

IN THE WRITE MIND

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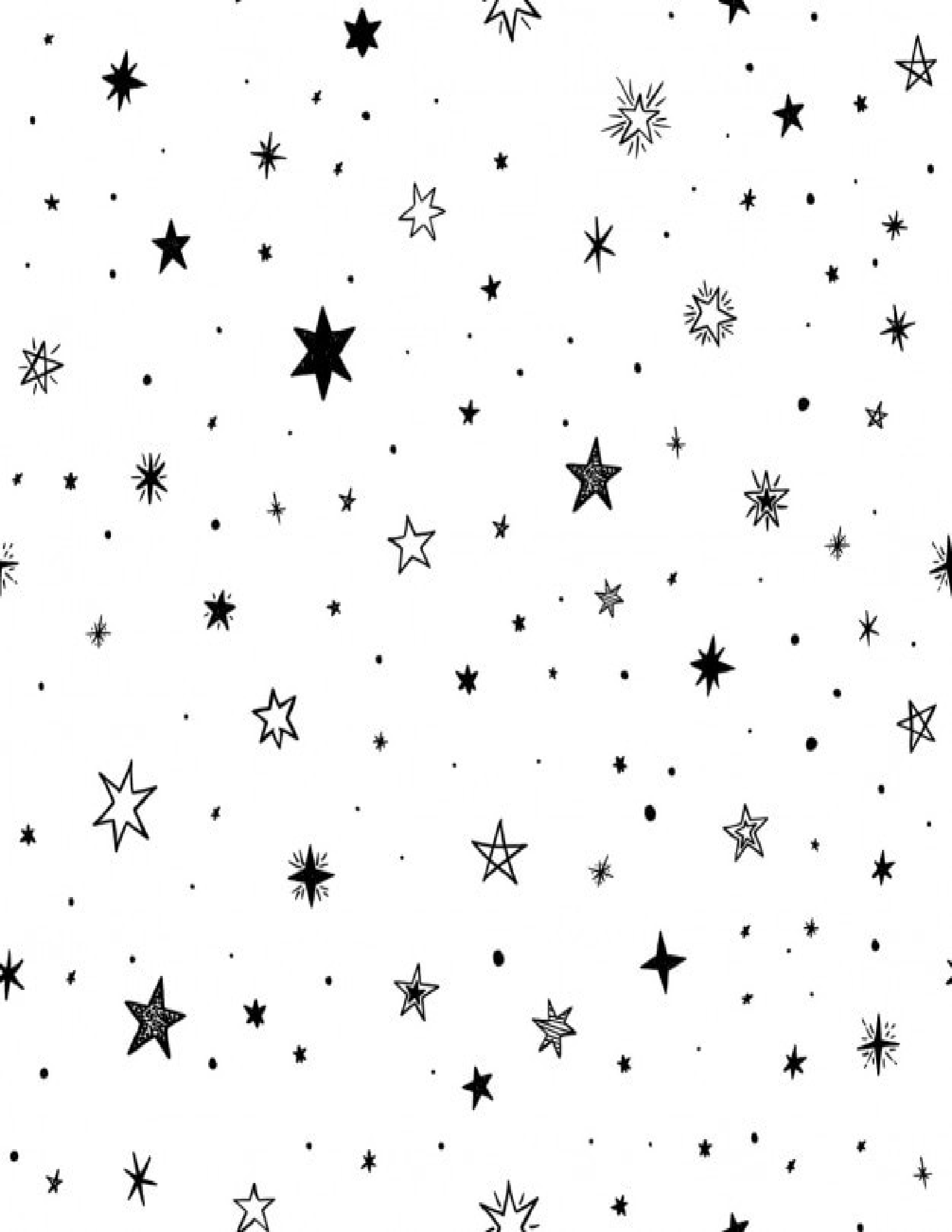


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Where Are You?

Poem By Ganesha Narahari Rao

Are you the thing? Are you the object?
Then where are you?
Are you the sense? Are you the self?
So where are you?

Are you the witness? Are you the ego?
Then where are you?
Are you in the heart ? Are you the conciseness?
So where are you?

Do you drowse? Do you talk? Or are you the emotion?
Then how are you?
Who are you? How are you? And where are you?
When you were born? How are you born? Where were
you born?

It could be however, but where are you?





Gaia and Luna
Art By Austin Roberts

Enigma

Written By Mahaela RyAnn Sleeper

You stand alone on your little balcony, a monarch overlooking their kingdom. Below you, the pool lies in wait. Its surface is placid and still; unbroken glass. You cross your arms on the railing and lean over. Somewhere beyond the fence, where the light doesn't quite stretch, you see something move. A coyote, or perhaps a fox? You squint your eyes, trying to see beyond the purple glare of the LED lamps.

The figure, shifting slightly, strikes you as something akin to a tortoise. Thoughts of crepuscular critters aside, you are now focused back on the pool. It glows like a beacon of hope in the vast darkness of the mostly lifeless desert. You cannot blame whatever creature was lurking about for wanting to get closer. It is a large and lonely world out there.

You see the flash before you hear anything. Looking up, you see the sky (which seemingly moments before had been painted with stars.) Now, it is shrouded by a thick blanket of black clouds. A storm is rolling in, and with it comes hope, life, and prosperity to the dry, barren, sands. You retreat inside, but leave the door ajar. A hushed silence falls upon you for a heartbeat or two.

Then, breaking the silence, thunder rolls in the distance, its deep sound reverberating across the desert and bouncing around the room.

You creep deeper into the room, hand gliding across the desk and grabbing a lighter. With a click, it ignites, and you circle around the room, setting each candle ablaze. Their dancing flames cast the room in a warm yellow glow. Their wicks turn black and crackle like that of a campfire. You fall into your chair, letting it spin idly. Your gaze listlessly falls upon that of your essays, which lay incomplete on your desk.

Outside, the wind hits the hotel. A siren-like whistle rings through the air. Gentle tapping begins slowly, and then grows in frequency. The first drops of rain have fallen. A downpour would soon begin. There is a word to describe the scent of rain: Petrichor. It is a nice word, but you feel as if your definition doesn't match the dictionary's. There is no musky scent. There is no fresh tang of green plants and new life. You inhale deeply, met instead with the sharp smell of chlorine.

You grab one of the papers off your desk and scan its title, "Alexander the Great: Life and Death." You frown, racking your brain for any trace of when you had begun writing. At this moment, it occurs to you that any trace of your past beyond this hotel is murky at best. Slightly unsettled, you close your eyes and focus instead on the fragrance of cinnamon and pumpkin that now drifts about the room. Something about this makes you yearn for a thing you cannot even remember. A distant place? Perhaps a person?

Above the whistling wind and the pounding rain, you catch snatches of something else



coming from inside the halls; two children squealing and screeching in delight, no doubt getting into some crazy adventure. You pity the poor parent.

The rain is at its heaviest now. You reluctantly open your eyes and abandon your seat. You shut the balcony door and hardly spare a glance down at rain-sodden carpet. You can feel the moisture creep through your socks and have simply decided that this problem can be dealt with by the 'you' of tomorrow. You walk to your bed, twin sized, and sit on its edge.

You remove the socks and pull your blanket around your shoulders. It is soft and cozy. Its texture reminds you slightly of the fur on a dead hare you had found by the hotel parking-lot. Scooting further back on the bed, you prop yourself up against some pillows and hum a little melody. Your own voice is something you so rarely hear or use. The vibrations in your throat feel foreign and new. You hum louder, relishing the sensation.

In the halls, an adult can be heard, the sharp commanding tones of a parental figure unmistakable. A smirk tugs at the corners of your mouth and you grab your book from the bedside table, running your finger down its worn-out spine before curling your knees up to your stomach, and opening to page one. In moments such as this, when you lay warm and cozy in your little room, you feel safest.

Nothing truly is right here. You know deep in your mind that there's something off about this place; about your reality. Yet, that's just it. This is your reality, however strange or nonsensical. From the blistering hot days spent hiding from the sun, to the freezing night time adventures in oversized hoodies, it is all yours. The hotel with its odd choice of lighting, the

parking lot with no cars, it is all yours. The warm blankets, unfinished essays, and savory pumpkin candles that make your mouth water, they are all yours. The halls that smell so heavily of mildew that you can taste it? Yeah, those are yours too. It's not perfect, but nothing ever is. It is beautiful though, the mystery, the darkness, the ever-shifting balance that comes with the nature of living in such a volatile environment. It shows you something nothing else could. Beauty is not a place, a person, or even a thing. It is an idea that stretches so far beyond human comprehension.

Beauty is this, and this is beauty.



Moonlight Watch
Art By Austin Roberts

Sandcastles No More

Poem By Mahaela Sleeper

The memory is vivid and cold
Ice layered upon a beach.

A beach that once was home to
Two kids
Building sand castles,
And splashing in the waves.
The memory rages like a storm
Churning the waters
Flooding the shore.
It consumes all,
Takes all,
Erases all
Leaving nothing
But a single shell.

Me
I fled the storm,
I escaped the beach
Feet bloodied and hair matted
I emerged, half-dead
Half drowned
Tainted
Sand covering my wounds
Alive
But barely living.
Yet, I return to that beach

Occasionally
A heaviness anchored on
My weary soul,

A wariness drawing my breaths quick
Makes my heart pound
Phantom waves splash across my
Ankles.

It's been years,
Maybe a lifetime
It's been too long for someone who
Has lived for such a short
Increment of time

But there is a beauty
In acceptance.
In watching the horizon,
Glistening with sunlight

Those two kids are gone,
And in their wake stand
Two different people
Bound by the chains of
Blood and scars.

One lays below the water, trapped
And the other stands cruelly above,
Her feet planted still
The guilt of being free
The guilt of knowing the other,
A little boy she had once known,
Was caught in the riptide,
Wondering why
There would be sandcastles no more.





Bleeding Horizon

Photo By Elaura Mehler



The Seashore Crab

Photo By Grace L Pearce

Belief Through Buckeyes

Written By Jodie Kane-Combs

Everyone comes from different walks of life and has different families; I just got a very unlucky start.

My siblings and I came from a family below the poverty line, which took a huge toll on our lives. We rarely had home-cooked meals, went to low-income schools, and our parents were not fit to be parents. Luckily enough for us, after multiple foster homes and years of losing hope, we found a “forever home.”

In a small town in eastern Kentucky, I came upon the belief that family traditions and recipes are very impactful and leave lasting memories. The church my family went to had an annual Christmas bake sale to raise money for the ministry, and our mother wanted us to get involved. So, she taught us how to make buckeyes. We spent a whole night in the kitchen, learning how to use the stove and microwave, listening to Christmas music, and often arguing about who got to do which parts of the recipe. The whole time, without knowing it, we were growing more comfortable with our Mom than we had with any other foster parent.

Buckeyes, and Christmas candy in general, are a very deep-rooted “southern” tradition. Being the curious child I was, I researched the history of buckeyes, and they mostly originate in Ohio. They were named after the nut of the Ohioan buckeye tree, as both the candy and the nut resemble a deer’s (buck’s) eye. In eastern Kentucky, buckeyes are one of the many Christmas candies that

are prepared. The usual purpose of Christmas candy for Kentuckians is to be given away, to show “southern hospitality.” In our family, we kept up this tradition. As the years passed, it became second nature to most of us. It became an annual moment for us to slow down and spend time together.

After the second year, it was then my job to melt the chocolate chips, while everyone else rolled the peanut butter balls. My siblings were jealous because they feared it meant that I was being favored. Though it was due to me being the oldest, I soothed their nerves by sneaking them over half a bag of chocolate chips, one by one, while our mother was not looking.

The next year, my younger sister got the next “promotion” in the kitchen, as she had the idea to make the buckeyes with crunchy peanut butter rather than using creamy peanut butter. After that, we were the first to sell out at the ministry bake sale and this quickly became a permanent change to the recipe.

My siblings and I, because we had been through so much, had a habit of emotionally shutting down at any attempt at connection. We did not necessarily grow up in an environment of love and care, so we never learned how to accept it. But, with this tradition, our mother taught us how to be loved. She was patient and kind, and she expressed her love through the buckeyes. She made Christmas feel “normal” to us, something we had never experienced. The last year



of this loving tradition was, unknowingly, the most special family holiday of my life. Though we had moved to Florida by this time, and were away from our home church, we continued making our buckeyes. We gave them out at our new church and people still loved them.

A couple of months before Christmas in 2020, our Mom suffered from a stroke, leaving her in a wheelchair for our yearly tradition. We adapted to this change: our Mom stayed on the sidelines, letting us take charge and correcting us when needed. She could not physically be involved, but she sang Christmas songs with us and watched the kids she lovingly accepted into her home, her kids, make the recipe she taught us so many years ago. The tradition ended after that year, as in September of 2021, our Mom contracted Coronavirus and passed away. This tragic event split my family, both physically and emotionally. After she passed, I moved in with my best friend, my sister got placed into foster care, and my youngest two siblings moved back home to Kentucky to live with our extended family. I had just graduated high school, and I had already lost everything.

Christmas came three months later, and the tradition was no longer. This tradition, which started and ended with my Mother, had such a lasting impact on my life. It made us all believe in family, and more importantly, gave us the belief that we deserved it. I had never felt normal before our Christmas tradition. Having the parents I did, being in and out of several foster homes, and never staying at a school for more than a school year, I felt like a freak. But having a tradition, doing one thing every year that made us similar to other kids, made us feel normal. Because of this familial experience, I will pass this tradition on. I want to pass on the memory of my Mother, her love and care, and give my future family the belief in love and family: the belief in the “power” of buckeyes.



Diamond Heart

Photo By
Stephanie
Trithart



Innocence

Art By Parker Knazur



Mimi's Caterpillar

Written By Addison Leonard

My grandma, Mimi, has a gorgeous garden full of all kinds of fruits and vegetables. She has birdhouses throughout her backyard and a hummingbird feeder in front of her window. My cousins, my sister, and I spent a lot of time at her house when we were young. We loved it when we got a chance to help Mimi with her garden, so we were always outside.

One thing I distinctly remember from the many days spent at her house was when Mimi brought a caterpillar inside. We kids quickly grabbed a jar, some leaves, and some twigs to create a house for the caterpillar. Mimi gently placed the bug into the bottom of the jar, then covered the top with a square of cheesecloth tightly secured with a metal ring. Each time we visited, we got to see how the caterpillar was growing. It got bigger and bigger as the days went by; eating the leaves almost as quickly as we placed them in the jar.

One day we went over to see how he was growing, and we found him hanging upside down on the little branch. Mimi explained that it was starting to make its chrysalis. We all watched as it reached up to the twig and started to slowly spin its chrysalis around its body. When the caterpillar was finished and fully encased in its new form, Mimi carefully grabbed the twig and put it into a bigger, netted cage, that was more suitable for the butterfly to come. As time went on the chrysalis got bigger, and it changed colors from a bright green, like the caterpillar, to a translucent, dark purple. When it finally hatched, my family and I were all so excited. The newly formed butterfly slowly crawled out of the chrysalis and onto the twig. I watched with wonder and fascination how the little green caterpillar from before could turn into this completely new-looking creature. The butterfly stood on the twig for quite some time, its wings had to slowly dry and open from being all squished inside of the

chrysalis. Once its wings were completely dry, the butterfly started to flap and flit around the enclosure. Mimi took this as a sign that it was time to let the butterfly go, so with all of us kids following swiftly behind, she grabbed the cage and walked outside.

She gently set the enclosure down on the table, opened the door, and took the butterfly out. Us kids, of course, wanted a chance to hold it too. With me being the oldest, I was up first. She took my hand and placed the butterfly gently on top. Now, one thing to know about me is that I have never been the biggest fan of interacting with creepy crawlies, so I was a little freaked out. Everything was going fine though, the butterfly was sitting on my hand and calmly flapping its wings. However, the butterfly had decided that my shirt looked like an even more lovely place to sit. Mimi quickly tried to keep me from freaking out and accidentally hurting the poor thing, she said "It's okay! It's okay! He won't hurt you!". I cautiously peered down at my shoulder and watched as it gently flapped its wings. With it being so close to my face I could see its eyes, its antennae, and even its swirly little tongue. Soon though, the butterfly flew away. I watched as it soared into the sky, thinking about all of the flowers it would pollinate or wondering if a bird would eat it.

I knew we couldn't have him in a net forever, so the time we got to see him was all the more special. I got to watch the caterpillar grow and change, I saw where the butterfly came from and understood its development. I think that's one of the reasons why I was so calm when it landed on me. I knew what it was, and I knew that it couldn't cause me any harm, so I had no reason to be frightened. This memory showed me how important it is to understand the things around you.

Galaxy Girl

Art By Cara Phillips





Rosette Nebula

Poem By Adrian Blake

I can't help myself,
I'm floatin towards your magnetic draw
Getting ever closer
To witnessing your cosmic awe

The thought of being
in the presence of your radiance
Leaves me in a blushing state
as I let myself imagine
letting our bodies gravitate

We'll be dancing across the interstellar clouds
until the day, when vibrantly
We will become one
In a grand display of visual harmony

First Love

Poem By Purshia Allotey

If you had behaved with caution
If you had behaved with poise
There would be no jurisdiction for me to make this
choice

I would've stayed
I could've spoken,
Yet you closed the door that I left open

When I peak through the tall stone door
There's nothing left for me
We've grown too much, there's nothing anymore
I was given a chance to blossom
To sprout without you

All the ways I've grown
But never learned to forget you
I just needed time for my perspective to be shown

I don't seek your forgiveness or affection
Though, a nice conversation might open the door
once again



Lips

Poem By Emmie Kennedy

Your lips make me feel aroused
But your lips never utter sweet sounds
They whisper harsh words
I wish I never heard
Yet to you my lips are still bound

You're charming, you're funny, you're clever
To please you is my only endeavor
I sing and I dance
I strive for romance
Yet to you I'm still just whatever

My skills and my talents are climbing
I got the lead in a show and it's exciting
I tell my good news
But you're unamused
I should have known my wins were trifling
When your voice skims your lips, I frown
But you're angry, so your malice doesn't count
Nothing good comes out
Of your precious mouth

Yet to you my lips are still bound

No Place Like Home

Written By Purshia Allotey

Beyond the door lies the comforting embrace of familiarity, a haven that I cherish deeply. The gentle fragrance of vanilla-scented candles gracefully wafts through the air, instantly enveloping my senses.

In the confines of four walls, I find myself in my most beloved sanctuary: my room.

Despite its modest dimensions, it cradles everything essential to me. The room is awash with the soft, diffused sunlight that trickles through my blackout curtains, adding light to my space. Its gentle glow graces my most cherished possession—the twin-sized bed that claims nearly half the room. This bed is my constant source of comfort and solace. A sleek black duvet comforter gracefully drapes over the mattress, its cool texture soothing to the touch. A smaller, hand-knit green blanket adds a touch of color to the room's predominantly dark palette.

Positioned behind my bed; stands a rich, dark mahogany shelf, elegantly displaying a collection of items close to my heart. On the top-most shelf, candles cast a warm glow, illuminating a globe placed beside them. Nestled alongside are two journals, patiently awaiting my thoughts. The shelf cradles my most treasured literary companions: books that have journeyed alongside me through the passage of time. Some of these books bear the weathered burden of age, their spines cracked, and pages softened by the passage of years, while others, untouched and forgotten, have lost the memory of what it means to be held.

Amidst this literary congregation, vibrant and playful Legos, rendered in an array

of colors, form a whimsical juxtaposition to the realm of dusty, well-worn pages. Adjacent to my bed, a series of paintings adorn the walls. To the far left, a vibrant depiction of eight colorful flowers dances in a seemingly random pattern, each outlined in silver against a soft yellow backdrop. In the center, a more abstract piece comes to life, with various shades of blue swirled together, resembling a serene ocean with gentle waves. Finally, to the far right, a vivid canvas unfolds, featuring a radiant orange background reminiscent of the sun.

A majestic tree, painted in deep brown, extends across it, bearing numerous branches and, on one limb, two doves. These doves, while devoid of expressions, emanate an unmistakable aura of love. Beneath the paintings gracing the wall, a canvas of free-hand art unfolds, showcasing a mesmerizing array of stars, planets, comets, and asteroids. In the heart of this manufactured galaxy lies the sun—a vibrant, fiery orange star with irregular craters, creating a captivatingly unique circular pattern. Orbiting the sun are three planets, each cloaked in varying shades of green, complemented by a striking sage-green shape resembling an italicized 'X' at its core. These planets seem to evoke the image of a mystical chemical world, while white dots scatter along the planet's periphery, adding to its cosmic allure.

I hold a deep fondness for the dark mahogany desk tucked into the corner opposite my bed. On the far left, my gaming setup beckons with promise. The console, though veiled in a gentle layer of dust, eagerly awaits the next adventure, while the blank screen of my monitor



yearns to come to life with the push of a button. Neatly stacked beside them is an assemblage of notebooks and papers, bearing the weight of impending deadlines and uncharted academic journeys. Under my desk are more notebooks. Capitals of unreviewed work lie in a box with index cards. Written on them looks to what can only be described as chicken scratch. A combination of graphs, numbers, and short-phrased written responses from a stress-induced night before an exam.

Finally, the tour ends with my closet, it stands as a realm of memories and emotions, far extending its primary function. This closet is not merely for storage or for tucking away those objects that tug at my heartstrings. The gentle waft of vanilla that pervades the room halts at its threshold, leaving it in bland solitude. Nestled deep within, elevated on a secluded shelf, are cherished photographs of my father and I. His radiant smile, full of life and warmth, illuminates the dim space, while his deep brown eyes shimmer with uninhibited joy. A cascade of letters and birthday cards, each one a testament to the past, precariously rest atop these photographs. Suspended below, almost in solemn reflection, is a black dress adorned with a delicate pink ribbon, when looking at it floods of emotions crash into my solemnly blank face. Yet, an assortment of meticulously arranged jewelry boxes on the shelf and a vivid tapestry of varied fabrics gracefully shield the painful undertones of this space, particularly that of the dress worn to bid final farewells.



A Family Of Stars
Art By Reueleasah Jean-Francois

Alternative Realities

Written By Stephanie Brake

As soon as you walk through the doors; it feels as you have entered a new reality.

Really you have, thousands of stories and other lives live here. You may not know all of them now but soon you'll be able to experience other narratives and find out how it feels to be in their world. The most beautiful place imaginable is a library. Once you make it through the doors, which were set open, the first thing welcoming you is the dim lights. Your eyes are finally able to relax, and you are able to see the breathtaking view that stands before you.

Thousands of shelves line the walls filled with books with different authors and genres. Windows are all around the front of the building helping a lot of natural light beam in. Tables filled with books are located right as you walk in and follow all the way to the back, leaving the middle of the building open and immense.

As you continue getting farther into the prestigious building, you see signs everywhere telling you what is trending under each genre and what everyone is currently loving. In the corner of your eye, you can see people in line waiting for a drink or small food that they sell inside the Starbucks at the library.

With the soft subtle music playing overhead you make your way over there, you find comfy chairs scatter the carpet and line

the surrounding walls, as well as rows filled with hundreds of magazines. Finding out that this library has not only thousands of books and stories waiting for you, but also a plethora of games, bookmarks, and magazines only adds to your excitement. The smell of fresh cookies and sweet drinks fill your nose as you continue to travel around the library.

You can hear pages turning as others decide if a book is right for them. As they do this the smell of freshly printed pages overcome your senses. This reminds you of the enchanting smell of vanilla and wood. As you continue to browse the library, you get closer to the checkout line where the noise of beeping sound like crickets on a clear night.

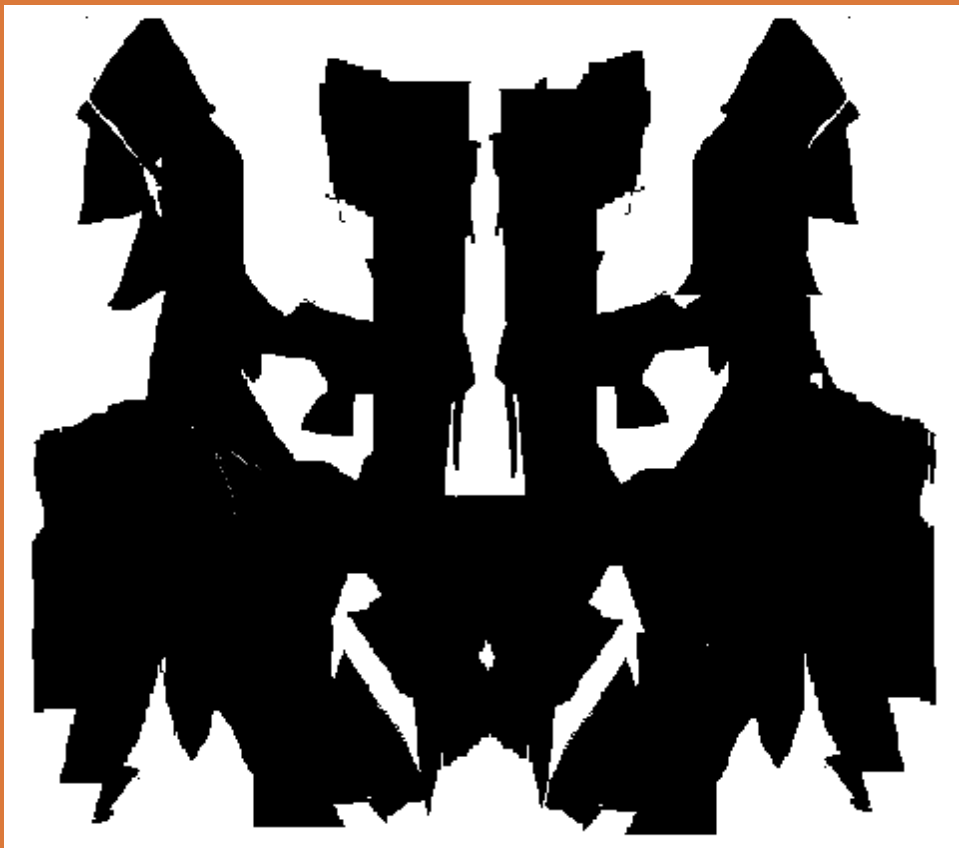
Walking down a new aisle, the beeping turns into background noise and the sound of the subtle music gets louder; but the smell of older antique books finds you. This aisles sign reading classics helps explain the new dusty wood smell invading your nose. As you saunter down this row you see thousands of different colors. Soon you realize there are multiple of each book but with different editions of the cover. Ranging from hardcover with a plain classic design to paperback with a fun cartoon design they all show the uniqueness each book can have.

Deciding to start your hunt through this labyrinth for your next reads, you grab



a quick drink from the Starbucks located in the front of the library and start to trek through each section. Tasting the excitement of your tongue as well as your coffee, you begin picking up books that interest you. You're able to feel some dust from the shelves slide off as you pull the books to you; resulting in you also accidentally get some in your mouth. Once the dust settles on the shelf and you wash the taste of what got into your mouth down with your coffee, you start flipping through the book reading the very beginning and the summary of the back.

As other people make their way inside this aisle, they start doing the same, some with baskets and others carrying what books or games they want in their hands. After searching around, going through all the sections from romance to fantasy, hardcover and paperback books are now stacked leading on your chest and no matter what you can't wash the taste of excitement and eagerness off your tongue.



Symmetry Completed

Art By Landon Phillips

Built-In Best Friend

By Leah Hughes

Born into a cruel world,
You made all the difference.
Into this life I was hurled,
And you changed my life
in an instant.

Regardless of if my day was gloomy
Or if my day was bad,
You found a way to make me happy
By being able to call you my dad.
The only person that receives the an-
noying texts that I send,
I am forever blessed
To have my built-in best friend.





All Green
Photo By Grace L Pearce

Blind

Written By Adrian Blake

"I'm going to do something!" The man declared. The other men laughed. Others scowled at him. The man then stood up; his trousers wet from the raising water. "Just look!" The man pointed at the hole where the water was rushing in. "If we repair this hole, the boat won't sink!" One of the other crewman raised his fist, "The Captain will fix it! All we have to do is wait, then He will fix it. Don't you have faith in Him?" The man slumped, "Of course I have faith in him." The others nodded their heads, pleased their crewmate was listening to reason. The crewmate continued. "All we have to do is wait and believe in our Captain. Sit down, relax! That hole will be fixed eventually." The man paused, contemplating about his next action. "Sit down mate, the Captain will take care of that hole for us as long as we believe!" The others motioned the man to join them in waiting. The man stared at the hole and the debris surrounding them. He put his hands in his pockets, pulling out some nails. "Why don't use what the captain gave us? Look, he gave us the tools to stop something like this! We have these nails and there's a piece of wood floating there! We can't wait for the captain forever, you know? We can use these tools to plug up the hole and then we can finally stop this boat from sinking!" The man cheered, trying to rile up the crew to join him. The others shook their heads. "We don't have to do anything but wait, as long as we have faith in our Captain, He will fix it for us." The man shook his head. "But he gave us these tools! I think he wants us to fix it ourselves! Why else will he give us the ability to fix it?" The crew mumbled but stayed sitting. "The Captain told us as long as we believe in Him, He will take care of everything." The man stomped his foot, splashing the others. "The captain IS taking care of us! He gave us the way to fix this mess." The man held out the nails. The crewmates looked at each other, their expressions were a mix of worry or anger. Finally, one crewmate spoke up. "The Captain just needs our belief. I'm going to wait for Him." The other crewmates nodded, agreeing with their crewmate. "Just believe, mate." They pleaded. He gave one last look at the hole and sat down in the growing pool of water, defeated.

Hunger

Written By Makaila Steele

Everyone hungers for something. Something they cannot grasp and sink their hands into. Humans are selfish beings who wish to own, to have something they know deep down they cannot. I am a selfish, selfish being. I hunger for love even though deep down I am unable to obtain it. The thing that stops me from having it is myself. I am only human. A human who fears the very thing they long for most and because of that my hunger will continue to fester, but I will not give in until it is dragging me down with it.



Pride

Written By Alexis Justice

Which is the worst of the Seven Deadly Sins? Is it Lust? Envy? Anger? I've been feeling these lately. Uncontrolled, bouts of anger. Jealously. When the red in my vision fades, my mind wanders. Why him? How is he better than me? How did this moronic pig steal her from me?

It's my wife you see, she's having an affair. She thinks I don't know. She thinks I don't know that she plans to leave with him this weekend. A "trip" to her sisters, but I know. I've been hiding my anger. I don't know how she doesn't see it. Too focused on...him. The signs are obvious, but it was when she became sloppy every Sunday that I became hateful. Her blatant flirtation, their "secret" looks. I see the way some of our elders look up at me with pity. As I stand on the stage, preaching about morality and sin every Sunday morning, my wife has no shame. The people are starting to notice. My heart was broken. I would leave home and go to the Church, sit in the office.

Pray. Scream. Break.

She doesn't care. He doesn't care.

She has broken her vows to me and to God. This cannot go without retribution. They will atone. That is what was repeating in my head, a mantra.

They will atone.

Blood everywhere. Screaming. Crying. Rage.

It was Pride that killed us all. The deadliest of sins.

Darkness In The Light

Poem by Katherine Vazquez

I was the darkness in the daylight.
My mind is like a tornado on a shaking bottle.
My hope is like the dove that Noah first sent.
I became cold hiding behind a shadow.
Darkness is becoming superior for it is lonely and dark.
Though, the crow enjoys being mysterious, wanted to be free.
My heart becomes a chained cage of fear.
My ears are sharp as a claw and eyes like hawks.
Dreaming so the mind and soul goes on.
Run, run, to a world of darkness.



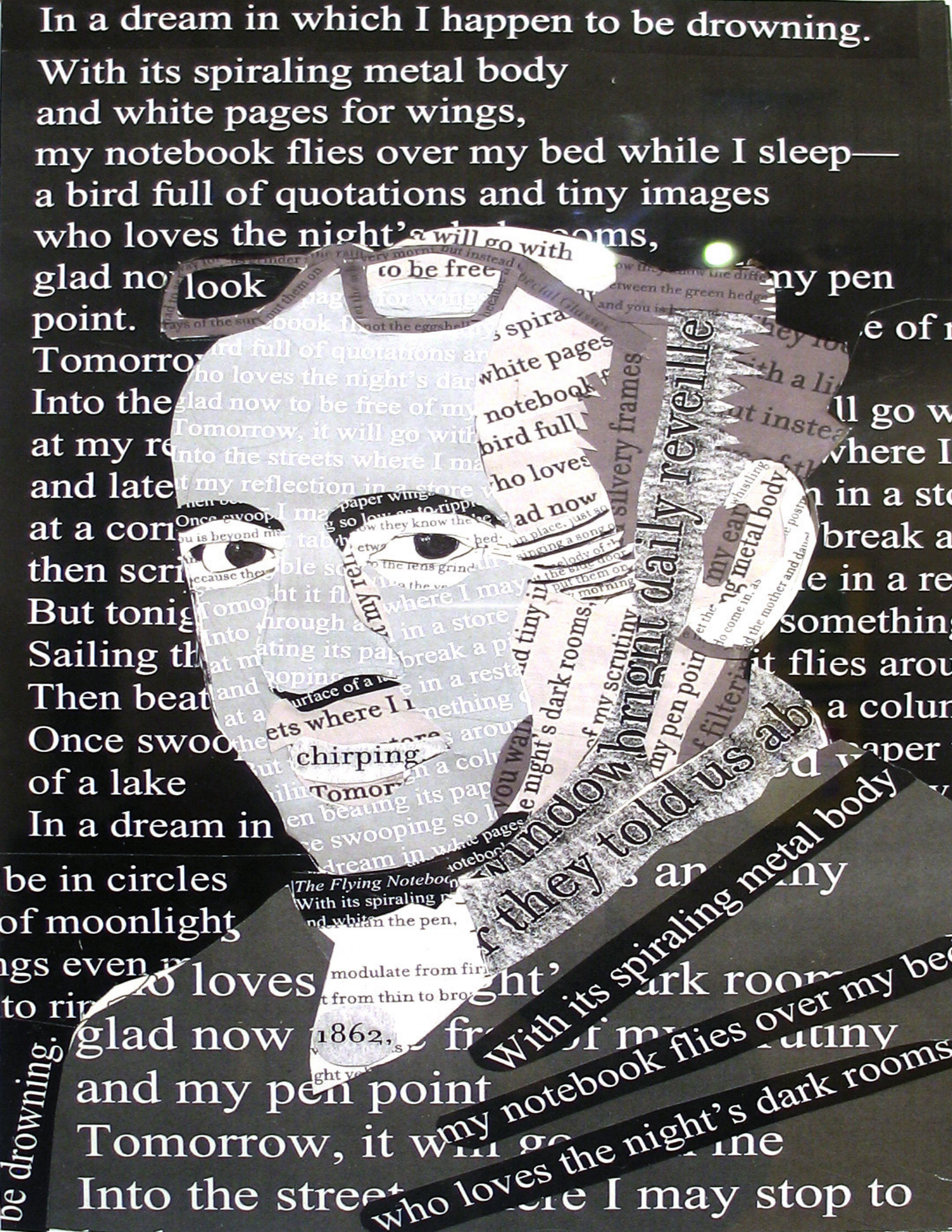
Gemini Rights (Above)

Art By Alexia Julianne Sibul

The Words of Billy Collins (Right)

Art By Austin Roberts





In a dream in which I happen to be drowning.

With its spiraling metal body
and white pages for wings,
my notebook flies over my bed while I sleep—
a bird full of quotations and tiny images
who loves the night's dark rooms,
glad now to be free of my pen
point.

Tomorrow, it will go with
Into the streets where I may stop to
at my reflection in a store window
and late at night, when the moon is
at a corner, I may see a tiny figure
then scribble on its white pages
But tonight, it flies around my bed
Sailing through the night's dark rooms,
Then beating its paper wings
Once swooping so low as to rattle
of a lake, it chirps and hums
In a dream in which I happen to be drowning.

be in circles
of moonlight
ings even in
to ripen
glad now to be free of my pen
and my pen point
Tomorrow, it will go with
Into the streets where I may stop to
who loves the night's dark rooms

Partner In Crime

Poem By Mahaela Sleeper

Your ghost watches
Shivering and wailing
Your blood against the ice
Buried beneath snowflakes.
Will you hold my hand one last time,
Deceased lover of mine?

My love
The rose red of what you had been to
me
Hidden behind yellow tape
Will you hold my hand one last time,
Deceased lover of mine?

Dearest,
I see you now
In the faces of those who gather
Behind the bars they keep me in
The blade in my hand,
The dirt in my nails
You've always held my secrets
So beautifully
So will you hold my hand,
One last time
Just as before
Deceased lover of mine?
Stranger,
That's what you had called me.

Stranger,
And
Betrayed,
Monster,
Marauder,
Murderer.

Then
You were dead

I saw it in your eyes, first
Heard it in your final scream, second
And felt it in the stilling of your frantic
heart,
Last.

Yet, beloved of mine,
You had been the stranger all along.

Betrayer,
Monster,
Marauder,
Murdered.

Deceased lover of mine,
If you are truly to make me your villain
And
If your ghost is never to glance my way

With love and affection
In its gaze
Please, take pity
And just hold my hand, one last time.

In love and in loss,
Life and in death,
For better and worse,

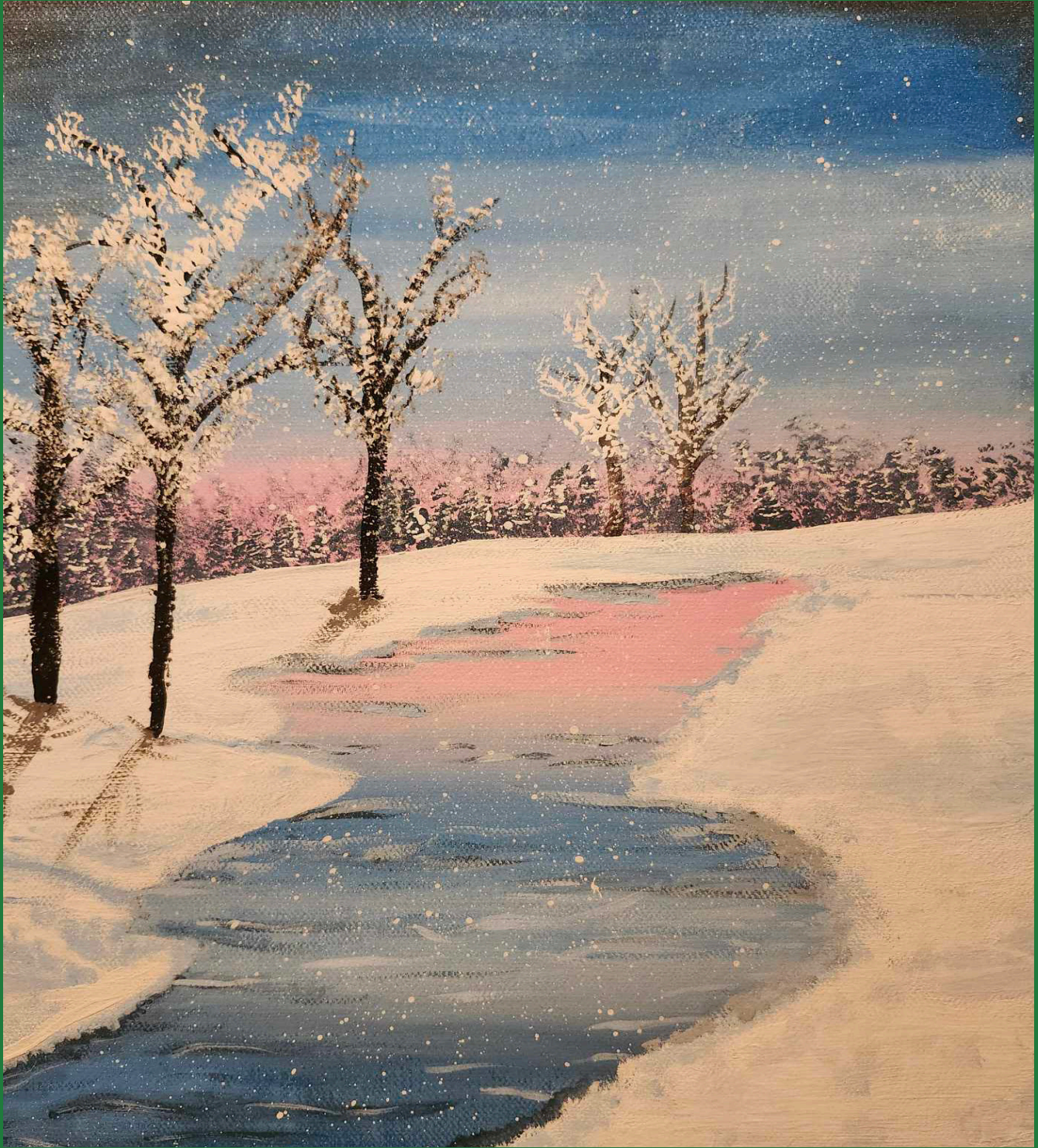
My murdered partner in crime.





Red-Winged Blackbird in the Talo Tree

Photo By Austin Roberts



A Snowy Sunset

Art By Kirsten Quaile



Winter Wonders

Written By Sienna Callaway

The anticipation builds as the cab driver makes the finally familiar right-hand turn into the long, winding, freshly plowed driveway. The snowbanks on either side are so high that I cannot see over them. I feel the car coming to a slow stop, and I know I have arrived at my home away from home.

As I leave the car, the glow from the frosted lamp posts warms me like a steaming mug of cocoa, and the smoke from the chimney waves its welcome. I start walking to the tall oak front door; the snow makes a satisfying crunching sound under my feet with every step I take. When I get to the door, I lift the cold, metal door knocker, but before I knock, even once the door swings open, I am greeted with a hug and squeal of delight from my grandma. The rest of my family greets me just as enthusiastically as I remove my coat and enter the living room. I feel the warm air envelop me. The flames of the fire danced and flickered, roaring colors of yellow and orange in the old stone fireplace. The nostalgic smell of freshly baked cookies is wafting through the house, making my mouth water ever so slightly. The kettle on the gas stove starts to sing in its high pinch voice, telling us it's time for tea. My grandma pulls out her good China passed down from her mother with hand-painted red roses. Then we gathered around the kitchen table, hand-crafted by my uncle. My family is talking about our plans to go ice skating; I look out the window and see tall pine trees decorated with fresh fluffy snow, the bare branches of maple trees. The frosted, long, dangling icicles twinkled like stars under the moon's glow. The moon is full and bright, as a spotlight to the dancing snowflakes starting to fall. A pack of wolves begins to howl, and then the timer on the stove dings. My attention is now on the plate of chocolate chip cookies placed on the table. The cookies are crisp outside and gooey in the center. Grandma's special ingredient makes it taste like little bites of heaven.

As the darkest begins to fall, the laughter of my loved ones comes to a close, and we all start to cozy up in our beds. The snow outside is a sound barrier, leaving me to my thoughts. As everyone drifts asleep, I scratch a drawing of a snowman with a carrot nose on the glass like I do every year on that same window. I think about how the beauty of the house and its surroundings pale in comparison to the beauty this house contains. I awaken to the hustle and bustle of breakfast preparations. The clanging of dishes and pans, the sizzling of pancakes on the stove, and the smell of freshly brewed coffee. After breakfast, we all put on a couple of layers of clothes and walk about outside. I am met with the sight of hungry deer searching for their next meal; upon seeing us, the deer freeze and stand in an eerily still position as if they had just seen a ghost. The sounds of birds singing their unique tunes ring through the crisp morning air. A cool breeze sends little shivers down our spines, and suddenly, I am in the mood for hot cocoa. When I walk inside, I hear chiming on the old grandfather clock that has stood in the same corner for as long as I can remember. The soothing tick, tick, tick feeling like an old, familiar friend. This sound lets a swarm of memories flood through. Stories of my grandfather selecting each individual log with love and care, wanting the best for his family. My heart warms when I see the sign above the fireplace with each family member's name hand-carved into it, like our little version of the stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.



Georgia Horizon (Above)
Photo By Elaura Mehler

Wolf Howling at the
Sky on Fire (left)
Art By Kirsten Quaile

Homage to
Akkadian Man (Right)
Art By Truman Henson

A Worms Eye View of
Stonehenge at Night
(below)
Art By Leigha Carmody



Pit-Pat

Written By Parker Knazur

Pitter-patter... pitter patter... a soft drizzle began on a warm summer day. “It hasn’t rained in days” she thought, gazing upward at the dark sky draped with a sheet of gray wool. Walking along the brick wall, she dodged and weaved through the small droplets to the best of her ability; it was a game she would play with her brothers and sister when she was younger. Hopping off into a puddle she continued forward, listening to the soft sounds of the rain and the distant thunder as it began to roll in. The wind blew across her face, sending a chill down her spine. Despite this, she continued trodding off and arrived at her destination.

When looking in the window she saw no one there so she sat on the doorstep waiting patiently for her friend to come. As the rain continued to fall, pitter-patter... pitter-patter... She puffed, contemplating whether to leave once more, until her eyes caught a small lady leisurely walking over with her umbrella in hand. She couldn’t believe her eyes! She ran swiftly to the woman, continuing to try and dodge the rain. When the old lady saw her, her lips formed into a bright smile scooping up the cat with one hand, shielding her from the rain. Once under shelter, the old lady smiled at the small feline.

“Yes, yes I missed you too Pit-pat,” she smiled.

She delicately strokes the cat’s fur, tucking Pit-pat snugly into her chest.



Being Beautiful Together

Poem By Hope Prevost

If you wander too deep in the forest
I'll become the marigold, tulip, and pine

Baby for you,
i'd become a florist
so you'd see a flower, and remember you're
mine

When you kick up your dust clouds
and try to hide behind the sand

When you lose yourself in the crowd
I'll find you and hold your hand

When you isolate like a bear
and find a cave and go into hibernation
I'll try my best to show you that i care
and cuddle up right next to you
and call it a vacation

If you get lost and can't find your way
I'll become your north star

If you get sad, and need music to play
I'll become a perfectly tuned guitar
and together we could sit in the shade
or we could sit by the fire for hours
admiring the beauty we've made

Baby,
How about we start with the flowers?

Paradise On Earth

Written By Natalie Wilson

This was the closest I have ever come to paradise, I was on a hike, and I came across something I never thought was possible. I could smell water in the distance, it wasn't just any kind of smell, it smelled like the freedom I never thought I'd experience.

Though it was an unfamiliar environment, it quickly resonated to my home away from home. This gave me such a calm and peaceful feeling that it made me want to stay there forever. I can taste the sweetness of freedom. On my hike, I came across the most beautiful mountain tops as if they were covered with a blanket of warm green topped with red and blue roses. I felt shivers down my spine as I gazed into the piercing eyes of this mountain. I feel the sun on my skin as if it is welcoming me with a warm hug. I saw an oasis; the water was so clear as if it was a shiny blue crystal that I would treasure for life. I can smell sweet serenity. As I wander closer to the water's edge, with every ripple of waves that touch my toes, I gain an abundance of joy. The most spectacular sunrise and a golden haze glisten over the water, casting a shimmering appearance right in front of me. I stand amazed at the sight of earthly heaven. I think to myself, "What a wonderful world", a world of peace, calmness and happiness. I can hear birds chirping in euphoric tune providing music to my ears, and everlasting harmony that brings me ideal peace. I hope this isn't a dream because I never want to wake up from this everlasting paradise.

For the first time ever I enjoy being alone, there's a sense of safety between nature and I, it is as if nature is my platonic soul mate. The sun above is as if God is watching over me, it gets me thinking of the meaning of life, something that is typically taken for granted. Here there are no politics and no rules, just nature and in unison. With every breath I take in, with every inhale, I can feel myself exhaling all my worldly problem. As if purposefully implanted, there was a miraculously grown fruit tree in front of me, it fits directly into the palm of my hand as if it was made for me. This fruit was the most delicious thing I have ever tasted. I saw a waterfall in the distance, it was as if all my thoughts were flowing together, the good and the bad. The weather was based off my emotions, if I cried it started raining, if I laughed happily, it would be sunny, and if I was just sad it was cloudy. My favorite was when I was at peace and genuinely happy, rainbows came out. On this day, I felt genuinely happy. The view was absolutely breathtaking.

I came across a fairy wistfully flying around me as if it were a small snowflake from the sky. It was so tiny yet so powerful, flying circles around my head and through my arms and legs. A line of glitter closely followed behind this fairy, falling into me and next thing I knew, my feet began to lift. I'm slowly prospering higher and higher. Before I know it, I am face to face with the top of the beautiful mountain. The view from up above is as breathtaking as the view from



down below. I see the clouds at eyes length, all making hearts and smiles within the sky. God himself must've shaped this whole place very delicately and with each stroke, added the most beautiful art I have ever seen. The life here is incredible and I've never felt so alive. I slowly float down and land gracefully on my feet. I stand in complete awe as I ponder upon this incredible adventure. I laid for a few hours on a bed of pink soft flower petals and before I knew it, the sun was setting. This only means one thing, it's my time to go. I sigh as I take one last gander of this entire environment. I stand still and close my eyes and take in the chirps of the birds, the rushing of the waterfall, the pitter-patters of the fairy.

I know that physically, I must leave this place. Mentally, I will always revisit here when I close my eyes to sleep. As quick as the blink of an eye, I am awake back in my bed. I know now that I have a calming escape whenever I get overwhelmed and all I must do is close my eyes to relocate.



Crepuscular Rays

Photo By Austin Roberts

You Define You

Written By Abigail Smith

In life you will face many challenges, most happen in your adult years. You're able to handle life differently and have a higher level of maturity compared to a teenager going through puberty. Especially since your parents are still teaching you and helping you through life. That wasn't the case for me. I had to go through one of the biggest challenges of my life as a freshman in high school.

Freshman year is supposed to be one of the best years, you get to try out for sports, establish new relationships, and create an experience for yourself. My high school years took a sharp turn for the worse after volunteering to record the high school football game. I have no recollection of what happened before, but I woke up on the sidelines surrounded by adults asking how I was feeling. The football and cheerleading coaches told me that I walked from the end zone to the sidelines and collapsed. Imagine being a 14 year-old girl, feeling confused, scared, and alone. It is something I will never forget, the emotions I was experiencing, the thoughts racing through my brain and the faces of everyone surrounding me. This was the start of a domino effect.

For the next two weeks, I kept collapsing at random times, making it a risk for me to even attend school. I would get an aura, my vision would get blurry, my face became pale, and I couldn't function properly. When I came to, I had no feeling in my legs and no memory of what had happened while I was unconscious. I knew something was wrong with my body but I had no clue what to expect. From doctor to doctor, no one had an answer. I was a medical mystery. Some doctors would go even as far as to say that I was a psychiatric case. It was a tough pill to swallow knowing that people thought I was faking it or that I was mentally insane. It was so much to handle and I was just a kid. It was getting rough; I had seen 15 doctors ranging in different specialties, but no one could give me a diagnosis. I felt like a lab rat being tested every other day by doing blood work, spinal taps, echocardiograms, and EKGs. Every test came back normal and nothing was wrong with me. After all that, I was ready to give up and accept the fact that no one could help me and I had to do this alone.



Then I met Dr. Natraj Ballal, a pediatric cardiologist, who works in Tampa, Florida. He told me, “We’re going to figure this out, I know you are over all the tests but if we want to figure this out, we must.” So we started from the beginning again. Blood tests started, results were nothing new. Dr. Ballal refused to give up on me and he told me he had a theory that I could have POTS.

POTS stands for posterior orthostatic tachycardia syndrome. To determine whether or not I had it, I had to take a tilt table test. To sum up the test, I would lay flat on a table and then the doctors would lift me straight up while checking my blood pressure every 5 minutes. If my heart rate went up by 40 bpm and my blood pressure was stable at the same time, that would mean I tested positive for POTS. I tested positive.

After 2 years, from 14-16 years old I finally got some answers and finally figured out what was causing me to faint. Just because I was diagnosed, didn’t mean my journey was over. POTS isn’t a curable condition, but it is manageable with diet, exercise, medication, and awareness of my blood pressure. It has restricted me from getting my drivers permit, playing sports, and simply standing for too long. For a while, I dwelled on the fact that I couldn’t do much. That was until I started pushing myself to do better and do more.

Another part that made it difficult was the bullying. Students would take pictures of me passing out and post them on social media to get a kick out of it. I knew I had to get through this, so I surrounded myself with people who supported me and had my back when I couldn’t stand up for myself. There will be setbacks, there will be hardships, but that doesn’t mean you stop or give up fighting. People will always have something to say unless you give them a reason not to. Shut them up and prove them wrong. Even though I’m not in the best of health, that doesn’t mean I can’t strive to accomplish my goals. Nothing should ever stand in your way, no matter how hard it may be. Passing out isn’t holding me back anymore, I won’t let it control me or define me. I faint, yes, but I’m an honors student, photographer, college student, weightlifter, sister, daughter, and a friend.

I am much more than my illness.

Staff Page



Adrian Blake
(Right)
Editor In Chief



Gage Vann
(Left)
Art Editor



Rodolfo "Enzo"
Cespedes
(Right)
Poetry Editor



Andrew Howard
(Left)
Photography Editor



Ms. Wirt
Advisor

Editor's Note

I am grateful for the hard work and dedication of the staff. Each member of the team has played a vital role in bringing this magazine to its full potential. Their attention to detail, creativity, and tireless efforts are what make this magazine shine.

Art and writing have always held a significant impact on society throughout history. From ancient cave paintings to modern-day literature, these forms of expression have the power to evoke emotions, provoke thought, and inspire change. I would like to express my gratitude for the submissions we received. Without them, the world of literature and art would be much poorer. So, here's to all the writers and artists who submit their work and the staff who make it possible – thank you!

-Adrian Blake



“In The Write Mind” is the literary and arts magazine at the College Of Central Florida, where students’ inspiration is published every Spring. Writing submissions of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, photography, or other artwork can be submitted.

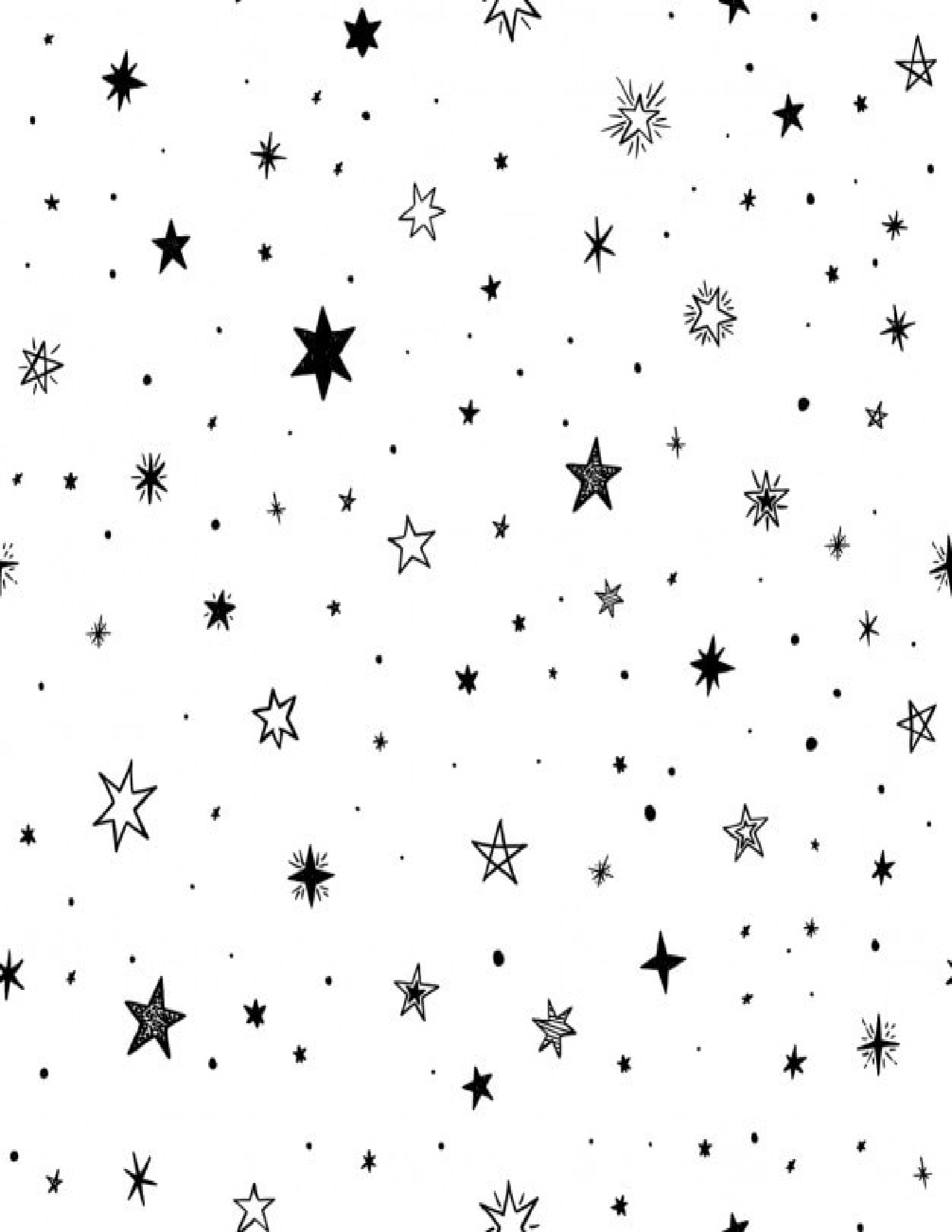
IMPORTANT: You must be a CF student to submit to the magazine and with original content.

Use the following link to submit to the next issue of
In The Write Mind

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In The Write Mind

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