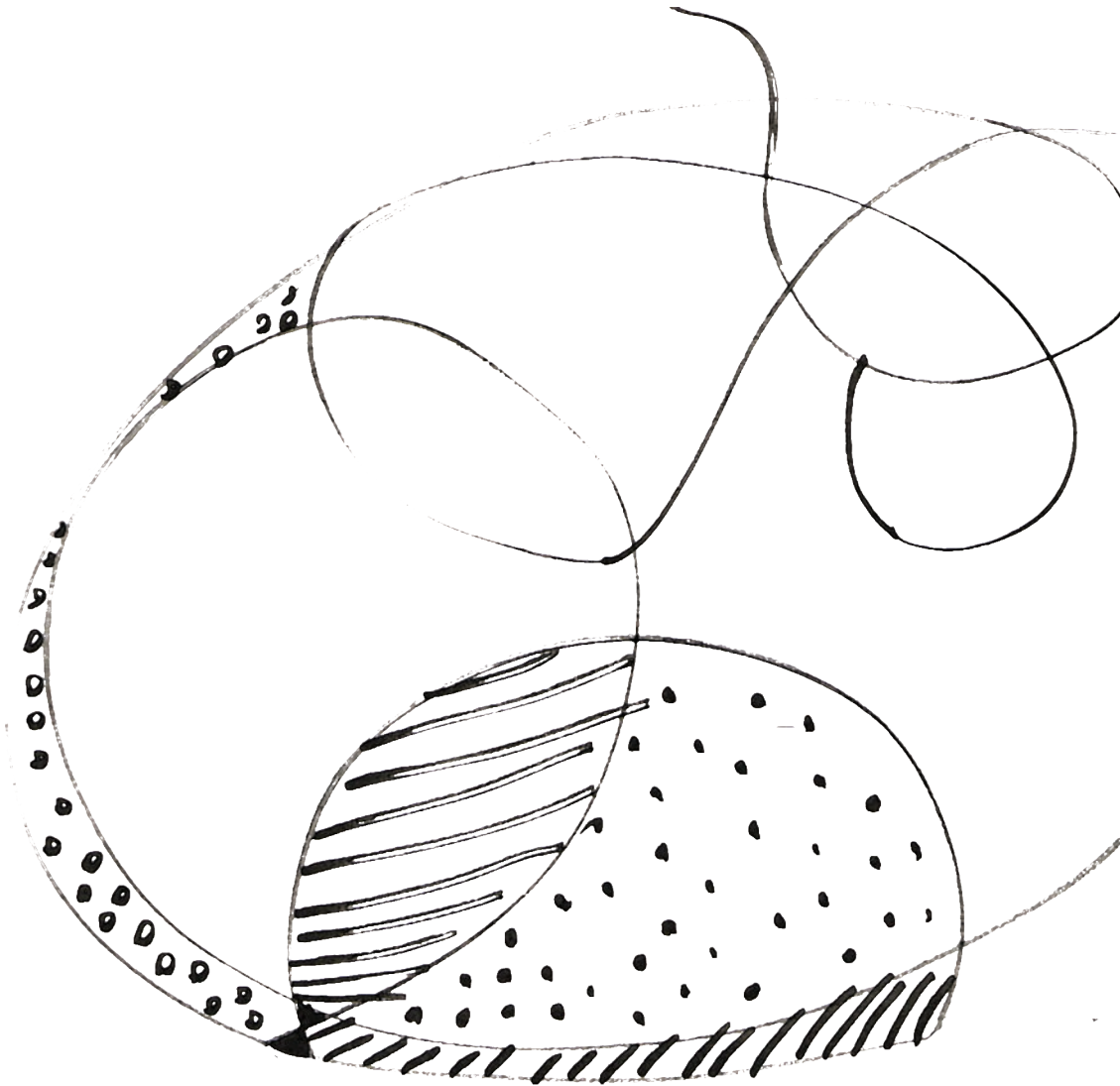


C onfluence 2020



CON*FLU*ENCE

\kən-flü'-ən(t)s \ noun

- 1: a coming or flowing together, meeting, or gathering at one point
<a happy confluence of weather and scenery>
- 2: the flowing together of two or more streams
<the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers>
- 3: the creative writing journal of Three Rivers College
<an issue of Confluence in your hands>



CONFLUENCE 2020

Where students and creativity converge



THE LITERARY JOURNAL OF:



THREE RIVERS COLLEGE

2080 Three Rivers Blvd. * Poplar Bluff, Missouri 63901

(573) 840-9600 * www.trcc.edu

Volume Twelve

2020 Recipients of

THE GORDONIA

Award for Writing Distinction

POETRY

Marvin the Mantis

by Ashlee Mathias p. 41

FICTION

The Strange New World

by Christopher Pense p. 6

Submissions

All students, faculty, and staff may submit essay, poetry, or fiction. Submissions are accepted each school year from November to February. Each entry may be 1,000 words or less, maximum three entries per author. Entries must be submitted digitally and can be emailed to the editor at gsnell@trcc.edu.

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INTRODUCTION

Gregory Snell, Confluence Editor

EXPRESS YOURSELF

After climbing 248 steps to the top of Mexico's Pyramid to the Sun, I took a photo as I sat peacefully gazing across the vast archaeological park where the cloudless sky met the horizon. It was New Year's Day, so I captioned the photo "The new year looks pretty good from here." It was January 1, 2020. I smile when I look at that photo now.

This year certainly has been memorable. Classes started mid-January and the next month the college was the victim of a ransomware cyber-attack. Files saved on the desktop computer were destroyed, design software was erased, and layout templates for Confluence were lost. The college was shut down for 3 weeks while the system was cleaned. The first day we returned in March, faculty voted to shut down the campus and move to online classes due to Coronavirus.

While some were frustrated by quarantines, remote communication, and the search for toilet paper, writers are familiar with these difficulties. We're always looking for quiet time and searching for paper to write on. It's normal to put our thoughts down and share them with distanced readers. During their Coronavirus quarantine, writers continued to express themselves.

At times, the pandemic frustration led to conflict. Writers are well acquainted with conflict. Conflict creates great writing.

- Romeo & Juliet create a conflict that leads to a classic love story.
- The conflict in The Lord of the Rings leads to an epic adventure.
- In the first Toy Story film, Buzz Lightyear experiences internal conflict when Woody insists "You are a toy." It's only after Buzz accepts whom he really is that he can fulfill his destiny.
- The internal conflict between living a comfortable but boring life or one with more thrills leads to an often talked about ending in the film Fight Club (which is ironic since the first rule of fight club is to not talk about fight club).

However, writers are always sharing their ideas. Ecclesiastes 3:7 proclaims there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." This year's isolation provided writers time to speak. An indomitable spirit inspired writers to express themselves—even during a pandemic. From their couches, on their phones, via socially

distanced Zoom meetings these writers exercised their craft. Confluence 2020 celebrates this unstoppable urge. Quirky sketches by artist David Fielding illustrate how writers doodle in the margins of their notebooks and journals. The jumble of fonts represents the diverse circumstances and sometimes difficult conditions in which they write. The size is like a pocket diary which adds to the intimacy of reading.

The selections in Confluence 2020 reflect a campus-wide call for submissions. This is not a contest where authors compete, there are no assignments given, and there is no class which produces the journal. Instead, Confluence 2020 is a snapshot of the current productivity in our community. Its content demonstrates what Wordsworth called "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." This year, 28 authors submitted 52 poems and stories. Submissions are read by a student group whose scores select which pieces are published. The top ranking items are scored by a panel of faculty and staff representing diverse fields. These scores select works that receive The Gordonia Award for writing distinction.

This year's recipients of The Gordonia for writing distinction are: Ashlee Mathias, poetry, "Marvin the Mantis"; and Christopher Pense, fiction, "The Strange New World." We thank this year's committee: Ryan Bixby, History; Carrie Franklin, Communications; Brice Matson, English; Corey Reynolds, Behavioral Sciences; Andrew Rivetti, Spanish; Tiechera Samuell, English; Kathy Sanders, Library Science; and Dionne Thompson, Med Lab Technology. This award is named after retired head librarian and English instructor, Gordon T. Johnston. In 1996, his vision and leadership created and organized an annual poetry reading to celebrate national Poetry Month. The award brings no prize or trophy, instead it recognize the merit of those who savor the craft of writing and know, like Henry Miller, that "writing is its own reward."

Writers have something to say. There is a voice inside them that demands to be expressed. So writers continue to talk to themselves, fill up notebooks, scribble on scraps of paper, and tap on their phones regardless of the circumstances. Perhaps Dorothy Parker understands the difficulties of quarantine when she says: "Of course, I talk to myself. I like a good speaker and I appreciate an intelligent audience."

Individual voices have expressed themselves in this collection of poetry and short stories. Not even a pandemic can stop them. Like Matthew Wilder sings: "ain't nothing gonna break my stride... Oh no, I gotta keep on" writing. Until things change: be safe, keep writing, and express yourself!

AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Alexis Lewallen

I am attending Three Rivers to earn my Secondary Education Associate Degree. I wrote this poem about a rough time in my life when I was 16. I really enjoy reading, writing sometimes, performing, and spending time with friends and family.

Amanda Moore

I am currently majoring in Elementary Education. Some of my hobbies include playing fiddle and spending time with my family and friends. I am extremely excited that some of my family and I are working on a gospel bluegrass album.

Andrew Phelps

I am a burgeoning writer, musician, and poet. I hope to play music and write fiction and poetry for a living. The creative process is my favorite thing about life. Writing, reading, and making art is my passion in life and I find this to be a great opportunity for me to express myself.

Ashlee Mathias

I write because it fulfills who I am—a follower of Jesus who gives me the ability. Inspiration pummels me at weird times, but mainly I'm just here for the coffee.

Austin Colter

I am an 18-year-old poet and musician raised in Ellington, Missouri. I am a first generation college student studying musical education in hopes of becoming the band director at my home town high school. Music, in any form, and poetry are things that I'm passionate about.

Ayla Crawford

Ayla is a Communication major and talented at reciting poetry. During the quarantine, she considered learning to sing Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious backwards, but thought that might be precocious and "going a bit too far, don't you think?"

Christopher Pense

Christopher studies secondary education. During the quarantine he alphabetized his Lego collection.

Dalton Maclin

I am 6'5", plan to be a pharmaceutical technician, and enjoy pizza. During the quarantine, I started to look forward to turning 30 years old, because then I'll have spent a month celebrating my birthday.

Declan Madden

Declan is open to suggestions for career options. During quarantine he contemplated world domination.

Dillon Harper

I have written poems with hopes that there might be one that is encouraged and affected by the words. Because of my selfishly blind mindset, there have been times that are more-or-less overcoming, without a hope in sight. Maybe my poem can bring someone to resolution, along with a revolution as well.

Francine Parker

I have been writing as long as I can remember. I write when something inspires me and use this to capture the feelings from specific times. I am currently following a dream to get my degree in Psychology.

Gregory Snell

Gregory likes poetry, puns, and snazzy socks. He teaches writing and literature at Three Rivers College. His favorite scent is an Indian Spice Market. During the quarantine he researched itineraries to view the Aurora Borealis.

Haley Slaughter

I am currently 18 years old and enrolled in Poplar Bluff High School as well as Three Rivers College. I hope to pursue a business degree. What inspires me to write is that I can put something no one else knows on a piece of paper and make it my own.

Jada Lewis

I enjoy writing anything from drama, romance, action, to horror. Exploring different genres is incredibly interesting. One day, I hope to publish my own book.

Jazzma Smith

Jazzma has been published in Confluence for 6 years in a row.

Johnny Boham

I am a non-trad student, majoring in pre-engineering. I plan to obtain a BS in aerospace engineering; and later, a masters and PhD. I hope to work for Boeing, Lockheed Martin, or NASA. I like to read and write in my spare time. During the quarantine I learned to cherish everyday items that I often take for granted--like toilet paper! The poem, "Pray for My Sins," is inspired by the 1908 painting "What Shall We Do for the Rent" (aka: The Camden Town Murder) by Walter Sickert.

Joseph Wallis

I write because I can't imagine life without creativity. A life without someone who looks at a blank page and fills it with doodles and odd shapes. A life without people who create massive beautiful stories because they thought it would be fun. I write because I have the need to create--for no other reason than to add to the mountain of love crafted by words and by everyone who goes out of their way to create.

Kate Wheeler

Kate is a home-schooled high school student, taking classes at Three Rivers College. She has always loved to write. When she isn't attending school or glued to her computer writing essays, one can find her performing on the stage, cheering at siblings' sports events, practicing and writing music on her guitar, hanging out with relatives and friends, or curled up with a good story.

Kianna Johnson

The art of poetry is a feat I have long admired. Wordsworth says, "All good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". The composition of poetry is "emotion recollected in tranquility." And John Keats adds that "if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all." These beautiful words inspire me and show me an ideal to which I can only hope to aspire.

Kimberly Pense

I first fell in love with writing when an elementary school teacher gave each student a blank book. She told us we could fill the pages with any story we wanted. It intrigued me that I could write my own story, characters, and adventures. Writing has saved my life. It's my escape and refuge from the real world.

Kimberly Thacker

Kimberly is deciding on career choices. During the quarantine she failed to teach her neighbor's dog to purr.

Layrn Risinger

I have plans to get my degree in psychology so I can develop my own psychological theory. I want to assist others in being a better version of themselves. I live by one motto that gets me through every day: "I have no obligation to be the person I was yesterday." During the quarantine I enjoyed the simpler things in life like snacky snacks and nappy naps.

Mark J. Sanders

Mark J. Sanders is an Associate Professor in Philosophy and English at Three Rivers College. His novels, "Dylan's Treasure" and "The Spring of Llanfyllin," are available in paperback and Kindle ebook formats at www.amazon.com.

Micayla Oennings

Micayala's future is full of mystery and adventure. During the quarantine she did not learn how many licks it takes to reach the Tootsie Roll center of a Tootsie Pop.

Savannah D. Nimmo

When I was a child, I wanted to write books. I remember reading a Junie B. Jones and telling my mom "reading is a movie for my brain."

Shelby Kirkley

Shelby is a life-long learner. During quarantine she realized that because of the word "indescribable," there's nothing that cannot be described.

Trent N. Taylor

Trent studies general education. He spent time during the quarantine wondering: Is it crazy how saying sentences backwards creates backwards sentences saying how crazy it is?

Vicky L. Turner

I really enjoy writing. Sometimes as I'm going to sleep, words start pouring into my head, so I grab my phone and start typing. I have published in Confluence for about 7 years and am also sending work to a publisher. I am married to a wonderful man and have a huge family. I find that writing is a great stress relief.

CONFLUENCE 2020

Where students and creativity converge

STAY STRONG BLACK CHILD

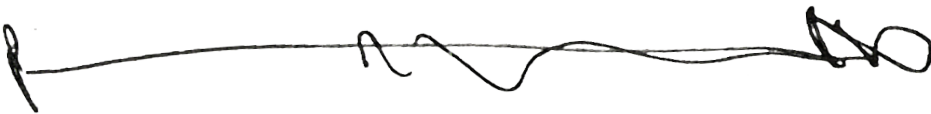
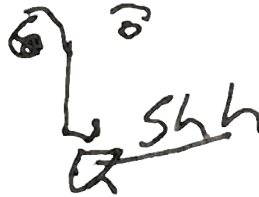
Francine N Parker

Stay strong black child
Even though things haven't gone your way in a long while
Stay strong black child
A better day is a coming along soon
A day when you will no longer be up nights crying at the moon
Stay strong black child
Even though the doors of this world seem to keep shutting in your face
Look to the most high
He will
Put a smile on your face
Stay strong black child
When the road called life becomes rough and twisted
When money is short, and bills are long
And you are one check away from not having a home
Stay strong black child
I know its hard....but what I tell you is true
You can accomplish anything you set out to do
Stay strong black child
Hold that head up and smile
Remember the most high is always with you
And you are his child
Keep your faith and pray
Dry your tears
When you get knocked down
Get up
Brush yourself off and keep going
Stay strong black child
Hold your head up high
Smile don't cry
And the rough times
I promise.
Will pass you by

WHISPERED LULLS

Jazzma Smith

Shh, shh, shh, simmer now.
Settle into the floating cloud
with a soft gentle blanket
surrounding with warmth.
May the moon and stars reflect.
May the wind and echoing trees
bring guidance till eyes shut.
May whispers lull around the head
and carry into clouds of REM.
May the dark embrace
until guarding of day
Sleep tight, shh, shh
shh, shh.



HIDDEN NO MORE

Kimberly Pense

All my life I wore a mask
Suffocating, barely breathing
nobody even knew

I wore it well
Hidden scars, hidden fears and pain
But you loved me
So I would be ok...Right?

Years of torment
Years of grieving who I could have been
My chest felt tight, the walls were caving in
I threw the mask to the ground
Shattered it to pieces

Fear set in
So I scrambled
To fix the broken parts
But it didn't fit the same.

Painted lines on my skin
Painted lines on my face
Trying to hide who I am

Painted lines to hide the scars
Painted lines to hide the tears
But I just can't seem to hide
The mess that's left inside

Tears streaming down my face
Erasing the paint
I strategically placed



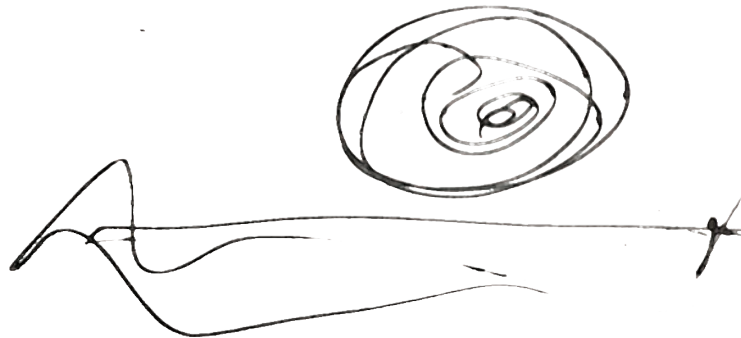
You let me know you're ashamed
Disappointed by the me you now see
So I try again
Painted lines on my skin
Painted lines on my face

Trying to be the person you wished I was
To be the daughter that makes you proud
But the colors underneath keep
Coming through as the paint drips to the floor

I see the disappointment in your eyes
As you meet me again for the first time
I can't be who you want me to be
I can't be who you used to know

The paint won't stay
My mask is broken
A life washed away
Losing myself in a sea of despair.

Spiraling downward
Not knowing what's at the end
Afraid it's too late
To be the person I've always been.



SOME MEN

Austin L Colter

Some men are scholars and some bakers others are war heroes and businessmen
But not I
No, I am a poet
I am unlike the common man
I see the hardships in life and beauty in death
I fear none, for what is fear
If I die tomorrow, my friend, know that I have lived a good life
And if I am to live for a hundred years, I hope you are there to join me



Christopher Pense

The giant sphere... That's the last thing I remember. I think my ship must have crashed into it. My memory is hazy at best, I can't remember anything before the sphere. When I came to, I was in this bright room with the sounds of someone screaming. I don't know how to explain what I saw next, so I'll just say it... giants. I know that's hard to believe, but I don't know what else to call them. I think they were pulling me out from the crash site or something. It was very hard to focus. I was in so much pain. I'm pretty sure I was screaming in agony as well. What I do know was I was immobile. I could barely move any of my extremities. Wait, I definitely was screaming. One of the giants struck me. Then they carried me over to some sort of table. It must have been some sort of laboratory or something. They were experimenting on me. Taking blood samples, measurements, anything they could get from me to try to figure out what I was. They must have known I was starving. They used that to their advantage. Since I could not move, they had to help feed me. It must have been a sedative. The next thing I knew I was falling asleep.

When I woke up, I was in some sort of prison. This whole world was new to me, but I know what a cage is. I struggled to reach for the bars, but I was still too weak. I don't know if it was from my arrival, or maybe the sedative I'm pretty sure they drugged me with. Possibly both, who knows, it's just so hard to focus. As I look around, I see what I assume is a camera. They are keeping tabs on me. No wonder there is no guard. That and the fact I seem to be incapacitated, there doesn't seem to be the need for one. I'm certain they are near though. I hear noises, I think it's their language, but I don't understand any of it. I try to concentrate on the sounds, but I just fall back into a coma.

I wake up to the giants again, they are taking me out of the cell to feed me again. That doesn't make any sense. If they are trying to sedate me again, why did they wake me up? No, that couldn't be it, there must be something more to this. They are trying to keep me alive for some reason, that's why they keep giving me nutrients. I'm just not sure right now if that's a good thing or not. Maybe if I...

I wake up again. None of this makes any sense, did they drug me again? Is my body just that exhausted after everything that happened? I don't really know, I still can't remember much before the... the... wait, what was before the laboratory? I can't remember anymore. Is that what they are doing to me? Drugging me so I lose my memory? Wait, what if this isn't a prison, what if it's a zoo? That could make sense. They have a camera on me so the patrons could come and gawk at me through a video feed. They are feeding me to keep me alive so I can stay as the featured attraction. Some alien creature to them, that they can't get enough of looking at me.

As I wake up again, my suspicions were confirmed. This must be some sort of zoo. I'm now surrounded by several giants. They seem to be holding some sort of recording devices. Filming me, taking photos of me, taking photos of themselves with me. It's humiliating... I don't know what to do though. I'm still hardly able to move. I have no choice but to play along, until maybe I can figure a way to escape...

Days turn to weeks; I have been here for what my best guess is about a month. I can still hardly move. The other day I was laying flat on my stomach, but I was able to hold my head up, so I didn't suffocate. That's a good sign, I'm starting to get movement back in my muscles. This is a good sign...

Weeks turn to months; it's been probably five months now. I've regained a lot of my mobility back. I can at least sit up now, as well as feed myself when they bring me the nutritional supplement, they give me to survive on. I'm no longer suspicious of them drugging me. I'm starting to think they have my best intentions in mind, but I am still a captive to them. I just wish I could understand them! I try to emulate the sounds they make, but they are so foreign to me that I just physically can't make them. It will be easier to escape if I can understand what they are saying while I make my plan...

By my best guess, it has been about seven months. It's hard to tell though. They seem to be drugging me less, or at least my body is not passing out as often. I still feel like I'm sleeping far more than they are, but maybe it is just the difference in our biologies. I still haven't fully figured out these giants yet. They keep throwing me off. I am spending less time in my cage and have been given slight freedoms to roam the facility. I think it's just because I can barely crawl, yet walk, so I don't think they are worried yet about me escaping. Speaking of escaping, you know what Stockholm Syndrome is right? Yeah, I feel I might be falling into that trap. My captors are treating me so well, it's hard to not think nice things about them.

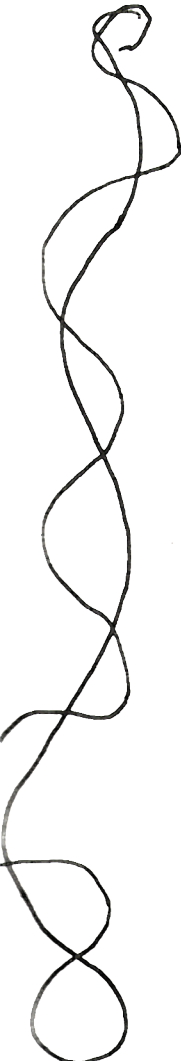
Am I starting to forget who I am? Who I was? Before the... wait, what was it that happened? I don't remember anymore. My long-term memory is so hazy, almost like it doesn't exist. All I can remember are the days from this past year that I have been here... Yesterday they took me out of the facility. They had me strapped down so that I wouldn't escape. I don't think there is a real chance of that though. I'm stuck in this world, even if I could get away from them, where would I go? While we were out, I saw another giant, one that I had never seen before. It looked like it wanted to take me. I was terrified. I went through enough as it was with this group of giants, I don't know how it would have treated me if it had taken me.

Today's the day, I think I have figured out their language. I'm going to try to communicate my first word with them. "Ma-ma



FREE

Vicky L Turner



What goes on behind closed doors,
If only the walls could talk, or even the floors.
It all goes on, the abuse, the sadness, the pain.
It goes away in the day, in front of others,
With night bringing it on again and again.
Hurtful words, stinging slaps maybe a fist or two,
A busted lip, bloody nose, maybe even eyes that are black and blue.
Why do i stay, you ask yourself,
Why why why??
You rant and you rave then start to cry.
Too hurt and ashamed that something like this could happen to you,
Afraid to start again with someone new.
So you stay and try to believe it wont happen anymore,
But you cant help but cringe when you hear the open door.
Please let his day have been stress free,
So he'll be in a good mood, and wont abuse me.
But you know that wont be the case,
He starts to yell, your heart starts to race.
Some day, someday,i will get brave and i will leave,
But until then i have to endure, i have to be strong, i have to believe.
That a better time is coming, and you will get some of what you have pum-
meled on me,
Then i will be happy, i will be free.



ILLUMINATION

Mark J Sanders

Those who curse the night and
Fear the darkness
Never have sat alone
Within the serenity that
Light's absence creates.

Open your eyes to the nothing—
Embrace the shades,
Welcome the shadows that
Illumine our too-bright world
With a comforting dimness.

Being alone doesn't mean
Being lonely—solitude
Becomes an oasis of shade
Obscuring the blinding sun
Of the tumultuous day.

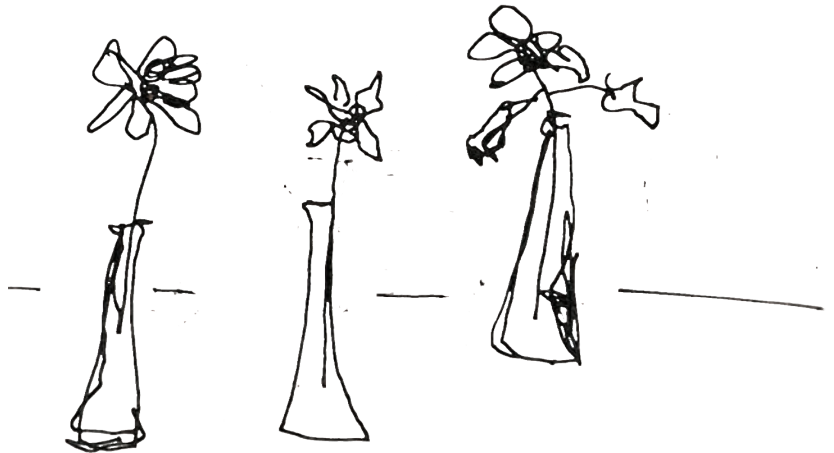
Nighttime, in the new moon's
Cast of pure, dark blindness
Possesses its own illumination,
The solace of hiding and resting
Deep within its dark wings.

You will find in the night
Your eyes absorb the light
From the darkness itself,
Illuminating the world in
Beauty and quiet peace.

HOW'S IT GOING

Austin L Colter

Hey. How's it going
Hows... stuff
I still miss you, sometimes
But I've changed,
and for the better
I can't remember the change
It didn't come all at once
the...transition
from the person I was to the person I am
It started with one lost friendship
then another, and another
and life happened
By the time it was over,
I was no longer you



NO IDEA

Micayla Oennings

NNo Idea

Dastardly deeds
You've done to me
And you've got no idea

Sweet dreams
And heart beats
You've got no idea

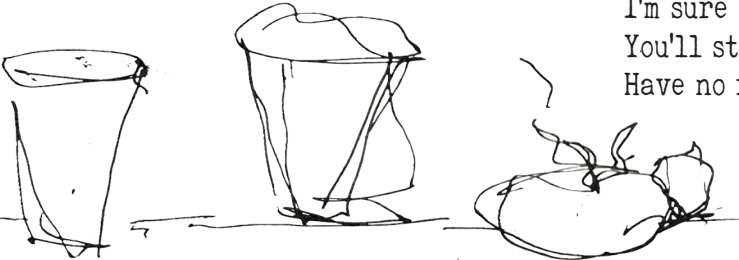
Your voice?
Blessed music
You've got no idea

I'm more Precious
Than platinum
You've got no idea

More clever a girl
Than a velociraptor
You've got no idea

Cute as a button
Why can't you see?
No, you've got no idea

Guess I'll wait for someone else
Less of a clueless boy
Even if you hear this,
I'm sure
You'll still
Have no idea.



You reside
in
the
depths of darkness.

THE FEELINGS BEHIND

Alexis E Lewallen

Your prey,
are the ones
who sometimes
wander
from the light, who struggle to stay close.

When children wander from their parents
the parents come
looking for them.
What if
no one
is looking for
me?

In my panic looking when
I
am lost
I
realize you have grabbed me
and your grip has only grown tighter
around
me.

I am in the light and... Yank! There
I
am in the cold numb darkness
six
feet
under

just out of reach.

I
sit here for months. Days on end
the feeling of warmth
absent for so long.

I
wonder if you're
right.

You say to me
I
will not want to go
back, but
I
know that's wrong
deep
inside.
I
know you only want me to stay so you can
swallow me whole and take me away
for good.

As hope is being
d
r
a
i
n
e
d
from my body
and mind
I
see a hand,
a hand that taunts me
with my family
and friends
just trying to
reach
for
my
hand
I
realize
they
were
looking
for

I am not alone, and you will not taunt me any longer
and
I jump... Into the light... once more.



Time

TIME

Amanda L Moore

I run off nobody
Rather everybody runs off me

I have no specific moment
When things need to be done
But those who work off of me
Has on their shoulders the weight of a ton,
To simply complete
The task at hand
Before my sand runs out
And they get canned

I do not think of myself as an enemy
Though people look at me and that's all they see
Something that is cramming their responsibilities
Though I look at them and ask "Haven't YOU made your priorities?"

I'm always continuous
And almost as luminous
As the sky on their "rain check"
Or that's what they say, in order to pay, no disrespect
And neither to forget

I do not try to be harsh or cruel
It just comes to me instinctual

But remember those times
When your life was filled with sweet rhymes
And I was nothing to you
Until you were about two

Then you grew up and still had great memories
And things came about with great ease and fun-filled journeys



But here comes college and "It's fun!" they say
Until you see I now own you and it's more work than play

Though when you get older and have a family
You will see, how fast I can speed
And before you even know it,
You're holding a baseball mitt...knowing it won't last for long
Because they will grow up with the help of me pushing them along

You will soon continue to age, and age, and age,
Until I pull you backstage...and then the curtain folds,
And I will no longer hold this person I kept as my own

Though I will rather find a new person
And continue on with them
Knowing that at the end
They will also be condemned

Until the light shines
And we are all gathered above
Including myself
Because I was also loved

Not by you
Or even by your neighbor
But by the One
In which we all call our Savior

My sole existence
will remain in the hands of Thee
And in that instant
He will control my eternity

I run off nobody
Rather everybody runs off me
Except for Thee
Because to Him, I am nothing

SHE WATCHED

Laryn D Risinger

She watched you wipe her tears when she fell
She watched you make her soup when she was sick
She watched you show up to all of her games
She watched you fix her tire on the side of the road when she got a flat
She watched you oogle the girls that looked her age
She watched you hit on the waitress when mom was at home
She watched you defend your brother for touching her cousin
She watched you grab girl's hips as you walk past -but only the girls
She watched your face get red with anger as the woman on the screen testified against her abuser
She watched you scream "Lies" or "She was asking for it"
She watched her cousin and aunt move far away from your brother
She watched her uncle go free without consequence
She watched him stare her down at Christmas
She watched you deny it in the car when mom brought it up
She watched you make her go back on New Year's Eve
She watched you drunkenly say "Of course she can have a drink!" to you as your uncle offered the glass with a smile
She watched everything go fuzzy...then black
She smelled the familiar aftershave and smoke. Uncle?
She felt something inside of her
She watched his head dip down as everything went dark again
She watched you make her a smoothie for her "hangover"
She watched the bruises slowly form over the next few days
She watched her uncle frequent the house more when mom wasn't there
She watched you both laugh at your cousin being "attention seeking"
She watched you say, "You're my brother, I know you'd never do that."

She watched you solidify all doubt of you ever believing her
She watched mom walk in and see the bruises
She heard the fight echo throughout the house
She watched you open her door defeatedly with red puffy eyes
"Why didn't you say anything?"
She watched the silence drag as you waited for an answer
"I watched, so I knew you'd never listen"



Possum NEWS
Fair • Balanced • Country

TAKING BACK MY MIND: TO GIVE IT AWAY

A new testimony of a changed man for 7 years now.

Dillon L Harper

Am I who I think I am? Is this who I wish to be?

Someone please chisel my stone heart from this mountain, it is not what I know as me.

For years now these words have soaked inside, I have held onto them so very tight. I have known and believed for years now, but now God has told me, "This will end tonight."

"I won't continue hiding away!" I scream to all of my fears
An attempt to seem bold and courageous, as I sit with a puddle of tears.

I was too young to know any better. Too young, to see what would lie in store.
What I thought would be a simple night turned out to be so much more.
I was only six years old man! With an innocence that you have robbed away!
I wish I would have known your motives when you asked my parents that I stay.

There are words that would loosen you from my clutches, as I stand with hardened fist,
I am a man now, but saying "I forgive you" is still on my to do list.

Do you have any idea what I became? Do you understand what mess you started?
Born into sin, I may have been. But you introduced me to it. Black hearted.
Twisted mind. Messed up thoughts. Shameful acts I've done and had.
Angry, miserable, guilty, hatred! More than all, I feel sad.

I can't take it anymore! These chains are coming off. I want to be set free.
Forgiveness is not an act for you! Soon, this process will release me.
If it happens for one, then I should do it for all
To your family members with lustful minds: You created a monster on that church van seat!
She too fashioned me as broken. Producing an immoral kind.

She had the nerve to become my baby-sitter! A year, continuing to do what she already did!

Didn't expect me to grow up remembering, did you? After all, I was "just a kid."

The hypocrisy runs deep, but on solely you two, I cannot place the blame.

See, my mind may have been diminished by you, but MY choices after, have become my shame.

Perverse, bitter, cruel minded, and weak were my characteristics to name a few.

Looking for teenage wounded prey to find. And I devoured using tactics, Just like you.

My conscience was nearly seared, from the schemes that you planted deeply inside.

I figure the choices that you have made, was your pain you just couldn't hide.

Who did this to you two? How could you feel that your acts would justify?

The wounds you torn and caused in me, still didn't change your life. Your lie.

Viewing the past through a different lens, nothing would have made your alibi any better.

My parents don't even know what you both have done, yet they were the one's who took you to hear the red letter.

You told people that you had a relationship, and that you really do know God

But by the actions that I witnessed first-hand I feel I can judge. Verdict = just seems odd.

Seems odd to me that you would claim to be, a Christian all along

Don't you dare spit on the Messiah like that! That statement is very wrong.

How is what you did Christ like? How can you say you know the way?

I have had to deal with this sin continually, it wasn't just for a day.

Since then I too have gotten to hear

The same red letters such as you.

But now on my heart they have worn down

My dismal point of view.

I now hope that you will hear them again.

That it causes a change in your heart.

The style of life that you both have lived

Can be forgiven with a brand-new start.

A new man now. With a new mindset,



Was the gift that I have received.
I'll say it now, I FORGIVE YOU!
Because in truth I have believed.
This letter you will never read, but I had to write it before I bow.
I lay this situation on the altar because the King of Kings is my desire now.

Luke 6:27-28

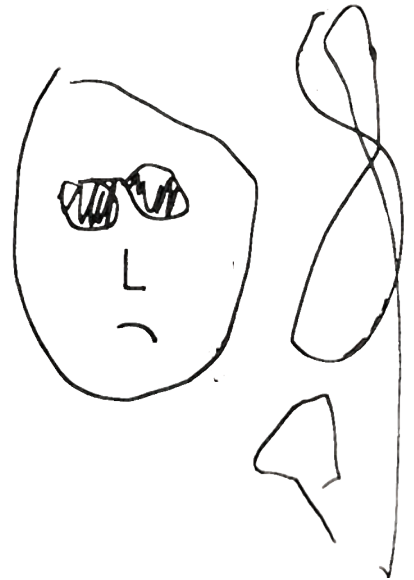
“But I say unto you which hear: Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,
bless them that curse you and pray for them which despitefully use you.”



WHY ME...

Francine N Parker

Burning hurt of salt in a wound
why me
Blurring of my vision
head swimmin
Ive got to make a final decision
why me
I havent done anything to deserve this
I only want to be loved
How did it get so twisted
if there was a beginning sign I missed it
why me.
Eyes wide open I walked into a wall battered and bruised with no one to call
one eye open still trying to find my way
walking in a fog
When will I find the day
Why me....
Why me, you said you would die for me
why me, you said you'd love me always
Why me, do i deserve this pain
Why me...



SAVE ME

Jazzma Smith

I'm Fine, Save me
I'm fine, save me
I'm happy as can be,
It's really sadness
I'm great,
I'm just miserable
I'm fantastic,
life is falling apart,
There's a lot to live for,
There's nothing to look forward to
I got it all together,
nothing's going right,
My life is great,
I hate myself
I'm lovely
I'm really horrible
I'm just smileful
I'm really cryful
I'm fine, save me



ICE CREAM AND ROSES

Dalton A Maclin

I wake up again this morning: cold and empty. I swing my feet around ready to embrace the cold wooden floor, or as ready as I ever will be. I stand up nearly tripping over my wadded up blanket. I slowly step towards my door walking into the hallway. My parents and siblings are still asleep. I step down the stairs, each one screaming a different tune as I walk down to the main room.

As I'm feeling my way around the still dark room, I bump into the couch. Finally, I find the light switch and head to the kitchen to make some early morning snacks. So far, my options are cottage cheese or half melted ice cream. Unable to decide, I take them both.

Now to find a spoon. While searching for a spoon in the drawer, I look up and notice the rain on the slightly off centered kitchen window above the sink. I can't see much further than the tree that my grandma and I planted about twelve years ago, before she left, when I was about seven. I give up my search for a spoon and wander into the living room.

I turn on the tv, turning the volume down before the sound comes out. I don't wake up anyone this early. I flip the channels to see if any of the late-night cartoons are still on, they usually go off about 5 in the morning. I can't find anything to watch, so I just leave it on some DIY home renovation show. I watch for about an hour as I sit there trying to eat ice cream without a spoon. I realize the ice cream probably hasn't been eaten already because it expired nearly two months ago. I rush to the door, stand on the porch, and spit it into my mother's roses.

I decide to sit on the porch swing and try to forget about what I had just eaten. The trees are swaying in the wind with the mist from the rain blowing up on the porch and onto my face. It's still dark, but light enough I can see down the driveway just past the third row of trees to the old blue rusted truck my grandfather gave my dad about three years ago, just before he left. I can smell my mother's roses in the spring breeze. They used to smell beautiful and sweet, like my best friend who left five days ago--a week after her birthday. Now roses.... roses just smell like suicide.

HOPELESS EMOTION

Jada L Lewis

This feeling is absolutely horrible.
You can't calm down no matter how hard you try.
You wobble and trip as you attempt to run from it.
That doesn't stop it though.
You can't seem to get enough air in your lungs.
Because your breathing is rapid and heavy.
You're hyperventilating, aren't you?
Your tears are falling but you can't stop them.
It's only a natural reaction to this feeling.
Especially considering the position you're in right now.
You can't seem to find safety from this feeling.
No matter where you go.
It's like the world has turned on you.
Taking your calm happiness from before.
Life Stole it away in an instant.
Replacing it with a horrible feeling.
A gut-wrenching feeling you can't just shake off.
No matter how hard you try.
Sadness?
No that's not the right word.
Even if it did feel like it applied a little bit.
Fear?
That was a part of it.
It doesn't completely fit the bill though.
What was this feeling?
It could only be described as a horrendous feeling.
A feeling that zaps all hope in an instant.
A feeling that combines both fear and sadness.
Was this feeling, Despair?
Despair.
You feel Despair.

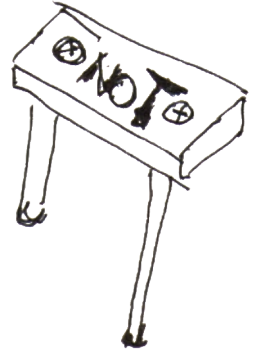


APOCALYPSE

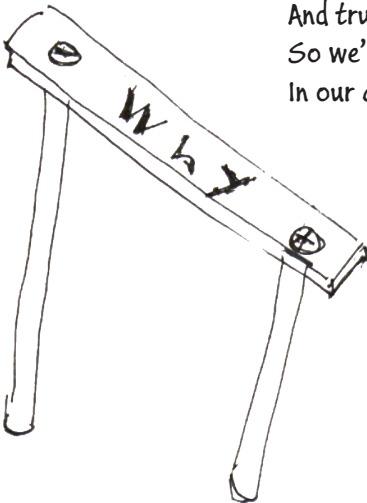
Declan Madden



Look around the world, you see,
Is this really our destiny?
To burn in eternal fire
And spread nothing but our mire?
Will we let it all fall
and ignore the heaven's call?
Will we sell the souls of others
And turn on our brothers?
Ignoring problems is what what we do best.
All we ever do is jest.



Deep inside we'll never be free.
Liars we will always be.
We focus on one thing: desire.
And hurt the ones we sire.
We stand proud and tall,
As if we can have the gall.
We take nothing from our mothers
And trust betraying lovers.
So we'll forever, rest,
In our comfortable nest.



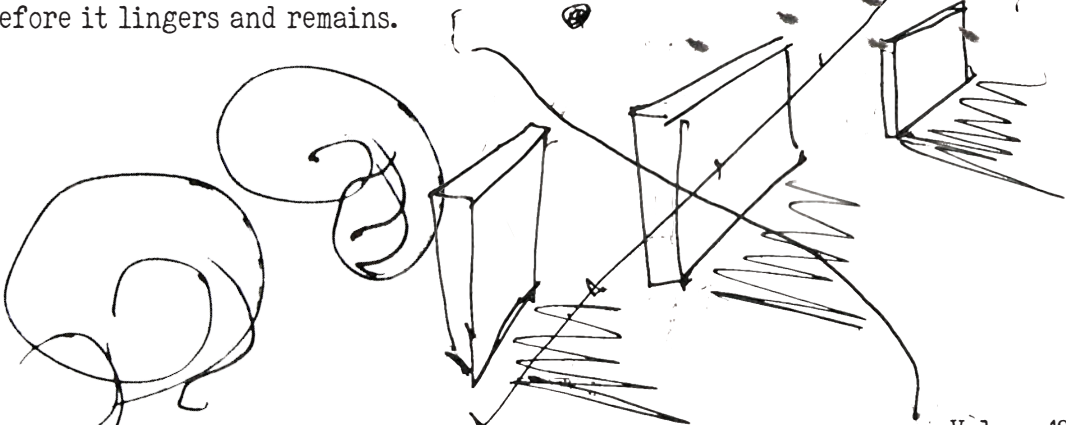
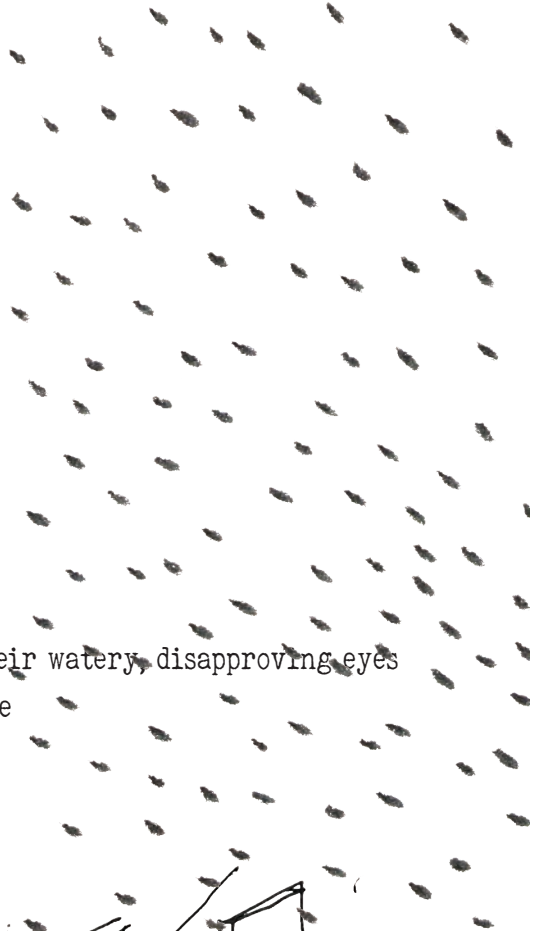
CEMETERY

Andrew C Phelps

I was a young man
when I went to the cemetery
I had a jet black lung,
I ripped out my tooth
and sold it
to the tooth fairy

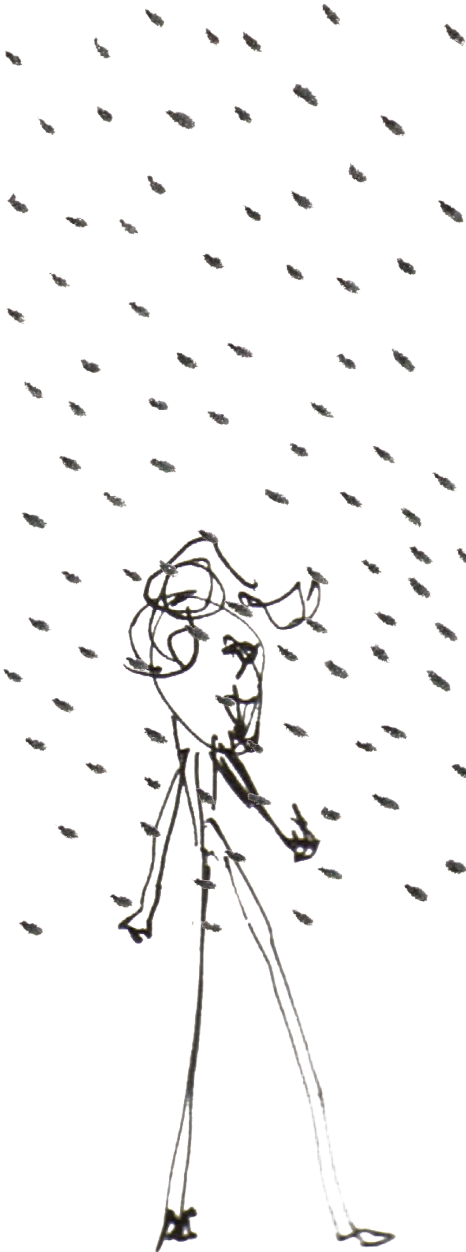
Why does mankind litter and lie?
Why do talented young men and women have to die
Out in the swamp
With no lover by their side
Why do they come to me to die?
Why do they come to me to die?

When I have nothing to say while staring into their watery, disapproving eyes
why, oh why, my love, why do they come to me to die
in the swamp to be buried
and disregarded in the lonely, dismal cemetery.
Wouldst thou tell me and free me from this pain
before it lingers and remains.



MY SOUL

Kate K Wheeler



Turning, I see
A twisted mass
Its seeping, oozing foundation
Flexes then Squeezes
Upward
The long black limbs
Jutting up towards
A grinning black skull
I collapse
And it goes down
with me
It covers, too
It shudders, too
A gleaming light
A kernel
Peaks out at me
From the midst of the branches
The last goodness
in my soul.



A LITTLE PROMISE

Kate K Wheeler

The clouds have opened
I've made my decisions
Yet I can't stop
This heart, thinking of you

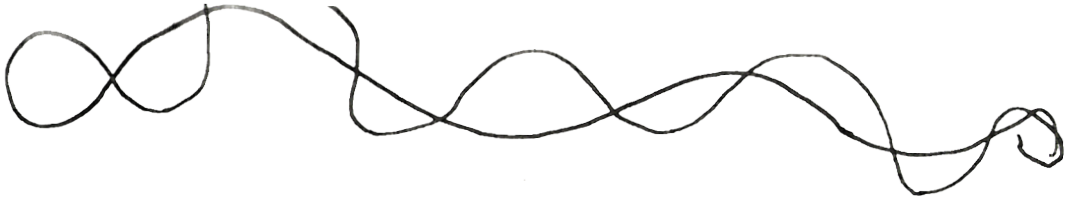
I've pondered, wandered
Getting stuck at this wall
It leads concrete steps up,
But also back to you

It's just a little promise
Just a little secret
Leaving my head alone
But chiseling at my heart

I want to choose you,
But I have to choose me
Yet I can't stop
This heart, whispering for you

It's just a little promise
But also a little freedom
Leaving in my own way
Wanting to run down yours



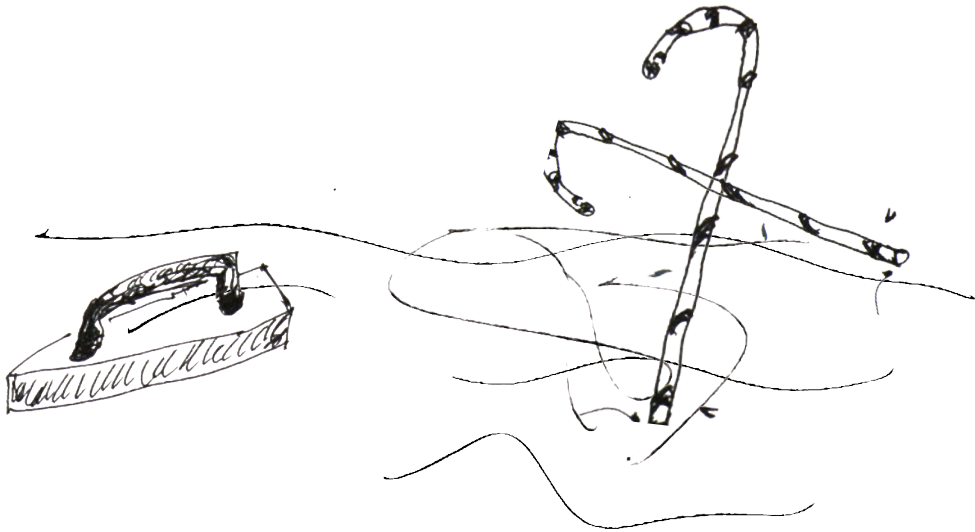


It's not your fault
It's my salvation
Leading me down my road while
This heart, pulls back for you



It's just a little promise
Holding me back a little
I will cut these strings
Releasing me to a clear sky

The clouds have opened
I've made my decision
Yet, I can't stop
This heart's promise, disappearing from you.



TILL DEATH DO US PART

Dalton A Maclin

I started out fine. We met at a local bar one Saturday night. She was seated at the bar. She looked a little cold, after all she was wearing a red crop top and a jean mini skirt in the middle of December, so I offered my jacket. Without hesitation she took it and thanked me. She had bright green eyes and dark brown hair. We talked and drank till the bar closed. We went to my place as it was the closest and we were too drunk to drive far. We watched some movies and snacked and had fun.

Eventually, one thing lead to another. Five years later, here we are: new house, new town, new everything. We are to get married in four days. With each day passing we grew less and less patient.

Finally, the day is here. She's getting ready while I'm tying up a few last minute things--picking up the rings, the cake to eat, and the cake to just look at--all before the wedding. I get into my place at the front of the church waiting for minutes that seem like hours; waiting to call her my wife.

The doors fly open and there she is walking down the aisle--beautiful as ever. She begins to pick up her pace into a sprint, still beautiful. I'm puzzled and don't have time to ask or even wonder why she's running to me. I feel her grab my arm and, next thing I know, we barrel out the church window. Beautiful shards of glass fly.

She tells me to hurry. That she'll explain. But as I look back it doesn't need explaining. Hordes of undead massacre the building. She lights the church on fire and smiles as it goes up in flames.

Driving. Somewhere. Not sure where. I read the words "Just Married" on the back window as we drive happily off a cliff not realizing until it's too late our last words... I do.

HIGHWAY OF MELANCHOLIA

Andrew C Phelps

I saw a man on fire
He said it was chilly out
I said I don't know where I am
and he disappeared

I saw a man on fire
Crossing the highway with murderous intent
Maybe he lives in the woods in a cabin
Perfectly content
In his madness

I know you stranger

I don't know your name but I've met your soul
And I can groove with it my brother if only you could too

but you're not here and neither am I and there is a good chance we will die
on the highway of melancholia

Colors of the neon kind splash and squirm in the air and I feel infinite on
the highway of melancholia

Colors of the curious kind living in harmony
With me

I love you all

Together

We shall be in infinity

The sirens will call and we will smile for the comfort we feel in our final
moments is sublime

And I long to be with you in a world all our own

That we built together

When we were young and we felt fine and we wine and dine

To the end of mankind but don't cry for I had a wonderful time.

THE LONELY PHANTOM

Trent N Taylor

A casted shadow, lay over the lonely phantom
Cold burns shatter the phantom

Darkness overlooking, with eyes like piercing daggers
Stabbing into the phantom

Another wandering vagabond approaches him
Curious of the phantom

Someone wondering about his broken, lost spirit
Just another lost phantom

But not this time, confused and worried, it wonders why
"Why are you alone phantom?"

Stepping out of the dark, the spirit's only answer
"Because I am a phantom"

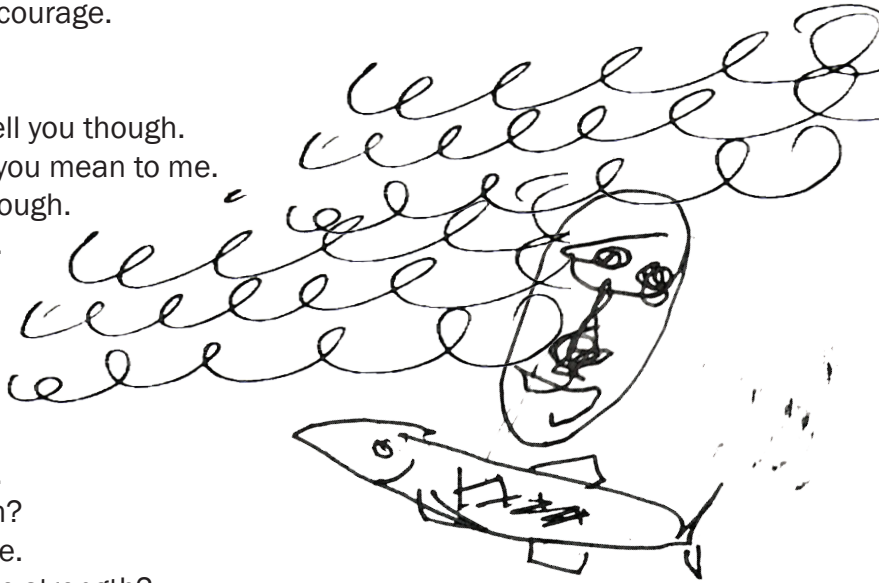
A shy response from the vagabond, "Well, I am here."
As she walks with the phantom.



APPREHENSION

Jada L Lewis

I want to be honest with you.
That's not possible though.
I can't seem to muster any courage.
Even though I want to.
I wanna tell you.
It's not possible for me to tell you though.
I wanna tell you how much you mean to me.
That's impossible for me though.
I'm such a disgrace though.
Why can't I be honest?
I hurt a whole lot inside.
Beyond comprehension.
I won't speak though.
Even when I see you cry.
I can't seem to do anything.
Why can't I tell you the truth?
I need some support, please.
Can someone lend me some strength?
I want to tell them all that I think.
Even if on the inside I want to fight it.
I want to rip the words from my own throat.
So I can finally let them know.
I want to tell them just how I feel.
No more hiding, please.
I don't want to be silent anymore.
No more fear either.
I want to be honest with them.
Please God, give me the strength I need.
I need strength to do something that should be so easy.
Something that shouldn't scare me.
I want to be honest with you.
Let me tell you how I feel.



TIMELESS

Kianna Johnson

You wrote me on messenger,
I needed a message, I was feeling regular.
You said, "Girl you is sooo cute".
I smiled a smile I only wear in dreams.
You must know a thing or two about what it means to dream,
Timeless, like our sleep, but I didn't sleep on you.
Timeless, like a day dream where you pulled a heart string,
And set my heart off in full esteem.
Now I wish I never met you,

I say,
That's it!
You're bad for me,
Like sugar in my bloodstream,
That's it!

I say,
You're bad for me!

I want ice cream sitting on a crossbeam regarding the clouds as they scroll past me,
Because it's time less;

But you want less time away from me.

I want time less,
Because I'm afraid of what you might ask me,
But, "Baby" you say. . .
"Come bother me".

And so, I'm doing a bothering thing.
You wrote me a message on messenger,
A timeless thing.

We started a fling, a stirring and concurring,
Time would begin to cling and I wouldn't have concurred that I know a thing or two about
vanity.

So I'm doing wild things,
Chained up, cuffed up, cause that's what you do to wild things.

You wrote me on messenger, I was feeling regular.
Regular couldn't describe what you do to me, how you bother me,
Come bother me baby,
Timeless.



YES TO PIZZA

Dalton A Maclin

Growing up, we never really spoke much. At least to each other. He was always talking to the girls in the hallway with his entourage behind him, but never to me. Not once did he ever say a word to me. At least not until the ninth grade and we got partnered for a biology project. While I saw this as a curse, he saw this as a blessing, which from his point of view is understandable, since I did have the highest scores in the class.

The bell rings and we leave for the day. As I sit on the bus waiting to leave campus, I feel a presence appear next to me. I look and it's him. I wonder why he is suddenly sitting by me. I ask him if he has any ideas for the project. He smiles awkwardly and says no and that maybe we could meet up to work on it together and that we can meet somewhere after school the next day.

So tomorrow comes and he sits by me again in not only my math but also my writing class. When biology gets here, we discuss when and where we should meet after school. I suggested the park, but he suggested we meet at his house because he thinks it would be easier to concentrate in his room instead of the park which makes sense, but I was still undecided until he said his mom was making pizza.

When we arrive at his house he shows me around and introduces me to his mom and his cat. Finally, we make it to his room. I unpack my things for the project. As I'm laying out all my colored pens and notes for the assignment, he re-enters the room and ask me if I wanted to work on the floor where we could spread out our work more.

As we are working, he asks me if there was a reason, I never spoke to him.

I say, "Honestly because 1) I thought you were dumb and 2) because I didn't think you wanted to talk with me. Why, is there a reason you never spoke to me?"

He smiles awkwardly again and says he always wanted to, but he didn't know what to say.

"Well for starters you could say "hi" or "hello."

He laughs a little and says, "I guess so, but I just always get nervous." I ask why and he says "Well I've always kinda--"

"Boys, pizza is ready," his mom calls up the stairs. We get up and head out of his room. I asked what he was going to say.

He turns and kisses me then says "-kinda liked you" and smiles with his cheeks all red as he runs down stairs to get pizza.

I follow him down to get pizza and his mom asks how much we have left. Not knowing for sure what just happened I just smile. He jumps in and says, "Probably another few hours." His mom tells us we can finish our dinner in his room if we'd like. So, we head upstairs to finish up the project and I'm scared to ask what that was.

Suddenly, after about an hour of working quietly, he asks if I'd like to hang out some more later this week. Not wanting to be rude or make things more awkward, I say sure.

He smiles and says, "Great."

Four hours later we finish our project and I walk home. My dad asks me how it went. I tell him it went good that it took longer than I had thought that it would but we got it done. He says that's good and then tells me goodnight as he goes to my parents' room. I head to my room trying to figure out why my friend did what he did. Finally I give up and go to sleep.

The day of the presentation comes and I'm still trying to figure out what he was thinking and why. I get to class later than usual and he's sitting next to where I sit, so I awkwardly sit down next to him. He asks me if I'm ready to present. I tell him no, but I wasn't exactly ready for last night either. He looks at me and apologizes. After we present, we sit with awkward silence between us, then finally the bell rings and we go to our separate homes.

Four days later he asks if I still wanted to hang out some more. I smiled and said yes.

We became closer over the years... so close I almost forget about the kiss.

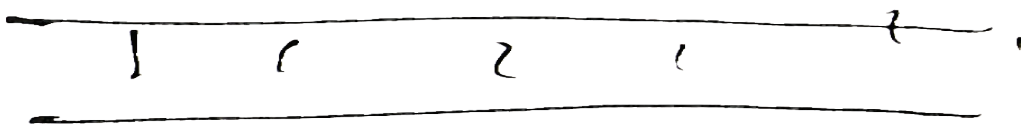
Then one day, while we were out for dinner, eating pizza, he asks me if I'd like to go out.

I said, "Sure, where to?"

He looked at me dumbfounded and says, "No, like out with me on a date."

I look at him not knowing what to say. Then he tells me to just say yes and so I do.

Six years later I say yes again, but this time it's an entirely different question.

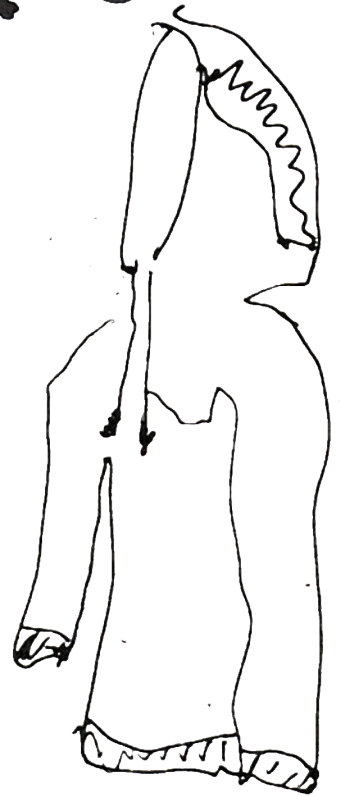


3 WORDS & LETTERS

Kianna Johnson


From day one when I met you,
You were just a boy I barely knew.
I never knew it possible I'd even care for you,
But I gained all these feelings;
That were all so very new.
And then they set a fire within me,
As my feelings grew and grew.
You're like weeds growing within me,
It's not possible I cut the grass.
You tell me to take baby steps,
But boy... I'm already running too fast.
So the best you can do is trip me,
That way I'll trip and fall for you.
There's so many things I wanna say,
But I can't say I love you.
And that's okay,
That's just fine.
I really love the feeling of wanting to.
But I know love hasn't reached us yet,
So I'm fine with waiting until it do.
They say the best things are what you wait for,
So my best thing will be you.
Don't close your eyes or hesitate,
Cause when I say those 3 little words,
They'll be true.

3 words, 8 letters... Can't wait to say I love you.



FOLLOWING

Trent N Taylor

 *A boy who is lost,
a boy who is confused,
a boy who doesn't know what to do.
He wanders forever, never wondering where to go.
Always asking where to go but with no destination.*

*A land for the forgotten,
a land for the hopeless,
a land for those who have seen it all.
They stay forever, never wondering where it all went wrong.
Always looking at the footprints behind them.*

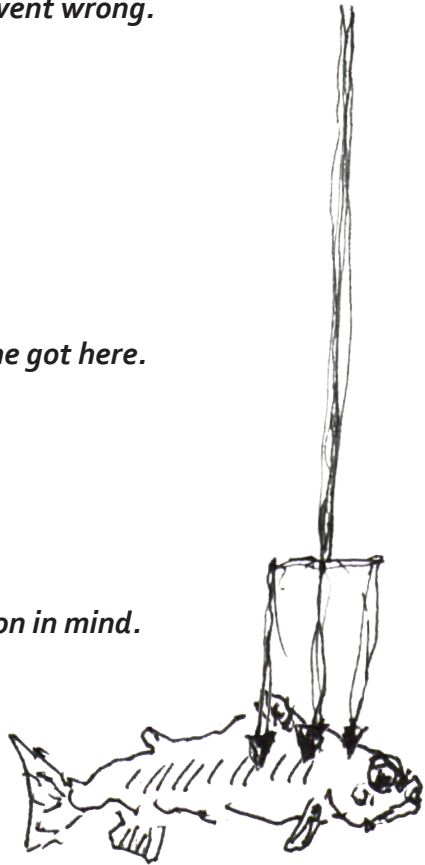
*A boy who is lost,
a boy who is quiet,
a boy who can't do this anymore.
He wanders the land of the forgotten,
a land for the hopeless,
a land for those who hate the world.
He wants to stay forever, never wondering how he got here.
Always looking at his footprints behind him.*

*A girl who is alone,
a girl who is blind,
a girl who knows what to do.
She follows forever, always right behind.
Never asking where to go and with one destination in mind.*

*A boy who is lost,
a boy who can't do this anymore,
a boy who can't do this anymore.
He sits in land of the forgotten,
a land for the hopeless,*

Volume 12, 2020

Confluence



*a land for those who can't do this anymore.
He cries to himself, always confused. I can't do this anymore.*

*A girl who is crying,
a girl who tries, and
a girl who loves.
She follows forever, always next to him.
Never asking why and with one thing to do.*

*A boy who can't do this anymore.
He can't do this anymore.
I can't do this anymore...
Warmth. Washing over me.*

*A boy who can't move,
a boy who can't speak,
a boy who is crying.
He rests next to her in the land of the forgotten,
a land where he finally found where he belonged.*

*A girl who holds tightly,
a girl who is no longer alone,
a girl who always follows. S
he rests next to him in the land of the forgotten,
a land where they can finally be together.*



MARVIN THE MANTIS
ASHLEE MATHIAS

Marvin the Mantis was a quiet fellow,
He hardly spoke and NEVER a bellow.

Marvin loved words but which ones to say?
He, She, Pit, Pat, The, Then or They?

All the words in his head, so much he could tell!
A sight, a feeling, a sound or a smell.

So fun and intelligent, so much to say!
But he could not, or would not, try as he may.

Marvin could speak, oh yes, he was able,
but he could not bring himself to utter a syllable.

Deciding his words was a troublesome task,
So, he sat thinking, blinking, unable to act.

While not speaking kept him meek and mellow, one day
they built up and out came- A BELLOW!
Marvin the Mantis was surprised by himself,
so much had come out in ONE BIGYELP!

So many words could not be understood,
Out in a jumble, WHO-WHAT-WOULD!

He looked at the words that came out of him,
and he knew, yes, he knew the meaning was lost in all of
them.

“Choosing my words carefully makes them easy to hear,
yes, choosing my words will make them very clear.”

Marvin the Mantis was a quiet fellow, who used his words
carefully, so as never to bellow.



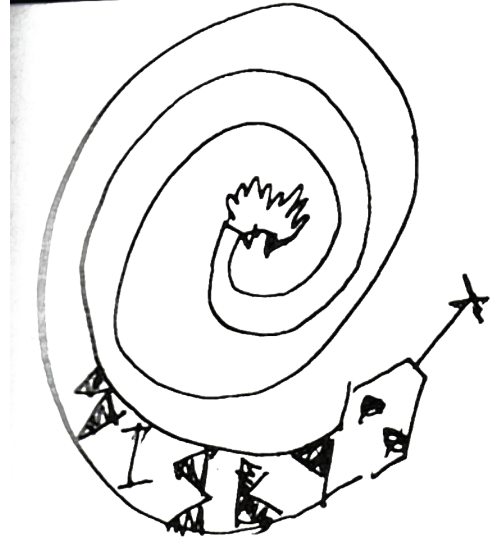
BLAKE THE SNAKE

Ashlee Mathias

Blake the Snake was a dapper fellow,
and he wore stripes, of blue, green and yellow.
Oh, how he loved color, colors galore!
Maybe he had room for one color more....
Purple and Green upon his back,
"Oh! I know what I need, a hat!"
A jaunty hat atop his head,
"MY! This outfit needs some red!"
"A red dotted scarf is just right,
but maybe I could fit in just a little bit of white?"
"A white feather for my hat, yes that will do,
but maybe I could squeeze in just a little more blue?"
Blue jacket on and hat up top, maybe a bit of orange, just to set it off?
So many colors and to his surprise,
he could no longer be seen, only his eyes.

He sat in the pile
And thought for a while.

Slowly he unraveled his colorful mess
he had to decide which outfit was best.
All his clothes in a pile on the floor, he sighed to himself, such beautiful sight,
all those colors of yellow, green and white.
"Stripes are my favorite, they are long like me,
yes I think stripes is what it needs to be."
Blake the Snake was a dapper fellow



BALOO AND MAGOO EAT LUNCH AT TWO

Vicky L Turner

Miss Magoo lived in the zoo and every day she ate her lunch exactly at two. Miss Baloo ate her lunch with Miss Magoo also at two. But one day their lunch was not going to be ready at two.

"Oh no," said Miss Magoo. "Whatever shall we do?"

"Well," said Miss Baloo, "I think the first thing we should do is notify the zoo."

"Oh that is so smart of you," said Miss Magoo. "Yes, that's exactly what we should do." Well they notified the zoo who said it would not be ready at two, but said four would have to do.

"Oh no," they both cried and were blue, because lunch should be served exactly at two.

"I know," said Miss Magoo, "maybe we should run away from the zoo, then they'll know we have to have lunch exactly at two."

"Oh now you're the smart one," said Miss Baloo. "That's what we'll do so they know that we eat exactly at two." So away went Miss Baloo and Miss Magoo, to see what else that they could do. Well, they ran upon old Mr. Who, so they asked him what he thought they should do.

"I know," said Mr. Who, "there's a nice cafe in town that serves lunch at two."

"Oh me! oh my!" said Miss Magoo. "That's exactly what we should do."

"Yes I agree," said Miss Baloo. "We really need to eat exactly at two."

So away they went to the little cafe, for it was nearing two and they knew what they needed to do. So in walked Miss Magoo with Miss Baloo too, to sit down and eat exactly at two.

"What will you have," asked Mr Slew,

"Well. we need lunch 'cause it's almost two."

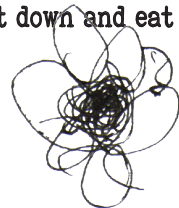
"We have stew if that will do."

"Oh that sounds great," said Miss Magoo.

"I think that's wonderful," said Miss Baloo.

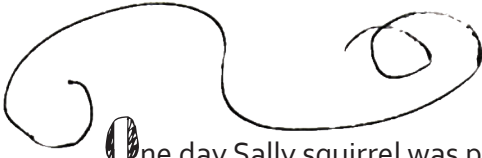
"Ok ladies, I'll make that two." So now Miss Magoo and Miss Baloo, got to eat stew exactly at two. Now they were ready to return to the zoo.

"Thank you so much for helping us two, you've been a real pal and a friend too, but now we must return to the zoo. Hopefully tomorrow they will serve lunch exactly at two."



SALLY SQUIRREL HURT HER TAIL ON A RAIL

Vicky L Turner



One day Sally squirrel was playing on the railroad track and fell and hurt her back. She also hurt her tail on the rail,

"Oh what ever shall I do," she said, "'cause I also have a bump on my head."

Well along came Felix the fox, who was just walking along singing a song. "Oh what a wonderful day, oh what a wonderful day, I'm walking along singing my song I'm doing good I'm doing no wrong."

"What, and who is making such a racket?" said Sally.

"Its just me," said Felix the fox, "and I'm, oh mercy me, whatever is wrong? Did you fall from a tree?"

"Oh my," said Sally, "would you open your eyes and see where I am. I am on the railroad tracks, not even by a tree, cant you see whats happened to me?"

"Oh my," said Felix "I should say you are right. Well, what happened then, did you get in a fight?"

"A fight! a fight!" Sally said with all of her might. "Do you see anyone here that I could fight? I fell as I was playing on the track, I daresay that I've hurt my back."

"Well," said Felix, "what can I do? I will try to make you as good as new."

"Well," said Sally, "I think that I should go see my Dr, to see what he thinks, but I sure hate to smell his stink."

"I will take you" said Felix. "We will go see Dr.Sammy Skunk. He will fix you good as new. He will twist you and shake you right out of your shoe, but he will make you as good as new."

"Well, I guess that will have to do, cause I want to be made as good as new." Away they went to see Dr. Skunk, to see what he had to say.

"Well how are you Miss Sally on this beautiful day?"

"Well I hurt bad, especially my tail, cause it got hurt on the rail."

"Now I have just the thing for your little ol' tail, that got hurt so bad on the train rail." So Dr. Skunk grabbed her tail, he shook it, he wiggled it, nothing was broke, so he stretched it out and gave her a Coke.

"I feel so much better," said Sally, "but I still don't like your stink."

"I know, I know, I know, what you think, I know that you really don't like my stink."

"Well," said Sally, "but you made me well. You stretched and pulled and helped my tail."

"I'm glad I could help," said Dr. Skunk, "but do you see that tree with the big barksy trunk, I really think you should play there and not the rail, and then maybe you won't hurt your tail. I hope you learned your lesson well, and stay off the tracks, cause nobody, I am like nobody likes to hurt their tail."

"I did, I did. I learned my lesson well. Thank you so much for fixing my tail."



COLLEGE VOODOO

Ayla Crawford

Slave to the school, I toil and tread
Fog in my mind, I'm back from the dead
They summon me, college – that swap shed
I always try but I always lose
Call the witch doctor 'cause I got the blues!

Pins and needles, they're in my heart
Inside my body, where do I start?
Sharp papercuts, grades torn apart
I always try but I always lose
Call the witch doctor 'cause I got the blues!

My shrunken head, this massive job
I've read the cards, it's my soul they rob
Others as well, this undead mob
I always try but I always lose
Call the witch doctor 'cause I got the blues!

But what's the point, I'm hypnotized
In its snake eyes, I'm am mesmerized
College is master, it is authorized
I always try but I always lose
Call the witch doctor 'cause I got the blues.



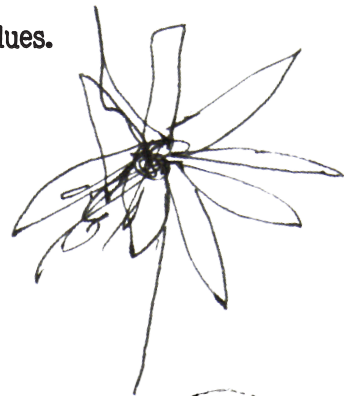
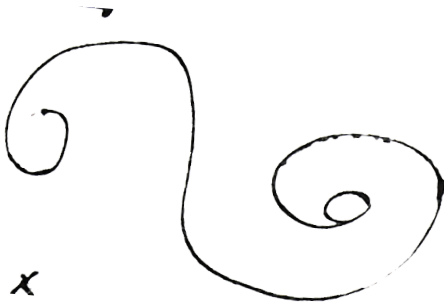
FLOWER BLUES

Gregory D Snell

I go through the cemetery every single day.
Driving to class, yes, the cemetery's on the way.
Many kinds of flowers, any color you could choose--
Respectful tributes.
I've got flower blues.

Each day flowers tell a story, all along the road.
Irises say blue's his favorite. I can read the code.
Tulips mean it's spring. Mums blow like leaves across the views.
Each story whispers:
"You've got flower blues."

Funeral mourning fills my yard when crocus heads spring out.
Crocus buds ensure a winter ice storm is en route.
Caskets of ice, withered souls... their hint of hope subdued.
And that is why I
Have the flower blues.



BROKEN HEART BLUES



Shelby Kirkley

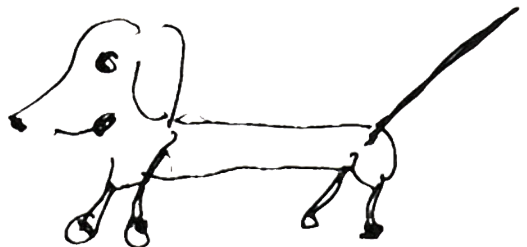
You left the other day
There wasn't really much I could say
Now I have to watch "The Office" alone
I have the broken heart blues.

We used to laugh together
Sit in the Sonic parking lot in rainy weather
Listening to my music that you hated.
I do have the broken heart blues.

Billie English, Ed Sheeran, and Khalid
I was just emotional, you see
Maybe that's why we could never agree
I have the broken heart blues.

Now my heart is broken
Yes, appetite has been stolen
But I still crave a Chik-fil-a
Even though I have the broken heart blues.

Depression had hit me before
Over-analyzing, lying on the floor
It's been a while since I've swept
Because I have the broken heart blues.





BABY BLUES

K Thacker

On the crawl, from daylight to dark,
Don't know when to slow down or stop.
Baby boy, you got it right on the mark
Baby boy, mommy is fixin' to blow her top

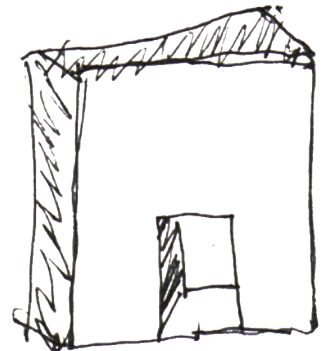
On the move, from room to room,
Daddy watches you from afar with dismay.
Baby boy, you've been on the go since you left the womb
Baby boy, mommy got something to say!

On the cry, from playtime to nap time,
We need a fresh diaper
Baby boy, these walls you climb.
Baby boy, mommy needs an anchor!

On the run, from daylight to darkness
Looking for a bottle in the night
Baby boy, when do you not lurk
Baby boy, when daylight comes, it will be in sight.

On the sleep, from dark to daylight,
We wonder when you will wake
Baby boy, finally sleeping through the night
Baby boy, mommy needs a break!

On the talk, will you please use clues
What new words can you say?
Baby boy, you give mommy the blues
Baby boy, the beginning of a new day!



EVERYTHING IS ALRIGHT,

SWEETHEART

Kate K Wheeler

I would never see him again. That was the only phrase I could comprehend from my amazing boyfriend Jonathan's message. No explanations, no apologies. He was simply gone. At least, I thought he was.

A few weeks later, I met David. He was a gentleman, with the cutest laugh and the perfect response to everything I asked. He was wonderful, I told myself as I wondered how exactly he had persuaded me to move in with him so suddenly. "He must be the one," I thought. "Why wait?"

I loved the house. David did all the cleanup and didn't ask me to pay rent. His only request was to stay away from the basement. It was old and decayed, he explained. Something could fall on me, or I could get sick. Glancing at the clean, tightly padlocked knob attached to the dark red basement door, I agreed. I trust him.

Soon into our blissful new life, I woke up, and David had left the room. Creeping towards our bedroom door, I heard a click, then a loud thump. Leaning my head against the door, I heard a scream and shot back! "NOOOOO-" it cut off. But the person screamed again, louder! Terrified, I dove back into my bed. I was too afraid of what I might find to venture downstairs. Instead, I muffled the sounds with my pillow. They seemed to echo for a long time. When I realized they were gone, my door creaked and David returned. He smiled at my shocked face. "Everything is alright now, sweetheart." As he approached the bathroom door, I managed to notice the slick blood coating his hands before he washed it away.

As time passed, I noticed changes coming over David. He had been pleasant and happy with me, but as the weeks progressed, he became more sullen as the evening drew closer. His disappearing episodes became more frequent as well. My attitude was very strange during these times. Every evening he was gone, my curiosity drove me closer and closer to that red door. Yet when the screams began, I would still dash upstairs and cover my ears. My life with David was perfect, I tried to reason. He had asked me to stay away from the basement, and I would. I didn't need to screw up our relationship. David always returned reeking with blood, but sometimes his face or arms were cut as well. Once, I saw ugly scars snaking down his back.

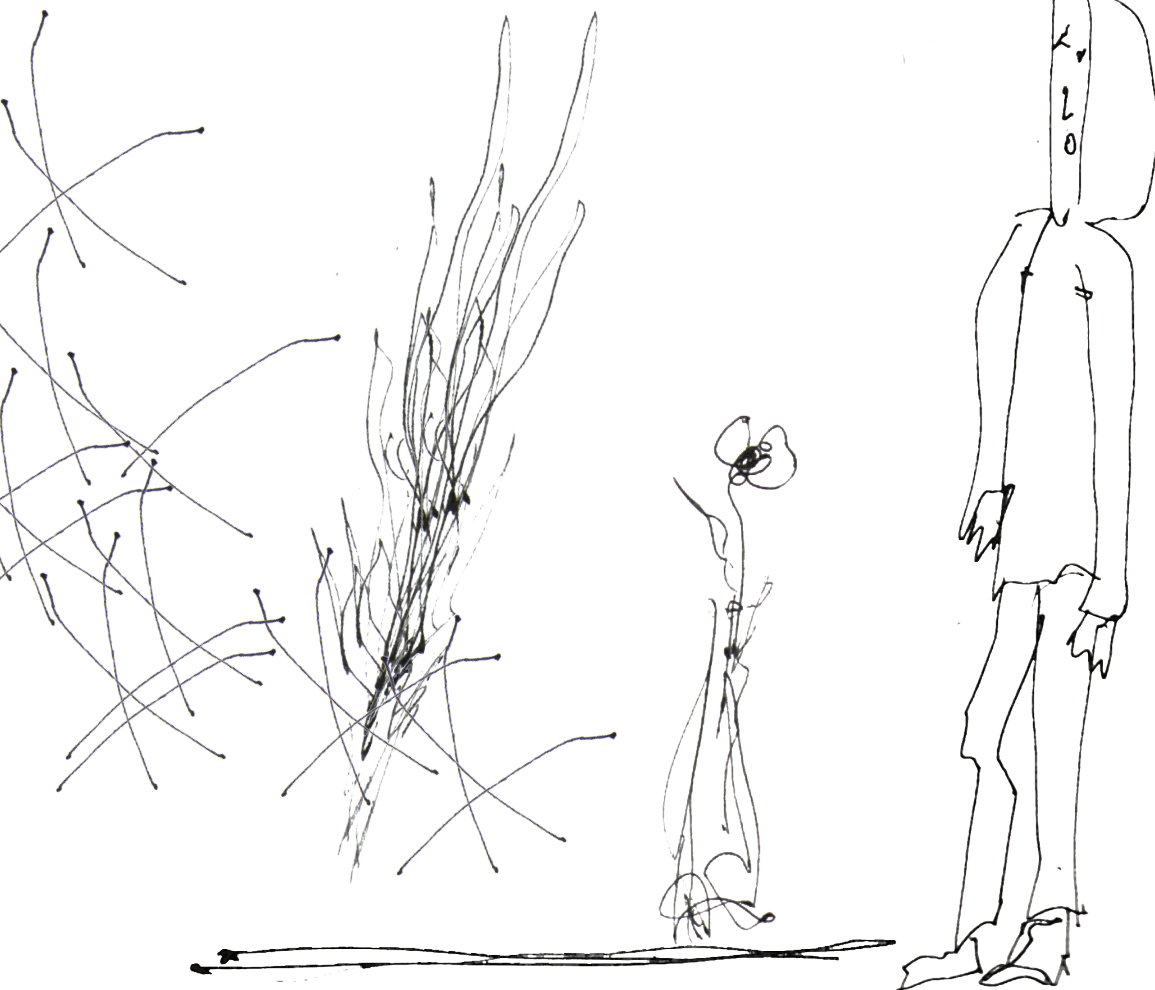
I began to dream of the red door. I got closer and closer in each dream until I actually grasped the door's handle. Yet every time I pulled, it didn't budge. A longing to see behind was building up inside of me. I needed to reach that door, to catch a glimpse of its depths!

Finally, I had a chance. This night, after David had left, I crept down the stairs and reached that red door. I had heard even more violent bumps and yells during my journey, but I ignored them all. I needed to reach the door. Seeing it unpadlocked, I pulled and the door yielded. Glancing inside, I only saw stairs leading to darkness. What...

A light flashed on, and I couldn't believe my eyes! Crawling up the stairs, with a mad look in his eyes and dark liquid coating his face, was Jonathan, my ex! I froze seeing him drag a limp body behind him. Looking up and seeing me, Jonathan bared his teeth and I saw blood gleam. "My sweetheart..." Wait, only David called me that. "I've killed the monster!" He tossed the body in front of him and I drew back in horror. David! He was grotesquely mutilated, his naked body crossed with long, dry scars and scratches. I couldn't recognize his slashed face! Staring back at Jonathan, I realized: I recognize him even more. I glanced at David's dead

body and realized, they must be brothers. "Oh, not brothers," Jonathan crooned. "Just two halves of the same whole. Now good has conquered, and I can claim my prize!" He bounded up the stairs towards me, scarred arms pumping.

I leaped back, slamming the door. I had to keep the skeletons in the closet! But I had no key, and now Jonathan was pushing back against me. His green eyes peaked out of the crack, and I watched them darken in horror. "Everything is alright now, sweetheart..."



THE MIX-UP

Joseph Wallis



I'd like to say it was an accident a coincidence, a mess up in timing, but I don't think the authorities take those kinds of responses for what we did. It was supposed to be a really simple joke. But, like most jokes you make one mistake and it turns everything bad. My buddy and I were just gonna teach this kid a lesson, the little punk cheated on my sister. It crushed her, I had to do something. Apparently, he's done this sorta things before. So someone had to teach him what happens when you cheat in life.

We followed him, my friend and I, after work. He was walking home and we bagged 'im and threw him in my SUV. He knew my voice so I had my friend scream things like "This is the last time you cheat anyone out of anything!" He was squirming so hard it took my friend all his weight to keep him subdued he was surprisigly strong stronger than I remembered at least.

We took him to this old abandoned house out in the B.F.E. so he'd be able to scream as loud as he wanted. I'd also be able to pop off a few rounds of my handgun to shake him up. Once we got there we pulled him out of the SUV. He was hard to keep up, had to end up dragging him inside. And well, this where things got crazy.

We kicked him to the middle of the room, lightly of course, and started shouting "You ready to die for cheating?" I shot the ceiling before he could respond, now that really shook him up.

Then I get this ring form my sister, and hear the worse news of my whole life. She says "There's no need to go through with your plan, it was a misunderstanding. He's here right now if you want to talk to him."



PRAY FOR MY SINS

Johnny D Boham

1

Look mum, look mum
It happened again
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

I found her this way
I swear 'till the end
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

I met her last night
At an old country inn
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

Of ill repute,
She sold me her skin
Pray for Her sins
Pray for Her sins

2.

I awoke this morning
By a lake of crimson
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

The bobbies are coming
I'm cornered within
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

My head bows in shame
The chains smart my shins
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

The judge decrees
I've no reason to live
Pray for His sins
Pray for His sins

3.

An embarrassment to all
I bear the burden
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

Father looks down
Fatigued with chagrin
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

Humbly, I plead
For your forgiveness
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

Shunned and alone,
I have no more friends
Pray for Their sins
Pray for Their sins

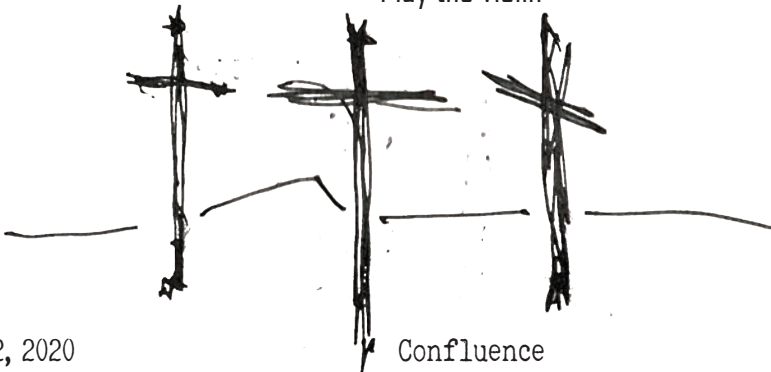
4.

The hangman's rope
Will soon swing again
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

Only God can save me,
His humble servant
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

I'm done for, now
I'm nearing the end
Pray for my sins
Pray for my sins

The curtains are closing
Time to turn in
Play the violin
Play the violin

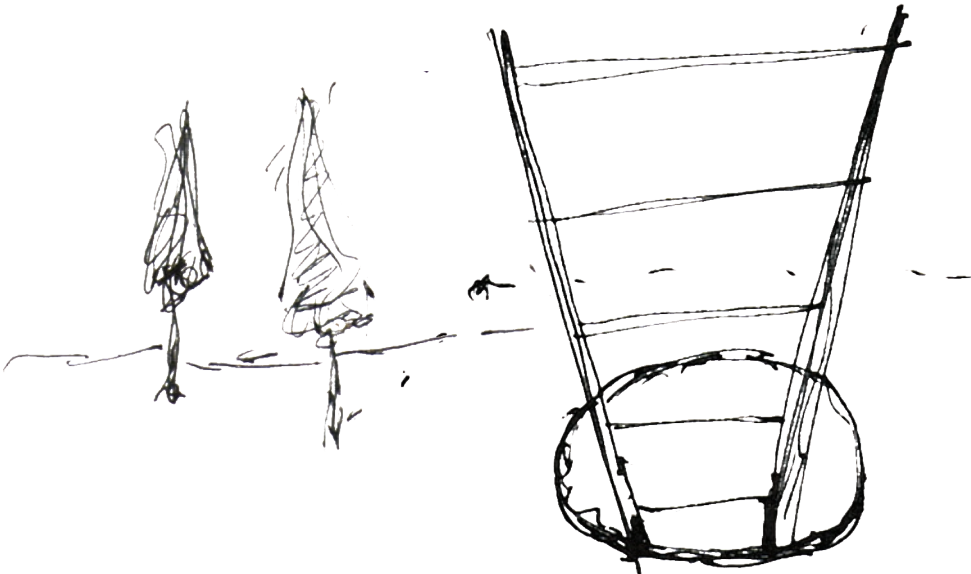


AUTUMN LEAVES

Austin L Colter

Leaves. fall. so. slow.
to the earth below
colors of satisfaction
soon engulfed in snow

Tis not the end,
for tomorrow a new day begins
but for the day,
Leaves. Fall. So. Slow.



THE WATER YOU NEED

Haley Slaughter

I stare at the page rereading the line:

"I'm not the whiskey you want I'm the water you need."

But that's not me.

I'm not the water you need.

I'm the whiskey you want --

I'm the intoxication you desire

because

you hate your own laugh, except

after consuming me, I'm not the refreshing taste

flowing down your throat.

I'm the burning

that you know you're gonna regret

when you wake up.

I'm not the suburb town you pass

through

to get to the big city, I am

the

big

city.

I'm the thousands of people outside that you get lost in,

I'm the tattoo parlor you end up in

after way too many drinks,

I'm the neon lights you could stare at for hours.

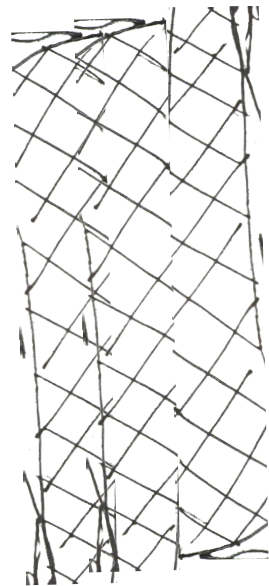
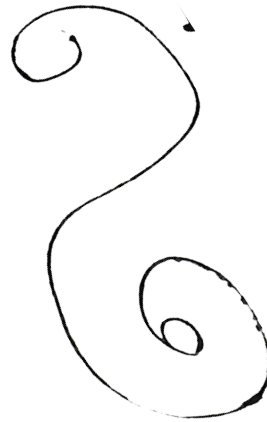
I'm not the fireplace that crackles,

I am the police sirens

you're running from.

I'm not your home.

I'm the hotel room you don't tell your wife about.

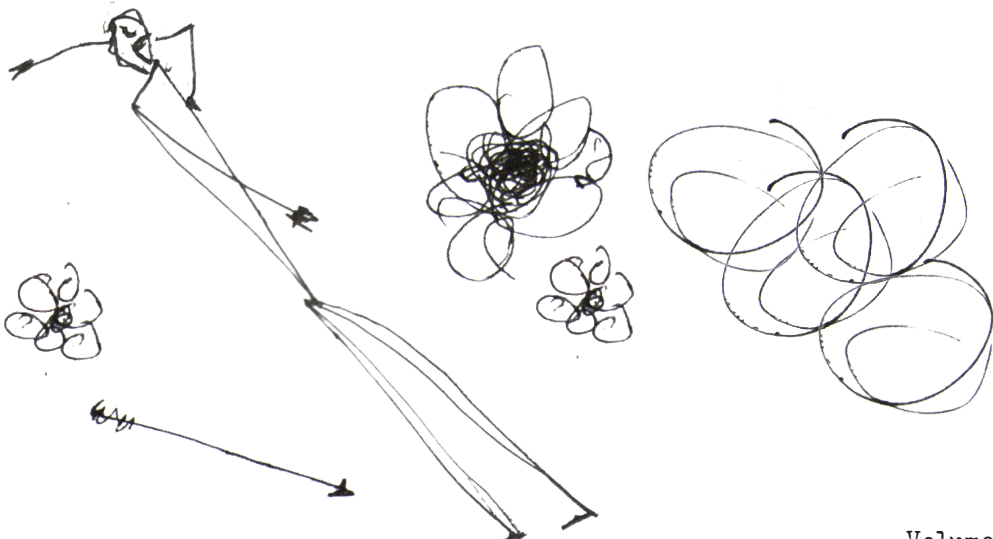


BLACK BIRDS

Andrew C Phelps



The black birds fly and the buzzards cry
And the stars cannot sustain the twinkle in your eye.
The vultures scream. This must be a dream
The sky is white and cold like vanilla ice cream.
You put on your snakeskin boots they hoist you up like a para-
chute
The balloons are scared beware the fair
maiden whomst lives and loves and bleeds for you. Beware
The magician for he is the vessel to which your debt is due.



Confluence

THE WAITING ROOM

Mark J Sanders

Two men walked into a room through doors on the opposite walls. When the doors closed, they faded and blended into the light blue paint on the walls like a special effect from an old movie. Two chairs, both upholstered in light tan suede, sat against the back wall. Another door was placed on the wall opposite the chairs. It was shut, and there was no knob or handle to be seen.

The two men sat down, neither quite ready to speak. The room was quiet and calm, the blue paint a proper match for the cool temperature, though no ventilation was apparent. The carpet matched the color of the chairs. The man on the right took off his shoes and socks and rubbed his feet into the carpet with a satisfied sigh.

"This is, without a doubt, the most luxurious carpet I've ever felt," the barefoot man said.

"At least your feet don't stink," the other man said.

"Yes," the first said. "That would definitely put our meeting on the wrong foot." He waited for a laugh or a smile that never came. "I'm Bill," he said, extending his hand.

"Richard," said the other, shaking the offered hand briefly. "What do you think this is?"

"I suppose it's a waiting room," Bill said. "Unless this is all there is...just you and me, forever."

"Only if Sartre was right," Richard said.

"We've only just met," Bill said. "What did you do?"

"I owned newspapers and radio stations," Richard said, "located in more than 200 cities across America."

"Would one of them have been Winona, Minnesota?"

"I had talk radio on both AM and FM there."

"Never listened to that," Bill said. "I usually listened to K-FAN if the Twins or the Vikings were playing, but talk radio was always so angry. Life's too short to be angry all the time."

"It was short," Richard said. "You got that right. What did you do?"

"English teacher," Bill said. "High school, mostly juniors and seniors. Creative writing and literature classes for more than forty years."

"That's not possible," Richard said. "You couldn't be a day over 25."

There was no glass, no mirrors, no reflective surface anywhere in the room, so Bill could only look over his body. His hands were smooth and free of any spots or blemishes. He pulled up his shirt to reveal a smooth, flat stomach. He ran his hand over his sternum and laughed.

"What is it?" Richard asked.

"No scar," Bill said. "I had three heart surgeries in the last five years, but there's no scar."

"What do I look like?" Richard asked.

Bill took a look and paused as he thought about how to put what he saw. "You look like you're in your late fifties or early sixties..."

"I was 61," Richard said.

"But there's a bad scar over your left eye," Bill said.

"That's where he shot me," Richard said. "He came into the board room with the gun. I suppose that's how he got past security. He was talking slowly and calmly about the paper where he used to work, the one I closed down, liquidated his pension, canceled his health insurance. Something about his wife being sick, can't afford the medication, blah, blah, blah. I didn't have a chance to say a word before he pulled the trigger."

"Did you feel anything?"

"The next thing that happened was my walking into this room," Richard said. "What about you?"

"The last I remember, I was home," Bill said. "I had been on hospice for about three weeks. The kids and grandkids had all come to see me, but in the end, it was just Annie with me."

"Your wife?"

"Yes."

"How long were you married?"

"Fifty-eight years," Bill said. "We met in college and married right after she graduated. What about you?"

"Three marriages, all divorces," Richard said. "Women seem to expect a husband who's home once in a while, but I was always too busy for that."

"Any kids?"

"Just one daughter from the first marriage. When she remarried, the new guy adopted the girl. One less responsibility for me."

"Success always comes at a price, I suppose," Bill said.

"Were you a religious man?" Richard asked.

"Not really," Bill said. "I was more of a dabbler. Annie and I attended the Lutheran church for all the big holidays, but we had friends who were Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and we took turns inviting each other over for our respective holidays."

"The Buddhists have holidays?" Richard asked.

"Not really, but the one I knew was from Thailand, and she could cook better than any restaurant chef, so we always found an excuse for a gathering. What about you?"

"I was part of a megachurch in Texas," Richard said. "More for the political and business connections than any of the religious stuff, to be honest. As long as I signed the checks for the offerings, they seemed to be happy with whatever else I wanted to do."

"Do you suppose we'll get to meet God here?" Bill asked.

"I never really believed in God," Richard said. "Looks like I might have been wrong about it, huh?"

The door opened, and a short man with dark skin, a dark beard, and long black hair walked in. He wore ripped blue jeans and a purple flannel top with an old pair of sandals on his feet.

"Hello, Bill," he said. "Hello, Richard. My name is Josh. I'm here to escort you to your homes."

"Our homes?" they said in tandem.

"Yes," Josh said. "We've placed you as neighbors in one of our new communities. Follow me...it's not far from here."

They followed Josh through the door and found themselves on a wide street free of any motor traffic. Shops, restaurants, and cafes lined each side of the street, and people flowed freely from one side to the other. Every hue and tone of skin, every color and style of hair and clothing, and a wide variety of languages could be seen and heard among all the people. Almost everyone seemed quite happy, although once in a while, a frowning visage, head downcast, sat and sulked at an outdoor table.

"What is this place?" Bill asked.

"We call it Bethel," Josh said. "It means, 'The House of God.'"

"So there is a God?" Richard asked.

"When will we meet him?" Bill asked.

"Look around," Josh said. "He's everywhere you look."

Josh led them to a pair of small houses. They were painted blue and yellow. Josh directed Richard left, to the yellow house, while Bill was invited to enter the blue one on the right.

"I'll give you a few days to settle in," Josh said.

"When you're ready, pick up the phone. I'll come around and explain what comes next."

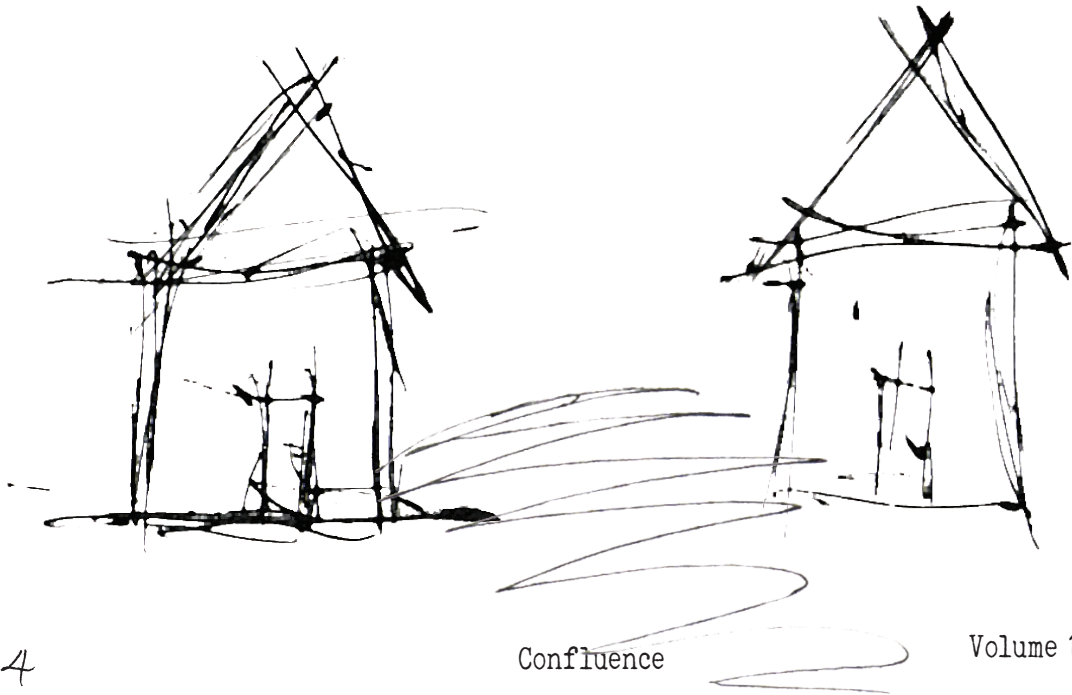
The two men nodded, and Josh walked back toward the center of town.

"Well, I guess I'll see you soon, neighbor," Bill said.

Richard nodded and headed inside.

Bill stepped onto his front porch and looked around the neighborhood. "I'm in heaven," he said.

Richard shut his front door and pulled the curtains shut. "I'm in hell," he thought.



HENRY'S ROOM

Trent N Taylor

"Honey, where did you put my purse?" Sarah asks.

"I'm pretty sure I left it in the living room!" Tom yells back from the kitchen. As Sarah leaves the bedroom, their cat Henry jumps at her feet.

"Oh my God, Henry you scared me! What do you need fluffy boy?"

MEW screams Henry.

"Okay, you have to speak English if you want me to understand you child," Sarah says while laughing at herself.

"Did you find your purse?" Tom asks from the kitchen.

"No, Henry is trying to tell me something again!" Sarah answers.

"Hold on, I'll see if he needs to be fed, he's a fat cat," Tom yells back. As Tom checks the food bowl Henry bolts ahead of him. "So, you are hungry again!" Tom proceeds to follow Henry down the hall to the food bowl.

"Hon, my purse isn't in the living room," Sarah says as she walks up to Tom.

"I guess Henry can wait a little longer, I'll help you look for it," Tom replies. As Sarah and Tom begin their hunt for the purse Henry runs out of the room, trailing behind them with a loud meow.

"Wait just a little longer, child. I need my purse to go shopping," Sarah quietly says as she crouches down to pet him. "Jeez, at this rate I might as well go shopping tomorrow," Sarah says dejectedly.

"If you want to take a break, I'll continue looking for it. Any idea of somewhere we haven't searched?" Tom asks.

"The only place I can think of is Henry's room, but I don't know why my purse would be in there," Sarah answers. As Tom makes his way down the hall Henry once again runs ahead of him meowing loudly. "You never give up do you?" Tom asks Henry.

MEOOW Henry exclaimed. As Tom opens the door, he sees Sarah's purse on the floor with the contents scattered all over.

"Henry! Did you steal Mom's purse?" Before Tom could get a reply, he hears another noise. He walks over to the purse and notices a small gray tail poking out. "I really hope this isn't a "present" from Henry," Tom says worriedly. He slowly tries to grab the tail and it disappears further into the purse. Tom swallows and opens the purse wide. Inside is a small gray and white kitten, whose eyes aren't even open.

"Oh my God. There's no way." He turns around to look at Henry who is now inside his empty cardboard box where he usually sleeps. Tom peers inside to see a nest of fluff and fur. "SARAH! COME IN HERE. OH MY GOD!" Tom yells excitedly from the bedroom.

Sarah runs into the room, "My purse! Why has it been spilled out?" As she asks this the small gray kitten slowly crawls out of the purse.

"Oh my God," Sarah gasps. "Henry is actually a girl!"

THE DEAD MAIDEN'S SONG

Johnny D Boham



1.

On the waters
Of old Acheron
My soul belongs
To the care of Charon

On the waters
Of old Acheron
I met the dawn
With a beautiful song

On the waters
Of old Acheron
My heart is strong
All fear is gone

On the waters
Of old Acheron
Closer, I'm drawn
White as a swan

Paddles—the ferryman

2.

On the shores
Of old Acheron
We land upon
Confluence

A beach of bronze

On the shores
Of old Acheron
The trees are long
And ripe with frond

On the shores
Of old Acheron
I heard my song
From a throng of fauns

On the shores
Of old Acheron
I danced thereon
Light as a fawn

Departs—the ferryman

3.

On the isle
Of old Acheron
The people are fond
In the house of Solon

On the isle
Of old Acheron
I live among
A pantheon

On the isle
Of old Acheron

Confluence

The sun has yawned
The light has waned

On the isle
Of old Acheron
I looked beyond
Across the pond

Waves—the ferryman



FEATS IN VALLEYS

Kianna Johnson

I use to worry about my likes and dislikes to others,
But there's an element that sets me free.
There are parts of me I've tried to cover,
Like depths beneath a sea.
And when those deep sea creatures rumbled up,
I grabbed up by the neck;
And wouldn't let way to breathe.
However once,
That creature broke the surface,
grabbed a pocket of air,
And set salvation a loose in me.
There's a sight to see in the valley,
Where on mountain tops you'll never see.
The world can take from you everything,
But when a lion's hungry,
It eats.
There's a sight to see in the storm,
But you've got to drown first.
When you're deprived of oxygen,
You really see.
I use to worry about the likes and dislikes of others,
But I drowned and it set me free.
'Cause once I laid loose of my inhibitions,
I let my hands go and set the creature free.
I seen the smaller things and people who really mattered,
Those of which always loved me for me.
My ignorance could only be rinsed by laughter,
For chains of society I had overseen.
I told you once I've seen feats in valleys,
The likes of which you've never dreamed.
There are feats in valleys,
That on mountain tops you'll never see.



ESCAPE

Savannah D Nimmo

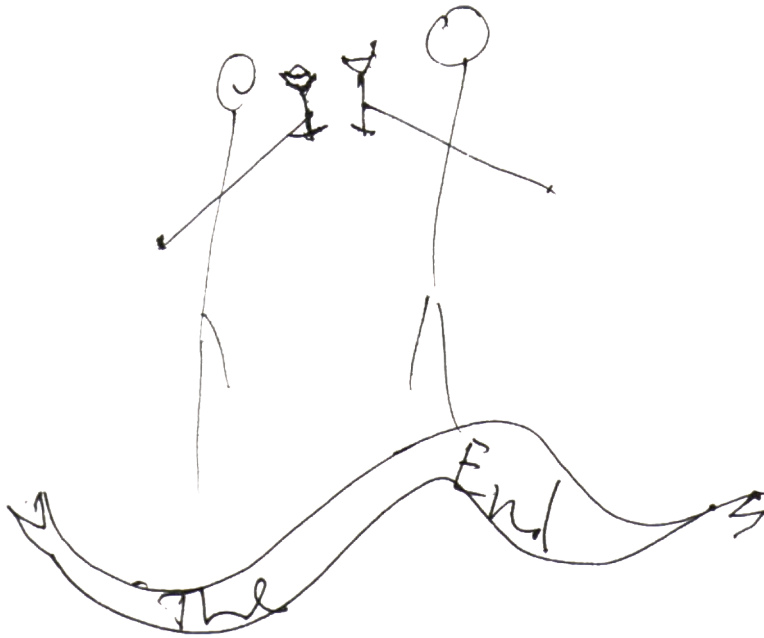
The problem was not them being down-stairs, it was the fact that I know her. And now I know that she has a kid. He keeps asking me why he can't see, and I cannot tell him it's because they damaged his eyes. To what extent I don't know. Poor thing wouldn't understand because upstairs they don't condone those types of compliance measures and the anesthesia hasn't worn off yet. He has yet to experience the pain of the procedure.

Penelope was not far behind me while running down the oversized sewers. These sewers were left over from when the continent was called "USA." Large concrete blocks covered in overgrown moss, lined the walls, ceilings, and floors. After hundreds of years the walkways are still somewhat intact on either side of the tunnels and provide the perfect entrance and exit from downstairs. We had come to the end of the tunnel where a metal rung ladder was cemented into the wall. It would take them up to a vintage man-hole cover that is heavier than she could lift. The piece of metal used to be heavier than I could lift, but the program requires strength. The manhole would open into an abandoned property located over 100 miles away from the city. The immediate area is only a few acres, but full of greenery to hide the cabin we used.

The forest was large enough that if you were on foot, getting out would take a few days. Our spot is identifiable to myself and Willow because that's where I found her. Hidden behind hundreds of trees and enshrouded in vines, bushes and seasonal bird nests the cabin is cloaked as a part of nature. The best part is the manhole it was built over. Whoever built it, put three feet of standing room height over the manhole and the rest of the cabin is underground. Hopefully it hadn't rained, because exiting the cabin requires crawling through a six-foot-long tunnel. I hadn't mentioned that. The boy wasn't as heavy as he looked, but I had to shift his weight on my back for this climb up the ladder.

I finally came to a stop by the metal ladder and looked two feet behind me at Pen. I could tell Penelope was exhausted, she was wheezing holding her chest as she reached for Joshua.

"I can carry him up the ladder for you," I said. "If you're caught by the patrol, what happened to your friend will happen to you. If I'm caught carrying the child, I can fix it. Hold the boy, I'll climb up and move the cover. After I come down, you climb the ladder, crawl through to the main part of the cabin as quickly as possible and we will follow you."



EXPRESS YOURSELF !

Write your quarantine story here...

EXPRESS YOURSELF !

Write your quarantine poem here...

EXPRESS YOURSELF !

Draw your quarantine memory here...

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COLOPHON

Confluence 2020 was compiled by the faculty, staff and students of Three Rivers College, Poplar Bluff, Missouri

The cover stock is

The Text stock is

The cover art: Confluence original illustration by David Fielding, 2020

The inside pages and the cover were design by David Fielding, Poplar Bluff Missouri

The headlines are set in Sketchy 30pt Typeface

The text is set in Elegant Typewriter, Sketchy, Franklin Gothic Book, Bradly Hand ITC, Brush Script 5td, Honey, Buxton Sketch, Agency FB, and Corbel 12pt - 24pt Typeface

Author's names are set in Franklin Gothic Book, Bradly Hand ITC, Brush Script 5td, Honey, Buxton Sketch, Agency FB, and Corbel 18pt Typeface

Design Software used: Adobe CS6 InDesign, Adobe CS6 PhotoShop

The account was serviced by Christy Pierce

Confluence is funded annually by Three Rivers College