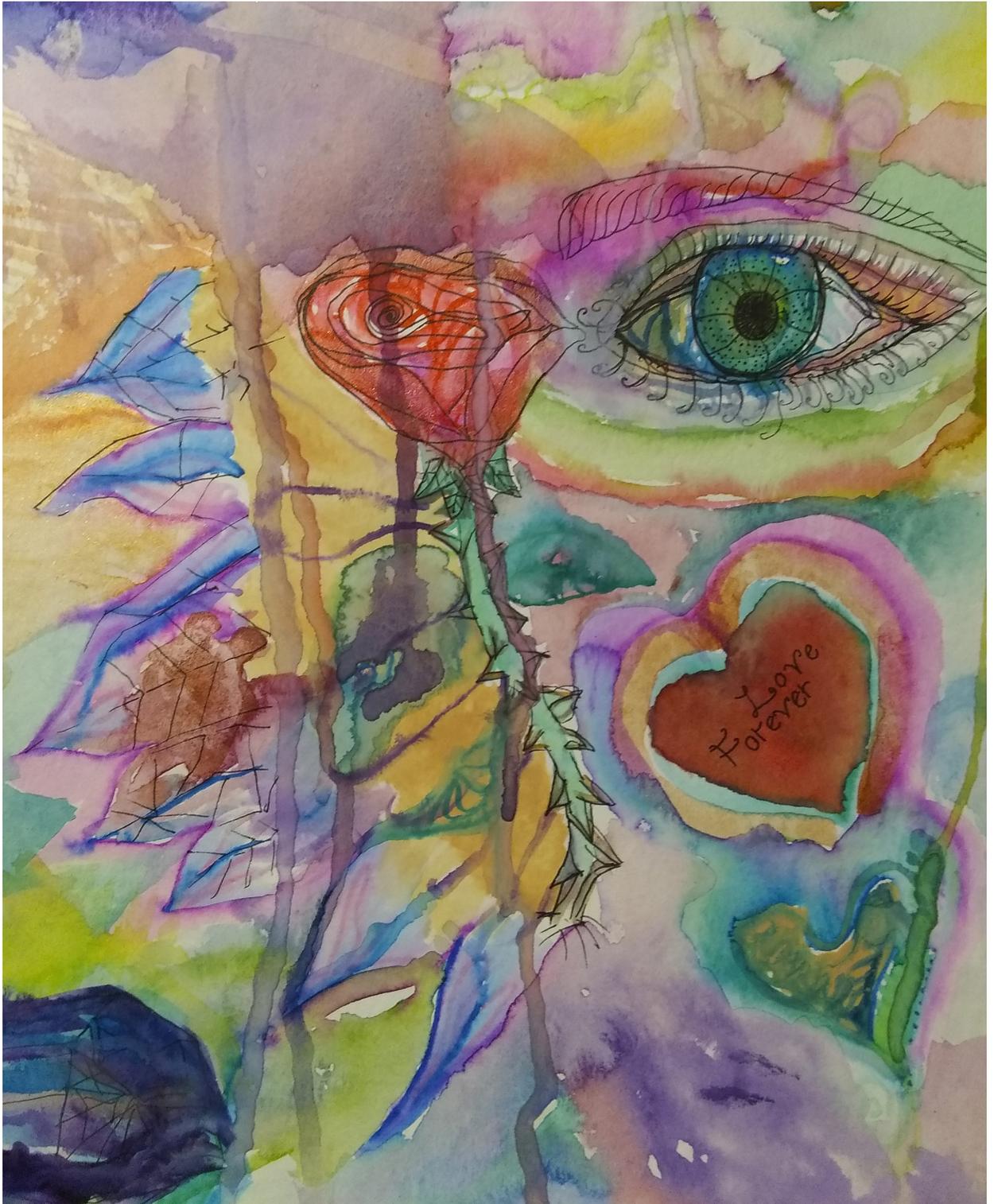


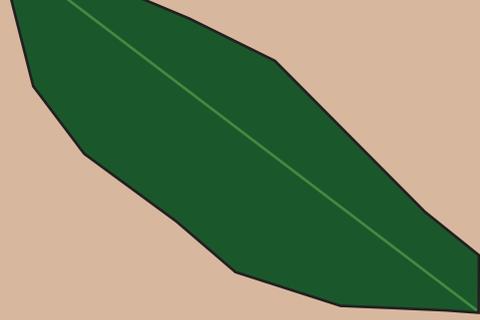
Untitled - Maya Williams



Gracie - Stephanie Gallant

Eye Love You - Sarah King





The Pear Tree by Virginia Boyd

Your pure white blossom is beautiful and bright,
Your branches cast a shadow and lend angelic light
To the luscious, green pears glowing in the sun.
Though they are as hard as rock, they feel as soft as silk;
And your milky blossoms are as light as a feather
And as fragile as a bird's wing that breaks when a pebble touches it,
Yet your blossom can stand through all kinds of weather.
You make me marvel and sing "Alleluia" to the King
Who made such a spectacular thing
That brings the bird and bee to eat sweet nectar
And marvel at the beautiful pear tree.



Butterfly Days - Anonymous

Every Place I've Been – Dawsyn Hoover





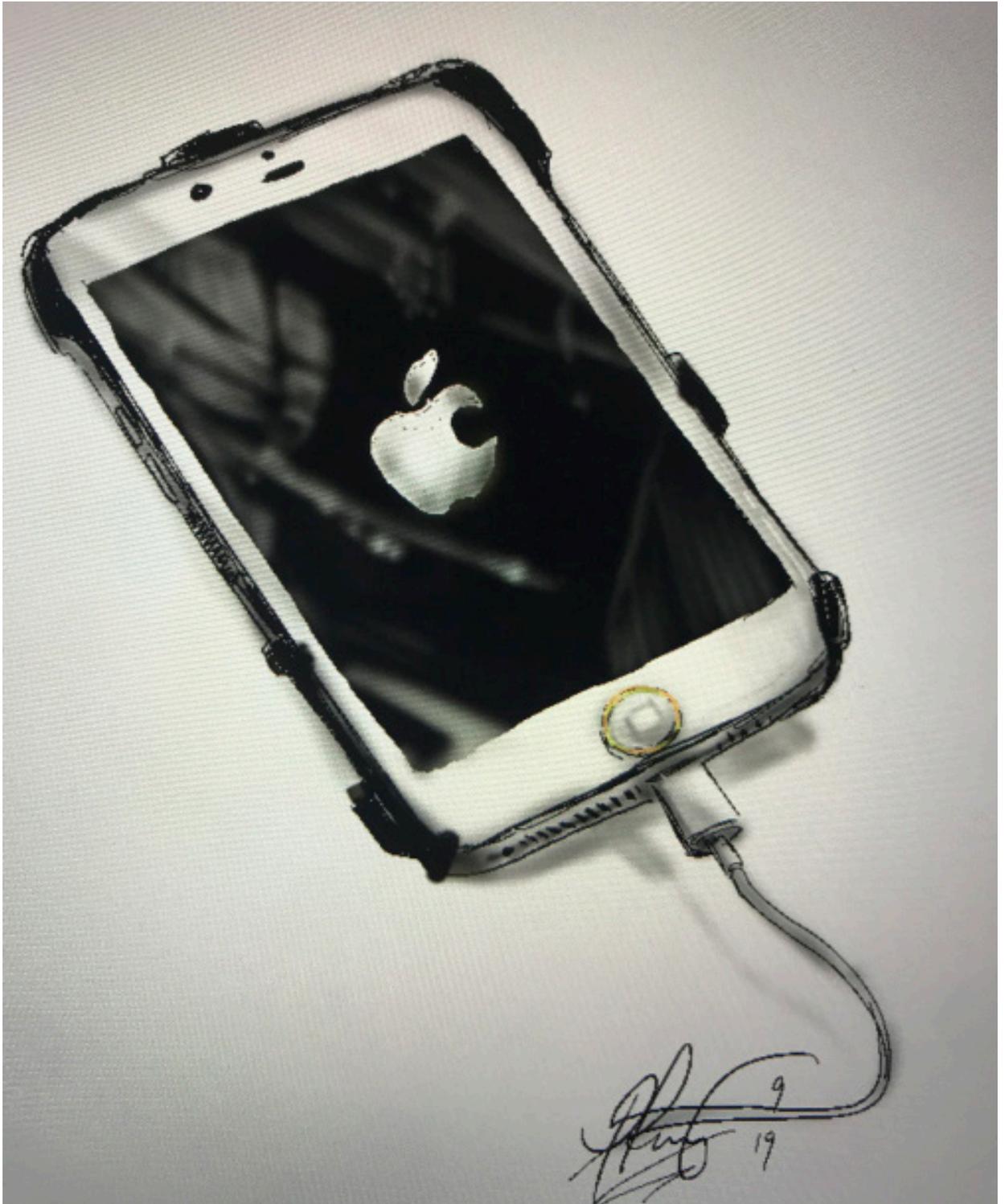
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Untitled - Santiago Traverso



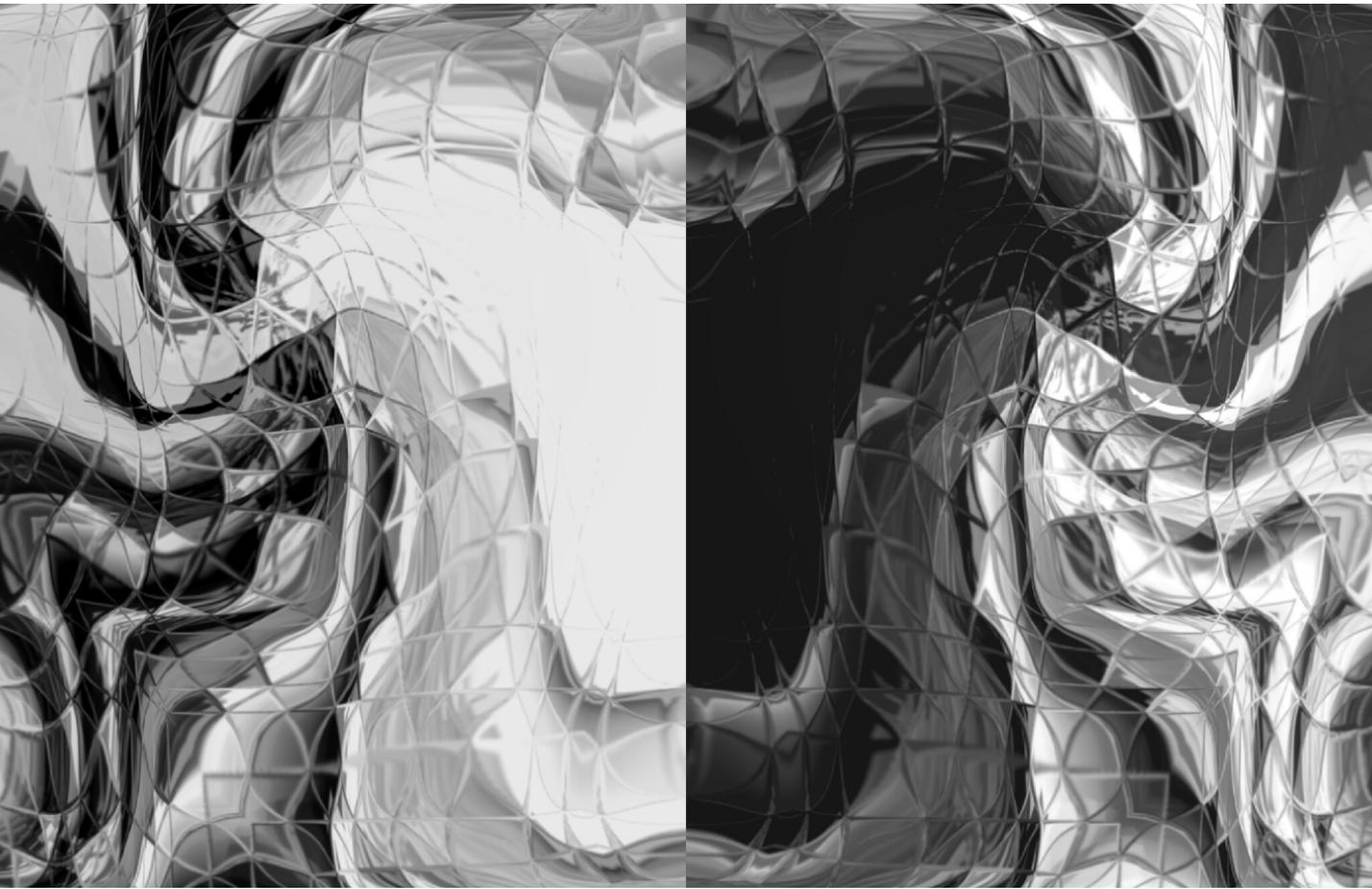
Sand Eater – Kyra Claxton



Untitled - Santiago Traverso

Untitled - Santiago Traverso





Mighty - Steven Vargas

The Fat Girl Speaks by Monica Silva

I get looked at, what's the first thing people see? It's not hard to get past. In all honestly my weight is all that's seen. "She must eat a lot." They think to themselves not knowing everything.

No she doesn't eat a lot but they don't know what's really wrong with her, they only see the surface. None of them have the courage to look her in the eyes and identify the purpose of her identity.

They all take a magnifying glass and zoom in and speak her doom like they could prophesize what's her future gonna hold.

She tries to break the mold of the body that she is trapped in. Looking at herself in the mirror and doesn't see the woman that she wants to be. Not sure how she should feel, she struggles to find something she could identify herself with.

Even she sees the fatness that she never can get passed. Mass is a matter that matters too much to society that even those so bold wouldn't deny that they couldn't control the cold that has come when they had something that needed to be told.

Fingers to their lips no one wants to hear what you want to say. They don't care. I wouldn't dare tell them they were wrong, somehow I do it. They should redefine the fat...no I take it back I would erase it all. Rewrite the stars and take that negativity and send it to Mars. This kind of hatred doesn't belong.

I long for a change, but that's not fair for me so I rearrange my brain. All this change feeds into my rage. I attack before they could attack me. Love is what I lack. Not from my family, not from my friends but I try not to focus on it.

I cover it with a smile and a few jokes but that doesn't change the way I feel. I like to think that I feel nothing, it would be easier. But life wasn't meant to be easy so I feel everything.

Overall I guess I can't complain though. My body doesn't define who I am. I define who I am, those are all fine words but I don't think I know who I am still. The only thing I know is that I'm not just the fat girl.

Independence Day by Virginia Boyd

Everything was in chaos
The streets filled to the max.
The traffic hardly moving
Because of the people's tacts.
At the blasts and the banging,
The crowds were in horror;
And then came a boom
That was louder than before.
The fireworks had started
And all was a roar,
For the howl of the wind
Told them right before,
Their glow so bright
And brilliant is to my eye
When I watch and behold
Another firework fly by.
The crimson red
And the medium blue,
The light green
And the whitish-yellow, too.
They shoot into the sky
As I watch in awe,
But then I cry
Because what I saw
Reminds me of
All the lives that have been lost
From all the wars
That both brave and cowardly men fought
And I begin to think
Of all the selfish things
That have brought us to the brink
Of war and, time and time again,
I think of all our brave friends
Who have fought to their lives' end,
And because of them
We are free to say
Happy Independence Day.



Frozen in Time: United States of America – Leanna Brooks



Waha River – Byron Luckey

Good Girls Can't Sleep At Night
by Victoria Connolly

Dim, dim, dim, dark days, dark nights.
Nothing ever lasts, they've to say,
Spent a life building,
What's been lost in a day.
Put on years of acts, saved a smile,
For another day, because a smile saved is a smile earned,
Happiness stashed away.
He said Repent, Repent he said,
But know he not that these sins are needed now?
Foundations...they create.
I suffer the payment, the devil screams whore

God said repent, but God, sins are our walls, how?
It's easy to say, you've never been a person before.
Her mind turmoil's over her family,
Her mind crashes with pictures of hell,
Does she spend enough time with them?
Would God hear if she'd yell?
She'd lay there and pray and with all of her might,
Close her eyes and realize,
Good girls can't sleep at night.

Shades of Blue – Emily Wilson





The Roosting Tree – Kyra Claxton



A Man's Part by Anonymous

Does he really want me or just the body that he sees?

Does he want my mind and soul, or does he just want to waste my time cause he really want a
hoe?

Does he want my heart, or does he want to play with it like darts?

You know what I want?

I want a man that's going to his part

I didn't say play their part because that's all these men do

They'll have you wrapped around their fingers and then you're wondering if he truly wants you

But a real man won't have you guessing if he wants you or your greater blessing

A real man isn't going to ask or beg for it

He'll know that to get that he'll have to do his part

What a man's part you may ask?

If you're a man and you don't know

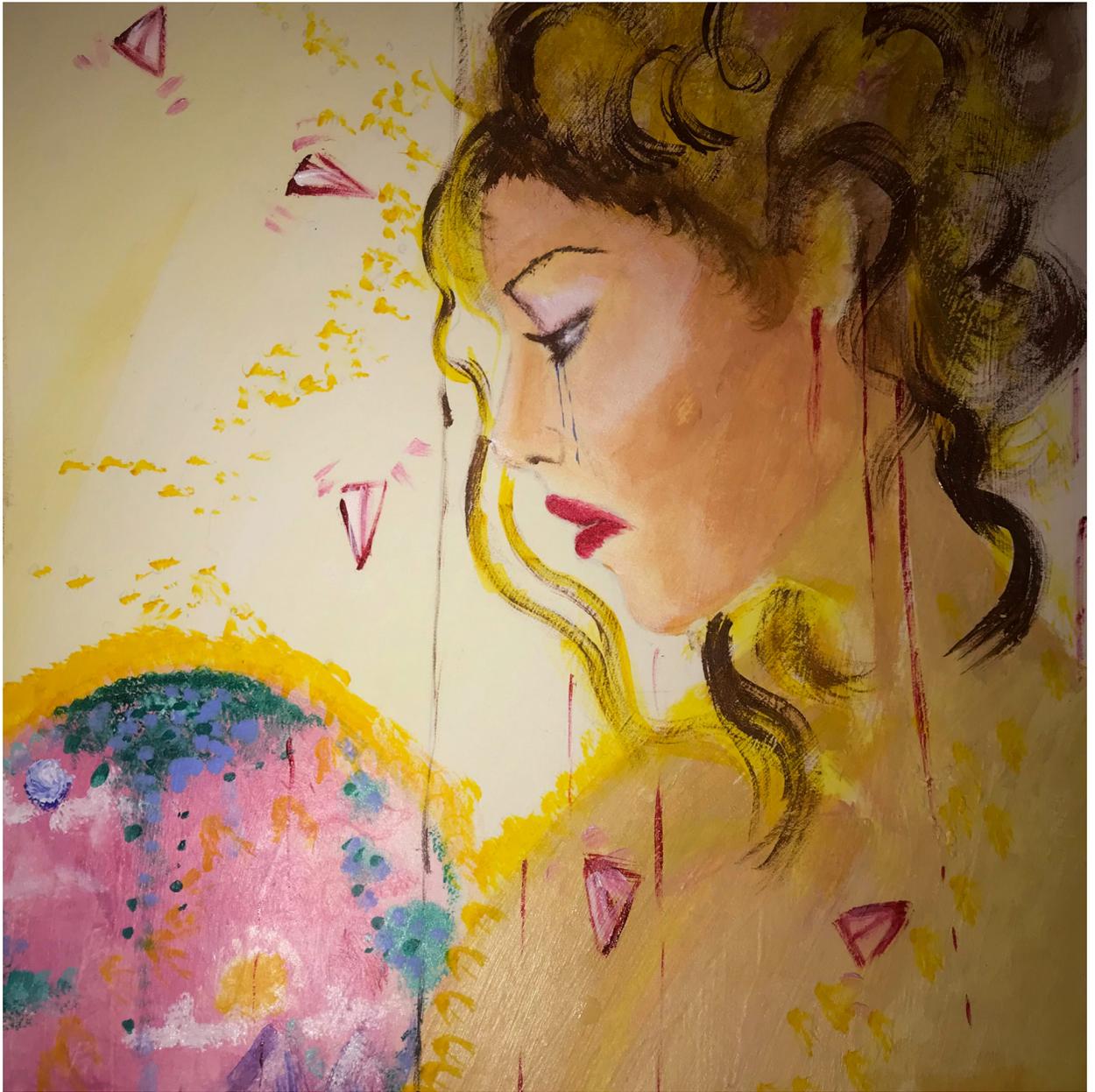
Wow you have a very big task

Because a real man already knows and doesn't have to hide behind a mask.

If you're a woman then sis do not think you'll get the answer from me.

Trust me you know when he does his part

Because the man of your dreams will become your re-
ality and you'll never ask again does he really want me?



Outlook – Dawsyn Hoover



Untitled - Anonymous

In The Eyes Of

By Victoria Connolly

There is a place in the woods. Beyond the scritchng leaves that whisper in the night when no one is looking. Beyond the shadows that appear against the light, even if there is nobody standing. Beyond the insidious old cabin of the wicked old woman who practices a magic in the dead of night, that no one else knows about. There is a place in the woods, a cottage. The boy lives here, with two other people he calls mother and father. We all live here together. The boy is called Thomas and he takes me with him everywhere. He calls me Tilduff and he tells me every day he loves me and that I am his favorite. Every afternoon, Thomas takes me out in this thing that is called wagon and we go out into the forest. He takes me to the same place every day, under a towering old mossy tree where he reads to me and tell's me stories. Thomas always holds me close when he reads to me, and he pats my ears before turning each page. I am a smart bear, that's what Thomas tell's me. Everything I know, I learned from what he reads to me, that's how I know about things like shadows, and trees, and the old witch in the thicket somewhere. One afternoon, we sat together under the gnarling canopy of our tallest tree, what was called sun shone prickly down at us through a roof of green. Thomas was reading to me a story that he said was called 'Scary Stories'. He always brings another book with him too, a big red one. It starts with a very long name and he uses it to find words from other books. From the red book, he says very long words and teaches them to me. The last word I remember learning was gnarled. Thomas said it meant long, and twisty, like old fingers. Then he showed me what fingers were on his paw. Thomas opened up Scary Stories and stopped on the page with a black and white drawing of a horrible beast with gaping eyes and a slumping body. The boy usually liked stories with creatures such as these; hideous, awful, lurking creatures.

"This is called, The man in the attic." Thomas read. I stared at the draped figure. I didn't know there had been a man in the attic. Thomas took me up there to play hide seek sometimes. How scary, that he had been there all this time. He continued to read to me about the man in the attic and it was what the boy would call, creepy.

"Sue slowly peeked her head around the corner. To her horror, she watched the frail, pallid figure of a dead man, who had once been faced to the high window, creak his head towards her- his neck snapping in the silence."

Thomas' body shivered.

"Isn't that creepy, Tilduff?"

I didn't shiver. I didn't feel the creepiness he felt. I know everything Thomas teaches me, but I can't feel the way he does. Maybe in a way I do. When Thomas reads to me, I understand the story. Maybe that is feeling. Thomas studied the text with small eyes and flipped through the red book.

"I wonder, what pallid could mean?"

I waited patiently for him to tell me. I could feel the boy's breath on my glassy eyes and nose, and I could feel his heart padding against my fluff. Eventually, he looked up from the book.

"What does pallid mean, Tilduff?"

Thomas put his hand on my back and tightened his fingers around me. He shook me from side to side a little bit.

"It means pale, white, right?" He said in a voice that wasn't his. I thought about it. Pallid meant pale, white. He let me go.

"That's right, Tilduff! Such a smart bear you are!" Thomas answered in his normal voice. I sat there in his arms as he continued to read, the sun glinting in my eye. Smart bear, Thomas had said.

With every story in the afternoon, there always came a story in the night too. Thomas read the same stories all about monsters and creatures. Sometimes, he would read me stories about bears, because he said I liked them. The one he called mother, always raised a fuss when she saw the boy reading the ghoulish stories before bed. She would say,

"Thomas, please! You'll have nightmares!" Then she'd usually take the book from him, put it back on the shelf, and give him one with lots of colorful pictures and animals instead. After she left, he would sneakily get up and retrieve the forbidden reading, each and every time. I wondered to myself why she thought to keep putting it back. If I could laugh, as Thomas could, I think I would. That night, after Thomas had gotten back from the place called 'eat supper', he ran into the nursery eagerly, squeezing to his chest what appeared to be a book I had never seen.

"Tilduff!" The boy whispered happily.

"Look at the new book I got from Nana!" He showed it to me. It started with a G, but I had never seen that word before.

"It's Ghost stories! We'll read it tonight okay? I promise!"

Suddenly, a voice called into the room.

"Thomas! Come say goodbye to Nana and Grandpapa before they leave!"

The boy rushed from the room with his book clutched tight. I sat against the pillow and listened to the word over and over in my head. Ghost, ghost, I wonder what ghost could mean. A short while later, Thomas returned with mother. She put his sleeping clothes on him and while he went for teeth brushing, she fixed up his bed for him, smoothing the blanket back and scrunching the pillows into place. She grabbed me up and placed me right in the middle for him. Rather promptly, the boy returned, racing to bed. He hurriedly got into the bed and anxiously waited for mother to be gone.

"Goodnight, dear." She said softly.

"Goodnight mama, can I read my goodnight story now?"

She looked at him with decisive eyes.

"Only as long as it isn't that ghost book Nana gave to you. Save it for tomorrow, dear, okay? You don't want nightmares, do you?"

The boy shook his head, an actor by now.

"No mama,"

She nodded, pleased and kissed the boy, then stood, leaving the wavering candlelight aglow. Mother closed the door softly and Thomas waited until her footsteps were no more. A great big smile lept to his waiting face.

"Okay, Tilduff! We're in the clear!" He ran to the bookshelf and swiped the new book off of the others. Climbing back into bed, Thomas pulled the cover up to his chin and hugged me tight. He set the storybook in front of us and opened it to the first page. The first page was laden with text and the lack of illustration caused the boy to turn the page. He flipped the pages until he finally came across a picture. He said nothing as he looked it over. I stared down at the dark picture, the only contrast in color, was the white pigmented person looming eerily in a small corridor. A person, just in flowing robes, and in no normal color. The face was set with blank eyes and there wasn't a trace of feeling, not creepy nor ugly. The boy breathed like he usually did when reading these tales, in the way he called afraid.

"That's a ghost, Tilduff. She used to be a person, but she died. When you die, it means your not around anymore."

I found myself not sharing the same understanding as he. That picture was of no monster, no beast. It was just of a person. How could Thomas act so afraid of a person? Ghost's looked like mother. I couldn't understand why the boy thought ghost people were scary.

"She's quite pallid isn't she, Tilduff?" He asked. Pallid, pale.

He began to read, and then he read, and read, and read until many of the pages were beneath his hand.

"Old Jack wouldn't believe the ap-apar-apparition before him, the black magic. He couldn't find the words as he gaped at the woman in the creaking corridor of the weathered ship. She looked him dead in the eye, her hair whispering around her shoulders in no air. The ghost of the woman commenced forward and old Jack stumbled back against the corner, grasping his chest- his heart was drumming too rapidly to be stopped. He began convulsing, and gasping for breath, for his heart was failing him. 'No, no!' the elderly sailor wheezed in horror as the woman approached closer. Her face began to contort into a hard, wrinkled woman's coun-ten-ance and she screeched bloody murder, so loud that the wooden walls rattled and the ship wavered. 'For what you've done!' She cackled. In a sudden instant, old Jack collapsed to the floor, a few more struggled breaths escaped his lungs, and then he lay there silent, his strained eyes forever locked open, in a dreadful fear. The ghastly woman formed back into the young face she once had been and gazed

upon Jack's deceased body emotionlessly. With a final stare of distaste, the ap-aparition damned Jack's soul to hell, then floated away into the hall, disappearing into the walls."

Thomas hadn't interrupted the story once to look in the red book. It could have been the most unsettling story the boy had ever come upon. He slowly closed the storybook and set it away, then hugged me tighter and hid under his blankets. He didn't blow out the candle.

"Don't be afraid Tilduff, there's no such thing as ghosts." The boy assured us both. But I wasn't afraid. I didn't understand the way he did.

I remember the next few days after that night. The boy had grown into an ill form of himself. It all started when he complained recordly of a hurt throat to mother. This lasted what seemed like the length of my life, until then, Thomas became less active in our every day walks and stayed in the cottage more. Mother touched his face and his throat often and said he had a fever. The boy wasn't who he used to be as he now stayed in bed more, slept too much, and only picked up books for himself, no longer sharing them with me. I heard less of his voice and when he touched me, he was frighteningly hot. Mother talked to father about the boy and they wondered together about what to think. Father thought he was just ill, while mother suggested they see the doctor. Father told her in reply, wait. Then came the dreadful rash. The boy's light arms, throat, and face splotched in a rosy way. That, was when the worry came within the household. There was a mention of 'scarlet fever' between mother and father and they immediately telephoned for the doctor to come. He didn't come tho, mother said he was far away, taking care of another sick little boy.

"When will he come back?" Thomas asked her in a sleepy voice.

"He should be back within the morning, he told me. Then when he gets back, papa and I will take you to him. You'll be alright, Thomas." Mother assured him in a gentle tone and stroked his feathery hair with a safe smile.

"What if I die, mama?" He asked. I was staring up at her too, and I saw how the light caught her eye like it also did to mine.

"Thomas what a silly thing to say. You will be alright, do you hear me? You just need some medicine."

The boy nodded slightly after doing nothing at all, then he closed his eyes and took in a long, whistly breath.

"Goodnight, mama,"

Mother rubbed his head some more, then kissed his red forehead.

"Goodnight, my darling. Everything will be okay, you'll see."

It was in an instant that he fell asleep. Mother had blown away the candlelight, and shut the door. I counted time as a way for fun. I counted the nights time for a long while and lost my thought

when the boy shook in his unconscious repose. But then he jerked almost violently until he awoke with a gasp and a moan. Thomas pulled himself forward in a stressed effort and I could hear him gasping in cool air and expelling it into hot. The ill boy struggled to pull himself from the bed but couldn't manage the act fast enough as he suddenly vomited onto the floor. He vomited again, the sickness wrapping its deathly fingers around the boy's entire body. The vulgar sound of vomit spilling to the floor filled the small, wooden room.

"M-mama..papa!" The boy wailed, and they both came racing in their nightgowns, mother carrying a flame. When she saw the vomit, she gasped. The boy threw up a third time, his body now shaking uncontrollably. Mother ran to him and scooped him up into her arms. In the jerk of the boy's lifting, I was knocked onto the floor.

"William, we have to take him to Doctor Stanley right now, he's terribly sick!"

"Darling, it's 3 a.m.,"

"William, please, we have to go find him, Thomas is burning up worse than he was before! He has scarlet fever, we need to get him to the doctor now!"

Father finally understood what needed to be done and he assisted mother in getting Thomas out of the room. They carried the horribly ill boy out and in the candlelight that was left on the bedside table by mother, I saw him look back at me weakly for a last time, and then the three of them disappeared around the corner. I lay there listening to mother and father and the boy rustle around outside and finally go off to somewhere in the dead night. I lay there counting time once again; counting the time until Thomas came back to pick me up off of the floor. I waited until there was nothing, until all of the world was still. I waited until the candle upon the table burned to a stub of wax, however, the light still flicked around the room. What were shadows, danced and grazed the walls around us. I counted the time that was left until the light suddenly whiffed out. I waited for Thomas, but he didn't come. The whole world had gone black now with but an accent of moonlight creeping through the billowing lace curtains. The only contrast in color was the white pigmented person looming silently in the near corridor. The person looked like father; he was a man. I had never seen him before. I wondered if Thomas knew about him. I think the man in the corridor was what Thomas would call, ghost. He was mysterious and pallid, like the woman in the storybook picture. It suddenly occurred to me the fear the boy had after reading that book; the fear nor understanding I was unable to share with him. I still didn't understand the concept of fear for ghost that Thomas had. The man in the hallway was a person, and as Thomas had said about ghosts, he had died. He just wasn't around anymore. The white man had a tight face and a set jaw. He wore a bonnet upon his head and a tattered jacket. He loomed in an ethereal white light from one space to the next, until he came to a stop right at Thomas' doorway. The man looked in and for a while, set his unblinking eyes upon me. After another while, he came into the boy's room in a steady, wispy pace and came for me. I waited as regularly as I always did, for, in my eyes, it was just another person coming to pick me up and either hold me or put me back down. The white man reached out for me and tightened his hands around me. I don't know if I felt anything or not. If I did, it was a feeling of a chill that didn't go away. He lifted me to his face, and I saw just how lifelike he was. What I could also see, was the other side

of the room, right through his face. I wondered if he knew how alive I was too, how alive I had become through Thomas. The white man looked at me for some time longer, but he eventually set me down right in the middle of the boy's pillows comfortably. Amongst the mess of disheveled blankets and thrown pillows, I sat there in a perfect place, neat and ready for my boy to come home. The white man stared down at me and slowly turned away. I watched him go off back into the corridor and disappear around the corner into the empty house as silently as he came. After he left me there, I began to count time again, and I began again to wait until Thomas came back home for me. Sometimes throughout the night, I thought about the white man too and wondered about him, wondered why I hadn't seen him before, or if I ever would again. I wondered why he decided tonight, when mother and father and Thomas were gone, and where he came from. But maybe, perhaps, it was as simple as a story. Perhaps it was the man in the attic who had come down. But at least he didn't come down when Thomas was here, he might have frightened the poor boy.



Untitled - Santiago Traverso

My Favorite Color is Sunrise - Jordan Peterson



The Sea by Virginia Boyd

Feel the wind in your face;
Hear the sea foam clapping
Its applause as you glide by.

Feel the cool sea breeze
As you look into the sky.

Hear the roar of the motor
With its monotone noise.

Gaze in awe at the clouds
And the seagulls as they fly.
Feel the rocking back and forth
As you ride along the waves.

See the clouds in the sky
And the sun brightly shining.



Hideaway – Jordan Peterson



Good Morning – Jordan Peterson

Dreamy Sunset - Jordan Peterson







Okinawan Summer - Emily Wilson





Chill Wave - Stephanie Gallant



Clouded Beauty - Stephanie Gallant

Untitled – Nathan Hoang



The Last Letter by Danielle Williams

He left letters.

Little ones jagged at the edges.

Saying 'I was beautiful', or that he 'loved me'.

He tried to keep my spirits up as much as possible.

But what about his?

I wasn't in my right mind, and neither was he.

His words written in crayon, and he dotted his I's with swirls of chaos and mischief.

My demons that laid a rest in the far left of my mind came out of hiding once he was around.

Dancing and intertwining their fears and misery with his.

How long did this go on?

For as long as his letters kept coming.

There was a new one each day, for 366 days.

That one extra day made a significant difference.

The last day we danced; the last day our spirits jived together.

The last day.

His last breath.

My last dance.

Our last kiss.

The last letter of our forever.

End Of The Line by MARIA BABIONE

December 26

This is my life's story. I've been wandering in this desert my whole life with no name and no hope. The only thing that keeps me alive is the occasional puddle of hot, stagnant water, but it can never quench the burning in my throat and does no more than allow me to live one more pointless day.

There is just sand as far as the eye can see, and on the horizon, a nonexistent ocean quivers and dances. The cloudless sky offers no relief from the crippling heat. I'm all alone in this wilderness, my only company the ghosts of my misdeeds and sins. I live every moment in fear of the beasts that would drive me to giving up, which I have considered, except deep down I know that death would be an even worse torture than life. My conscience never ceases to nag at my mind, telling me that I will be punished for my countless sins after I die.

When I fall asleep tonight, it will be the same as it's been my whole life. I'll say, "Things could get better tomorrow," and then tomorrow comes and things won't be any better.

* * * * *

December 27

It is midday now, and today is no better than yesterday. I'm sitting under the edge of a cliff to stay out of the sun until it cools down some.

This morning I had an interesting encounter. I was getting some water from a pool that was half mud, when a man stumbled up to the mud puddle and began to drink. When he finished, out of habit, I asked him what his story was. Today, I was in luck.

His story wasn't much different than mine, except he had heard the Good News dozens of times from his sister. He thought that I was crazy because I was so eager to hear what the Good News was all about.

After he left, still mocking my stupidity for wanting to hear a fairy tale, I was thoroughly confused. He had heard the Good News plenty of times, but still thought that it was nonsense. I, on the other hand, was dying to find out what the Good News was all about and yet I had never heard it once. If the followers of the Good News thought that their message was so important, why did no one ever tell me about it? I only hope that I get at least one chance to hear it before I die.

December 28

I was attacked by beasts last night. It wasn't the first time and it definitely won't be the last. I'm pretty sure that it was Fear and Hatred this time.

I was sound asleep when I suddenly woke up, covered in frozen sweat and conscious of the fear that I would die before I heard the Good News. I sat for a few minutes trying to warm back up when a sudden wave of hatred for those who believe in the Good News crashed over me.

Why had no one ever told me? Didn't they care that I was dying?

Amid these agonizing thoughts, I realized that I wasn't alone. I stood up to see what it was, but I was only greeted by the solitary silence of the desert. I was about to lie back down when something crashed into my legs and knocked me to the ground. I rolled onto my back and tried to sit up, but two beasts ran up to my head and began shrieking in my ears. I was pinned to the ground by an invisible force, unable to move, trying to resist the horrible thoughts racing through my head. After a few minutes, I was completely drained of strength and gave in to the thoughts that nearly drove me mad. They continued to torture me for what seemed like an eternity, and then left, vanishing into the blackness. I was too exhausted to move, so I fell asleep and didn't wake up until late afternoon today.

I am still trying to figure out how I didn't die last night. It was the worst attack I have ever experienced, and yet, my life was spared. Maybe the man I met yesterday was wrong about the Good News being a fairy tale.

* * * * *

December 29

Thankfully, I had an uneventful night. But I can't say half as much for today.

It was past noon when it happened. I was walking along, as usual, when a crazy guy with a crossbow jumped out from behind a rock and aimed right at me. Just as he released the arrow, a white-bearded man jumped in front of me and the arrow plunged into his chest. The crazy guy ran off yelling curses, and I bent down to see if the man who saved my life was still alive. He was barely holding on and I said,

"You shouldn't have done that. My life isn't worth saving."

He smiled and said, "Oh, yes it is. God's own Son died to save you from eternal punishment. We all deserve to go to hell when we die because we have all sinned against God when He specifically told us not to, and even one sin condemns us. But God loved us so much that Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, took the place of all mankind on the Cross. Everyone who chooses to believe this will be saved because of Jesus' sacrifice and Resurrection. Just accept His gift of salvation and ask Him to forgive you. Jesus loves you. He wants you to spend eternity in Heaven with Him. He doesn't want you to be eternally - in - agony."

With that he breathed his last and tears filled my eyes. I can't explain the emotions I was feeling. Deep down in my heart I knew he had told me the truth, but it was too easy. I had wanted to hear the Good News, but now that I knew the message, my mind stood in the way of actually accepting it.

All these thoughts and more ran through my mind as I buried the man who saved my life and told exactly what I had thought I had wanted to hear.

* * * * *

December 30

I spent all of today looking for water and not finding a drop. Now the sun is setting and I am under an outcropping of rock, wondering about the Good News.

Can just accepting the gift of salvation really save me from hell? It is too simple. It's just like someone told me once: "I would accept the Good News, but I don't want to release control of my life over to God."

There are a hundred reasons why I should accept the Good News, and only two reasons that I can think of why I shouldn't.

I can always become a follower of the Good News if I'm about to die. I can wait a while longer.

* * * * *

December 31

I'm guessing that I've been knocked out for about six hours.

Late afternoon today I noticed that I started getting light-headed and delirious from lack of water. Although I knew better, I headed towards the mirage that I mistook for water. Half blinded by the heat, I stumbled off the edge of the cliff. As I fell, I had one brief moment of sanity and I thought, "Why didn't I accept the Good News when I had I chance? Now I'm going to die and spend eternity in hell." When I hit the sand below, I immediately lost consciousness.

Now I am sitting below that same cliff, knowing what I should do, but still unsure of how to do it. I finally decided to pray:

"God, I've never prayed before and I'm not sure how to accept the gift of salvation, but I can't wait any longer. I need You. Please forgive me for all of the mistakes I've made. I know that You are who You say You are, and that You died on the cross and rose again to save me. I surrender everything I have and all that I am to You. Do with me what You will. Please, help me. Amen."

January 1

I fell asleep last night completely changed. I've never felt so loved and safe in my entire life. While I slept, I dreamed that Jesus gave me a drink of water that quenched the burning in my throat, and He gave me new clothes.

When I awoke, I realized that the dream was much more than just a dream. I suddenly remembered that the burning in my throat had vanished entirely the moment I called on Christ's name. Then I noticed that I was wearing new, clean clothes.

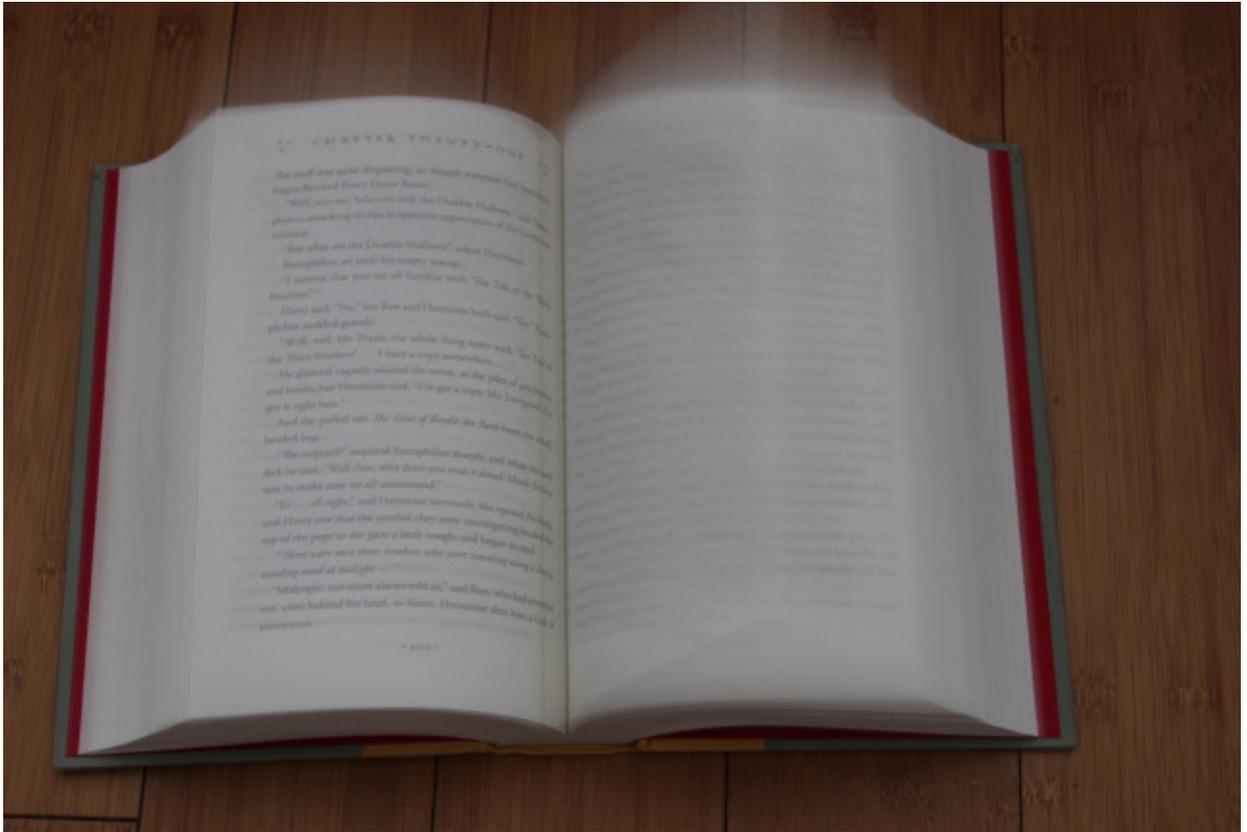
The sun rose, casting light on everything, revealing beauty that I had never seen before. A longing to serve God with my whole life filled my heart and I stood up, ready to face the mission I'd been given by my Savior Himself.

There are so many people who don't know Jesus. I know what that feels like, and I must go and tell everyone I can of the Good News. I know that my Savior will always be right beside me.

I am no longer a man with no name and no hope, clinging to the end of the line. I am a child of the King, and the greatest adventure of my life is just beginning...

"Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Romans 10:9



Speed Reading - Anonymous

Life Will Go On by Virginia Boyd

Life goes by like the pages of a book.
Sometimes, it's slow, sometimes, it's nonstop,
and sometimes, it's somewhere in between the two.
Sometimes, we'll be counting the seconds in our boredom,
Others, we'll be wondering where the time flew.
Either way, life still goes on
So, we should make the best of what we have been given.

Life's Clockwork by Damon Mercado

People simply know that time moves forward just as life itself.

There are times when we all wish for the past to be changed or experienced again, however it is just a fantasy that many wish even to this day.

It is not a crime to think of the past or even the time of any past experience, but life is like a clock itself.

Time goes forward once life is on earth. There is also the time of those that have ended, but the world goes on since there is many that still have time.

Some say "The time in the past was better than today", yet today the people may not have realized that life has gotten better with the risks taken in the past. This is why it is called history, to wish it away or to ignore learning it will simply have it repeat itself in the future.

In this day we the people are close to a utopia for everyone, however different ideals and perspectives do hold us back. But this is also the beauty of life.

And yet today, time has allowed all to be different yet similar at the same time.

Without violence there is no peace, without truth there is no trust, without death there is no life.

What do any of these words mean ?

Well this, is your time.

It is your time to think about what these words mean to you, or not?

But there is a clock for us all.

Some can worry and it can even scare some people.

Others can accept it and use time to find purpose.

While some can do both.

They know that there is no need to worry about purpose and just experience and embrace the present.

With so many things to think about not everyone has that much time, but that is part of life itself.

Questions won't always have answers. The difference can be scary yet pleasing.

To evolve you have to be weak but fight, to be kind is sometimes not seen,

to accept is a challenge compared to resisting.

Many words have contrast to each other, yet that is what makes our world.

So to loom to the future can be the same as the past, but in anyone's present time that can be the clockwork of life.



Vasquez Memorial Poetry Series brought Jericho Brown to CF to read from his collection and answer questions.

Brown grew up in Louisiana and worked as a speechwriter for the mayor of New Orleans before earning his doctorate in literature and creative writing from the University of Houston.

Brown also holds a master's degree in creative writing from the University of New Orleans. He is an associate professor and director of the Creative Writing Program at Emory University in Atlanta.

Brown's daring new book, "The Tradition," details the "normalization of evil and history at the intersection of the past and the personal. Poems of fatherhood, legacy, blackness, queerness, worship, and trauma are propelled into stunning clarity by Brown's mastery," according to a CF press release.

Brown is the author of three collections of poetry:

- "The Tradition" (2019): Finalist for the 2019 National Book Award.

- "The New Testament" (Copper Canyon, 2014): Winner of the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and named one of the best collections of the year by Library Journal, Coldfront, and the Academy of American Poets.

- "Please" (New Issues, 2008): It won the 2009 American Book Award, according to the author.



Q&A

Q: What inspired you to write poetry?

Poetry taught me about sex. Poetry taught me all kinds of things that I wanted to know about. I think I knew what a miscarriage was when I was in Elementary school, because of a poem called “Stillborn” by Sylvia Plath, where she compares her failure at making her poems to having miscarriages. And of course, me being a curious kid, I wanted to know what a miscarriage was. Poetry allowed me the opportunity to know things. And I thank God for that, because then I wouldn’t be a man who would know easy stuff. There are secrets that people don’t talk to one another about. There are things in this land—in this world—that we dare not speak of. So, when I was a kid, I wanted that language. I wanted to be able to use that language. I wanted to say what was real. I wanted to tell the truth. People don’t like telling the truth. When people tell the truth, people call you controversial.

Q: What is the best advice you’ve ever been given?

“Always say yes, but use condoms.” “Always say yes, but plan.” I really think it’s a good idea, particularly when you want to be an artist, to take every opportunity to see and experience what you can; because that’s going to become the finale for your art. That’s going to be the material for your poems. So, if there is an opportunity to do it, then do it.

Q: Do you prefer self-publishing or traditional publishing?

Here’s what I think about publishing, I think it’s last on the list of things I think about. Publishing is actually the saddest thing for a poet. When I’m writing a book, it’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me. When I have to let that book go to my publisher, I have lost everything I have been doing often for the last four years of my life. And now I’m looking at the world like, I have nothing to revolve my life around. So, I think the most important truth if you’re an artist, is that you perfect the things you are making. That you make them as good as you can possibly make them. So that when it is time to publish—whether you self-publish or publish with the press—you know that what’s going out in the world; you’ve done everything you can possibly do with it before you move on to the next thing, and you have made something you can be proud of. That’s number one. And then the route you go—whether it’s publishing or publishing through a press—I don’t think any is better. But there are opportunities that come with each. When you self-publish, you have the opportunity of getting all of your money for every book you sell. When you publishing with a press, you have an opportunity of entering in certain prizes that don’t take in self publish books. So, there is different kind of attention, because you might win one of those prizes. You have a different set of prejudices and respect that people deal with authors who have published with their own press. Whereas, when you’re self-publishing, you’re not necessarily dealing with the same thing

Q: How do you stay motivated?

You have to love it. We need to do what we don’t have as a career. Figure out what you love. Writing is failing; failing is a play. When I’m stuck, I pull a bag of lines that go as far as 1999. I cut off lines and save it. If I write something bad, then I need experience to fix it. Just because you don’t write something new, it doesn’t make it bad. Be your identity. Perfect and discipline what you want to do.

A message from the staff to the reader

The Social Isolation by Jeff Boyd

Think back to a distant time, long ago, when people greeted people face to face, where restaurants had indoor seating, and professional haircuts were the norm. Remember when teachers made fun of online content creators and when preppers were considered out of touch with reality. Who knew being a homeschooler was the best tool for preparing for the apocalypse? I certainly wasn't expecting it. Turns out I didn't have 20/20 vision.

It seems like a dream, doesn't it? But it was in fact the norm just a few short months ago. In reality, almost no one realized that we would be living in a global pandemic this year. I certainly did not. Congratulations! We have made it into the history books.

Although I have made light of many things, it is important that I acknowledge that we are living in uncertain times and many people have suffered. It is with great regret that we have had to mourn friends and loved ones. It is safe to say we have all been affected. You could look to any source of news and be aware of this. However, despite the loss, I recommend we see this as an opportunity. An opportunity to reorder our lives.

No other time, short of 9/11, has brought us closer as both a nation and the world. Communities around the world are uniting. Now is a time to reflect on our lives. - to be grateful for what we have.

Being quarantined can be a challenge. The entire family all stuck in the cramped house, stress is high, and tempers are short. It is easy to say something that you may later regret. Rather than using this time as a chance to sleep in or binge-watch Netflix, use it to reconnect. We have lived such entertainment/media focused lives we forget to give the people in our life the time they deserve. Take the time to reconnect, whether it is with parents or by zooming with friends on the other side of the world.

Most of us are not doctors, nurses, or other medical personnel. But there are many who are capable of being local heroes. When this is over you will want to look back on this as an opportunity well spent and not wasted. Look at those around you who are less fortunate. We are all capable of doing our part to uplift others. We all have older family members and neighbors who are in need. Times of adversity can bring out the worst in people, but it can also bring out the best. Do not waste this chance to better the lives of those around you. And when this trial is over remember what it is like to face a tentative adversity. And when times are tough: remember, you've already survived the bat soup apocalypse.

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Art Editor

Virginia Boyd



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