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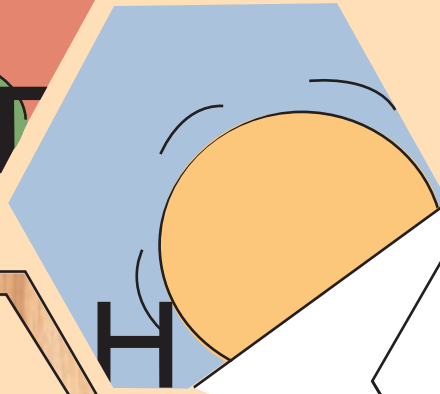
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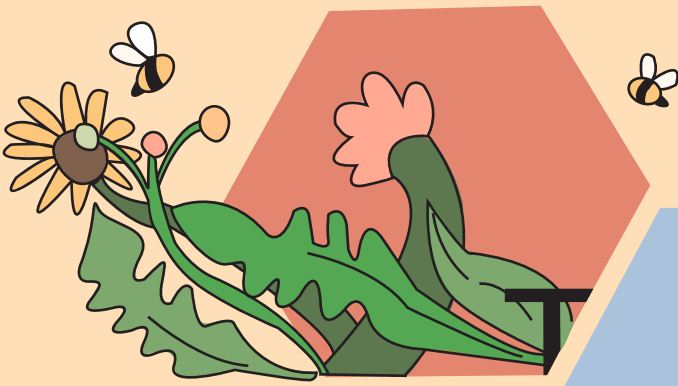
A Journal of
Literature
and Art
VOLUME 17

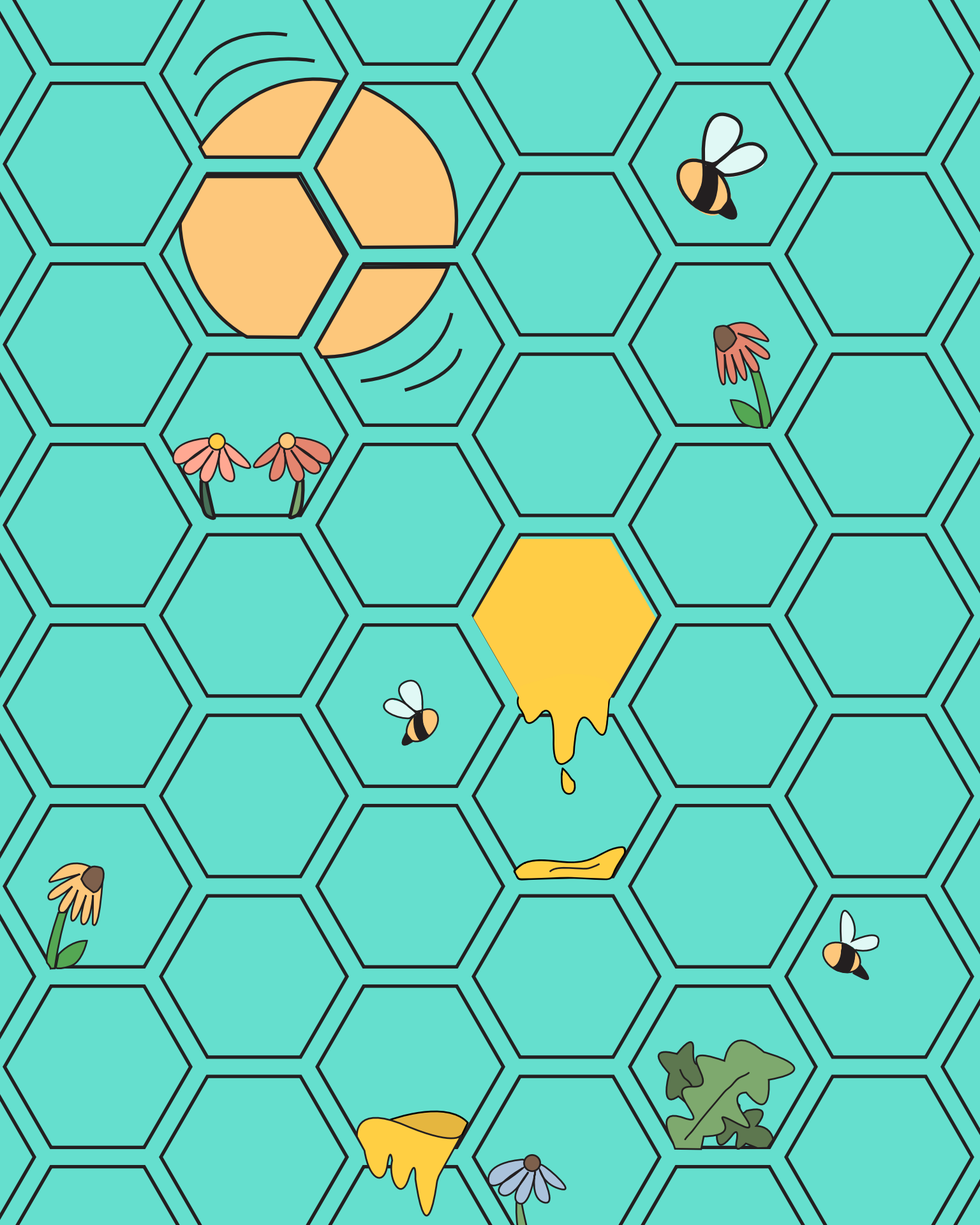


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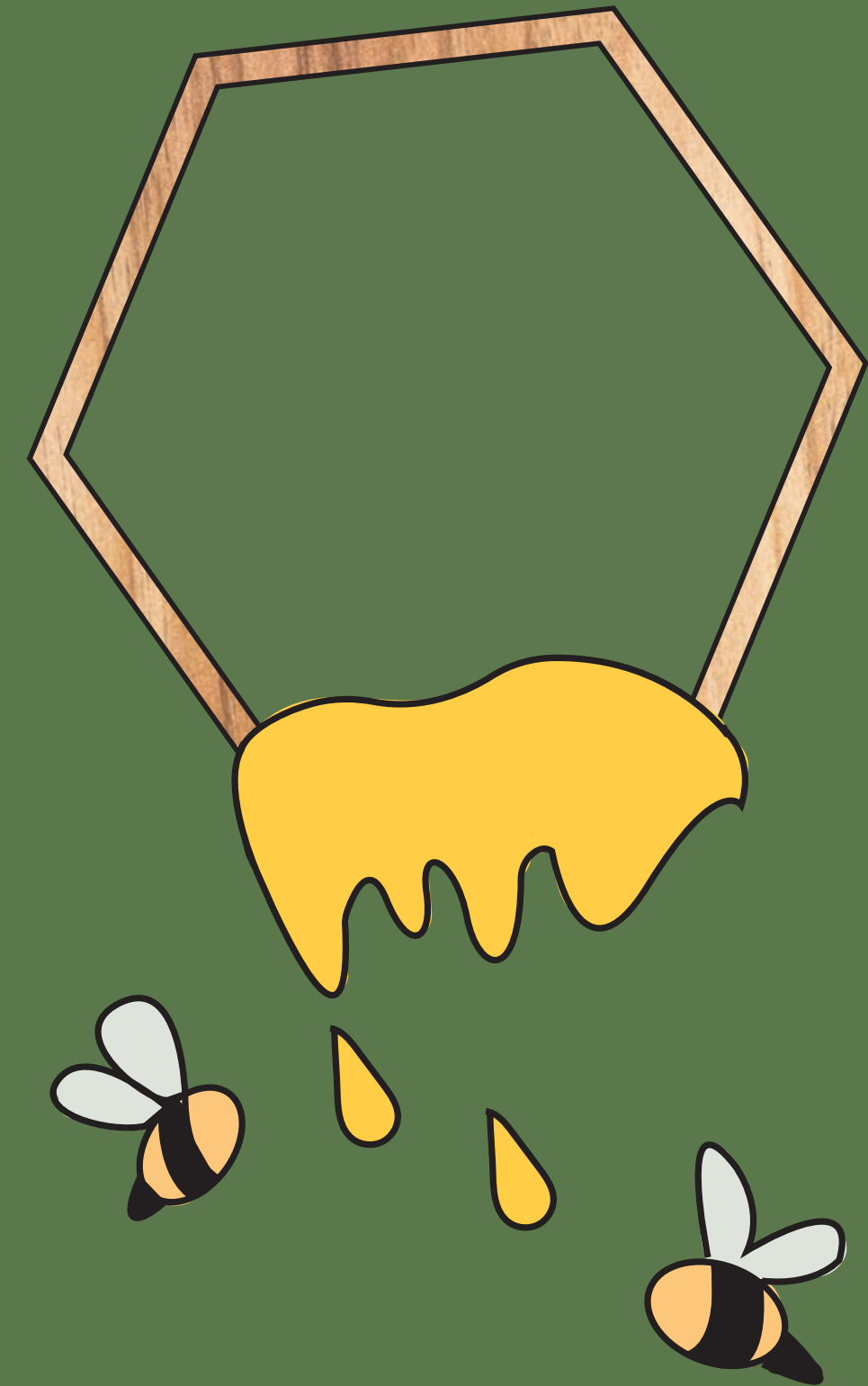
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THE BRIDGE

A Journal of Literature and Art
Volume 17



This volume of *The Bridge* is dedicated
to Mother Nature, her children, and our
commitment to preserve them.

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MISSION STATEMENT:

The Bridge is managed entirely by students. Our charge is to serve, as we are dedicated to showcasing the artistic talents of our student body. Our goal is to excel, as we wish to pay a debt to our alumni, keep a promise to ourselves, and set an example for our successors.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

In 2019, *The Bridge* underwent a transformation of its mechanisms, reorganizing its staff to closely resemble that of traditional publishing and design houses. Distinct editing, design, marketing, and web teams worked within their areas of expertise, while also collaborating to create a living, breathing journal. This approach highlights the connection between art, literature, and people, and inspires this year's design, which focuses on the vital interconnection between communities and ecosystems.

Drawing inspiration from the industrious bee and its ever-precarious place in the current climate crisis, we modeled our layout after the beehive, which relies on both individual responsibility and communal coexistence in order to prosper. Hexagons—which represents the hive cell as well as the cellular makeup of the natural world—run throughout the pages, linking art and literature together in symbiosis. Hexagons also grace the cover of the journal, collaging natural tones and organic shapes together into a cohesive whole that pays respect to the beauty of the earth. Our design offers a sense of realism that we hope will resonate with the readers, while also inspiring a call to action to preserve the natural world. As such, we focused our production on sustainability, printing the journal this year on partially-recycled paper, though we urge publishing agencies to make more sustainable options—including 100% recycled paper—more widely available.

Even though we looked to nature for design, the pieces in the journal also tell human stories. We recognize the diverse experiences and backgrounds of Bridgewater State University students and seek to represent our community with integrity. We recognize our privilege and power as editors, so we took care to include pieces that are diverse in voice, form, and expression. It was also important to us to include nonbinary artists, artists of color, LGBTQ+ artists, disabled artists, and international artists to represent the connection that we all share. While many pieces in the journal reflect themes of loss or uncertainty, others exude strength, healing, and perseverance in the face of adversity. We wanted the journal to represent interconnectedness and what we can do to help the future, the natural world, and our place within it.

With this issue of *The Bridge*, we have reflected our vision of 2020, while still honoring the history of the journal. We thank the contributors who trusted us with their work, and we are grateful for the opportunity to work on a journal that features timely art and literature. We hope these pieces speak to readers and inspire change.

Sincerely,
The Editors, Volume 17



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CHILDREN

PIERRE DUMOULIN-MINGUET

oil paint



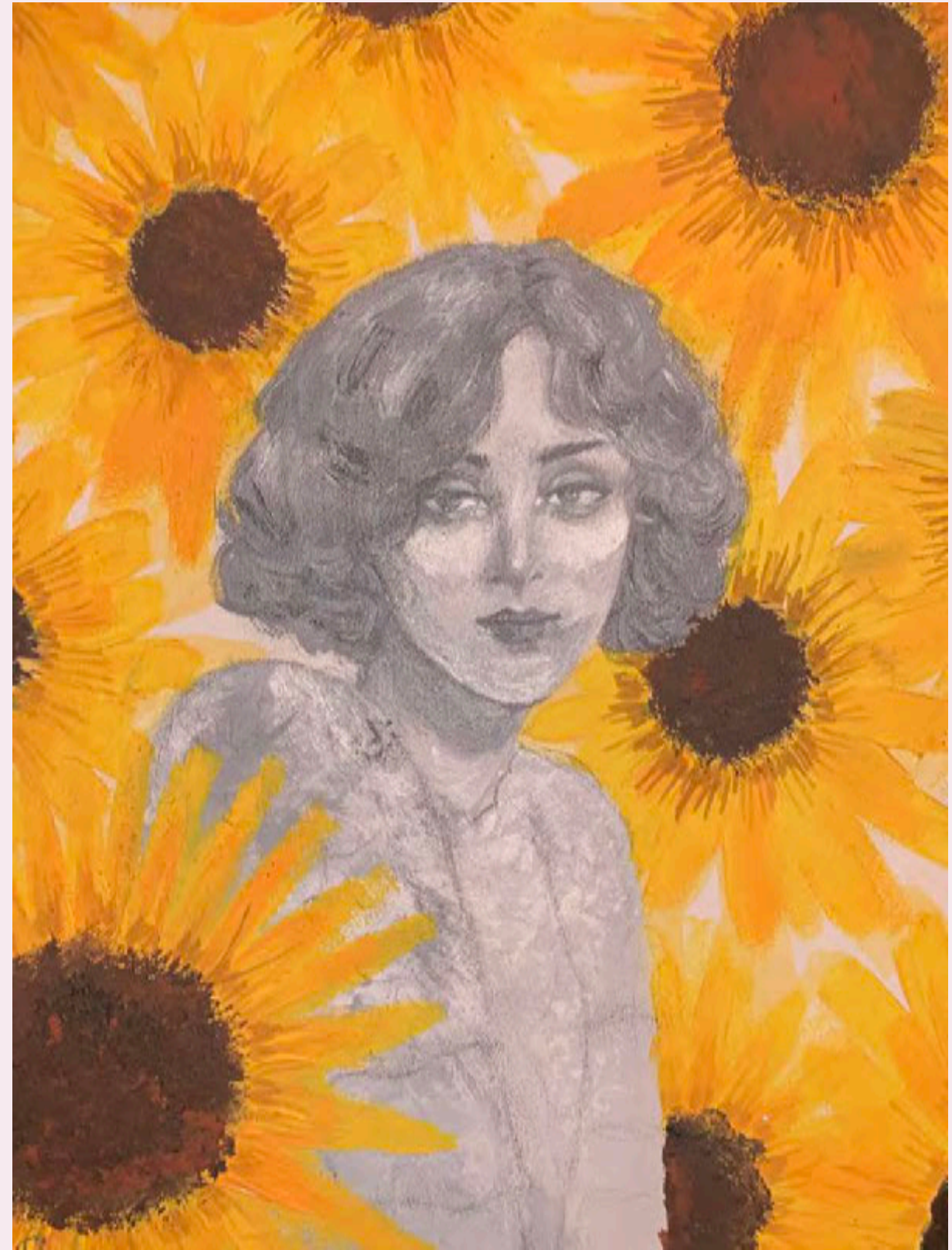
SUNFLOWER

ADAM BLOWERS

I woke up with a memory sparkling in my eye
of being a kid of spring and summer—

I held my head high
like the tall, thin, quiet,
quickly growing sunflowers
I wish I was
in my grandmother's garden
with my sun-speckled face
and my golden-washed locks,
basking in ultra-violet admiration
I thought the sun cast only for me,
when I still believed that the earth sat still
and the sun would swim across the oceanic sky,
through the seafoam clouds,
diving down into the hues of red
seas on the horizon of the season—

that was when I knew how to love myself
and the blooming sunflower within,
I've just forgotten to appreciate it
when I fell in love with the autumn moon emerging
from the smoky, deep, purple, watery depths
reflecting firefly stars
in the deep-end of my summer's sky,
a photographic memory kept in a jar.



SUNS SEEN THROUGH MY EYES
EMILY OUTERBRIDGE

acrylic and graphite on canvas



BUTTON-UPS & BUTTON-DOWNS

LAINE DREW

creative nonfiction

I bought my identity at Kohl's for \$19.99. It was short-sleeved, navy blue, and patterned with adorable little white chipmunks and trees. Surrounded by a number of mismatched graphic tees, denim jackets, and Boston Celtics shirts, this button-down was an outcast. It was all by itself, and I found it waiting for me on the discount rack in the men's section. I took it to the dressing room, put it on, buttoned up the front to the very top—realized I was choking myself—and then unbuttoned the top so I could breathe.

The sleeves stuck out in an unflattering way, so I folded them up to create a better style. I then paused, took a deep breath, and looked at myself in the mirror.

"I look good," I thought to myself. "But maybe not good enough, I hate boobs."

I then thought, "I mean, not other peoples' boobs, but my boobs. I wish they would just fall off."

I stared at myself in the mirror for a bit longer, contemplating, overthinking, until I finally said to myself, "This shirt will look good on me once I cut my hair."

I changed out of the shirt, put my hoodie back on, and walked over to the register. The cashier was an older woman with the name tag *Patty*. She had bright blue eyes, short white hair, and her pants were tucked high around her waist.

"Will that be all for today, honey?" she asked in a raspy voice before scanning the tag on my shirt.

"Yes," I replied, giving her a cautious smile but not providing any eye contact.

"This shirt is nice," she said, trying to make some small talk. "Is this for your boyfriend?"

My eyes widened when she asked this, and my sweaty hands clenched my purse tighter as I stood in front of her. I was clearly annoyed but also frightened—frightened because I knew what I was going to tell her next, which, I assumed, would open the floodgates of disgusted thoughts within her mind. I was always so paranoid.

"No," I muttered, shyly, after a slightly long pause. "The shirt is actually for me."

"Oh," Patty replied with an undertow of surprise. "Well good for you."

She finished my transaction, we thanked each other, and then I left. I contemplated never wearing the shirt again, feeling the need to retreat back to the comforts of my women's clothes, my Bath & Body Works perfume, and my two-dollar mascara. Feeling the need to button myself up. But that feeling did not last. Somehow, that button-down transformed me into someone new.

A month later I cut my hair. I went from having hair down to my butt to having a short, pixie-like asymmetrical cut. It was completely buzzed on one side, and the other was at shoulder length. It was a new cut—a new me—but it still had some curls and waves leftover from the past. With this new cut I

saved more money, got over my fear of interacting with cashiers who ask about the clothes I'm buying from the men's section, and decided to go shopping at the mall for more shirts.

I first went to American Eagle and was in awe of the variety of button-downs hung around the men's section of the store. The colors, patterns, and personalities seemed endless, but the first shirt that caught my attention was a long-sleeved maroon poplin covered in tiny white polka dots. Maroon is a color that I aspire to be. It is warm, but not overpowering—rebellious but in a way that's subtle and effective. I bought this shirt, along with a black short-sleeved poplin with white zigzag, diamond, and triangle prints. This shirt was the life of the party—perhaps who I am when I'm drunk. It is the kind of shirt that makes you excited for summer, and for life.

I then made my way over to Target and bought one more button-down. This one was a calming emerald green poplin with long-sleeves and polka dot print that is a slightly darker green than the shirt itself. It has the personality of that friend that wants to take you on a hiking trip to relieve the stress that has been built up after a long week at work.

A man wearing a leather jacket, jeans, and a trucker hat watched me as I browsed in the men's section of Target. I noticed him. I felt his eyes looking at me—judging me—and I began to feel furious. My insides felt like an angry cartoon character. I felt the veins popping, the face turning red, the hot steam blowing from its ears. But somehow, in the heat of that moment, the angry cartoon character within me got an ice bath. I felt relaxed and cooler, and unlike during the conversation I had with Patty, I was not frightened. It was as if the calm aura of my new green button-down surrounded me and connected to my being. It was as if my sense of self, after several years, was weaving into something more secure. Something more powerful.



One might find it strange that button-downs have shaped my gender identity, especially since their history is so radically different from mine. The button-down is cut from the cloth of the elite and the privileged. They are sewn from materials of sophistication, precision, and class.

Button-downs were first worn in the late 1800's, and early 1900's, by British men who played the sport of polo. Polo, the game where men ride on horses and hit balls with long mallet-like sticks, was extremely popular in India in the mid-nineteenth century. Polo had few rules at that point. There were no goals, no teams, and no boundaries on the field that separated players from one another. But within twenty years, with the rise of colonialism, polo was discovered, transformed, and brought to England by the British military. At this time, polo became civilized. Rules were created, a scoring system was established, teams were made, boundaries were drawn. Binaries were enforced. It was us versus them; you were in, or you were out. Even the look of the sport changed, as players began to wear helmets, goggles, boots, and these strange long-sleeved shirts with buttons up the center and along the collar. Polo became the sport of button-downs.

John E. Brooks, co-owner of Brooks Brothers, the oldest clothing store in America, first took notice of the button-down while watching a polo game during his visit to England. Brooks knew of the button-up, which are shirts with buttons up the front but no buttons under the collar to hold the flaps down. Brooks, however, had not seen a button-down before, which are a subcategory of button-ups. Basically, button-downs are button-ups with buttons under the collar to hold the flaps down, preventing polo

players from being distracted as they play. Brooks was fascinated with its form of collar restraint. He told his grandfather and his brother about it back in the U.S. and the rest was history. The steady take-over of the button-down began to spread across America.

From there, the button-down and the button-up became elite icons within American culture. Ivy League schools, such as Yale and Harvard, began to sell button-down and button-up shirts in their school stores. Presidents like Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, and Barack Obama endorsed and wore button-downs at campaign events, while giving speeches, or while presenting themselves to the public. They were sold in many different colors and fabrics to suit the individual needs of the men who wore button-downs. They suited the individual aspects of privilege and power.

Button-downs and button-ups even have different genders. In the nineteenth century, men would wear buttoned shirts when going to battle. These shirts, while buttoned, did not resemble the traditional button-up shirt styles that exist today. These were the button-ups before button-ups—the Neanderthals of button-ups. As the theory goes, because men typically held their swords with their right hand, it was logical that the buttons should be sewn on the right, making it easier and more convenient for men to unbutton their shirts.

Women's shirts, however, have buttons on the left side. There are many theories for why this is, but the main argument is based around when women's buttoned shirts were created. Because buttoned shirts were so expensive, it was often wealthy women that made the decisions on how they were made. Wealthy women in the nineteenth century did not dress themselves and relied on the help of servants. Because servants were predominantly right-handed, it is argued that women's shirts have buttons on the left to make it easier for them to help women button their shirts.

Today, it is still common to see these gender differences—these binaries—among button-ups and button-downs in stores. “Unisex” button-ups have become a thing, but one can argue that because unisex shirts typically have buttons on the right, which is masculine, they aren't actually unisex. It is possible, then, that with every button, and every stitch, button-ups and button-downs reflect our culture. No matter the gender of who is wearing them, they expose who has power, who has money, who has success. It is possible that they are the identity of the privileged.



My history, on the other hand, is much different. Button-ups are clear cut—black and white—while I am gray and complicated. Button-ups have control over their identity, while many times I have not.

I knew I was gay at age nine. While other girls in my fourth-grade class gawked over posters of the Jonas Brothers, Jesse McCartney, and Drake Bell, I found my attention drawn to a poster of Selena Gomez. I loved the waves of her hair, the way the light tinted her chocolate-colored eyes and made them look like they were glowing, and the red lipstick painted over her soft, full lips. I remember looking at this poster of her, thinking to myself—praying to myself—that I was not gay, but deep down knowing I was. At the young age of nine, I already knew the power of perception.

Conversely, when I was ten, I started looking at posters of Jesse McCartney—but not in the ways that other girls looked at them. While other girls my age found pleasure in looking into Jesse's eyes, I wanted Jesse's eyes. While they liked boys with Jesse's style, I wanted Jesse's style. While they were in love with Jesse's hair, I wanted his hair. While they wanted to be with Jesse McCartney, I wanted to be

Jesse McCartney. I so desperately wanted to ask my mom to get me clothes like his—boy's clothes—but then I decided not to. I was afraid of what she would think of me.

When I was twelve, I came out to someone for the first time—well, kind of. Her name was Audrey, the first friend I made in middle school, who I had a huge crush on. We were talking on the phone one night and, inevitably, she asked if I liked anyone. I told her no, but she could tell I was lying, so she listed pretty much every guy in our grade that I possibly could like. I genuinely said no to liking every guy she brought up, so she jokingly asked if I liked her. I got dead silent when she asked this—sort of like a cricket, hiding in the cracks, that abruptly stops chirping when a human gets too close.

“Laine, are you there? I was kidding,” Audrey blurted out in a worried tone.

“Um,” I uttered, trying to say something, anything, that would make this less awkward, anything that would lead her to believe that I didn't like her.

“Oh my god, Laine, do you like me? Do you actually like me?” Audrey asked in a tone of mostly disgust, but also a hint of curiosity.

“Uh, yeah,” I muttered, not really seeing the point of lying.

Audrey laughed a nervous uncomfortable laugh after I admitted this and then hung up. The next day at lunch she told the loudmouth in our class, and they proceeded to yell out to the whole cafeteria that I was gay and that I liked Audrey. I tried to salvage all of this by saying it was a rumor. It kind of worked, but not really. I got stared at, laughed at, kicked around, made fun of, banished from my lunch table—all the hallmarks of being outed in middle school. This was my first coming out experience, and, really, I had no control over it.

When I was thirteen, my mom found out I was gay by snooping through my journal in my room. I went across the street to get some candy and when I returned, I found that a page of my journal was missing. The page she ripped out was specifically about a girl I liked named Hazel. I freaked out and contemplated never going downstairs and dealing with my parents ever again, but then eventually went downstairs to both my parents sitting in the living room.

“We were expecting you would come back down here,” my mom said while simultaneously shutting off the TV.

“Yeah,” I said, not really knowing what exactly to say.

There was a long pause, a slow, awkward, dreadful, pause, until my dad finally stood up.

“Laine,” he said.

“Yes,” I replied.

“We love you.”

My father hugged me, and then my mother, and then I was forced into a long talk full of the famous, “When did you know you were gay?” and “Have you ever been with anyone?” questions. During all of this I was crying. The tears I cried were both happy and sad. Relieved and frustrated. They were tears of convulsion. My parents accepting me saved my life—there is no doubt about that—but, to this day, I still am angry at how all of this turned out. My parents accepting me was a good thing, but it is just another example of how I was never able to be gay on my own terms.

This theme followed me into age fourteen, when I told my friend Brian to ask a girl on my softball team (who I liked) if she was gay. I told him not to mention my name when he asked her, but he did, and she freaked out. The next day at practice I plunged into a pool of whispers. She told everyone on the team that I liked her, and my stomach dropped as if I were free falling from a building. Everyone

on the team shut me out and talked about me behind my back. I even received a note in my bat bag that stated, “You don’t belong on the team because you are a dyke.”

Amanda, the girl on the team that I liked, started to wear make-up to practice and flirt with the baseball boys in front of me after she learned that I liked her. One practice we both arrived early, before other members of the team showed up, and for a split second we were alone. I wanted to say something to her. I wanted to burst out in rage. I wanted to ask her why she would hurt me. But fear held me back, and soon after, a kid she knew who played baseball walked by. She ran up to him—away from me—and basically jumped on him. Maybe it was best that I didn’t get the chance to say anything to her, or maybe I would have gotten the answers I needed.

Four years later, in 2016, Amanda came out as bisexual. It would be easy for me to hate Amanda, but honestly, I don’t. Through learning that I liked her, I assume Amanda feared that she exhibited



a code that made the concrete wall she built around her identity more translucent. She needed to draw the curtain—to create a distraction from her queerness that she feared was becoming more and more noticeable. I, unfortunately, was that distraction. That scapegoat. We both did not have any control over our sexuality, we just handled it in different ways.

Today, I identify as a twenty-two-year-old lesbian with a gender of I-have-no-idea. I always tell people that my “pronouns” are “she, her, and hers,” but there are more days than not where I do not think they fit. A cliché thing that is always said about college is that it’s a fresh slate. You’re able to take control and ownership of who you are without the judgement of those from the past. This in many ways is true, but what if you’ve never had any experience, at all, with being who you are?

Going to classes, working two jobs, and taking care of my parents after they got divorced (not the other way around) has made it hard for me to even think about finding myself. Relationships have been hard to come by, however, I have been on a couple of dates. Most of them involved getting food, making out in movie theaters, and getting high. They were fun while they lasted but, ultimately, they did not work out.

Overall, college has been one giant learning experience that has not ended yet. I am still on the quest of discovering who I am, constantly experimenting, failing, and trying again. Constantly finding myself through clothes. It has been hard attempting to construct, from scratch, my sexuality and

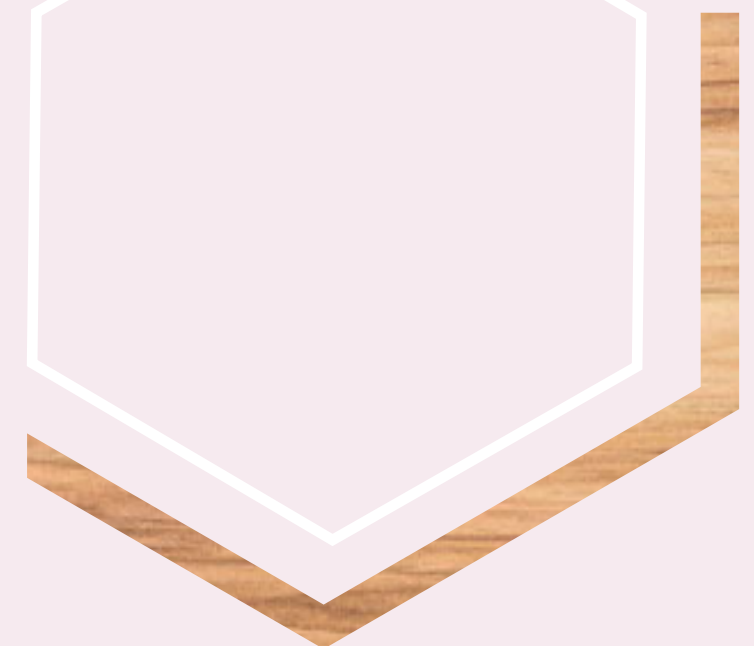
gender. It has been hard unbuttoning myself. But these difficulties, these pursuits of finding myself, have been better than not having any control over my identity at all.



And, yet, despite this sad, mundane, slightly traumatic story of mine, I find myself connected to, of all things, button-downs. I currently own twenty-six, all of which are hanging on the coat rack in my closet. All of them have a different color, a different pattern, and a different personality intrinsic to my being. Each day, before I head to school in the morning, I make the difficult decision of choosing which shirt, which personality, to wear that day. It usually takes me a minute, but eventually I pick one. I then perform my ritual: putting it on, buttoning it up, rolling up my sleeves, and looking in my mirror. My hair is shorter now, a high-and-tight undercut, and is not reminiscent of my long hair—the hair I had before button-downs. My new look has allowed me to own who I am, even if I don’t know exactly who I am.

Perhaps I wear button-downs to feel powerful, to feel privileged, to feel as though I belong to a group that I obviously do not belong in. Perhaps I am stealing from that group, rebelling against them and their binaries by claiming their button-downs and making them my own.

A wise person once told me that gender is performative. I did not understand until I sat down for a while and thought about what it meant. At first, I was against the idea, firm in my belief that gender is something that we are, not an act to play out. But then I realized—we are what we act. We are what we perform. Every day we wake up, put on clothes, maybe put on makeup, maybe do our hair, maybe put on jewelry, maybe do our nails. All of these things we do, these rituals we perform, shape us, mold us, define us. I may not know exactly who I am yet. I could be cisgender, I could be transgender, I could have multiple genders, I could have no genders. I will figure this out when I figure this out. All I know now is that each day, each morning, I wake up and perform who I am through button-downs. Each day, through wearing them—through queering them—I am, in a small and barely noticeable way, changing what power means, and changing what privilege means.





GOLDEN BLANKET

SIERRA YARD

acrylic on canvas

REGENERATION

MEI FUNG ELIZABETH CHAN

ink and color on silk



KALEIDOSCOPE LIMBS

ABBEY BRANCO

I dream in periwinkle blue
and crushed sea glass

and when I dip my fingers in the base of your spine,
I can feel your heartbeat against my skin

calming me

soft summer sea eats away at our bodies,
sucks out every sacred notion
and white lie we thought we could get away with

I cannot tell you what you mean to me
I don't even know what I mean to myself

they say you have to love yourself before another,
but that means I'd have to glue back the shattered shards to my bedroom mirror
and throw away my own shadow

I see daylight in sepia and caramel drops,
and when I kiss you I cannot say how badly I want to taste blood,
I want you to know how much you scare me,
how much this thumping in our chests makes me want to shoot out of the sky and land face first
into the open arms of the ocean's waves

I thought I could make you as happy as the sky,
but I don't really dwell on false hope anymore

PAZ E TRANQUILIDADE

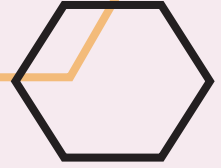
NICOL DA SILVA

acrylic with glitter





THE BUTTERFLY LANDS
LINDSEY MACMURDO
photography



ALMOST

SHAYLA HINDS

fiction

I loved the butterflies I felt around Her. That nervous swarm of monarchs zipping around in my belly. I thought butterflies were so beautiful, so free—who knew they could also be so ugly? So painful and dreadful and nauseating. Butterfly wings crowd and flutter harshly. I wish I could swallow a net and collect them all.

I never questioned my sexuality until I met her. I always imagined marrying a man until the night she stayed up with me just to hear me rant. I always thought of walking down the aisle to my future husband until I suddenly had dreams of being led to a woman also wearing a white dress.

They say kids are supposed to be dumb and make mistakes. Are these dreams just another childhood fault? Is my overwhelming desire to kiss, to touch, to enjoy another woman just that? A desire?

I refuse to believe it. Her touch feels like a cool stroke of aloe over flaking, burning skin. Her gaze sets me aflame like a volcano, setting me in ash like the people in Pompeii. How can I keep denying my feelings when every time I am with her, my body screams the truth?

Everything has changed with a burst of starlight, colored sparks flickering when her name lights up on my phone. Flushed pink already creeping onto her cheeks as if she is blushing blossoms.

“I didn’t wake you, did I?” she questions. I glance at the time, only now noticing the late hour. Interesting how fast time will move while you

daydream of eyes the color of swirling mocha. I assure her that I’ve been awake for a while. I gesture for her to speak, knowing that she’s not the type to call for no reason.

“Don’t be mad,” she cautions, her strawberry lips pouting. “But I just wanted to hear your voice,” she says, puffing her cheeks up playfully. I heave a small, amused huff before jokingly rolling my eyes.

“Wow, waking me up for this—” she tries to cut me off mid-sentence, protests that I was already awake, and I just giggle again. I tell her about cooking dinner with my mom and how I haven’t studied for any of the tests coming up. Meanwhile, her eyes are soft, a well of fresh coffee simmering inside them. I am convinced she is straight. I am also convinced that she feels the same overwhelming bubble of emotion I do with each hug.

Our relationship is demanding. Like rose vines creeping up a wall, her cloying affections cover up her claims for my attention. Covered by petals, it is easy to ignore the biting thorns. I overlook how those prickly arms choke me, mistaking it as an embrace. I hate when she touches me like I am in a display case, different from the others she carelessly interacts with. They exist in a realm of no consequences, while every moment with her feels like a continuous charge through a field of land mines. The stigma of the ‘gay friend’ clings to me like dirt.

I’m no stranger to the notion of giving up. Every night I ponder the thought. Giving up on

breathing, living, laughing, just letting everything collapse around me. When I met her, I realized that some things aren’t worth giving up on. Her smile restores my breath while her eyes steal it away again. She hates her teeth, but I love her genuine smile so much. She ducks her head down in embarrassment, and I tease her again just to see that smile stretch across her face.

The moment she tells me she might be gay my heart stutters. I came out to her a long time ago, comfortable enough in my sexuality, but not comfortable enough with the implications.

She asks to sleepover, and it takes the whole day to calm my racing heart. This isn’t the first time we will have an overnight adventure, but the last time was when she was assuredly straight.

I should’ve known I can’t resist her. With my shaky hand, I sweep muted pink eyeshadow onto her trembling eyelids. When I move on to her lips, my eyes focus on outlining her cupid’s bow. Her eyes continue to stay closed, eyelashes fluttering uncertainty against her cheeks. I want to kiss her, I think I am supposed to kiss her. Her eyes finally flutter open.

“Almost done there?” she questions a little breathlessly. I haven’t even started.

Anticipation is drumming a steady beat in my chest and I swear I hear the same bass in hers. I lick my lips and watch as her coal-colored eyes follow the movement. I think I am supposed to kiss her. She suddenly shuffles backward on the bed, scrambling away from my closeness like a crab.

She takes a makeup wipe from my stash and starts quickly undoing the work I’ve just done. She forces out a yawn and a “Can we sleep please?”

Tucked in bed, both of us on our backs. My eyes refuse to droop, nerves making my body vibrate. I trace colors on her ceiling. I turn to face her, and she soon follows. We stare at each other, wide eyes trying to read each other. She doesn’t seem tired anymore.

“You remember what I told you the other day?” she whispers with cracked lips, worn from her vicious biting. I nod my assent. “I think I might be straight after all,” she murmurs, a hesitant smile, no teeth. I nod and smile back, my cheeks feeling strained from the force it takes to keep it there. She turns on her back, and I’m frozen on my side, forcing myself to remain neutral.

I desperately want to sleep, desperately want to breathe. In this moment, I’ve never wanted to give up more. I feel the tease of sunshine lighting up my darkened world, but I will never get to taste it.

“I came out to her a long time ago, comfortable enough in my sexuality, but not comfortable enough with the implications.”

FELICIDADE NICOL DA SILVA *acrylic*



TRISTEZA NICOL DA SILVA *acrylic*



CTRL ALT DEL BLKWOMXN
DOMINIQUE DURDEN

The women I know used to shrink all the time.
Now, we bare our teeth,
drink the blood of our enemies.
After all, anything that bleeds be unholy,
ain't that why you call us witches?
Call us hysterical,
Call me bitch,
Bitch please.
I could swallow you whole in one bite and use your bones to pick my teeth when I'm finished.
Boy, I birthed you—
don't you ever disrespect your mother.

And yeah, Crystal, you were right:
every time I walk into a room, my black goes before me,
while my woman sits in the back where she will neither be seen nor heard.
Sometimes my woman walks into the room before me, and locks my Black out because my black
is too black, and the only black in the room, and my woman cannot afford to be the stereotype,
even though she be angry,
even though she be right,
even though she be backbone,
even though she is too much of all to only be one,
and still she be forced to choose,
like you can separate one from the other when you are the bastard child of bondage.
My woman closes the door on my black.
My black closes the door on my woman.
My woman and my black fight every single day.
My woman and my black be tired.
My woman and my black be so tired, cuz she be everything to everybody and don't get none of
the credit for everything she gives.
And she gives,
and gives,
and gives,
till she can't give no more, and then she gives again.
She be the meat, the bone, and the marrow.
She be the cook, the pot, and everything in the pot,
and still have to clean up everyone else's mess.
And maybe that comes with the territory.
Perhaps Medusa was a black woman,
you know how they be demonizing us when we talk back.
Perhaps it wasn't snakes in her hair, but locs,
and if I am my mother's child, I have followed in her footsteps.
If there's anything that she has taught me, it's that looks can kill,
and that if I have to serve a man,
I should serve him well done.



ODE TO VAGINA
CAMILLE SAN GABRIEL
oil on wood canvas

NO SUCH THING AS NORMAL

MEG BONNEY

creative nonfiction

My period came when I was in seventh grade. It was excruciating to bear, with horrific cramping, and a flow that would leak through a tampon, or even a pad within a single class period. I dreaded attending school during the weeks I was menstruating. I woke up every morning of my period with awful morning sickness; I had to start waking up earlier to ensure that my puking or dry-heaving wouldn't cause me to be late once again. Eventually my mom determined that it could be beneficial if I started birth control.

Birth control reduced my flow to a minimum, but the leaking tampons prevailed. I cried in the farthest back stall of my middle school's second floor women's room after the first time I bled through my jeans after going on birth control, distraught that something my gynecologist had reassured me would help my condition hadn't done what it was anticipated to do. Highly embarrassed by the possibility that anything could be wrong with me, I didn't tell my mom or my gynecologist that it was still happening, and after a successful trial run, I realized that using two tampons—something strongly discouraged—stopped the leaking. I kept this dangerous charade going for six years.

During the summer leading into my junior year of high school, I lost my virginity to my first boyfriend, Alex. It was agonizingly painful. Holding back tears, I told him it hurt, and asked him to stop or even to just be gentler.

"That's normal for virgins," he said as he wrapped his hand around my throat and pushed me down, becoming even more forceful.

I bled for three days; I bled after the next dozen or so times. Each time it hurt but I dealt with it—after all, it was *normal*.

By the following year, the pain associated with sex had essentially vanished, but I still had to use two tampons at a time while menstruating. Being a swimmer, I would go through nearly a whole box of 36 tampons in the span of a week. My mom questioned why I would go through so many, asking if something else had developed since the last time we touched base regarding my unruly menstrual cycle. I lied and began to buy extra boxes on my own, hiding them under my bed. I began to wonder a bit more seriously if something was actually wrong with my body. In an action all too common for people my age, I attempted to self-diagnose through *WebMD*. The possible results—cancer, ovarian cysts, fibroids—scared the hell out of me. Then another possibility appeared on my computer screen: uterine didelphys.

Uterine didelphys is a birth disorder resulting from the malformation of the Mullerian ducts, which fuse together in utero to become a woman's reproductive system. With uterine didelphys, the ducts don't join completely, causing what is essentially a duplication of the reproductive system. As the malformation can occur at any

point in the system's formation, there is large variation in the organs affected, and to what extent—some women have two cervixes, some have a full or partial vaginal septum. The cause is unknown, and the frequency is highly speculated, reportedly affecting 0.1-0.5% of women, though that figure could be more, as it's an easily overlooked condition. Symptoms are almost non-existent, except that many effected women find difficulty with tampons working correctly.

Upon more research, I realized that I could quite possibly have uterine didelphys, but remained hesitant to say anything to my gynecologist, embarrassed at the thought that I wasn't normal "down there." As it is, there is already such a stigma against anything that sways from the "norm" in regard to the female body—I didn't even want my mom or my doctor to look at me in disgust or as a freak due to my possible abnormality. I continued to keep it hidden until about a month before my eighteenth birthday. I had just begun dating someone new, Mike, a great guy who, after Alex, treated me far better than I ever thought a guy could treat me. Better than I thought I deserved to be treated. However, I was horrified at the idea of being intimate with him, worried that if we were, he would be able to tell something was different. I didn't want to drive him away. I had to see if there was something I could do to make me normal. Luckily, I already had an annual exam scheduled with my gynecologist. There, I waited until the last minute to express my concerns.

"Anything else?" Dr. Keith asked.

She had known me for six years and could tell I had something on my mind.

"Well..." I began, opening the floodgates for an emotional tirade based on concerns I'd been bottling up for years.

Upon leaving, I still didn't have all the answers, but it was likely that I did have uterine didelphys. Dr. Keith determined that I had a partial septum, the reason behind the tampon leaking, but it wasn't

prominent, hence why it was never detected during any of my previous pelvic exams. She also found that I had two cervixes, which was a hint that I did have uterine didelphys, but there were a series of other possible defects which had to be eliminated through different tests and exams.

Within the next month, appointments seemed to pile up on each other. Such a ridiculous number of ultrasounds were performed on me that I can now easily provide a comprehensive guide on how they are conducted. I had abdominal and vaginal ultrasounds to observe the formation of my reproductive system, and also to check for complications commonly linked with uterine didelphys, such as fibroids, ovarian cysts, and to see if I was missing one of my kidneys. Dr. Keith directed me to a fertility specialist who would determine whether or not I could have surgery to correct any of the deformities. They would also determine the likelihood of my ability to have children.

At the specialist, Dr. Klipstein's, office I had yet another ultrasound. My mom was insistent on going in with me. My mom, Dr. Klipstein, a nurse, and the ultrasound technician surrounded me as I lie exposed and vulnerable on the exam table. I think of this moment and shudder, feeling like a circus animal being ooh'ed and aah'ed as the technician poked and prodded me with the ultrasound wand. Dr. Klipstein pointed out things on the large screen above me while my mom subsequently made comments about how crazy but "cool" it was that this could actually happen to someone's body. It wasn't cool at all—I felt like a freak. After the ultrasound, we discussed our options moving forward. I could get surgery to correct the vaginal septum, but any surgery on my cervixes or uteruses were experimental and highly discouraged by Dr. Klipstein. Grasping at any chance I had to seem normal, I agreed to do the septum surgery. Once we determined the date, the conversation took a turn. Dr. Klipstein pulled out my chart, containing all the results and images from my previous tests and ultrasounds.

"I wanted to discuss with you the complications that your condition may cause with conception in the future," she began. "It looks like both your uteruses are less than 40% of the size of a normal one. Sometimes one is significantly larger—we were hoping in your case, that one day, when the time was right, a doctor could artificially inseminate that particular uterus to ensure that you could carry a baby to full term. However, with the size of yours, it seems unlikely that you could have a full-term pregnancy. There is still a chance that you could have a planned cesarean section before the 37-week mark, but that could increase complications for both you and your baby. There are more accurate tests that can be done before you're at the point where you'll start trying, but don't worry, you can cross that bridge when you get there."

On the car ride home, my mom asked me how I was feeling about the surgery. She didn't address the high chance of infertility (she knew I had long insisted I did not want to have kids). What she didn't know was that I was starting to change my mind, that like many teenage girls, I had begun to think of baby names and facetiously kept a list of them on my phone. The news that I likely wouldn't be able to have kids, let alone a safe pregnancy, hit me like a ton of bricks. After getting home, I got in my own car and drove the route I typically took when I needed time to think; I cried and cried until there was nothing left to cry. I held so much resentment for Dr. Klipstein, hated that she didn't even offer to run some of those tests, that I would have to continue to live with the ominous cloud of uncertainty until I actually wanted a child. It seemed mad that the best option was to let a young girl wait to fall in love, get married, and get excited about possibly starting a family, only to rip that dream out from under her at the peak of her excitement. It seemed more rational to have run the tests, and if they determined that I couldn't have a child, to let me come to terms with that at eighteen and not get my hopes up. I was mad that I didn't

ask, that I didn't say anything, but I didn't want to stray from the status quo—I just wanted to do whatever seemed *normal*.

I told Mike about the surgery two days before the scheduled date, randomly blurting it out while in line at a McDonald's drive-thru. I had spent the last week critically overthinking how to tell him, wondering if it was possible to hide it and go through recovery without ever hinting something was going on.

"Wait," Mike hit the brakes of his car after inching forward in line. "Why are you getting surgery?"

A deep sigh released from my lungs. This is it, no takebacks, you have to tell him, I thought. The moment of silence felt endless, but was abruptly broken by another sigh as I finally mustered up enough confidence to explain what was going on, making sure to tiptoe over all the "gross" parts—I didn't want him to think I was weird, that something was wrong with me, that I wasn't normal. Mike reacted far better than I ever imagined. So much better I cried over how relieved I was that he still wanted to date me. After the surgery, he came over to take care of me while I rested in bed, complaining about the pain, which felt so much worse than any pain I had ever felt before. I joked about how I should've just dealt with the septum because the pain was too much. Mike told me I needed to take another painkiller and go to sleep. I was crabby, but I'd take that pain over what I had dealt with for the last six years any day.

The physical healing was quick. I was able to get back into the water and start training for my first collegiate swim season, which started three weeks later. Now, my periods are significantly more tolerable, and I save a lot of money not needing to buy so many tampons, but the emotional effects are still apparent. Going to the gynecologist after my surgery was rough—whichever nurse escorted me into the exam room would ask the same question while going through my chart, "What is uterine didelphys?" Understanding that it's very rare and they are professionals just trying to learn more

about their patient, I would try my best to explain, but again, it was tiring and embarrassing feeling like a zoo animal. Sometimes they'd see my surgery on the chart and say it was strange that the nurse before them had included a deviated septum surgery in my gynecology history and begin to delete it—it's extremely uncomfortable having to stop them and explain that the surgery wasn't on my nose.

I get extremely self-conscious being intimate. During each encounter, I catch myself overanalyzing and wondering if my partner can tell something is different. I avoid foreplay as much as possible because I hate being fingered, terrified that he can feel my scars. Last year, my hormones went haywire and a birth control pill that worked for me for years stopped working—I had breakthrough bleeding for two weeks out of the month, on top of my normal period, for four months straight. Dr. Keith suggested that the hormone influx was due to the abnormalities of my reproductive system. Almost every day was stress-inducing, trying to avoid putting myself in a position where my partner would want to be intimate. I refused to explain to him what was going on, scared he'd step away the second he found out I wasn't normal, but I also didn't want him to think I was pushing him away or that I was no longer interested. It was like walking on a tightrope. The possible inability to have a safe and successful pregnancy still lingers over me, its dark cloud releasing a storm of emotions whenever I'm around young kids. The surgery may have corrected one abnormality, but the others and their effects will follow me throughout my life.

I often catch myself wondering, why me? Why, out of so many women in this world, do I have a rare condition that is widely not understood? I force myself to remember that it is because I'm strong enough to handle it. With all the complications I've experienced, both physically and emotionally as a result of uterine didelphys, I have managed to adapt, and I will continue to do so with whatever challenges it may throw at me. I'm no longer afraid to be open about my condition. It's time we break taboos about female bodies. It starts with women taking a stand against societal norms, speaking up, and being open about the things that can be uncomfortable. By doing so, we pave the way for future women to live more comfortably in their skin—to accept that there's no such thing as normal.

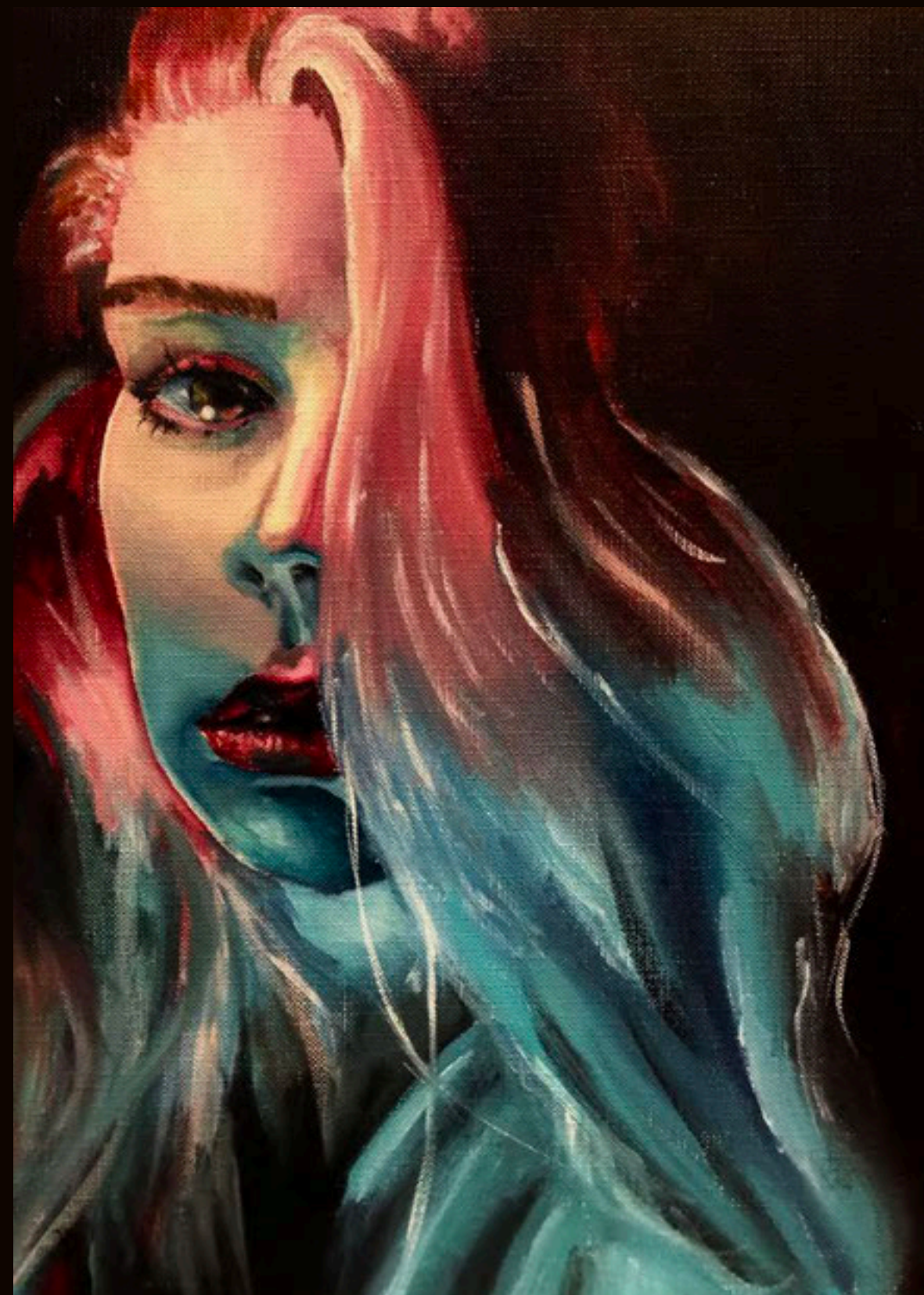
FALLING LABELLUM

NICOLE COSTA

Hope has vanished from the orchid's veins,
as it stares at me with its wilting dragon tongue.
Aphrodite cries out,
"Give me more sun!"
The goddess burns the spotted yellow center,
making sure it can never have any young.
Laughing,
as she watches the delicate pink petals fall off
one
by
one



OMINOUS GIRL
CASSANDRA DOMEIJ
oil on canvas



COMPANION

ABBEY BRANCO

I noticed it one morning,
hiding at the foot of my bed,
a gentle hum vibrating the quilt sheets tucked around my ankles.

Wispy body and bared teeth,
a creature, round and filled with smoke, licking at my eyes in the early mornings.

I didn't know it then, but for twelve hours I grew you, fostered and festered you. At fifteen, I made something appear that many don't have until they're older.

My therapists call it loss. I call it baggage.

It has grown over the years. Garnered momentum in a college rejection letter, a shaky breakup.
My body refusing to act as it should.

For five years I have called you my own. Kept you behind my legs and watched as you closed my lips and tore out my throat; took away my speech because it's easier to be quiet when all you have to say is sadness.

They say losing a parent is like losing a part of you.

But I think I gained something that day. Something I'll never really let go of. Something that keeps me human.

LOCAL ANESTHESIA

MEI FUNG ELIZABETH CHAN

aquatint, dry point, etching, engraving, mezzotint, watercolor with chine-collé gampi on Hahnemühle paper



DIASPORA

ELIZABETH BRADY

i've never seen the face of god
but i've heard her voice
beckon between the blades
of grass on a wave of land,
a wave the most brilliant green,
i hear her.

i've heard her in stories
that have been told for
many thousand years:
a queen buried
standing up,
a giant who forged
a bridge of stone, i hear her.

i hear her song echo
in darkened alleys,
carried up from
the cobblestones,
reaching up from
the bogs
that end life,
sustain life,
are life,
i hear her.

i hear her in the melody,
spinning in circles breathlessly.
i hear her in the ceaseless beat,
steady drumming and stamping of feet,
i hear her.

she howls with hunger,
she cries with death,
i heard her.

she does not command.
she does not encroach.
she whispers,
she sings,
"at last! you're home."

GOLDEN SEA SIERRA YARD

acrylic on canvas



SHY SKYLA
SIERRA YARD
acrylic on canvas



STELLAR SMALLNESS
LUCIENNE QUIRK

Sweeping solar systems do harrow me
to think of my own smallness in contrast,
how my composition is but stardust,
my body mere fragments of one more vast.
The loftiness of nightly ponderings
are but dwarfed in dark skies by countless suns;
how pointless are my mind's own wanderings
in the shadows of their bright burning tons?
Yet I, though composed of meekest matter,
like many moons towards giant Jupiter,
drew near an attractively grand gravity:
your love, a force like space's black vacuums.
Though I am a drop in this starry sea,
like a telescope, you magnify me.



ANXIETY ILLUSTRATED BY MOTHS

HANNAH GLUCHACKI

oil pastel



GRAVE THOUGHTS

MAIA DASCHKE

creative nonfiction

Wake up.

Scroll through phone notifications.

See the *Daily Mail* announcement that another girl my age has killed herself.

The word is bold in the headline: SUICIDE. It shovels a pit in my mind. It digs up once carefully buried memories.

* * *

The memory of when I was twelve and my best friend called one night and I didn't answer. I was tired and falling asleep and assumed it was something about Alkaline Trio that could wait until morning, but when I woke up and listened to her voicemails I really wished I hadn't waited until morning because it sounded bad, it sounded so bad and I wished that I could have been there to stop the razor from breaking her skin. When I found out she was still alive I remember thinking I had never been more thankful. But when we were fifteen she really went for it and washed down too many pills with too much booze and got too close to death before she realized she didn't really like death after all and so she called 911 and went and lived in an inpatient hospital for a while. Outside the hospital walls I lived in worry and guilt.

* * *

Roll over.

Spot the self-help book strategically placed at eye level on the bookshelf.

Remember what the book says about feeling emotions instead of killing them.

Force myself out of bed and try to clean the slideshow of memories playing in my mind.

* * *

The memory of when I first started dating my boyfriend and he told me about what his grandpa did to him when he was young and he said it wasn't until years later that he realized what had happened and when it hit him it really fucking hit him and he never told anyone out of fear so years later when his brother came forward with the same story he spiraled downwards into a horrible depression.

I remember so vividly the way he looked away from me for a moment and said, "I almost..." his lips puckering out and his fingers straightening until his fingertips touched the tip of his chin, forming a gun. That wasn't even how he planned to do it, but any gesture was easier to make than telling your girlfriend, "I almost killed myself."

* * *

Walk towards the window.

Tend to the plants and take in the sunshine.

Remember what else the book says and open the window to let out negative energy.

Spot the tree straight ahead in the backyard, notice how pale and dead it is. The way its dull gray twigs paint the January sky with spiderwebs.

* * *

The tree inspires the memory of last January when I hit the worst point in my depression, which entailed a heavy marijuana dependency, a habit of always crying when I found myself alone, and a constant sense of existential dread. And even at that point I wasn't at *that* point—the point of suicide. *Suicide, suicide...* the word buries itself deep in my mind as if there are more unwanted memories to dig up, but I don't know why because I have dug them all up and I can't think of what other terrible things I have left to process until I remember the conversation I had with my mom during that really bad point when she asked me if I wanted to and I told her no and that was true but I admitted to her that sometimes I wondered if people would care if I did. I remember the sudden paleness of her face, the trembling of her lips, the pain in her glossed-over eyes. I recognize the same pain now in her texts when she sees me share something about mental health on Facebook and it still worries her even though I've been doing so much better so she asks me if I'm okay and I'm glad she cares but I feel so guilty for giving her that pain in the first place.

* * *

It hurts, it all hurts to remember, but I let it.

And when my eyes start to brim over with tears of pride for my growth and for our growth, I close them and smile. When I open them again, my view is no longer just wooden spiderwebs in the sky.

Now, my view is painted scarlet by a cardinal perched on a branch of the bare tree.

And after a moment of confusion, I remember reading somewhere that cardinals are not migratory birds. They don't escape winter—they survive and triumph through the desolate cold.

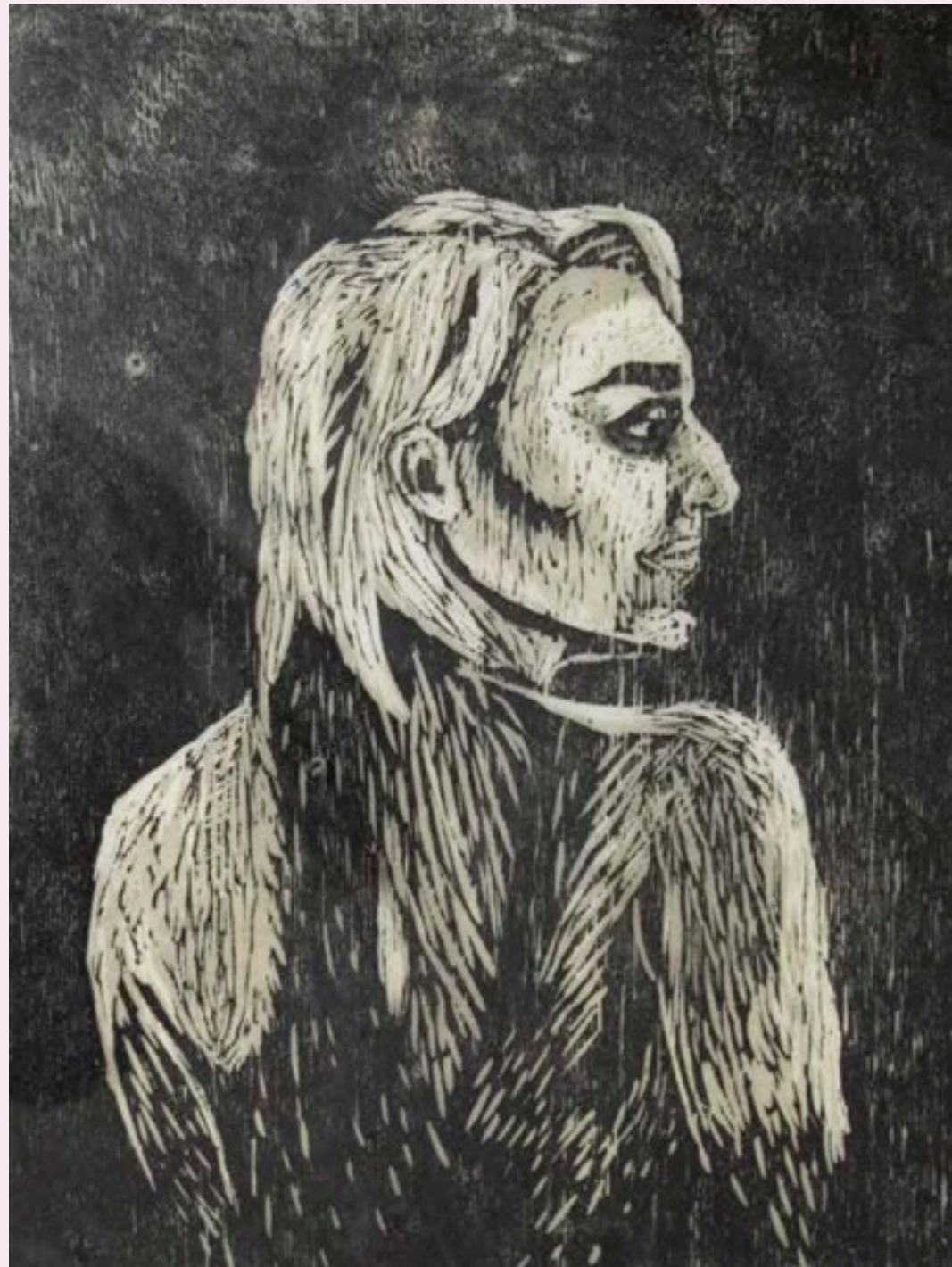
"It hurts,
it all hurts to remember,
but I let it."

BEAUTY IN A NEW ENGLAND WINTER

KAYLA ROSE

photography





SELF PORTRAIT
CAMILLE SAN GABRIEL
woodblock relief printing

GENDER? I BARELY KNOW HER

MEGHAN DAMIANO

creative nonfiction

When I was a senior in high school, I cut all my hair off in protest. Okay, not all, but a lot. It was this awful, granny-esque pixie cut with more layers than an onion, and was like, fluffy on top, like the head of a cockatoo, but I digress. Sometimes I felt like a BAME, proud of my feminist haircut. You don't need long hair to feel feminine and pretty—ask the celebrity whose picture I used as a reference. But in reality, that confidence was rarely ever in sight. Instead, it made me anxious that I gave the bullies who tormented my childhood another excuse to refer to me as a “thing” and to make fun of me because nobody could tell what I was. It made me a target and I was terrified. I still kinda am.

Picture it: a crummy, cold ice rink snack bar. The walls are blue and the paint is cracking. It's dusty and dirty and exudes cheap. It's just me, hiding out in the back crevice like Harry Potter (fitting, considering we have the same haircut), doing homework because I'm a senior and it's a Saturday. In comes this pair of hockey parents. Snooty, dressed in name-brand clothes, the guy probably wearing a golf shirt, and the woman looking like she'd like to speak to somebody's manager. They look around for someone to fetch them hot chocolate or whatever—oh hey, that's my job. I am wearing a blue crewneck sweatshirt with my favorite band—Modern Baseball—on it, regular skinny jeans, my pixie cut, no makeup. Generally,

genderly indecipherable. I greet them, grab their order, and they pay. At some point during or after this exchange, the guy refers to me as “young man” and I feel myself physically shrink. I'm really shaken up by his mistaking of my gender, because for the umpteenth time, no one has been able to tell that I am female, and that is more troublesome than any insult at this point in my life.

Gender, for me, has become this big glowing question mark. Ever since I was a little kid, it's always been this elephant in the room that reminds me how normal I don't feel. I never really liked Barbies or dolls, or typically rigidly “girly” things. I hate the color pink, or any bright color, unless it's in small quantities. I don't really like makeup or doing my hair. I have masculine features that come straight from my dad—a giant nose that I never grew into (which is, frankly, just rude) and thick, dark eyebrows, that match my equally resilient leg hair. I am shapeless, like a sheet ghost. I am also really aggressive and okay at sports, and all my friends are guys, lesbians, gender neutral or probably equally as confused as I am.

From the early schooldays, I was made fun of for the qualities that made me feel unfeminine. I could usually keep up with the boys, and for years, I played t-ball and baseball, and hung out with the boys at recess. I used to be referred to as a butch and get egged on to be more aggressive in games so that bullies could laugh at me for

being terrible at sports but still trying. Or I'd be considered a slut, trying to make the boys like me. And for years, it really didn't bother me. I was a really confident and kind of dumb kid, so I laughed with the laughter and stayed true to me.

Then came the accursed middle school. While the boys were at least outright in why they were making fun of me and gave me audible critique about how I could potentially stop the mocking, girls weren't so blunt about it. The girls I grew up with would make more subtle remarks, like when my softball coach told everybody aloud at practice, "Meghan's mother hasn't taught her how to shave her legs yet," in regard to my sasquatchian calves. The more and more these comments came hurtling at me left and right, the more and more I crawled back into my protective shell, and I think that's a big part of why I'm kind of a shut-in as an adult.

I felt really ashamed of who I was because boys played pranks and made jokes about who would have to dance with me at our local middle school church dances, and I had no cool female friends because I wasn't photogenic (or interesting, but that's a personality thing and I stand by that). I was made to feel like a monster, and the more I tried to build myself back up and come into my own identity—which in this case meant listening to really aggressive emo music, wearing a lot of black and a lot of hair dye—the harder liking myself became.

It wasn't until college when I found people who really wanted me for me, that I learned how to love myself (at least as much as I possibly can). I finally started gaining some of my childhood confidence back. A lot of that can be accredited to binge drinking and having money to buy my own clothes, also getting rid of the toxic people in my life, but a portion of that can also be attributed to meeting great friends and holding on to the ones that let me be the weird, amazing, genderless blob I feel like a lot of the time. Now, I'm twenty-three, and I don't cry when a little kid can't figure out what I am, because frankly, I can't either. I just know that sometimes I feel like wearing pants and nonconforming t-shirts with dragons on them, and sometimes I feel like wearing old, vintage-looking dresses that show off what I got. Sometimes I want to shave my entire head, and other times I would be distraught without my ponytail. I just take it day by day, and that's fine by me.

It's also cool to be living in a time where we have open dialogue for people like me who don't feel like they fit in anywhere—regardless of how many times my friend's Republican dad posts memes about their "x" number of gender identities. I don't bother to argue with him anymore. I just own that I am who I am, and not always, but sometimes, that's pretty fucking rad.

MADONNA AND CHILD

CAMILLE SAN GABRIEL

oil on canvas





SKAKET SUNSET

ARTHUR KOPELLAS

photography

AUNTIE BARBARA'S HOUSE

ADAM BLOWERS

She said her breast
was like a deflated football,
left in the snow all winter long—
lumpy and lifeless, with those thick stitches
holding an empty air sack together.
She couldn't look down.

She kept staring
forward at her curtains shut tight
to the darkest and deadest winter—
the trees stripped naked, desaturated
bark and skylines that no light could break through.
She apologized.

She said sorry
that she didn't shovel the stairs,
that it was dark inside her house,
that all night all she talked about
was the tumor they removed with her breast,
how food tasted like battery acid
and felt like razor blades inside her throat,
and how she wishes we could have spent more time together,
but she needed rest.

GOD

CAITLIN FARIA

fiction

I never imagined that my fresh new start at my fresh new job in a fresh new state would turn out like this. To my right, the dead body of a woman hangs in the trees. Her body is lifted by rope and her arms are out so that she looks like a cross. To my left, her husband, God.

Not the real God, but he's what people consider to be as close as you can get. His real name is Officer Godesko, but everyone around here calls him God. I don't know if it's just to shorten his last name or if it's for his morals. Maybe it's for both. The way everyone refers to him is always so nonchalant and comfortable.

"Yeah, I just saw God at the bar. We talked about the ball game for a while."

You wouldn't think that God would be a word that people say so easily. Usually the name has a bigger meaning and people put a little more emphasis on it. Like when you go to church or something and the priest guy is talking. It's never just a name.

"And then, GOD came to Abraham and told him..."

The God standing next to me gives the word a different meaning. It's not really lessened, but I guess more human.

He and I are the only state troopers in the area. It's a small town in northern New Hampshire called Willbrook, and it's engulfed in dense woods. There is a small town center just half a mile away from where we are now. Willbrook's one of those weird places that you see in TV shows and movies—everyone knows everyone, but nothing ever happens. The biggest issue is teenagers taking their parents' pick-up trucks into the woods at night to smoke pot, but God never arrests them or anything. He just lectures them for a bit. Even though they don't like getting caught, they never give him any trouble, because they respect him so much. The kids always hand over their weed, say "thank you," get back in the trucks, and wave as they drive off.

God's this big 43-year-old guy who looks like he could be a lumberjack. He's probably somewhere around 6'8" and is all muscle. His shoulders are so broad that I'm surprised he even fits through doorways. His oldest son, Adrien, is built the same way. However, the rest of the family is around average height and slender. His fourteen-year-old son and nine-year-old daughter are both the perfect height for their ages, and thin, as opposed to muscular like their father. They look more like their mother, whose body is now being brought down slowly from the trees.

Her name was Ellen Godesko.

Willbrook has a well-known drifter who wanders around all day and night. Mr. Obsurro was the one who reported seeing her like this. He was drunk when he made the call. I can see Adrien hugging his little brother and sister through the trees. God didn't want the kids to see the body up close, but they refused to stay home. They kept back about 400 feet from the area we roped off and weren't anywhere near Ellen.

Somewhere in these woods there are teenagers smoking weed together in their dad's pick-up truck.

This is the first time I've seen anything really bad happen. Not just around here. I haven't seen something like this anywhere. I'm only twenty-two, and I grew up in a more upper-middle class town. I got my bachelor's in criminal justice, and now I'm here.

In nowhere Willbrook, New Hampshire.

With God's wife, Ellen, dead in front of me.

* * *

It's been two and a half weeks since Ellen's body was found up in the trees. God's sad, but he hasn't been showing it. At least not around anyone. Even the day that we first saw her, he just stood quietly next to me. Now, we're looking up at the trees again. Two more bodies are tied up with ropes, with their arms out. Two children that look like crosses in the air.

Their names were Clay and Rachel Godesko.

God is standing next to me again, looking up at his children's corpses.

The little boy who found them is crying at home now, while his mother holds him. This short and stocky cop with a Band-Aid on his chin came over and started talking to me and God. He said all the regular condolences and all, but then went into what he really came over to say. They tested the DNA found on Ellen, and all that was found were traces of the family. The only suspect they had was Mr. Obsurro, the creepy drifter, but now he seems unlikely. Something else came up, too: the ropes used to tie up the bodies were from God's house and the bodies were dragged out into the woods already dead.

God plunged himself into this investigation. When he wasn't at home with Adrien, he was at the station looking through reports, or at the crime scene studying every little thing.

The people of Willbrook all felt awful for him. Guys at the bar said they felt bad they didn't know some crazy serial killer was on the loose and coming after God's family, that they didn't have the common sense to recognize this. Some of the ladies I talked to who live nearby the house have this theory that it might've been Adrien. Apparently, a couple of their kids go to school with him, and said that Adrien was known to "have a temper" and "wasn't afraid to go after someone if they messed with his friends." The ladies are pretty dead set that he did it.

"That would explain how his DNA was found on the ropes."

"Plus, he would be able to get the ropes and everything from the house."

They kept going on and on about how it was Adrien. As much as I was starting to agree, I wasn't planning on telling God anytime soon.

"I feel so bad for him," one of the women said. "Lately, poor God keeps getting bad news."

"Yeah. First his wife and now his two kids. It's only him and Adrien now, and what if Adrien really is the killer? Then what? God just has to live in the house with the kid who murdered his family?"

"I think I'm gonna make the poor guy a lasagna for dinner tomorrow, then he won't have to worry about cooking."

I drove back to the station after that. How was I going to tell God that his son was the killer? It was so obvious—the DNA, the bodies being dragged from the house, the ropes belonging to the family. When I get to the station, I walk in and see God sleeping on the desk with papers all over the place, drool falling from his mouth, making a small puddle on one of the folders.

* * *

It's been another week. Now Adrien is missing. He just disappeared this morning. The women I was talking to a while back said they think that he is trying to hide and get out of Willbrook so that he never gets caught. Search parties have been sent throughout the woods and will go until sundown. We've been in contact with all the other New Hampshire state troopers, telling them to keep an eye out for Adrien. Nothing's come up yet.

Everyone's worried about God. He rarely goes home and stays up all night and day at the station going through every file that might give him some answers. I keep making him sandwiches, and they keep getting piled up on his desk, uneaten. The only times that I've seen him sleep lately is when he knocks out while going through papers. He doesn't willingly sleep anymore and I'm sure that if it was possible, he wouldn't close his eyes again until he found Adrien.

Right now, it's 2:36 a.m. and I'm the only one at the station. I convinced God to take his work home tonight in hopes that he might, at some point, wind up in his bed. I am going through Adrien's disciplinary reports from school. He doesn't seem like that bad of a kid on paper, but from the stories I've heard from students, it seems like he just knows how to get away with things.

I start to walk out of the station to get in my car, but I decide to take a quick look at the crime scene one more time before I head home for the night. I grab my flashlight from the trunk and head out into the woods. For most people this would be horrifying, but I've gotten used to it. I walk over the police tape and look at the trees where Clay and Rachel had been hanging before they were brought down.

I see something out of the corner of my eye. A big burly figure is walking through the woods, dragging along a body from God's house. I turn my light off and run closer, weaving between the trees.

Why would Adrien come back? What did he forget to do? What, or who, is he dragging behind him?

I get close and see Adrien, but he's not the way I thought he would be. He has bruises all around his neck and is covered in dirt from being dragged by God.

His back is turned to me now. I can see the rope in one hand and Adrien's bunched up sweatshirt in the other. I slowly make my way through the dark, dense woods. I try to stay on rocks or big tree roots so that I make as little noise as possible. I don't think God can hear any of the sounds I'm making though, because Adrien's body is crushing leaves and hitting branches as they move.

He finally stops and lets go of his son's sweatshirt. First, he ties the rope around the trunk of a tree, and then he goes over to the corpse and starts to tie a knot around Adrien's ankle. I hold up the flashlight and start to make my way towards God. His back is turned to me.

I can feel every inch of my foot hit the ground. First my heel, then the outside of the arch, and the ball, and then my toes push off and my next foot starts going. A branch snaps under my arch and God turns around. I slam the flashlight against his temple as his head whirls around. He stumbles backwards a little and holds the palm of his hand against where I had hit. I shove him to the ground and start punching. I knock God unconscious and tie his hands together with the rope. I lean into my shoulder where the walkie-talkie rests.

"I have a murderer apprehended in Willbrook about a half mile west of the trooper station. I need back-up. One dead body and one unconscious."



HOLY BOOK (CHEESE BOOK)

TUVEYA KIRNON-DAVIS

stone



REINCARNATION
MEI FUNG ELIZABETH CHAN
ink and color on silk

MAN OF WAR

KATIE SHEEHAN

ink drawing



THE BLACK TAR SHEEP

RACHAEL SWEENEY

Twelve years old:
that's when I heard of you for the first time,
though I never saw your face.
I watched you
carefully,
scared,
far too young.

Brown powder
Poppy flower
Burnt spoons
Twelve years old

You've tainted all the veins I love—
I almost feel you coursing through mine.
They are warm with dopamine;
I am hot with anger.

Dopamine
Dope sick
Dope sick thief
First it was my belongings,
shortly after, my heart.

Black veins
No sleep
Stay away from me, Heroin,
I am the black tar sheep.

GLADIATORIUM

ANTOINE TROMBINO-APONTE

Prisoners of long-lost wars once waged
 in allied defense of our rights and freedoms
 hastening again to charge against the hate
 held amidst arena arches and portcullises
 as we invoke the illusion of agency
 in trading blow after blow before the crowd
 which has cheered us into frenzied formations
 of young against old, rich against poor,
 color combating color, gender goading gender,
 and the faithful fighting the faithless,
 with the only common ground between us
 being the slurried sand left to absorb
 the cocktail of our collective bloodshed
 spilt in hideous in-hesitance to entertain
 the tearless eyes of the very tyrants
 who have loosed lions and tigers upon us
 so they may ensure our blades and tridents
 will remain aimed at the throats of those
 enslaved alongside us in the pits
 rather than raised with martyrous resolve
 toward the lofts of leisure looming above
 where wagers are placed on our wins and losses
 to be decided at the whim of a downcast thumb—

I implore us to ignore their hollow incitements
 to tempt us into battle with our siblings in bonds
 whom despots have disguised as adversaries
 seeded to divide and distract us to such a degree
 that the very chariots and trebuchets
 with which we perform in shackles
 will never find targets in their aging institutions
 built to profit on the plight of the imprisoned
 but will instead complete the systemic purge
 that our overseers have too long sanctioned
 to condemn us without trial to public executions
 readily delivered by our own bloodied hands
 in the hopes that we will yet come to forget
 that those who share our struggles are not our foes
 but should rather be our greatest friends—
 may we now make their marble thrones quake
 with the thunderous rapture of rattling chains
 as we march in ranks of unfettered fury
 to topple the monuments to our oppression
 and chorus ourselves with the chant of one mantra
 voiced by thousands of frothing mouths
 echoing our fallen forebears' fearless cries:

*ego Spartacus,
 Spartacus sumus.*



LAST BREATH

DAVE MAHLER
photography

SHE BITES

DAVE MAHLER
photography



THE BEATING

KAYLA ROY

I followed the flowered path
Through that dark led by
The howling of the wolves
Hunting in their packs for that
sweet, red

Rose on crisp autumn air
My toes barely noticed the thorns
Piercing flesh to fresh pieces
Dripping steadily that
sweet, red

Without even a star in the night
Right into the beating caverns
Drumming a sound
Hot and Heartfelt
sweet, red

I made myself a little bed
Content to stay a little longer
While you came to lay beside me
Pressed to my mouth those lips
sweet, red

Whispered sweet wishes
Traced constellations into my skin
And once I had fallen asleep
Washed in a warmth
sweet, red

That cavern mouth closed
And the spot where you laid cold
Simply walked on into that dark night
Left me behind caught in that
sweet, red

Alone to wonder

Which had been the wrong turn?

GRASP
KAYLA ROSE
photography



I THOUGHT

JULIA HEBERT

I thought I worked well under pressure
but I can't figure out what to do
my hands are covered in blood
and I am confused
I thought I worked well under pressure
my life is fleeting away
I can't catch my breath
and I am fighting to stay
I thought I worked well under pressure
I am trying to find my phone
everything is covered in blood
and I have never felt so alone
I thought I worked well under pressure
I don't want to go away but
I am losing my will to stay
I don't work well under pressure
my body is covered in blood
I don't work well under pressure
I can't catch my breath to stay
I don't work well under pressure
and I have no more time stay

ABANDONED

KRIS SPOONER
photography



A MARVELOUS MIND

MARIAH MCCARTHY

A great marvel is my mind,
The dream director,
Words may mask the will
crazed carrier of burden,
True freedom is found
When will-fire wakes dreams,
may marvel at its masterpiece,
Superior strength sustains
an aid against anguish
My world whirls only for you,
Holder of hopes,
by pouring praises to pay

my sweet savior of secrets.
that weighs the heaviness of my heart.
of the keeper of my convictions,
strength strains the path to desires.
from the master of my meaning.
my imagination apparatus,
a waking wave of wonder.
my magnificent mind,
halts heightening fears of failure.
my wonderful word widget.
I honor your vigor,
homage to my heart's true home.

M!ND FUCKT

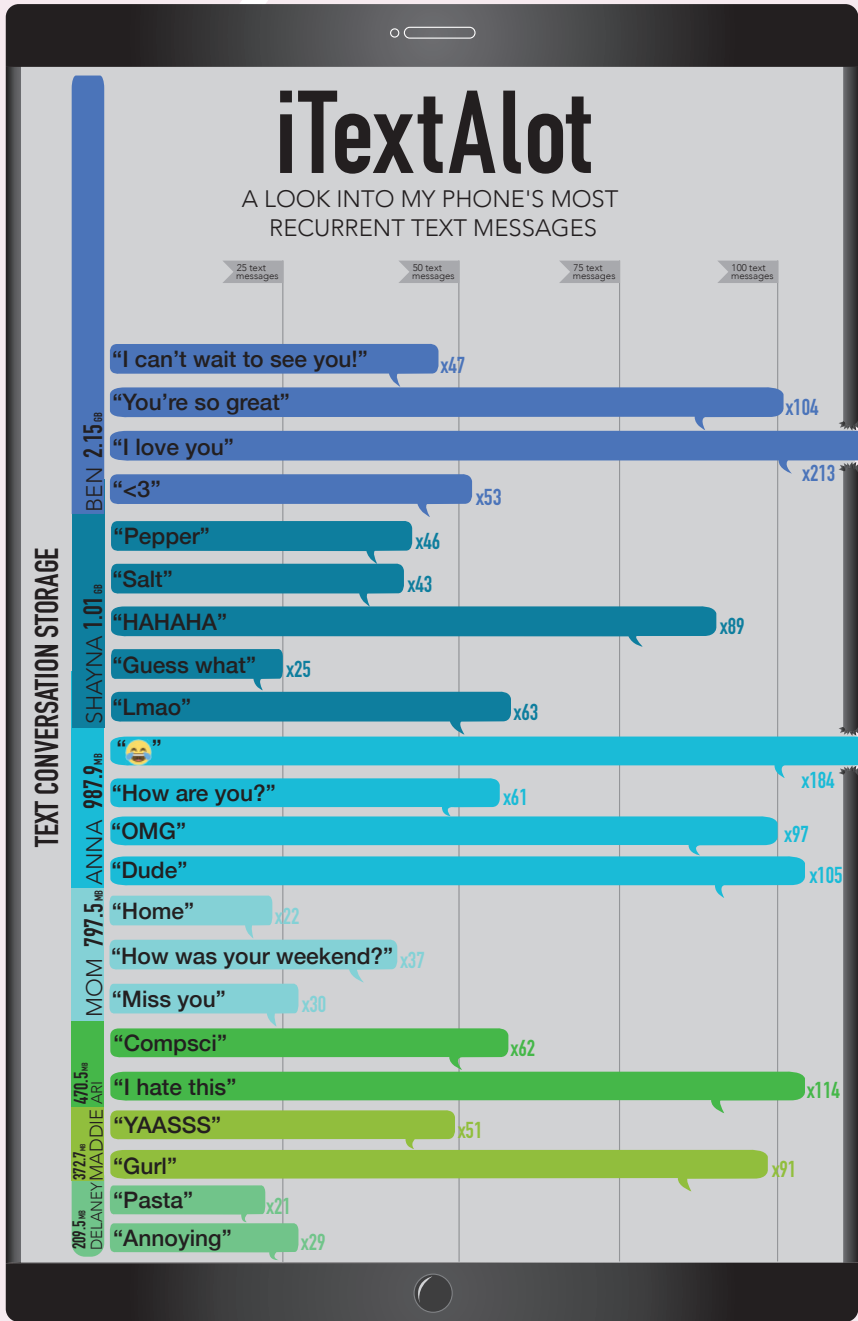
TUVEYA KIRNON-DAVIS

digital media



LOADING...
CALVIN BRIDGES IV
digital media

ITEXTALOT
SAMANTHA SILVIA
digital media





TWISTY THE CLOWN

BAO HUYNH

graphite pencils and charcoal

Here I stand before you,
having surpassed mere mortal hours.
Oh, did you ever have a friend before,
who deathless gods owe debt?
I alone broke the midnight veil,
eyes set on vindication!
Spare me a moment, if you will,
to share my lawless tale.

I've bathed in ink till my eyes went black.
My fingers, scarred and meek,
broken down by words ushered forth
by poets long deplete.

But mother birthed not a fool that night
many moons ago!
She raised a bastard with a will intent
to bring this system low.

Witness me now! For I passed a lonesome night,
placing my mark upon this world.
My words, like the Morning Star,
bursting brightest before dawn's light.

Like a titan I did march,
towards that teacher's lair,
my essay clasped within my grasp,
like a scornful prayer.

She would look upon my work
(and I had hoped, rejoice)
but, I must inform you...
I made a sinful choice.

In my haste to see the end,
I forgot a crucial seal.
That which would part me from the rest,
with such prideful zeal.

I hit the page mark!
Paid credit where it is due!
But alas, she did look down on me,
and said, with hope that I would do better...
"You silly bastard, Sam!
You forgot your last name header!"

FOOL'S FOLLY

SAMUEL BOURE

EULOGY TO MY NON-DEAD MOTHER

JOHANNAH CRONIN

Dear Mother,

Since your death, I've been hoping.
Hoping greatly that you'll return to the way you used to be.
I know all I can hope for is a rebirth.
I also know that being reborn will change you.
I often think of the small memories we shared.
I remember you pushing me on swings,
wind flowing through my hair,
laughter coming out of my mouth.
I wish I knew what I had that day.
I wish I loved you more than I did.
I wish I hugged you a little harder,
so you knew that I loved you,
so you wouldn't disappear from my life.
You killed the woman you were.
You ended your life.
And not a day goes by when I don't think twice.
Think that I should have,
that I could have,
changed the outcome.
Instead I sit alone sometimes,
opening the box of your things.
Sometimes I imagine the smell of you still remains.
I try and inhale all that you were.
I try to create the love you gave me.
I remember the words you told me.
I remember the hard days,
when you would come home with alcohol on your breath.
I remember the fun days,
when we would walk on the beach looking for shells.
And I remember all the days between.
I can only wish that wherever you are,
wherever you go,
that you are happy.
That you have finally found hope.

PLYMOUTH
LEAH LEWANDOWSKI
oil on canvas





TORN PERSPECTIVE
NATALIE SORRENTI
oil on canvas

FAT GIRL KATHLEEN BAZARSKY

i have found myself saying things like
i'm not hungry—when in fact i am starving
Saying things like
i had a big lunch—when i meant two days ago
Saying things like
i just ate—the entirety of the cheesecake in my shameful bedroom

i have found myself thinking that i
Do not deserve food
That i
Cannot eat
That i
Am too fat

i am back in a place i do not know how to get out of and it feels so good
Feels so beautiful to be hungry
Feels so peaceful even in the pain

No matter what it is i allow myself to shove down my throat and swallow with regret
i cannot keep it down

i am two weeks post-breakup and i have downloaded Tinder
And everyone seems to want to go to dinner
So i wonder what i can eat without being ill
Wonder what i can eat in front of a boy who wants to sleep with me for reasons i will never understand
Wonder if he will look at me while i eat
Wonder if he will see a fat girl sitting across from him at the table

i have been buying new underwear
You know,
For the new sex
Except i can only put the lingerie on if i haven't eaten in a day or two

FAT GIRL (CONT.)

You see
 i know i am not overweight,
 i know it is me making these things up in my head
 But i believe it—
 Believe the best parts of me are the ones that do not exist
 Believe i am prettier when i am hungry
 Believe that no one wants to sleep with the fat girl
 Believe that all i am is a fat girl

And starving doesn't help
 Because it is two weeks post-breakup and i am still fat
 So i take pills
 i climb the stairs up and down and up and down and up and down like it is my job all day long

i
 Don't know what to do because all i feel like i am is the fat girl
 Feel like i am too much body and too much woman
 Feel like i might scare them away with my pubic hair and love handles
 Feel like they might tell me they love me just to find out they are lying
 Feel like i might be too vulnerable with the boy i do not know
 With the boy that does not know me
 With the boy that has no intention of knowing me
 With the boy that might want to know me
 Just to find out all i am is a fat girl





COMFORT ABBEY MARCEAU photography

ALL I ORDERED WAS ORANGE JUICE

CAITLIN FARIA

creative nonfiction

There was a lot happening on the day of Papa's funeral. At least there was for my family. We all had to meet up with each other, go to the funeral home, drive to the cemetery, and watch as the color drained out of our worlds. It's weird thinking about that day—knowing that to the vast majority of people, it was a normal day. They woke up and ate some cereal. They watched some TV, maybe a movie. They went to work. They were probably bored most of the time.

I don't remember ever feeling as exhausted as I was that morning. There weren't any thoughts—no "I can't believe he's gone" or "where do I go from here?" It was just all blank. That had never happened to me before. My thoughts were usually racing. That morning, they were completely silent. I got dressed and went upstairs. I didn't eat cereal. I didn't watch TV. There was no work to do. We just had to get in the car and go to Rockland. So that's what we did.

We got there with a lot of time left. Why didn't we go to Nana and Aunt Mo's house like we usually did? It was only around the corner from where we ended up. Maybe none of us were ready to feel that close to Papa again. Maybe none of us were ready to see all the flowers people sent, or all the pictures, or his favorite spot on the couch. I don't know how Nana and Aunt Mo did it.

We pulled into the parking lot of Butterfields, a small breakfast place that we go to all the time. I

knew it was familiar—I had been there countless times before with Nana, Papa, Aunt Mo, Uncle Gabriel, basically every member of my family—but it looked so alien that day. Nothing seemed to really fit. The colors smashed into each other, the smells were overbearing, and every piece of furniture looked somehow off. The moment I walked through that doorway every aspect of my life changed, everything I looked at changed. I became a completely different person. I still don't know if I became better, but I know I'm not the same. That childhood landmark was the first place I visited on the day I grew up.

Around me was my sister Erin, my brother Kevin, my mom, my cousin Brendan, and my Uncle Gus. We sat in the restaurant for about forty-five minutes. During that time we maybe said six words each, speaking only to order. Some people got muffins, Erin got a bagel, but no one ordered any of their usual items like pancakes or waffles. I asked for orange juice.

I never order orange juice. Every time I go to Butterfields I get chocolate milk. There was no reason for me to get orange juice. The words just came out.

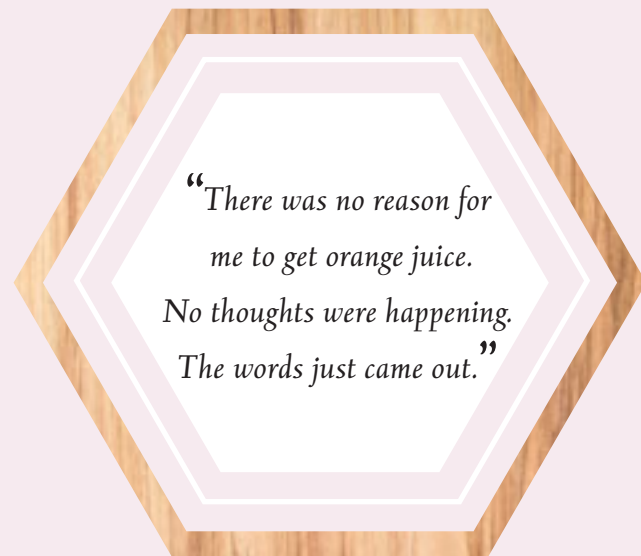
"Can I have orange juice please?" I don't even really like it that much. That doesn't matter though because I couldn't taste it.

Usually there's a tanginess that sits on your tongue and a flood of coolness that goes all the way from your lips down to your throat when you take a sip of orange juice. There wasn't any of that.

There was no tang when it hit my tongue. There was no cool when it went down my throat. I knew there was a drink in my mouth, but if I had to guess I would have thought it was just heavy air. Like when you fill up your mouth with air and your cheeks puff out a little bit. It was like that little push against your cheeks, just on my tongue. All I felt was pressure.

The aftertaste of orange juice was always the worst part of the drink. It would stay with me for so long and bug me to no end. That day, I couldn't taste the drink in the first place, and I couldn't taste it after. There was nothing there.

Ever since then, orange juice has never tasted the same. It does have that tang and that cool again, but it's nothing like it was before. I still feel



No thoughts. Another sip. No tang. No cool. I finished the drink without tasting a single drop.

We left Butterfields and drove to the funeral home. Everyone sat in chairs as the funeral director told us what we were going to do. At the cemetery, I occasionally had little flash thoughts. They came in an instant, stayed for a couple seconds, and then petered off as if they never existed. Most of them I don't remember. But the one thought I will never forget: *there is no aftertaste from my orange juice.*

that overwhelming pressure against my tongue every time. I try not to drink it unless somebody offers it to me. If they do, I'll take small sips so that I don't seem ungrateful, but also so I don't hyperfocus on the weight of the drink. Because every time I feel that weight, all I can picture is standing at the cemetery with my cousins on my right, and my siblings on my left, realizing that something as simple as drinking orange juice, would never again feel the same.

SIMPLY HOME

NICOLE SEELEY

watercolor



A DROP
GINNELLE FOSTER
ceramic



SPINAL STRETCH
MIRANDA MOSCATELLI
oil on canvas

FAIRYTAILS

KAYLA ROY

wolves prowl
Just as the sun sinks down
No need for the full moon
They just follow the lights of the bar signs

Their prey looks too tasty
They simply can't resist
They hunt in their packs
Ravage a village
Incisor on epidermis
And leave with a

And in the morning
Girls are left bloody and crying and breaking
But there are no tracks in sight
No scent of the wolves to trace

And the villagers come to accept the loss and say
"It's in their nature"
"You can't expect them to resist something so delicious"
"Wolves will be wolves"

these wolves
Free from blame
Still stalk the night
Still ravage the villagers



ENCRUSTED (SKULL)
GINNELLE FOSTER
ceramic

HANDPRINTS

AMARANTA MARTIN

creative nonfiction



Was it rape?

I need you to tell me. You are the only person who knows. Isn't that strange? Solo tu y yo. Y este pregunta. Always between us. A third wheel spinning us into nothing. Forcing us together. Wrenching us apart.

Was it rape? Dime la verdad.

What about the minutes, the hours, the days before? Walks through sepia, almost-autumn days. Your hand in mine. Do they somehow negate it all? Is this a zero-sum situation?

I need to know.

Bueno, vamos.

¿Recuerdas esto? It was the weekend of my birthday. You came over to celebrate, armed with a pocket full of feelings in powder, tab, and pill form. I couldn't find a flashlight. We shoved some battery-powered Christmas lights into an empty bottle of Patron Silver, an awkward lantern cutting through the darkness of the city.

Yo tambien te amaba. So maybe it wasn't.

We walked to the beach near my house. Streetlights flickered out around us. Was that a sign? Laughter trickled out of open bar windows, sticking to the hot air.

Mi amado. Can I call you my rapist? Is that too harsh? You'd have to share that title with someone else. I hope that's okay.

A few tabs. A few bumps. A blanket in the damp sand. You told me about watching your mother die, cancer spreading from her breast to everything vital. I pictured her hand, paper skin stretched over sharp gray bones, disintegrating in your palm as her last breath floated through you.

We were drunk. And high. And tripping. And rolling. So maybe it wasn't.

We talked about everything that night. Our words flowing over the coursing river of our trip. You cried when I told you about my first conscious thought: staring out the window, waiting for Her, while anxiety pulled at the edges of my existence. (She never came.)

Another flashback to Her. Hair dripping with moonlight, brushing against my cheek.

"Mommy does crazy things sometimes."

Si, lo recuerdo.

Entonces...

Our Lamp de Patron painted soft shapes across your face. LSD and molly brought my fingers to your frayed collar. I wanted you there in the sand. Our shared pain scattered around us, grainy and saturated with color.

I wanted you. So maybe it wasn't.

The police drove by on their nightly rounds. Sirens off, lights flashing. Blue lights lingered, became solid. The beach was closed. How can they close a stretch of sand and water? Your visa was...well...tu sabes... so we snuck off, two wild kids whirling through the streets, whooping with joy.

The walk home. Swinging arms. Singing. An orange halo over the city. Shimmering concrete. Light pollution. You stuck a dandelion behind my ear. A thousand points of yellow.

You kissed me on the bridge as the last train screeched beneath us.

I kissed you back. So maybe it wasn't.

It doesn't matter. I woke up with your handprints on my chest.

Home. Giggling our way up the broken front steps. Fingers clumsy from uppers. Fumbling for keys. The front door swollen and creaking with humidity. Abrazos. Bumbling down the dark hallway.

My room. Blue walls shrunk around us. Popcorn ceiling caved in. Mi cama.

"Amorcito, por favor, la luz. It's too blue in here."

I couldn't come down. My pores were so small they weren't letting anything in. Frantically I picked at the threads in my comforter. I could feel my pulse in my teeth. You pressed a cold glass into my hand.

“Relaja. Drink this.”

Lights out. Drowning.

Gritando en silencio. I swam to the surface, acid scorching my lungs. Was it hours or minutes later? Maybe it was days. The glow from the dumb solar tea lights on my back porch ricocheted off the fan in my window. Prisms of light crashed through my room, against the wall, against the mirror, illuminating every muscle in your body.

“I’m too fucking high for this.”

“Don’t worry, te quiero.”

You were standing over me like a Greek fucking statue. You were George Washington crossing the Potomac. Your erection was silhouetted against the fucked up kaleidoscope backdrop. I was inside a cheap disco ball. I was tripping too hard. My bones were fused to the bed. I was buried alive. I couldn’t move.

I pushed you away. You pushed back.

“NO” exploded across my brain, bounced off the walls, shattered. Fell like confetti. Filled the room. It was red. I was too fucking high.

“It’s going to be okay. No tenga pena. Te quiero.”

Everything smelled like soil. Soil dredged raw by conquering armies. Soil soaked in blood. Soil the color of rust. Matted crows picking at human carcasses scattered amongst barbed wire and trenches. Flies buzzing. Fresh meat rotting.

Estoy aquí, con los cadaveres. Estoy aquí, en la sangre.

My wrists twisted and burned in your grip.

“Please,” you said with each thrust (I hate that word). Your voice was so thin, so fragile. It was a newborn fawn stumbling around, blind and warm and wet. It could’ve died at any moment. You were too fucking high.

“Please, te quiero.”

You said please. So maybe it wasn’t.

You watched your mother die. So maybe it wasn’t.

Eventually, I surrendered. So maybe it wasn’t.

I was too fucking high.

I woke up nestled against you, instinctively seeking your protection from the haze of pain. You were sleeping so peacefully, your eyelashes dusting dainty shadows across your high cheekbones.

I still think you’re beautiful. So maybe it wasn’t.

For a few minutes, I forgot what happened. In the crushing midmorning light of late summer, I still loved you.

So maybe it wasn’t.

The heat was unbearable. Did you turn off the fan? There was a thumbprint across my wrist. Una pulsera.

I was quiet on the way to the train station. You called me by my middle name, an attempt to make me hate-laugh at you. When I didn’t, you touched my cheek.

“¿Que pasó, amor?”

Fuck, this is my chance. Right here. The bruises between my legs are screaming.

Say it. Say it. Say it.

Can I say it to you? Can I say it to your face right here? Looking into your eyes. Ojitos stolen from a cat or an owl. The color of sunlight through a leaf.

Can I say it?

I can’t. My throat is closing.

Say it. Say something. Anything.

(Inhala)

“I feel kind of weird about last night.”

(Exhala)

Your face, a mask.

(Suspira)

You say some bullshit that doesn't deserve the weight of words on a page.

"Mi amor, calmate, we were both very fucked up, lo siento."

You kissed me goodbye. You walked away.

I didn't say it. So maybe it wasn't.

Months crawled by, loud and terrible. I let the blue walls absorb me; they know what happened. I didn't want to leave them; they whispered the truth.

"...it was / it wasn't..."

Dímelo.

Machines beeped. Plastic tubes. White coats in and out.

"Amanda, your father is very sick. This could be it."

I dragged myself to work. Compartmentalize, you must. Todo para la familia.

Hushed voices in the lunchroom.

"You look tired. Are you sleeping okay?" Siempre. Nunca.

Frantic voicemails. Texts left on read.

"Hi, it's me. Llámame por favor."

"Amandita, I need to see you."

"Mi amor, please. Pues, eso, que lo siento mucho. ¿Entiendes?"

"Salgo para Bogotá mañana. Let me talk to you before I go."

You had to leave the country. Paperwork. Arbitrary lines in the sand. Zero tolerance. Talk of walls.

Six months later I went to you...

When people ask, I laugh.

"Yeah, I visited my rapist in Colombia. It was a fucked-up time in my life."

My rapist.

You're mine.

But we were so much more.

So maybe it wasn't.

Or was it?

Tell me.

Necísito saber.



OVERLOOKED

TIFFANY MACLEAN

photography

COFFEE FOR YOU

KAYLA ROSE

I'm in the kitchen,
with your blue chipped mug.
Our love is simple,
French roast, no sugar.

I'm in the kitchen,
with coffee the way you like it.
Twirling the bent spoon,
I'll let you sleep in.

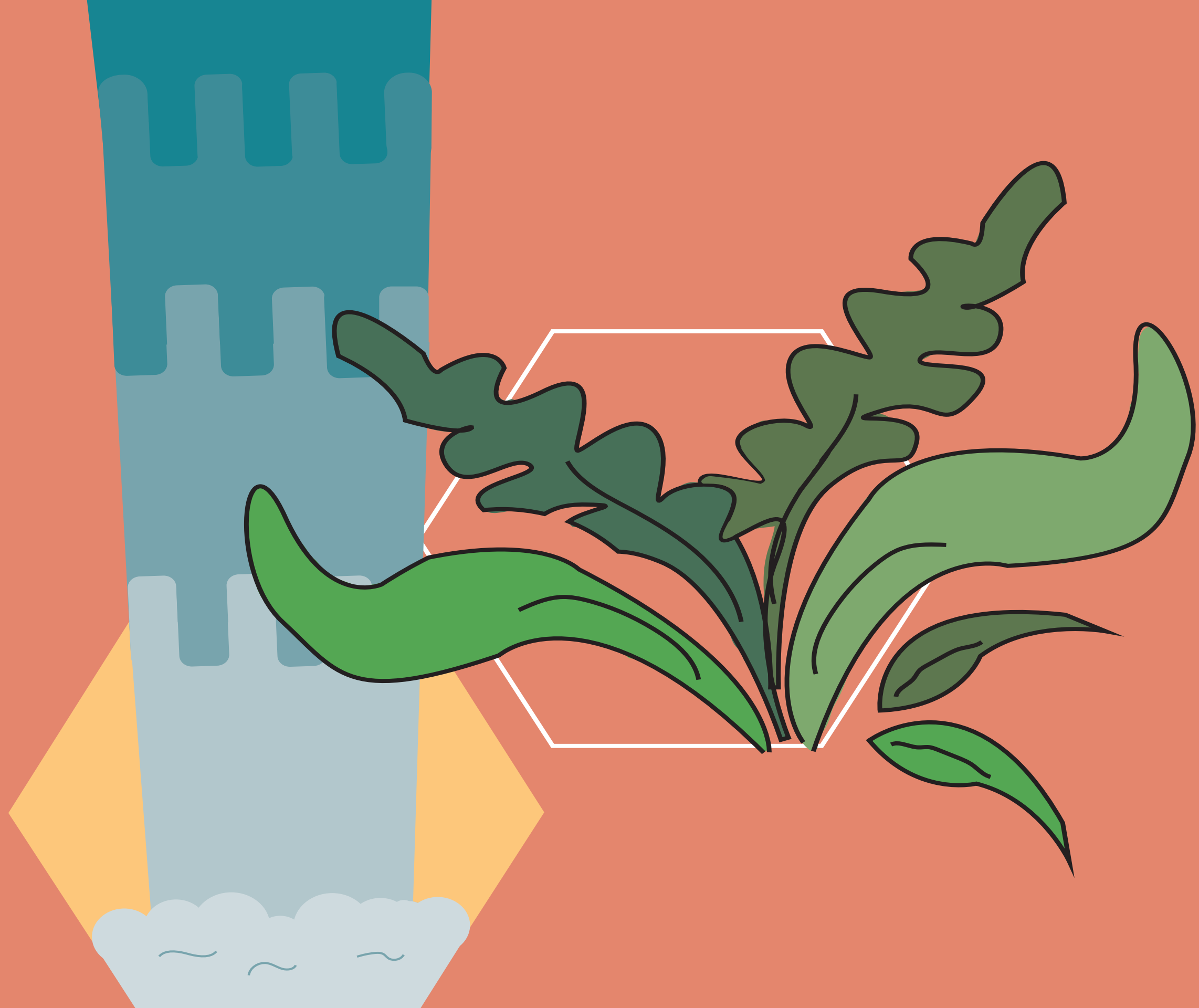
I'm in the kitchen,
with your cold cup of coffee.
Our love is simple,
I'll do it all again for you.

A LETTER TO WOMEN

ALYSSA NEWELL

Dear Women,
You are more than enough.
Your worth, your strength, your resilience
are all that make you whole
in a world that sometimes fails to recognize that—
because the power women possess is often left unknown.
You are not small,
you are not weak,
but that will be instilled from the moment you are born.
You are worthy,
you are valued,
you are strong.
When the world shows its sharp teeth
do not be consumed.
Rise above the adversity.
Rise above the criticism.
Your crown may tilt,
but do not ever let it fall.

EMBRACE
JENNA MORRIS
acrylic



CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

KATHLEEN BAZARSKY is a third-year double major at Bridgewater State University, majoring in English and Communications. She is passionate about the environment and works at an environmental non-profit in Providence. In her free time, Kate loves to write, paint, and do yoga! You can also see some of Kate's work in *The America Library of Poetry* and in the UMass Boston *Watermark Journal*. And keep an eye out for her book titled, *I Will Eat You Alive With My Words*—a poetry book, of course!

ADAM BLOWERS is an English major with a concentration in Creative Writing, hoping to pursue poetry and fiction writing as a means of being happy. Perhaps poor and underappreciated, but happy. Unfortunately, his name does not rhyme with flowers—that would've made this poetry thing a whole lot easier! He dedicates the poem "Auntie Barbara's House" to Barbara Smith.

MEG BONNEY is a senior political science major, minoring in writing studies. Since a very young age, she has always had a passion for writing and hopes to become a journalist after she graduates. Apart from writing, she loves to swim, paint, and spend as much time as possible outdoors.

SAMUEL BOURE is a senior at Bridgewater State University and is working towards an English degree with a concentration in Education. His areas of interest range from early research and analysis in gender studies, to unpublished short stories that are still being shared and worked on in both local and online communities. Samuel has a love for editing, enjoys helping others refine and perfect the work they are doing, and would love to find a career where he can do just that. He has lived in Whitman, Massachusetts his entire life, but frequently travels outside of the country to see and learn about cultures that are vastly different from his own. As a transgender man, Samuel believes the most important thing anyone can be is open-minded and hopes to continue doing work that supports and represents those who need it most.

ELIZABETH BRADY is a first-year English MA student at Bridgewater State University. As an undergraduate, her poetry was published in two volumes of *The Bridge*. After obtaining her MA, she hopes to pursue rewarding work.

ABBEY BRANCO is a senior at Bridgewater State University majoring in English and Early Childhood Education. She loves to read and spend time with her dog, Iris. This is her third publication, her first time being with *The Bridge*. In the future, she will continue writing, teaching, and helping as much as she can.

CALVIN BRIDGES IV is a Digital Media Producer, studying Communications and Graphic Design at Bridgewater State University. He would like to graduate and pursue media design within sports. He currently does freelance for multiple different outlets, which include: MSHTV (Middle School Hoops), The Connect Media and Boston Elite Sports. He creates media for the BSU athletics department @bsubears. He also runs his own Instagram and Twitter multimedia accounts (@calsoscoped, @ndasuite). When not doing content creation, he enjoys playing basketball and gaming.

NICOLE COSTA is a senior with a double major in English and Elementary Education. She enjoys creative writing and poetry.

JOHANNAH CRONIN is a senior studying Environmental Geoscience at BSU. She has always had a passion for reading and writing poetry. It has also been an outlet for expressing her emotions through words. While life has been difficult dealing with personal challenges, she accredits much of her success and resilience to family support, especially from her grandmother.

MEI FUNG ELIZABETH CHAN is a multidiscipline artist who is currently based in Long Island, New York. She was born and raised in Kowloon, Hong Kong in 1988. She received her Master of Fine Arts from Rhode Island School of Design in 2017, and her Bachelor of Arts from Bridgewater State University in 2014. Before she pursued overseas study, she worked as a dental hygienist in Hong Kong and completed her Diploma of Dental Hygiene at Hong Kong Philip Dental Hospital and HKUSPACE. Last year, she completed her drawing and printmaking residencies in Venice, France, and South Africa.

NICOL DA SILVA is doubling majoring in Fine Arts and Social Work. Her main focus with art has been abstract. She's exploring her joy for colors representing her emotions and way of life, a method that is pushing her out of her comfort zone, helping her control the way paint falls, and allowing her to express herself in a new way. She looks forward to continuing her journey, and one day would like to use this technique in her field of Social Work, helping children heal through art.

MEGHAN DAMIANO won the best scary story contest when they were in 7th grade. They have since peaked. Meghan Damiano is a BSU class of '19 alum and current graduate student at the University of Rhode Island, pursuing a master's degree in Library and Information Science. They live in Rhode Island with their partner and cool cats, Ghost and Yoshi.

MAIA DASCHKE is a junior at BSU. She loves to write poetry, flash pieces, and anything on her mind that desperately craves an outlet (which is pretty much everything). She finds poetry in the normalcy of everyday life and refuses to write with artifice. Most often, you can find her reading and writing at her local coffee shop or exploring nature for a quiet place where she can continue to do both.

CASSANDRA DOMEIJ is a Fine Arts major with a minor in Management at Bridgewater State University. She concentrates in painting and sees herself as a detail-oriented artist. She focuses on creating realistic works of art that are mainly human portraits.

LAINE DREW is a writer and future educator from Plymouth, Massachusetts. She believes that stories are what we identify with. People (including herself) find it hard to write nonfiction because it is hard writing about the deep, the ugly, and the tender experiences that make up large portions of our lives. However, she chooses to write nonfiction because she likes to believe that her story can make a difference. She likes to believe that her story can resonate with someone else, and can give them the courage to tell their story. That is why she writes nonfiction, and, ultimately, that is why she writes.

PIERRE DUMOULIN-MINGUET was born and raised in France and came to the United States of America when he was nineteen to go to college. Pierre is a Psychology Major with a minor in Studio Art. Pierre has always had an interest in art and works mostly with graphite, although he recently started experimenting with oil paint. Pierre wants to become a therapist and considers studying art therapy.

DOMINIQUE “MO” DURDEN is a twenty-three-year-old poet, an avid reader, and lover of all things art. Her passion has always been music, poetry, and the arts as a whole. Poetry is her truth. Being able to find healing through her platform as an artist is a gift that she is truly thankful for. She can be found on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr as @momothe poet.

CAITLIN FARIA is a freshman at BSU. She plays goalie on the women’s club ice hockey team and is a member of RHA. In her free time she likes to write, read, listen to music, and watch movies.

GINNELLE FOSTER is a Fine Art and Secondary Education major who is interested in every subject from art to science. She is currently focusing her artistic efforts on a few pairs of large, wearable, articulated wings in the sculpture program. She works at the Bridgewater State University observatory and aspires to teach art in high schools abroad. She hopes to one day pass on her interest in integrating multiple subjects within her art to her future students.

HANNAH GLUCHACKI is a senior and an Art Education major at BSU. She has always loved drawing and painting and couldn’t see a future without incorporating art somehow! She hopes to one day have a side business where she can make commissions for people, while also teaching art classes.

JULIA HEBERT is a Biology major at Bridgewater State. Even though science is her main focus, writing is a big part in her life. She has always loved reading, and is amazed at how one author can connect with a multitude of people. Julia started writing with the same intent—she wants many people to relate and connect with her writing. Her goal in life is to finish and publish her novel.

SHAYLA HINDS is a junior in the Communication Disorders major. She started writing when she was a child, and wanted to become an author before deciding on speech pathology. She enjoys writing poetry and short stories in her free time.

BAO HUYNH is a junior student at Bridgewater State University, and he is an Art Studio major with double concentrations in Graphic Design and Painting. He will be graduating in fall 2021. Drawing and painting are not only his hobbies, but they are also his passions and a way to express himself. Some students have a hard time drawing human figures, but he thinks that is his style of art and is confident in his works. He keeps practicing new mediums of drawing and painting human portraits and figures, and hopefully can master them someday. He is very interested in *The Bridge* this year. Hopefully, he will have a chance to work on *The Bridge* to learn new things.

TUVEYA KIRNON-DAVIS wants to spread joy, awareness, and open-mindedness to whoever comes across DatXart. Her art is about encouragement and self-journey fused with voices, emotions, and perspectives. She hopes for the best and never looks back.

ARTHUR KOPELLAS is a student in Social Work and Communications and one day hopes to make outreach content for non-profit organizations. As of right now, you can find Arthur playing Dungeons & Dragons and taking photos that don’t always have a meaning to them, but sometimes do. Find all of their work on Instagram @artie_photos.

LEAH LEWANDOWSKI is a Studio Art and Secondary Education major with a concentration in Art Education. She is a second semester freshman at BSU. She has always loved art, especially working with paint. She looks forward to developing her skills and knowledge at BSU with the hopes of one day being an art teacher.

TIFFANY MACLEAN is a major in Education and a photographer who strives to make the mundane seem whimsical. Lighting is the inspiration for her images, both in composition and mood.

LINDSEY MACMURDO is a senior at Bridgewater State University, majoring in Photography and Art Education, with a minor in Art History. She is a photographer working mostly with digital media. Her photographic style consists of narratives. She is fascinated with the past and with telling the story behind a person, place, or thing. Her work has a very distinctive whimsical and dreamlike nature to it. In the past year, she has displayed her photographs at the Rhode Island Center for Photographic Arts, as well as the Annual Student Art Show on campus. She has been awarded the John Heller Memorial Scholarship award, one of the art department's highest recognitions at the university. Upon graduation, she plans on pursuing her dream as a full-time photographer and using her creative blood to make an impression on the world.

DAVE MAHLER is a Film/Media-Communications major and looks forward to graduation in May. As an editor and performer, he often finds himself working on his next music video. When he finds himself in nature, his eye is often drawn to up close textures and vivid colors. They are especially enjoyable to him since he has a condition called 'Aphantasia' (a lack of a 'mind's eye'). He is now working on the 'self branding' stage of his career and can be found online at DaveUnscripted.com.

ABBEY MARCEAU is a senior Communications major with a concentration in Culture. She is passionate about art and takes pictures everywhere she goes. After college, she hopes to work for publications like *Bon Appetit* or *Refinery29*.

AMARANTA MARTIN is pursuing a masters in Peace and Conflict Studies North of the Wall. Director of making things happen at an NGO in rural Central America. BSU Alumni.

MARIAH MCCARTHY is an English major at Bridgewater State University who will be graduating in the spring of 2020. In "A Marvelous Mind," she uses alliteration, variation, enumeration, and kennings to model the format after that of Old English praise poetry.

JENNA MORRIS is a senior Studio Art major with a Fine Arts concentration in Painting. She spends her days working in a middle school special education classroom and her evenings on campus taking night classes. After a long five and a half years, filled with three different schools along the way, she has made it to her final semester. She spends way too much time watching YouTube, buying makeup and pillows, and decorating her 2001 Ford Taurus, Flora, for every holiday.

MIRANDA MOSCATELLI is a Psychology major minoring in Studio Art, hoping to go on to graduate school and earn a degree in Expressive Arts Therapy. She will be graduating in August 2020. For her, art is a form of expression of each individual's experience of reality. It is also therapeutic and that's what she hopes to share with others now and in the future.

ALYSSA NEWELL is a social work student with the hopes to inspire others through her writing. She is an advocate for self-love and mental health. Besides her passion for poetry and writing, she loves to travel and gain new experiences to evolve.

EMILY OUTERBRIDGE is a freshman at Bridgewater State University, majoring in Graphic Design with a minor in History. She graduated from West Bridgewater middle-senior high school in May of 2019. In addition to art, Emily enjoys sewing, writing, and make-up in her free time. Fun fact: Emily once saw Bernie Sanders at an anime convention.

KAYLA ROSE is an English major with a concentration in Writing and Writing Studies. She's passionate about creative writing and conceptual photography.

KAYLA ROY is a senior English major at Bridgewater State University who can be found penning poems if you know where to look. She is a reader-turned-writer that finds most problems can be solved putting pen to paper and writing poems. She is equally inspired by the world around her, the power of a feeling, and the simpler moments of magic that sometimes go overlooked.

CAMILLE SAN GABRIEL (they/them/their pronouns) is 22 years old from Lynn, MA. They are a Fine Arts and Secondary Education major at BSU, through their art they explore personal, political, and religious themes. You can follow them on Instagram @art_by_san_gabriel.

NICOLE SEELEY is a Studio Arts major concentrating in Fine Arts and Graphic Design while also majoring in Secondary Education and minoring in Art History. She will be graduating in fall 2021. She has always wanted to become a teacher and fell in love with the arts during her high school career. Nicole wants to travel for the arts so that she can take this knowledge back to her classroom. She wants her future students to be inspired by what she has done and where she has been so that they are influenced to create some amazing original works.

KATIE SHEEHAN is a sophomore studying graphic design during her time at Bridgewater State University. She has aspired to be an artist ever since she was young. Now her primary medium is pen, ink, and pencils using lines, texture, and shading to show definition. She has also been expanding her skills with digital art. Her pieces of art focus on a more dreamlike aspect of the imagination and the viewer is invited to bring their own interpretation to the meaning of the subjects. She continues to work and develop her skills to become a better artist.

SAMANTHA SILVIA is a senior at Bridgewater State University majoring in Computer Science and minoring in Graphic Design. She enjoys the challenges of computer science but also loves letting her artistic side go. Combining these two studies, she hopes to work with web design after graduation.

KRIS SPOONER is a senior at Bridgewater State University and currently taking up a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Victimology. He plans on continuing to the graduate degree level and using his education to help victims of violent crimes. Photography has become a driving passion in his life with many thanks to Professor Sarah Washburn for motivation, inspiration, and guidance. He will continue to grow and push himself as an artist and photographer.

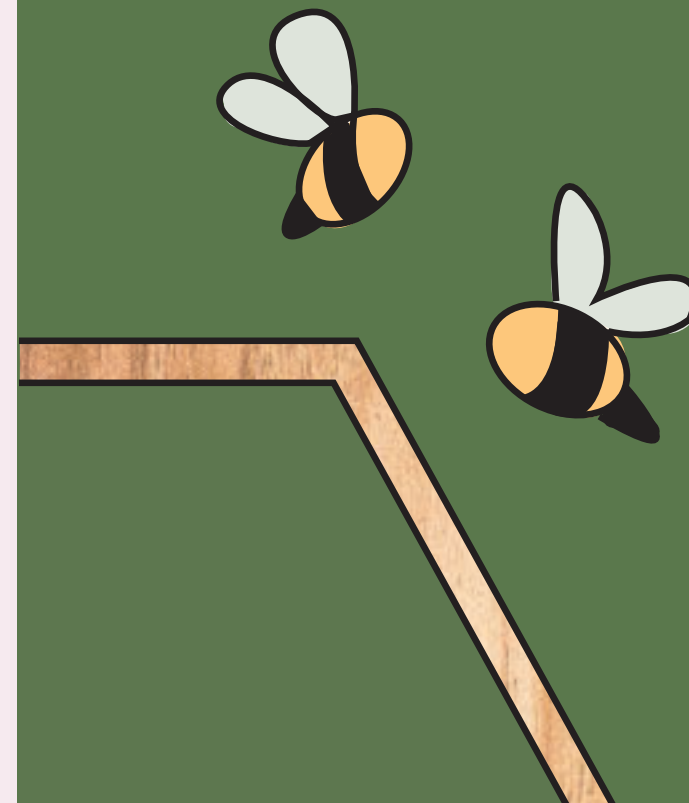
NATALIE SORRENTI is a Fine Arts major with a concentration in Painting at Bridgewater State University. As a senior, Natalie enjoys expressing her creativity through all types of art including painting, ceramics, photography and crafts. She also enjoys going on new adventures with her friends and making the most out of her college experience. She's looking forward to graduating in spring 2020 but will always look back on her experience at Bridgewater as a positive one.

RACHAEL SWEENEY is a twenty-three-year-old junior at BSU. Rachael is studying Secondary Education and English to pursue her love of creative writing and to be an ally to struggling young students.

ANTOINE TROMBINO-APONTE is a recent graduate from BSU who majored in English, with a concentration in Writing and a minor in History, who also works as a museum educator. In his increasingly rare free time, Antoine enjoys writing poetry, fiction, and music, and engaging in all manner of nerdy pastimes from tabletop gaming to learning dead languages.

SIERRA YARD has a double major in Secondary Education and Art with a concentration in Painting. She is working on getting her dream job of teaching art. When picking colors, she tries to use neutrals that complement the complementary colors. Blue and orange are her favorite to use. The gold covers the rest of the colors but still allows the colors to come through.

LUCIENNE QUIRK is a History and Secondary Ed undergrad. She always refuses to read sappy YA novels, but for some reason has a sweet spot for love sonnets. She writes them to prove chivalry isn't dead, or, if it is, it can at least be brought back with necromancy or something.



EDITORS' NOTES

JENNIFER BÉRARD is a senior majoring in English with a Communications minor from Norton, MA. In her free time, Jenn enjoys traveling, skiing, reading any chance she gets, and spending time with her family and Black Lab, Haven.

SAM CAVE is a Geography major who will (finally) be graduating in spring 2020. She's a sometimes writer but is more widely known for being a Rock Paper Scissors champion, lover of squirrels, and freer of bugs that find their ways indoors. After graduation she will be hosteling around Europe for a few months and will fall into a plan for next steps along the way. Maybe.

GABI D'AMELIO is a senior studying Graphic Design and Photography with the hopes of being able to combine both mediums to start her own business in the future. She loves being able to express her creativity. One pretty interesting fact about her is that she has a YouTube channel that she uses as another form of expression, to upload videos that make her happy, show her interests, and also document memories so she can have them forever.

KIANA COVONI is a senior English major with minors in Asian Studies and Anthropology. She loves to write and hopes to be a novelist when she graduates. She also enjoys studying languages, reading most genres of books, and watching bad science fiction movies.

RILEE GRANGER is a senior majoring in English with a Writing concentration. They read fantasy the most, but when they have to be rooted in the real world, they enjoy queer studies and annoying their friends with philosophical questions that no one knows the answer to.

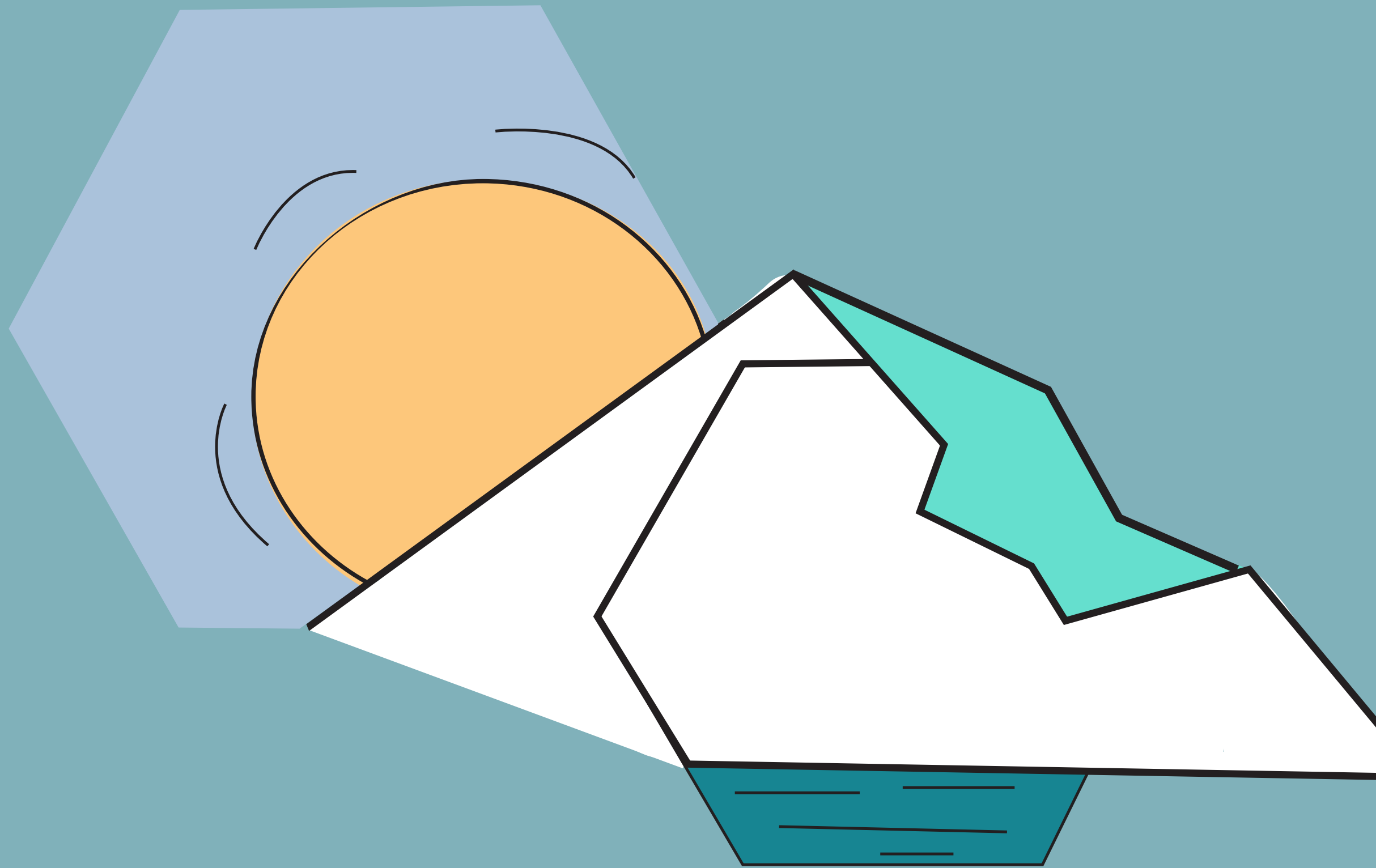
KELSEY LONG is a Graphic Design major graduating in spring 2020. She loves art and expressing herself through illustration. She is passionate about the environment and many of her works portray the ideas of reducing waste and fighting global warming. When she is not lost in a sci-fi novel, you can find her doodling on her iPad or out in nature.

IAN MELLO is a Communications major entering his final semester at Bridgewater State University and is the program director at 91.5 WBIM-FM, where he also co-hosts his own show. In addition to doing a podcast and radio show, Ian enjoys reading and writing poetry. He is a second-year editor at *The Bridge*.

MARY REDMAN is a Graphic Design major with a second concentration in Photography. She will be graduating in spring 2020. She has always been interested in her creative side. Anything from doodling in her notebook to finding interesting recipes to try out in the kitchen! She is very excited to be working on *The Bridge* this year and looks forward to learning new things.

SYLLINA RAMALHO is a pasta enthusiast and strongly believes pasta can be eaten any time of day, including breakfast. She believes anything made with potatoes is pretty great, too. Syllina feels like there are not enough parking spaces at BSU. Her hobbies include being a mom, creating art, and watching anime. She is also an *amazing* graphic designer. You can find her work on Instagram @bysyllina.

ERIN RYAN is a senior majoring in English with a Writing and Writing Studies concentration. She is from Gloucester, MA and this is her second year as an editor for *The Bridge*. In her free time, Erin enjoys writing and reading anything she can get her hands on. She is also a devoted mom to her two fur babies, Bandit and Chloe. After graduation, Erin hopes to finish the novel she has been working on, travel to new places, and find a job in publishing and editing that makes her happy.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We, the editors of Volume 17, would like to thank the offices and individuals who have been endlessly supportive of *The Bridge*. For fostering the learning environments necessary to create great art, and for supporting a platform from which it can be shared, we thank Professor Ann Brunjes, English Department Chair; Lori LeComte, English Department Administrative Assistant; Professor Rob Lorenson, Art Department Chair; Kathi Brazil, Art Department Administrative Assistant. We also thank current and past faculty advisors and editors, who have helped shape this journal and its traditions with their vision and dedication.

We thank President Clark for his support of the arts and publications like *The Bridge*. Thank you to Arnaa Alcon, Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, for bringing together the worlds of art and literature, and for being a champion of interconnection. The concept for this year's journal was born through your inspired definition of collaboration. Thank you to Robin Costa-Sullivan, Administrative Assistant of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, for coordinating our budget, believing in our vision, and helping make our events successful.

Thank you to Jaime Knight, Assistant Director of Creative Services and Publications, as well as our publisher, J.S. McCarthy Printers, for bringing this issue to life.

Thank you to all the professors who generously gave us space and time to encourage their students to submit. We are also grateful to the administrative assistants who graciously forwarded our emails across their many departments, helping us encourage submissions from students of all disciplines, and reaffirming that creativity has no specific majors or set borders.

As this issue of *The Bridge* tackles many sensitive issues, we thank our campus Wellness Center, Counseling Services, Pride Center, Center for Multicultural Affairs, International Student and Scholar Services, Military and Veteran Student Services, Office of Institutional Diversity, Disability Resources, and the many other groups and individuals on campus for providing and promoting safe spaces, learning opportunities, visibility, and inclusivity.

We would also like to thank our campus Sustainability Center for being an ally. May we continue to take on our global climate crisis in all the ways that we can. We thank our planet and all that lives within it: you deserve so much more than a thank you note, but we will thank you still.

And to each artist who submitted—thank you for creating. It is no small feat to share your soul, and we thank you for your vulnerability, truth, and perspective. Whether your work can be found in the pages of this issue or not, you are an inspiration.

To our readers—your role is as important as any other, for art endures through you.

