

Ergo

FALL 2019

PEACE
CAME
UPON
ME

IT LEAVES ME WEAK

6
50
62
178
180
182
184
185
186
188
190
191
192
194
CO 197
198
204

James Haezel

Ergo

FALL 2019

President/Editor: Nicholas Wingate

Senator: Rebekah Miller

Photo/Art Editor: Donata Koegel

Editorial Board: Donata Koegel, Nicholas Wingate,
Rebekah Miller, Kuryl Newark, Danielle McIntyre,
Bryce Warren, Mikayla Raichel, Kimberly Wick,
Clayton Winspear, Kathleen Norton

Treasurer: Kuryl Newark/Kathleen Norton

Faculty Advisers:

Dr. Aniko Constantine, Janice Stafford, Stephen Fonash

Staff Typist: Debra Tomm

With appreciation to those whose help and expertise
make each issue possible:

Print & Mail Services Team

Marketing Communications: Molly Andrus

ERGO is the literary and artistic publication of Alfred State. It is funded by the Student Senate and is freely distributed each semester. Students, faculty, and staff of Alfred State are invited to submit their original works of art, poetry, and prose by e-mailing their submissions to Ergo@alfredstate.edu.

Our thanks to everyone who participated this semester and keep the submissions coming!

Sincerely, The Ergo staff



~Rebekah Miller

The ancient, just barely erectus, scratching glycs on its cave floor. Picture this: the architect of civilization scoring in the dirt a plan for generations, ignorant as a nit. Purging itself of visions...unaware, driven, consumed and fearful. Grunting and gesticulating, inarticulate... loathsome yet, surely, dear?

A prehistoric darling. Cherished. A perfectly designed conundrum. Testing its own ingenuity and marking its own future on earth. Sketching...a composition of imprudence, superstitious radiance. Lost then found...Inevitable necessary essence.

Trudi Hill



Lulu

I am in a dream made of oranges and sunshine; I barely remember the snowflake's design

She gave a reason for changes and moonlight; and clearly September was her time to shine

Grasshopper's song carries her to me on boats over oceans that didn't exist

fly-shooing memories are what she sings to me as bobbins stay stuck in their permanent twist.

Secrets are held in the waves that she floats in; where mermaids once lived, but are gone

We never speak, only wave and find peace in knowing our friendship was strong

I am in a dream made of gold, and loud laughter; of slim cigarettes burning long

Of TV parades with old and proud actors; of lack of regret, and flip flops

The treadmill is silent, the birds flew to the beach, the smoke hanging still is now stale

Dream standstill is quiet, you're just out of reach. But for your presence, I'm thankful

The palm tree casts shadows on still, dancing ladies; I wake knowing my dream was real

I am swimming past windows and contemplating my wonderful Grandma, Lucille.

Cassandra Robbers

What I Know

Under the weight of pain, wings begin to grow.
Time moves ever onward, so the mind must be progressive.

Alone upon the hills, where it's always cold
I reflect on yesterday's version of myself.

Taunted by my old faces, it's hard to separate the past.

The wind speaks in tones that are more natural than my being,

But even so, I scream in my foreign tongue
And curse the weight of what I know.

I'm starting to find comfort in my solitude though.

The only love I feel is the love within me.
As strong as my heartbeat I hold out for warmth
But realize that my love is unreciprocated.

I seek true altruism in a loveless reality,
I pursue true love in a lustful society,
And in my failed pursuit I become my own lover,
Embracing the only love I know.

I hold my head high,
And indulge the needs of my body.
With each step forward,
I expand the capacity of my mind, rejecting reality.

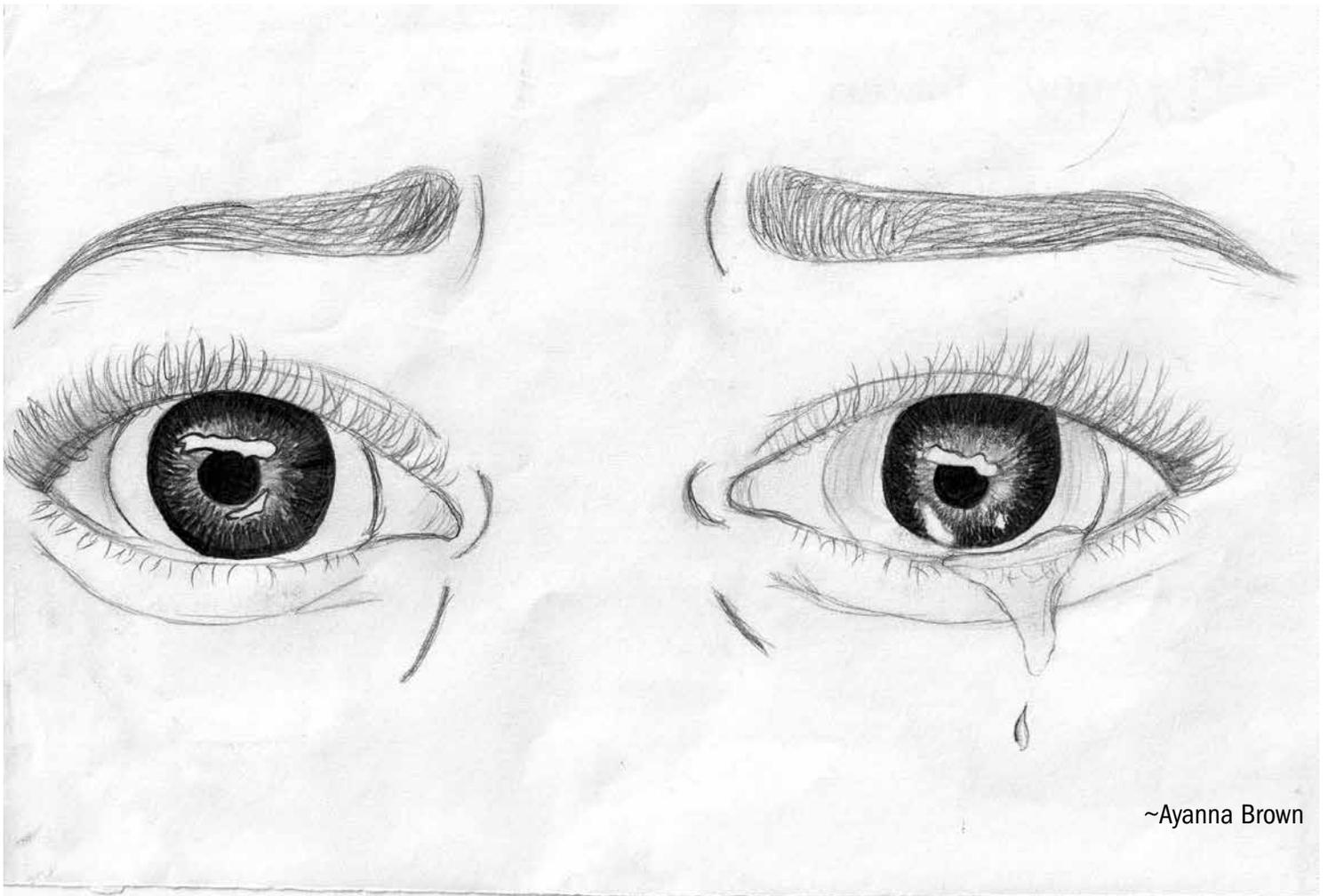
With ignorance erased, I will know nothing foreign.

As I love myself, I will reach down deeply
And seek that feeling within all things
Including the past that stole my innocence.

May the feeling of warmth find me naturally
Soaring in the sky, acquaint me with the wind.
I no longer have to scream
There is a fire roaring within me.

Now I see
Now I've seen.
I patiently lie in wait,
Eager for what tomorrow brings.

Anonymous



A Letter to Her about Our Roller Coaster

Like a roller coaster, we spiralled into a different reality. I looked deep into your green eyes and instantly confided my truths to you. As natural as our overlapping hands, I fell in a way that was surreal.

When there was distance, you'd part it with reassurance, and never did I suspect the distance to take hold of us again, but even as it did, I held onto my feelings true. Like the water, so blue and lukewarm, I began anew. In my own right, I trailed the hills, and upon the mountains, I bequeathed to you my symbolic state of mind and declared my love for you.

Under the weights, we've grown weary; we both seek to find ourselves in the dust that's yet to clear. I sing songs to send my emotions on a euphoric ride that ultimately holds the thought of you. It's the thought of you that keeps me awake throughout the late nights, forcing me to look to the sky above. In the dark sky's beauty, I imagine my place among the stars, and wonder if you have a place beside mine.

Time continues to flow. Some days I'm up and others I'm low, but my mind continues to grow. Watching the spring rise glow, it's hard not to feel a sense of serenity. Each day I work to tackle more miles, and my physical state receives the world's blessing. Your journey continues, and all the while I stay in awe of you.

My journey takes me south, to earn the blessing of my home. I do not know what the future holds, but you taught me to embrace the unknown, and so I will tread on the water of the moment, hoping that one day it may take me back to you. Even if we are not to cross paths again, I hope that the roller coaster of fate allows me to learn about the person you'll become. Find yourself, find your way, and I too will go in search of my own path.

Zacchaeus Robinson

WASTED

I have spent my life wasting time: wasting spare time, others' time, and most of all, my own time. I have cared so superficially for others only to blatantly ignore the robbing of my effort so precious. I've spent the last 15 months convincing myself that I am capable of accepting any less than my ideal, postponing the rejection which demands to spring forth from my care until today. I truly entertained the notion that I could protect an object of my fixation from external dangers by ruling her life; how not? I was seldom resisted anywhere along the way, assured I was manifesting common interests. Assault has a funny way of throwing people off. The last two days have made me realize how futile my efforts had been for both parties. Huh. I'm proud of her; though it was quite a surprise to me, she found great strength through her trial – so much I suppose as had been dormant but waited patiently to cut me out. Her experiment is finished.

The Science Experiment (Matthew Sanders)



~Anonymous

Lucy Fur

**I wanted this cat.
So furry and small.
Just a tiny creature
Curled into a ball.**

**But deep down inside her,
What I couldn't see,
Was she held onto demons,
Just like me.**

**She gracefully scampers,
To hide in the hall,
To spring out and grab me,
To entice me to fall.**

**That bath mat she's under,
Trying to be cute,
Is merely a cavern
From out which she shoots.**

**Even when sitting,
And purring so nice,
She digs in her claws
And squeezes like a vice.**

**As I thought what to name her,
It's exceedingly clear,
It must match her perfectly,
Match the dread and the fear.**

**Will my toes be alright
As I sleep through the night?
Or will her claws find my feet
And fill me with fright?**

**Will she bite my achilles,
As I'm trying to eat?
Or will she mask her terror
By meowing so sweet?**

**Oh, little kitty,
I now have a thought,
Of a name that is perfect
For the terror you've brought.**

**Lucy Fur - such a name!
Yes, that is your crown.
The name that is fitting
As you sneak all around.**

**Looking for weakness,
Or an exposed toe.
To sink in your teeth
And claws to the bone.**

**But here you sit quietly,
Trying to help me write,
Amused by the scratching
And the reflection of light.**

**Just for a moment,
I think - oh...you're so sweet!
Then I feel your tiny claws,
Sink deeply into me!**

Mary Hribar

I've tried to write happy,
Something with joy,
But nothing seeps out,
Just things that annoy.

Things that have visited,
While I was asleep.
Left me breathless and shaking
It's my soul that it keeps.

My monsters are different,
From everyone else.
I can't seem to escape them,
Even by myself.

They live deep inside me,
In places I dread.
They ultimately trap me,
Inside of my head.

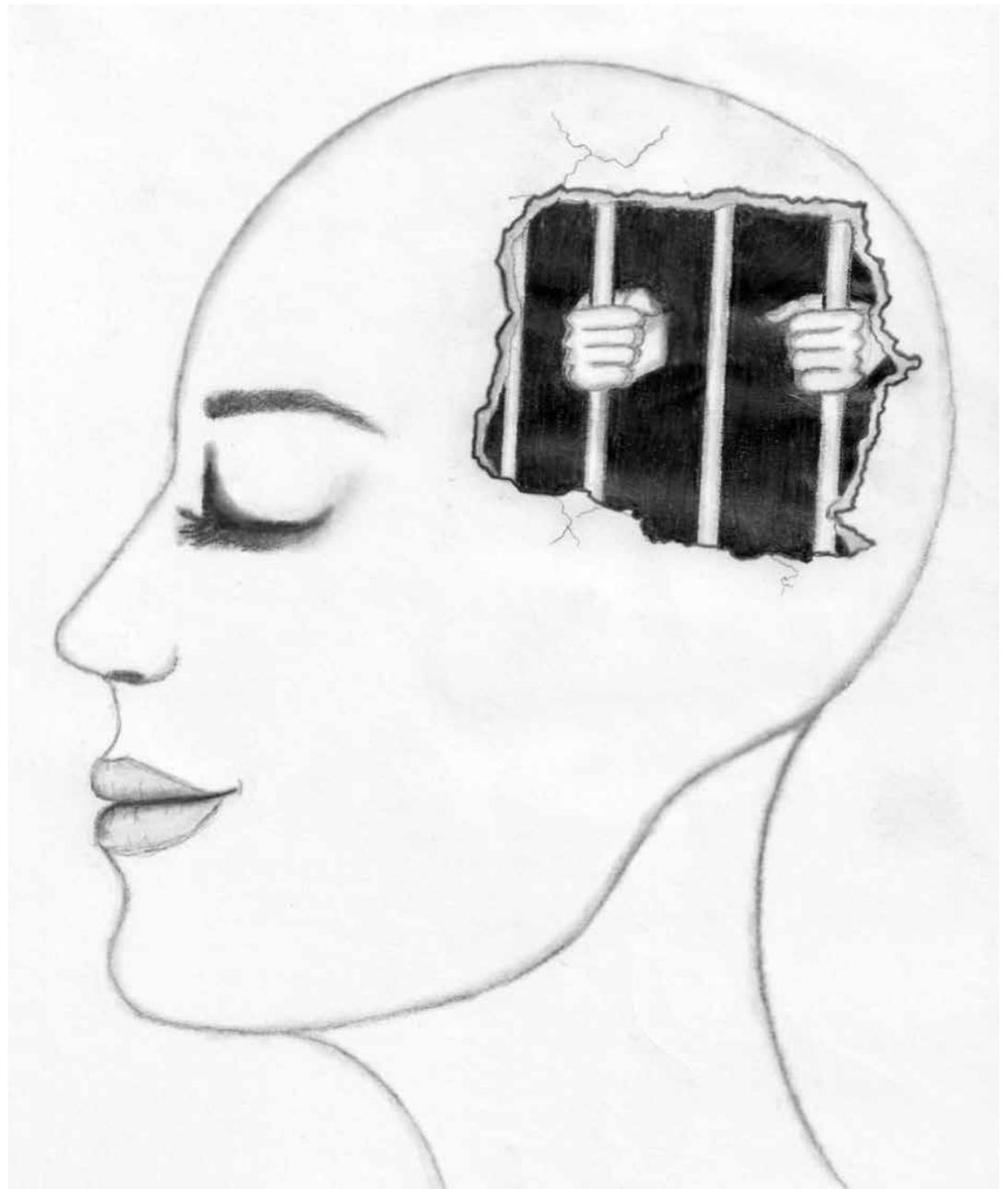
I can't seem to lose them,
They stick to me tight.
They darken my daytime,
And shine brightly at night.

The curl he kept proudly,
At the top of his head.
The smell of Old Spice,
Makes me nauseous with dread.

I can't just let go.
I've tried and I've failed.
So throughout the years,
I've constructed a veil.

I smile so brightly,
I'm always "ok,"
No one sees what's inside,
It would frighten them away.

Mary Hribar



~Rebekah Miller, *True Prison*

SINGING

Choral singing affords me a comfortable level of non-accountability; though studious, I would never grow as the main feature. My success came from the synergistic (or sometimes parasitic) bond I would forge with the strongest – rather than truest – singer I could find in my section. It was a transaction; for confidence, I would trade my delicate, chameleonic timbre, matching vowels and placement, typically. Intonation has been difficult for me only in a choral context; I found early on that I could not trust others to keep true to pitch – in fact, this seemed an ability few well possessed – and I would find myself struggling instead with the task of on-the-fly modulation (not always matching all four parts, yikes!).

Matthew Sanders

STILLNESS

Pt 1

When she fell silent, everything else fell silent also. The bright blue skies spoiled with dark grim gray, as my heart drained of scarlet. Every step taken towards her lifeless body, drew the clouds further in, overlapping, never drawing thin, until the weight of grief was unbearable. No stream was left dry, no street was left untouched by the tears. Endlessly falling from the clouds, feeling as natural as the Earth's tireless motion.

Pt 2

As her body is lowered into the ground, those under her name express their pain. My great grandmother, who lived a life unlike any other had fallen victim to dreaded mortality, and the reality is just beginning to assert itself.

Pt 3

A moment of silence, a break in the endless pitter-patter of the falling rain that was shaping the world I'd grown accustomed to. I wished to hear her speak in the silence, and so I listened. The stillness of the moment persisted, along with a naive sense of hopefulness, to just hear something, anything. Air, silence, and our lives. Nothing seem to matter. For in the dirt, nothing is significant.

Pt 4

Thoughts begin to take aim. Silence, solitude. Everlasting solitude. Her voice is quiet, yet I wait and listen. Looking up to the clouded skies, the light brown colors of my eyes were pure black. Black as coal, as black as the lining of my unnurtured soul. But the silence started to fade, and the rain began to fall. The tears began to fall. She cannot be heard from the heavens. The voice is truly silenced by death.

Pt 5

Rain turned to snow and ice in the many months that followed. The ice fell hard like fallen soldiers while the snow fell gracefully as only she could. The world I knew was blanketed in white. Frost gripped my face; snow kept

me from touching true ground. I walked amongst frozen forest, in the hopes of a warmer tomorrow. For beauty is nonexistent in the absence of sunlight or in the absence of her smiling face. The darkened sky stands to torment old self-inflicted wounds. Scars refuse to heal til the bearer does.

Pt 6

Weather with no pattern. The ice would soften to snow, then the snow would harden to ice. Back and forth. A constant reminder of the lessons she taught me. The nature of what we want, what we expect, and what we know is irrelevant to our power over the end. The end result is always cold. Stone cold, even in fire. It ends embedded in the soil, or in embers amidst the wind. Whether in the soil, or in the wind, the meaning is the same.

Pt 7

The fire I lit sent sparks into the sky. My eyes followed the smoke. She's buried below, but ironically I continue to take to the stars. Maybe, a new one had found its place. Maybe, I'd even envision her face within the heart of the constellations. But even the thoughts stand to create torment. Death is cruel. It comes mostly without warning and leaves a trail of sorrow. Our minds are unable to cope with the imminent feeling of losing someone, yet we are all fated to lose ourselves to the dust.

Pt 8

The sun shines on my war-torn face and illuminates my beaten skin. A cloudless blue sky welcomes the life around me. People can heal people. The faces of the lives I witness, the stories told by each fold and every smile dissolve my endless solitude. My grandmother was full of life. Even in her years of suffering, she loved people. In my grief, her life went uncelebrated. Her love, pushed aside. She'd want me to continue on as she did, allow grief to fuel compassion. Her legacy did not end in the dirt. Her legacy lives on within me, and I will follow the love.

Zacchaeus Robinson

“Dear, the girl she once was before,

Before she lost herself in so many different ways

Before she got her heart broken and started doing dangerous things

She’s contemplating where she went wrong

All she ever wanted was a happy life in a world full of hatred

But being happy mixes with the complications of responsibilities

She thought she could prevent this traumatic event, but it happened

And it’s messing her up mentally, physically, and emotionally

She was raped

She was always warned that it might occur in her surroundings

But she wasn’t fully aware of the company she kept around her

Now she’s blaming herself for the complications of what’s happening to her

“How could I let someone get that close to me?”

Some boys are full of lies and there’s nothing you can do to control that

Now she doesn’t want anyone to get next to her, no one to touch her, or even speak to her

But baby girl, you have to understand it’s not your fault

You can’t keep blaming yourself for other people’s actions

I’m sorry this traumatizing event occurred in you

But you can talk to me, trust me everything will get better

And for the boy who raped this girl whose intention wasn’t even to love her, I hope you seek help. How could you do this to her?

She said no three times and all you had to do was stop but no you wanted to “please her” how dare you take advantage of her?

She cries everyday on top of everything else that’s getting thrown at her

I blame you for making her feel as if she doesn’t deserve any better

Behind that hidden smile I can see that she is broken

How could someone with so much love get treated this way?

But baby girl, I’m warning you that everything will be ok

Baby girl, just pray and you will see better days.”

Breanna Harris





~Ashley Herbert

Often, I find myself thinking about some of the deeper questions in life. This time, I found myself thinking about love. How does love work? Why do we love? I can remember one time in particular very vividly. It occurred when I was an eighth grader madly in love with a beautiful young girl I had been lucky enough to know since kindergarten. We had developed a great friendship from the beginning, but when our school closed after we finished second grade, we fell out of contact for two years.

Later -- completely by chance -- when we found ourselves in the same school again, we remained close friends, but it developed into more. We were so infatuated with each other. At the age of thirteen, she had a change of heart all of a sudden, choosing someone else perhaps because they were taller than I and funnier than I. Worst of all, I was close friends with that boy at the time. I was absolutely devastated. I cried the whole rest of the day that I found out about it, and I refused to tell anybody why. I was broken, incapable of speech. After that, something inside me broke, never to heal completely. I hope that you, the reader, never has to experience this kind of feeling. That girl and I practically refused to recognize each other's existence for about a month, not even making eye contact in the hallway. After the rest of that year, we eventually grew back into being good friends, but nothing will ever be the same between us.

It amazes me sometimes how people can seem so insensitive but are they really just covering up how they really feel? Is it just part of a disguise, a mask that hides their true emotions and acts as a way for them to run away from love? Why is love scary? Why can love be so tender and caring, rewarding even, only for it to be a knife that slices you through the heart, taking the rest of you with it in that single blow? Love is a peculiar thing and it deserves to be handled with delicate care as the deadliest thing hides behind a most intriguing and soft mask of balanced fragility and tenderness.

L.E.O.



~Rebekah Miller

Brightly colored dark eyes
roll their vision to the
ground
for an uncountable time.

Feet gather together,
lift the rest,
and move forward.

A hand of rough skin grabs
at the bag hung
on the back of a plastic
chair.

Scarred fingers with
short, plain and bitten nails
enclose the strap,
lift it to a hunched shoulder.

It digs there,
material heavy
with books of known non-
sense:
doubling the weight
of a thousand cluttered
thoughts
dragging down
on drawn-in shoulders.

Half untied sneakers lead
forward,
attention aimed strictly
down
as words of relief
and twisted comfort
whisper musical tones
to ringing deaf ears.

Imaginary eyes on clothed –
but oh so bare – skin,
silent whispered words of
nonexistent hate
following close behind.

A few more steps
and the hood stitched
to an old, beloved sweatshirt
gets drawn up
and over
a ducked head.

Frizzy, simple hair
explodes around the side
of a blank face, each strand falling
to its long-accustomed role
of shielding its owner from the
world.

Escape is a ringing,
echoing thought that booms
between thudding ears;
hurrying to an unimportant destina-
tion
on a time contrived by madness.

A lip is drawn in,
caught between white teeth,
dug just so into.

Empty hands bury
their unsightly selves
deep into pockets
as distance is traveled
along deeply memorized paths.

Each step is quick
and thoroughly planned –
practiced, meticulous breathing
failing, restarting –
with a winding path
adjusted to accommodate
for paths of others, sighted and
judged
by the shoes they walk
so confidently in.

Keys are passed between
twitching fingers,
ready and planned use
practiced in a flooded mind
a few dozen times beyond necessity.

Metal slides free
from the sweaty skin grasping it
to twist in a lock.

Shelter is sought
as heavy doors close;
relief comes slowly
and in low doses.

Vision finally lifts
from the ground
in front of those untied sneakers
where it had been hiding.

It meets with familiar,
brightly colored dark eyes
in a reflective, metallic surface.

Black spreads as eyes shut,
seeking final flight
and hiding in the depths
of a dark room.

Such is the life of a soul
entrapped
and damned
by its own mind.

Mickayla Raichel



~Ashley Herbert

Sometimes I wonder why we think what we think. How did this process of thought develop? Yes, we do take after those we are around and hold close, but where did their thought come from? How have our minds developed this way? Where did all of these different ideas come from? Sometimes I wonder, why can't we all set our thoughts aside for a little while and enjoy the present moment, even if it be just for an hour. A minute. A second. Sometimes I wonder.



~Karl Platt

L.E.O.



~Susan Perry

Is There Life In The Walls?

I open my eyes and heartbreak takes over as reality sets in. I look around and try to remind myself that everything is real. I can feel everything, and everything has an effect on me. Is there life in these walls? Prominent history, dominant views on how to ease the poverty that drives the heart to feel such emotional strife? The knowledge that the world can turn against us is the nail in the coffin.

But I've come to the realization that the world is not at fault. The world is innocent. It is the world's creations that brought us forth, and we are different. It is our differences that have claimed millions of lives and caused the generational trauma; the whips are in my blood, ingrained in my DNA. Within my body is the blood of slaves, broken, chained, worked, deprived, and drained.

It is such a shame that I can see separate worlds on the same street. My brothers and sisters divided by wealth, which has been systematically engineered to remain in the hands of the whites. I do not speak to offend, but I do speak the truth. It is the truth that we are still fighting.

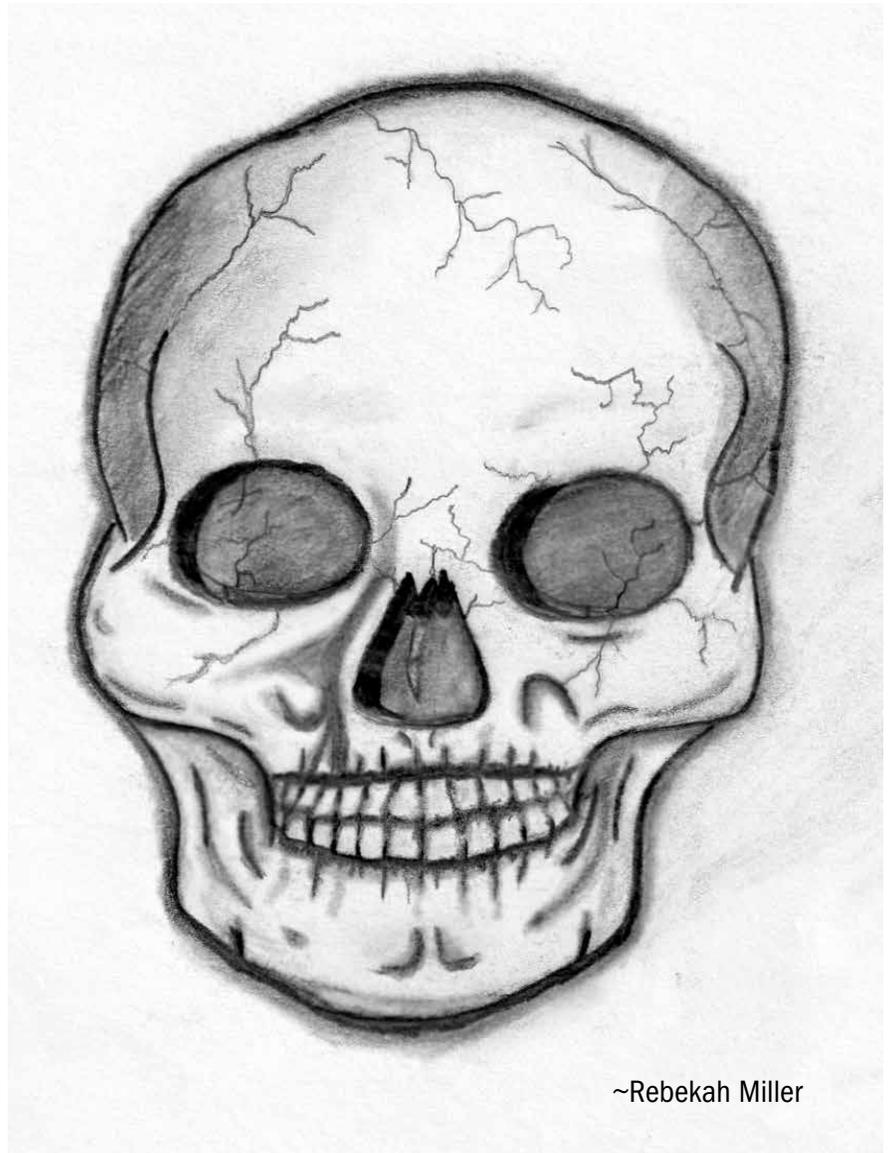
Whites, my white brothers and sisters, I go to a festival with my family in upstate New York, and many of you looked down on me. Blacks, my black brothers and sisters, I go downtown and see so much suffering. Is there life in the walls? In these walls around me I can hear people pounding, pleading for an escape. On their faces I know and reflect the pain.

Words aren't enough. Promises aren't enough. People say every day that things will change, and that things will be better, but the streets are still warm with the bodies of the homeless. There are still millions of people working, white and black, with no chance of moving forward. In my 19 years of life, I have never felt so overwhelmed by the future, and even now I still feel it in my heart; the odds are stacked against me.

I'd hate to say that I feel this way because of my skin, but the people of this darker tone usually end up as statistics, and represented as such within the many social constructs of our lives. Systematically, we are beaten at the start.

When I was first introduced to racism, I was 16, and I was new to New York. I didn't even realize just how much it impacted the lives of my fellow man. I didn't want to believe that the world was black and white. As I look forward to the future, I hope to live within a society that has truly learned to be accepting and tolerant, a society where children never have to feel like they were born the wrong color. I pray that in time we will overcome our differences and that wealth will not be able to diminish human compassion. It was never color, nor wealth, nor position that was meant to define our story. It was always our humanity.

Zacchaeus Robinson



~Rebekah Miller

Falling in Love

It's that feeling you get in the middle of your chest,

You can't quite describe it, but you can feel it.

It sits there, demanding to be felt.

Your heart could almost release and explode at any given moment.

It takes up your entire chest,

It spreads until you can't think straight,

It stretches to your stomach and gives you those butterflies.

And that's when you know you're falling in love.

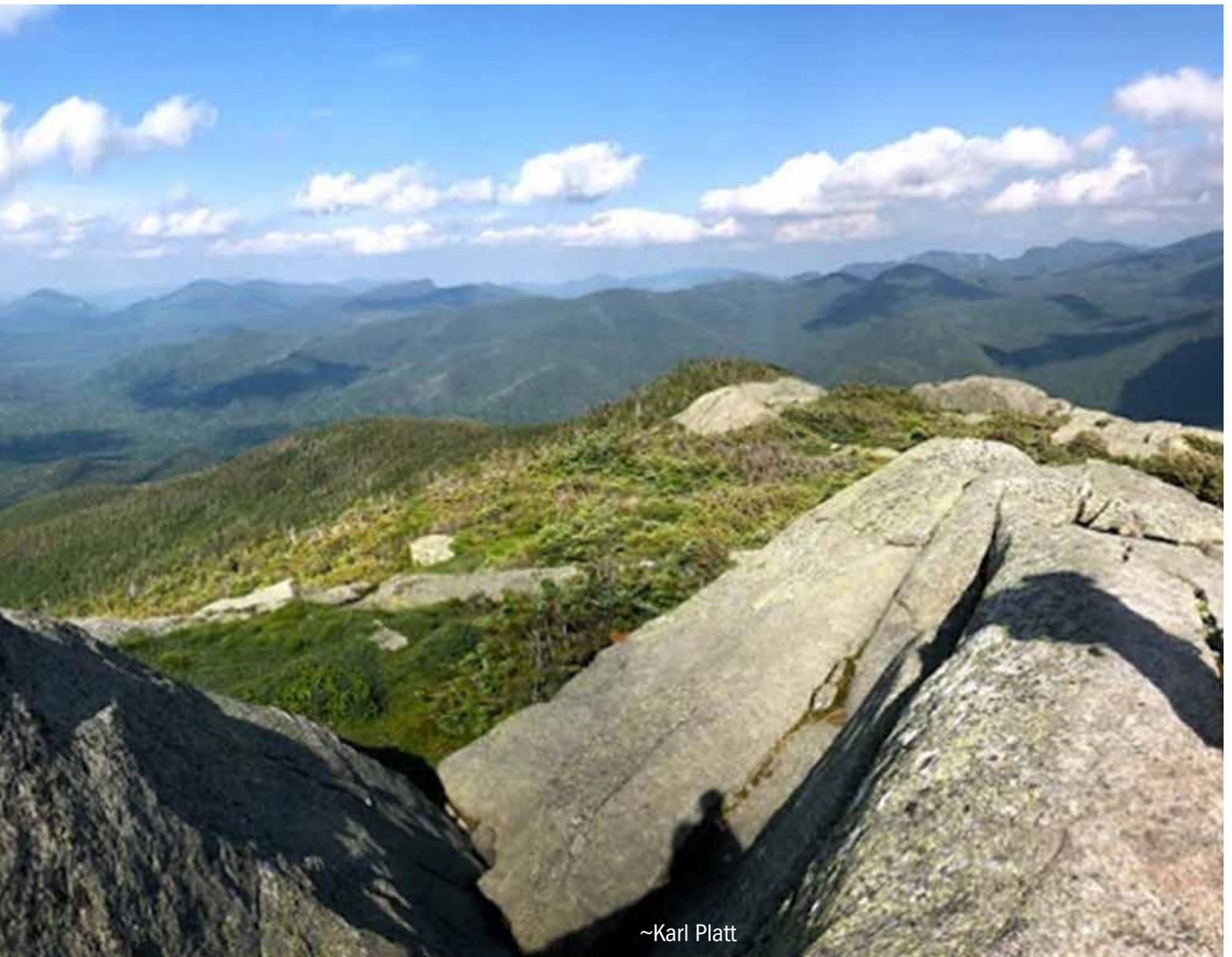
Mac Congdon



GRANDEUR

I wanted to feel important: a tall order, given my insatiable vanity. Many people have tried: some subtly, others under the dangerous guise of love. I was a force of nature, meddling in every affair I could find. I would be the solution, not a supporting role. I cannot say for certain if my ego swelled of its own gluttony or perhaps nearly stepped slowly from around an unlit corner. I believed, falsely, that I was growing capable of honest love, that sort with the proper trappings of mutual regard, common goals, and perhaps most of all, healthy empathy. Empathy, in fact, was a facsimile: I didn't feel for long after it happened that I had defied her trust that very first time we shared with each other. She waited for me to think of it, to consider seriously how mindlessly I subverted every fiber of her will, of the will we outlined from the outset. I tried to save her from others that dared to violate her trust and save the first time as her treasured exercise of will. I stole it from her.

Matthew Sanders



~Karl Platt

The Night of January 12th

He left. That's all I knew at that time; he left me, that's what it felt like, but then I realized I knew more that I could tell. It was a warm orange night; the sky was blue and pointless; the stars looked like flashing lights reminding me of my sadness and sorrow. I was in the living room, and my mom was in the kitchen making dinner; she was too proud to look back, too proud to look at him, and tell him to stay. He picked up his luggage and gave me a warm "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry" look. He grabbed the lock with his free hand, the same hand that patted me in the back every time he was proud of me, every time I did something right; this time was different; this time he grabbed the door and didn't look back; he left, and I can still feel the sound of the door slamming behind him. My mom didn't say anything; perhaps she lost her voice; he took everything: the bags, the pat in the back, he took me. My 7 year-old self wouldn't cry; she went to the balcony step on the stairs and watched him fade away. I watched my mom fade away, I watched her regret everything she had, even me. She gave me a cold look and said, "Dinner is ready." I knew she regretted everything, and I also knew she was ashamed of it; she wanted to say sorry and hugged me and tell me everything was going to be okay. She couldn't, instead she told me "Is you and me now, you understand? You and me," and I never felt more alone in my miserable, pointless life because I knew It was only me. "Finish your dinner," she said, I couldn't look at her; she grabbed my face and with her cold-broken voice she told me "Don't you dare cry; you can't cry; you are not weak, he is; you are not a coward he is, don't you dare be like him." That's the last thing I heard from her, everything after that was all in my imagination, I imagined her hugging me and telling me she loved me, I imagined her wanting me back and patting me in my shoulders after I did something right. Now I am my mother's biggest regret; I am my mother not wanting me back, I am the pat in my shoulders no one ever gave me; I am my dad and his mistakes, I am my mother and her regrets.

Yaremy Feliz Valera



~Karl Platt

TEARS ON MY PILLOW

I wake up with tears on my pillow. Life is hard for people like me. My family doesn't have much anymore. My mom died when I was 6, and my dad is now confined to a bed. We live in a high crime neighborhood, and it's a fight for survival. I'm 19, and I dropped out of school and got two jobs to support my family. I have a younger brother. He still goes to school. He's the star player for the basketball team. I've gone to every one of his games. We recently celebrated his 11th birthday, but I had nothing to give him. He sleeps in my room. We don't have a bed, so we sleep on a pile of blankets. Our dad has his own room, but we can hear him moaning from pain at night. Sometimes I feel like putting the poor man out of his misery. He was beaten badly by a group of thugs one night on his way home from work. That's why I carry a gun everywhere I go. It's unregistered, but so is every other gun in the area.

One day, after work, I was stopped by a man in a navy suit. He didn't blend in here. He told me that he had been robbed by a man that owned a pawn shop down the road from my apartment. He said that his wife's engagement ring, along with his watch, were inside. He made it clear that he was looking for someone to rob the shop. I explained how I couldn't help and how my family needed me. The man then threw a backpack at my feet.

"Open it," the man demanded.

I complied, and what I saw I almost couldn't comprehend. Inside was nearly \$3,000.

"You may also help yourself to anything in the register and safe," he added.

The money was tempting. With that much, I might be able to get a car. Better yet, I could catch up on bills. To this day, I still don't know why I took the money.

"Meet me here tomorrow with the stuff," the man said.

I took the bag home and showed my dad the money. I couldn't stop smiling as I told him about the possibilities. The bills would be paid for the rest of the year. I could get my brother new shoes and a basketball. The choices filled my head as I gave my dad his pain medication.

"What did you do for that?" my dad asked, pain in every word.

"Nothin' yet," I replied.

"Is it worth it?" he demanded.

I didn't answer. I couldn't answer. I knew the owner of the shop, and I didn't want to rob him. Sure, he was a bad guy, but that doesn't mean that he deserved to be forced at gunpoint to empty the register and hand over his wares. Everyone in this side of town is looking for a way to make money. I put the backpack in the kitchen cabinet and grabbed a mask from Halloween. It was a Devil mask with horns but no back to it. I put on a hoodie and loaded my gun. If things went wrong, I wanted to be prepared. Once I was ready, I said goodbye to my dad and brother. On my way out, I grabbed an old duffle bag and walked down the stairs. It was getting late, and I wanted to make sure the shop was still open. I walked down the street, the entire time thinking about how I was going to do it. It wasn't long before I was outside his shop, peering through the front door. He was standing behind the register, admiring his latest addition. It was a gold chain covered in diamonds. I put on the mask and put up the hood. I kicked open the door and fired a warning shot into the ceiling.

"Open the register and the safe," I demanded.

The shopkeeper complied and quickly opened the register. I threw the duffle bag to him. He started putting the cash inside.

"Now the safe."

He went down under the table and came up holding a sawed-off shotgun. I panicked and fired my gun twice. Each bullet hit the man in the torso. After I realized what I had done, I quickly put some of the jewelry in the bag. I made sure to put the required objects in the bag as well. Soon, I heard sirens in the distance. I could almost guarantee that they were coming for me. I slung the bag over my shoulder and ran to my house. When I got back, I locked the door. My heart was racing. Did I really just do that? Did I kill a man simply because he was protecting what he had? The answer to both questions was "yes." I heard my dad in the other room. He was beckoning me into his room. When I walked in, he had tears in his eyes.

"Why?"

I couldn't reply. I just stared at my dad. Soon, I had tears in my eyes as well. I cried on my dad's chest.

"I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to kill him. If I didn't he would've killed me."

He put one of his hands on my head. That night, I slept on the floor next to my dad.

I awoke the next day and continued my life as usual. Today was slightly different though. I had the day off from work, so I walked with my brother to the store. I bought him a new pair of shoes and a basketball. He was smiling from ear to ear. Next, we went to the store and purchased more food than we had seen in years. I was so excited to be able to eat more than one meal a day. We even had some money left over for dessert. When we got home, my brother began putting groceries away while I focused on paying back all my bills we had accumulated over the couple months. Everything was great, and I still had some money left over. I told my brother that I was going to take him to a restaurant for dinner, which is something that he had never done

continued on page 18

in his entire life. He asked if he could go to the park to play some basketball. I told him that he could, but to be back before dark. He put on his new shoes and raced out of the apartment.

A couple hours later, right as the sun was beginning to set, I heard a car pull up outside.

“We have the area surrounded. Please come out with your hands up.”

I ran to the window to see a group of police cars waiting outside. One of them saw me at the window and pointed.

“I’m not leaving,” I screamed.

They motioned to the front door. I

grabbed my gun and hid behind the wall between the front door and the kitchen. I said a little prayer as I heard footsteps come up the stairs. The door was flung open, and I fired two shots before I realized what I had done. My little brother looked back at me with tears in his eyes. Blood started to drip from his mouth. He had one bullet in his chest and another in his abdomen. I threw down my gun and rushed to him. I held him in my arms until I felt his body go limp. I shook him a little. This can’t be real. I checked for a pulse. Nothing. His eyes were still open. I moved my hand in front of his face. No response. I closed his eyes and screamed. Through my tears, I could see the police. They were just staring at me. Speechless to what they saw. I kissed my brother’s forehead as I laid him down gently. I stood up, shaking and covered in blood. I put my hands on my head and dropped to my knees. The

officers looked at each other. They each grabbed a side of me and led me outside. People were everywhere. I was lowered into a police car.

In the following weeks, I was found guilty for two accounts of murder and armed robbery and given life in prison. I was granted the freedom to go to my brother’s funeral, as long as I had two officers by my side at all times. My father never spoke to me again. He passed away soon after the funeral. So I live in agony. I wish I could turn back time and not take the cash. I wish I could’ve walked away. News travels fast in prison. Everyone knows what I did. I’ve had death threats and attempts made. Prisoners don’t like it when you kill an innocent child.

Payton Allen



~Karl Platt

The Other Shoe

Can you really love a person so much that even cheating
doesn't steer you away

Can you really want a person so much that even if you
don't get treated like your worth...you still stay

Can you really not ever know what you want and keep
playing a game

Can you really know you're hurting two people yet still
do it anyway

They say hurt people hurt people
Hey it's me...I'm people

No one can ever know why I continuously do what I do
but me
But that's not important now

I see the other side i know what i put people through
I can unlace mine and put on your shoe

He's liar
He's manipulative

He's abusive
But his words are sweet like the finest Swiss chocolate
And he knows how to use 'em

He's calculated
He'll say the sweetest things that make you feel like the
only girl in his world

His hugs warm you up like soup in the winter
His touch gives you chills like no other and you forget
you're fucking with a sinner

Can he really be I don't believe it I see the good
underneath
But getting feelings outta him is like pulling teeth

He'll never understand he's scared of the truth
There's love right in front him can't he see
WHY DOESN'T HE REALIZE HE'S HURTING ME

I guess it's my fault I fell for the "swindle"

FUCK YOU BRANDON JUST STAY SINGLE



~Susan Perry

Evening finds them on the hillside; a common spot for the two to hide away at. They call it the “hillside” – one word, not two, though it isn’t a very accurate description. “Cliffside” would be more on-the-nose, he thinks.

The hill is full of thick vegetation: long grass and wildflowers grow relentlessly here, and the first day they stumbled across it, they had spent the entire day collecting wild daisies and buttercups. He had tied them into little crowns and lined her hair with them, and she had tried to copy him, had failed. That had been months back, and the weeds they had picked had long ago regrown.

At its end, the hill dropped into a free-fall edge that plummeted at least two hundred feet before hitting the tops of even the highest trees that grew at its base. Not much farther beyond the trees lay the town they both call home - though he more than she. Wrapped around the lip of the cliff is an old, half rusted fence that had been thrown up by some good Samaritan.

They sit now in a similar quiet, him with his back to one of the posts, her with her legs together and slightly on top of one another to fit between the rotting posts. Her ankles bounce against the rock wall of the cliff past the fence, though it is an unrhythmic pattern because of the way she is sitting.

The noise of the clearing is of a wild forest; bugs of all types chirp and sing, and the birds in the trees just a stone’s throw away chorus away in their own harmonies. Sticks crack every now and then as a larger animal wanders through the brush; what it may be is easy enough to guess. *Deer, probably*, he would tell her if she asked for his opinion. *Maybe a skunk*. He would say, just to catch the way her nose scrunches up at the idea. Though he never would tell her so, he figures she probably knows anyways.

There are no inquiries of his thoughts on the wildlife tonight, though. Evening is approaching in the west; the sun had begun its final descent to the horizon an hour or so ago, and now it cast orange, pink and almost purple rays across the scattered clouds. It is a pretty sunset, though he doesn’t much care what the shade of sunshine that reaches across the sky is; as always, his eyes are shut to the world, head leaned back against the metal pole.

The wind is gentle but present, occasionally blowing a too-long strand of hair across his shut eyes, and he would blow it back with a long, soft breath. Next to him, she sits just as quiet, even more motionless than he. Her mind seems far away from their hillside, and though he does not have his eyes open to read such expressions, he can feel it in their quiet.

As the sun creeps lower and animals begin their evening settle, he hears her take a breath in. Had he been sitting closer, perhaps he would have felt her body draw in, or had his eyes been open, seen her shoulders lift, but he is far away, and he is blinded. These signs would have told him that certainly she is going to say something, but he doesn’t need these signs to tell him so. He knows her too well, can feel her inquiries before she voices them, her desire to speak.

Whatever she had been about to say is gone, and he is unsure whether to be relieved or concerned. Her silence perplexes him, and a part of him desires to voice his own questions, but he relents. To do so would be to permanently silence her thought process, this he knows. If she wants to tell him something, or to ask, she would do it on her own.

Dusk rapidly approaches as he waits, alone in the black behind his dark eyelashes. He feels her tension grow and rise as she pulls her courage, tests it, fails. By the time she gets full hold of her thoughts, the sun is nearly gone. Dark rules their beloved hillside, but neither feels the desire to begin the hike back down the worn dirt trail. Not yet.

When she speaks, it is gentle, and uncertain. She says his name, but the weight of her gaze does not filter across his skin. She has remained still by his side, surely still looking down the cliffside. She never looks at him when she is lost in thought; he assumes it embarrasses her, though he will never ask. Such a question would hurt her, and to do so knowingly is forbidden to him, by him.

Nonetheless, her soft-spoken words hook his conscience, and he cracks his heavy eyelids. He turns his head, studying her silhouette in the low light of dying sun. Soon there will be no sun, and so far away from unnatural light up here, she will be nearly invisible to him. Not for the first time in his life, nor the last, he admires how well her face works.

Her nose is short and buttoned, tipped up to the sky. Freckles decorate the bridge, spreading along her cheeks like a fine powder. They are mostly hidden at this angle, but he knows her face too well to not acknowledge them. Her lips are slender, just shy of full, a shade just darker than her pale complexion. Her chin is proud, jawline defined, a shape that is equally defiant and fragile.

Wrinkles crease her forehead, eyebrows drawn low, deep in concentration. The darkest part of her face is her eyes, narrowed to just slits as she studies the last few moments of dying sun. Light fails as she turns her face towards his, and black travels across the sky in a final suffocating sweep. When night falls in the country, it falls *hard*.

His eyes adjust fast, though the image isn't as sharp as it was for the few moments before the sun diminished. She still isn't looking at him directly, but instead gazing into the grass that sprung up around his sitting body. His gaze shifts to her hands, which sit in her lap. A daisy is squeezed between them, occasionally being twirled, stripped of its leaves.

"Do you think..."

Her voice causes him to look back up at her face, his head tilting to the side as he studies her. A thousand different emotions play along her expression, crease her forehead, soften her eyes and pull at the corners of her drawn tight lips. Her voice is quiet but veiled, and it gives him no specific indication of what she might be thinking.

So, he waits.

The wind blows, the birds sing their sweet night songs, the forest hums with its distinct chatter of not-quite white noise. Time passes, and he watches her, and she watches the grass. Every now and then her shoulders draw in, tense, relax.

"What if it's all for nothing?"

Her words are slow, drawn out, and stumbled. It doesn't seem to fit exactly what she had wished to say, but when she looks up at him, the rest settles in her reddened eyes.

They are full, those bright eyes, threatening to crest and spill. He hadn't noticed her sniffing and wonders how fresh those salt tears were. They seem wrong to him on such a defiant face, a face he has followed to the end of

earth, a face he would follow again. As he studies those sad eyes, a single drop struggles free and falls.

It leaves a wet trail, sliding down a smooth cheek quickly. It falters at her jawline, grows pregnant there, then finally falls to the dampening, dewy grass. She doesn't wipe the salt line from her cheek, sitting still, and when he meets her gaze again, he realizes it isn't sadness that has hooked this reaction from the depths of her conscience. Written in the salt that lines her eyelids and stains her skin, is a word he would never have in all the years of his life been able to describe her as.

Insignificant.

He looks away from her, looks up into the night sky, the darkness that envelops them, the stars that wink at them, the forest that hides them.

Silence grows between them once more as they ponder together their existence in the world around them, and of the world they claim is their own. He gathers each word he's going to say carefully, shaping them with a careful tongue before voicing them.

"I'm not sure." It doesn't seem enough of an answer for the question, but he continues after another dragging moment of night-forest quiet. "So what if it is? At least it is beautiful."

From the corner of his vision, he can see her lift her own chin to the sky, and he lowers his face to gaze at hers. A thousand stars from unfathomable distances reflect in the dark shadows of her reflective wet eyes, and he is brought again to a sweet sorrow that drags at his heart strings. Another tear breaks free of her soft eyes to roll down her cheek, this one not creeping but racing.

She reaches for his hand in the dark, closing her eyes against the dark wonders of the universe seen through country eyes and closes her fingers around his. Her lips purse, her shoulders draw in and up, and another tear struggles free. With it goes the tension in her trembling body, and a soothing only he could supply worked its way through her.

"So what if it is."

Mickayla Raichel

THE KITCHEN

Amanda Silva

A stern hand clutched an andiron.
Primitive pioneer,
he pursued his unusual prey
with trivial regret.
Faced with starvation,
intoxicated by fear,
he lunged,
delivered the blow,
and sighed with relief.

The air reeks of despair,
desperation, and
death. We have no hope,
no food, no will.
We are lost.
Pushed to extremes,
men must do the unthinkable
to survive. Our supply of
horses, dogs, rats
diminished – there is no other way.

He took her to the kitchen.
She stood too near,
her smell too inviting
for him to resist.
Weak men will do anything.

I ambled over there,
behind him,
hearing her body drag the dirt,
but not seeing it.
The breeze rustled her hair.
He did not hesitate
as he pulled her down the steps.
I could not help him
bring her body in,
but I did not stop outside the door.

He paused.
His sunken eyes
surveyed her flesh,
not knowing where
to start.
He took a knife
and began to cut
eagerly, but feebly.
I watched him pierce her skull.
I watched him saw the flesh
off her bone.
I watched.

This crude butcher,
covered in blood,
gone from reason,
used every tool he had
to extract all she could give.
And I stood,
waiting for his heinous harvest
like a dog.
He started a fire.
Flesh never tasted so pure.
Hell never felt so real.
Yet here I am, for another day.
Hope, is ever-present.

*Hope is ever-present
on my journey to the new world.
A life of servitude is not
my highest aspiration,
but I am hopeful that my true
purpose will become clear
as I take a proper place in this village.*

*I have worked in the kitchen before, but I hope to find work elsewhere.
I know I could make a fine seamstress or nanny.
If the men have not need of either trade, I will have no choice but to
relent to their demands.
I am in no position to bargain for employ.
I am lucky to be included on this passage, though it grows more
difficult by the hour.*

*Sometimes I stand on the deck of the ship and smell the breeze.
I look for land every day, but where I do not know.
I am no sailor.
Our supplies become more depleted every day. The people are restless. It
seems no one signed on for a journey that would take this long.*

*We finally reached land,
but it is not the land
we were looking for.
The weather means for us to stay here awhile, but I am anxious to
reach our final destination.
When we finally board the boat again, I cannot help but smile
as the final stage of this journey begins.*

*At last, there it is
in the distance - Jamestown.
I can see it!
Excitement swells within me
once again.
I am hopeful yet nervous.
I feel every wave, every churn
as we sweep up the channel.
The wind dies down, the anchor descends, and I gather my things as I
prepare to take my first steps on this land. My heart is pounding –
when will it stop?*

*We were not prepared for the
skeletons that greeted us.
We have been deceived!
We feel betrayed, solemn,
despairing.
All our provisions are gone yet
there is nothing here.
What will become of us?*

*I cannot go near the kitchen.
There is no comfort in its walls.
Every day I stand with my face in
the breeze, holding my fear close,
filled with regret.*

For Your Information

I remember the day I first saw her. It was my freshman year; we had a Sociology class together in Capen Hall. She was gorgeous. Copper skinned with short cropped jet-black hair; however, this wasn't the most noticeable thing about her. Besides her beauty or rather perhaps because of it, everyone including myself seemed to be a bit intimidated by her. No matter where she sat in the lecture hall of roughly 250 students, there was always a ring of empty seats around her. There was some unspoken rule that all who saw her innately understood. She was to be seen and admired, but there was just too much risk in speaking with a girl that far out of one's league.

I was having a particularly miserable day on September 11th, 2008. It was going so poorly I figured that nothing could possibly make it worse. It is keen to note that on these kinds of days, you need to realize that you aren't out of luck, it's just that your luck is being reallocated and condensed, so that it can be applied generously to the cosmic scales at just the right time. When I saw her that day, I knew my moment had arrived. Once again, she was sitting all alone in a sea of faces. Knowing my day couldn't possibly get any worse, I picked up my belongings and sat down next to her. For that moment, I know I was the envy of all the other cowards in that room. Knowing I was outmatched by this peerless beauty, I did what any trained gambler would do. I bluffed confidence, and I had it in spades. Donning my most charismatic persona, I introduced myself, and to my delight this angel did indeed speak the tongue of mortal men. Her name was Lauren, and as we talked, I was astonished at how much we had in common. It was almost eerie. She laughed at my sarcastic remarks and with quick wit fired back stinging retorts. That was hands down the best and quickest Sociology lecture I ever attended.

Since my luck was in now, I decided to let it ride on a true all or nothing bet. As we were beginning to leave lecture, and everyone was packing up their bags, I gave her a small piece of paper with my name and number on it. I nonchalantly let her know that I would like to do something, and if she was ever free to let me know. With the ball firmly in her court, we went our separate ways.

The next day I received a text from her, saying "this is Lauren Fyi." My gamble worked! And now, not only did I have her number, but I also had a last name! Fyi? Huh, I had no idea what kind of nationality that might be, or even how

best to pronounce it. She had looked Hispanic to me, but maybe Asian? I was just a small-town country boy, I didn't know much about the world. So I turned to that new social networking site Facebook, I wanted to see what I could learn about this Lauren Fyi. Surprisingly, even though I'd never heard the last name Fyi, there were a lot of Lauren Fyi on Facebook. Even more puzzling was the fact that they seemed to be every age and race imaginable but none in my area that matched the Lauren Fyi that I had met. So, my search ultimately proved fruitless. I resolved that next class, the first thing I was going to do was ask her how to pronounce her last name. Then I could work my way into learning more about her from there. My plan was fool proof.

Next class arrived, and I was once again the only person to sit near her. As we waited for class to start, I casually asked her how to pronounce her last name. She looked at me a bit funny and said "Lindenmeyer?". Now it was my turn to stare quizzically. "Lindenmeyer?" I parroted back confused, "I thought your last name was Fyi?", and I showed

"I thought your last name was Fyi?", and I showed her the message for good measure. She laughed for almost a solid 30 seconds.

her the message for good measure. She laughed for almost a solid 30 seconds. It was cute at first, but I soon deduced that I was the butt of her secret joke. Once she could speak clearly again, she pointed out that Fyi was not in fact her last name but an acronym for "For Your Information." I tried desperately to play it off like I knew that the whole time and was just playing a funny joke; however, she had me made. Though I didn't know it at the time, her next words were prophetic. "We're going to be great friends."

I have never known a more loyal friend than Lauren. She is literally a copy of my soul in female form. Whenever we get together, we talk of ourselves as one of the legendary duos reincarnated, like Gilgamesh and Enkidu. She is part of the family I choose. Nowadays we keep in touch regularly. I even officiated her wedding and was honored to welcome Cameron formally into our family. For my toast I told this story, and there was quite an uproar at my expense, but I didn't care. Because on that day, I saw my friend Lauren sitting at a table, and all the chairs around her were full.

James Winston

Come, and I will see you again

Hey, there you are
They were here yesterday
Yesterday, and the day before!
They know the dead, and they love it.
Night they are, and love black
Come, and I'll see you again.

Explanation

When I was little, I used to sleep in my grandma's room. I was excited to go there every night and hear stories from her. I do not know why, but owls also used to go and sit on her roof every night too. I was afraid when she told me what they were, but still curious to hear their sound and to know more about them. *Aboubacar Camara*

A Light in the Dark

Fear has taken over
And left you in the dark
Leaving you all alone
With the demons in your head

They tell you that you're worthless
That you're a lost cause
That you'll always be a failure
No matter what you do

You start to feel hopeless
That there's no chance to recover
But I'm here to tell you
That simply isn't true

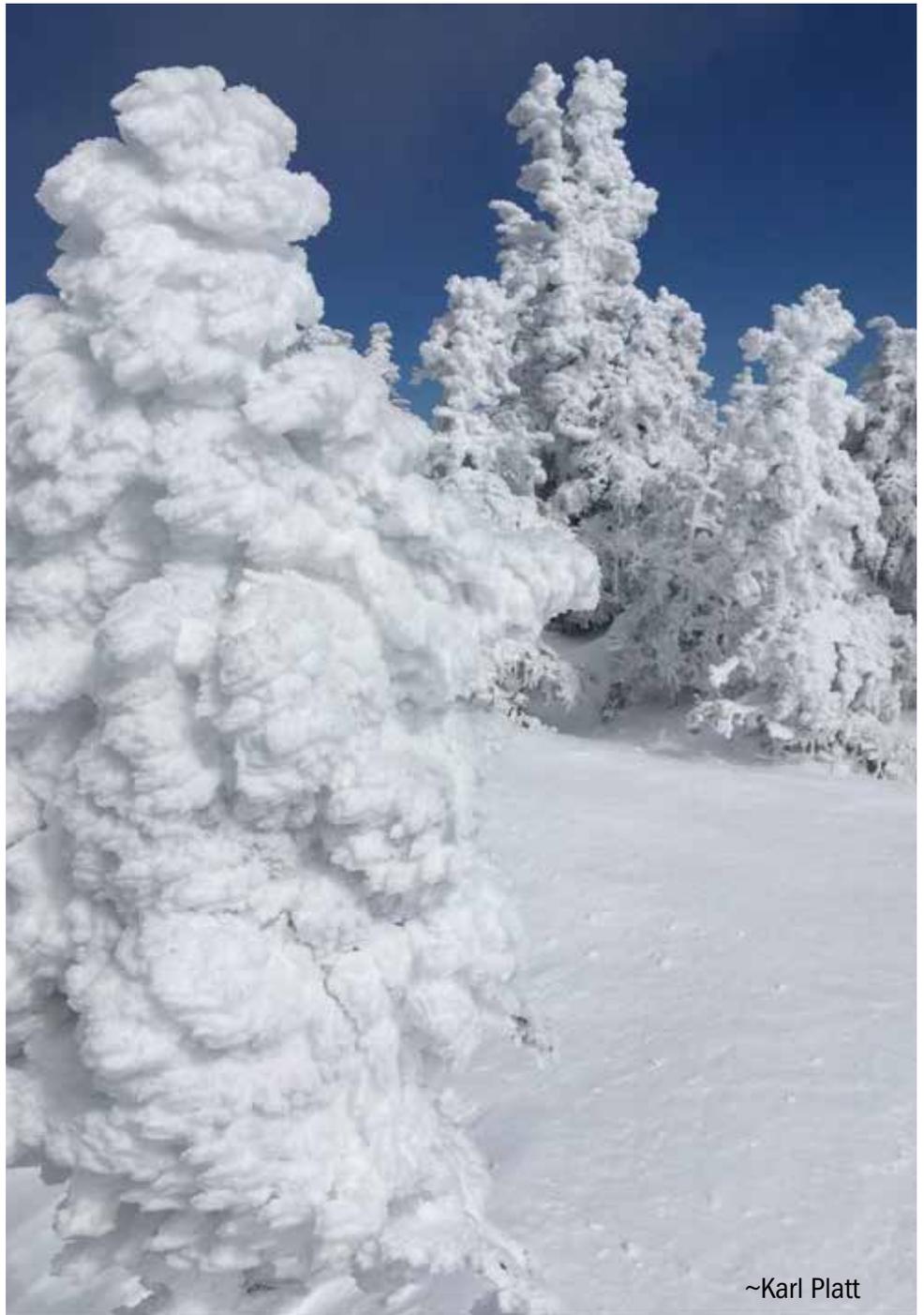
I know how easy it is
To let the demons win
But you can't let them control you
They'll only bring you down

You say it's all over
But it's only the beginning
Anything you're dealing with
Can be improved with hard work

I know how hard it is
To stay strong when things get rough
But I leave you with a message
That I hope will help you stay strong
No matter what you're going through
Remember you're not alone
And that there will always be
A light in the dark

Allison Morgan

24 | *Ergo* | Fall 2019



~Karl Platt

Where do I get off?

I helped a girl today,
She said she looked fat.
I looked deep into her eyes
And asked why say that?
Later in the day,
She whispered I'm so dumb!
I turned to her and said,
Let's focus on the fun!

Let's focus on what you did right,
Not on what is wrong.
You are so very smart!
So beautiful and strong!

I helped a girl today
As she hid inside herself.
Scared to let others see
What she kept hidden on a shelf.

What's inside the book
You don't let others see?
A tear slipped out as she whispered,
It's the bad inside of me.

The things I am ashamed of.
The stuff that brings me pain.
The monsters I am scared of.
It's little sunshine - lots of rain.

I said I have an umbrella handy!
I'm pretty savvy with a sword!
You have nothing to be ashamed of!
You survived with words!

Inside of those notebooks,
Are the stories of your life.
Filled with anger and sadness,
Pain, regret, and strife.

But if you dig a little deeper,
You'll see they are much more!
They are ink laden roadmaps
Marking how you won the war!

They outline how you survived
When others put you down.
They detail how you faced the beasts,
And left them on the ground.

They show a tiny girl,
Facing demons that she knew,
Who stole her innocence-
killed her soul,
But yet she still fought through!

The ink - it was a means,
Of pouring out her heart!
Releasing all the negative,
To make a brand new start!

You see, I helped a girl today.
That girl - she was just me.
Changing from the girl I was
To the woman, I want to be.

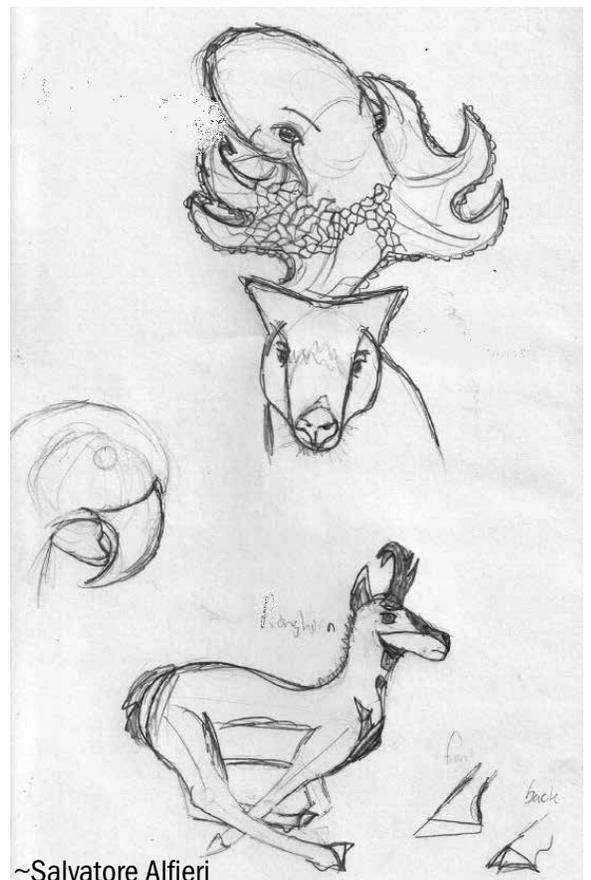
As I opened up the pages,
I could see that it was true.
The ink captured all the feelings
I had needed to work through.

Always bland or blue the ink,
The colors of my battered
beaten soul,
But somehow they are helping me,
To heal, to change, to grow!

Mary Hribar

I've changed over the past few years.
I don't know who I am, anymore.
I am lost.
I don't know what to do
Or
Who to be.
I don't know where to go.
Where do you go when you're lost?
Which train do you take?
Whom do you take with you?
What do you do when you love someone,
who doesn't love you back?
When your whole body screams for
that person?
When they are all you want and need?
What do you do when you are alone?
Which train stop do you get off?
What kind of tea do you make?
Whom do you call when you need to go
home?
I don't have a home.
How do you make the carousel stop turning?

Yaremy FelizValera



~Salvatore Alfieri

WAKING FROM THE DREAM

One could say that life is filled with endless questions to which we do not yet know the answers, and I once counted myself amongst their ranks.

The sun was warm as the cicadas dueled the birds for sonic supremacy, overhead. It was at one such crescendo that I threw my trash into the all but empty receptacle. At the exact moment I was rid of my smelly burden, I found a clear winner for the title of “Shittiest Moment of the Day.” My ancient foe, the bald face hornet, who had terrorized me in my youth amongst the apple orchards back home, broke our detente. With one swift strike, he drew first blood. That lone crazed bastard stung me on the wrist; however, the last laugh was mine! Urgency had been the pace I had kept all this morning, and with uncharacteristic speed, I ended the engagement. With a grumbling and begrudging respect, I wiped his remains on the nearest tree. There was no time to stop and honor my fallen foe, I needed to be on my way.

As I entered the Dining Facility, I couldn't help but notice how warm it truly was. I watched jealously while in line as the fans in the common area seemed to share their love with all but me. As I approached the cashier, I became aware that I may have run a bit too hard on my way in. I didn't think I was that out of shape, but try as I did, I just couldn't catch my breath. I exchanged pleasantries and currencies with the lady at the register. When she asked how I was, I remember clearly her response, “oh that's nice.... Wait what?” What had I said though? What was she staring at? Why the hell was it so damn stuffy in here?! She just continued to whisper and point, I couldn't help but think how rude that was. Then my eyes were drawn to the source of her alarm. That insidious little bastard had arranged a dastardly 5th column coup. The potent words of his venom turning my own body against me. With the rapid swelling of my arm and fast spreading discoloration of the skin, it became abundantly clear that the last laugh was certainly not mine. I then realized it wasn't the air that was stuffy, nor was I out of shape, I simply couldn't speak or breathe. She wasn't whispering at me; I just couldn't hear over the sound of blood in my ears. And that's when the panic made its presence known. Called forth in time with the ever-increasing beat of my heart, the world slowly started to fade away in tune with the deafening ba-bump. Then that too began to fade, becoming white noise in this evolving crisis.

My first thought was I needed to call her, but my fingers wouldn't work on the keypad. I needed to let her know just in case, that I loved her. But just in case of

what? Who was she? All I knew, my whole world was on that floor, I needed to stay calm, and I needed to breathe. The funny thing is, as the seconds passed even the simple tasks of remembering those two simple things became so very hard. They began to distort and fade like everything else. My mantra was just stay calm and breathe, and it began to decay to just simply breathe. Eventually I thought, wait... what is breathing? It seemed such a silly thing, why would you need to do that? Wait, do what? Everything seemed muted; it was like I was slowly sinking to the bottom of a pool. The sounds and light began to fade as I settled on the bottom, and here we meet the true protagonist of my story. For she is Nothing. She whispered the only truth, the dirge she sang was one fundamental and pure in its nature. For she is Nothing and I belonged to her. That was all that mattered. I had always feared nothing, but I didn't understand that there is nothing to fear. For there is just nothing, it doesn't matter, care, hurt or despair. In our time together, she taught me all these things. That profound truth changed my life. I have never known such peace as oblivion.

The paramedics finally arrived, and with the help of EpiPens and a mountain of antihistamines, I gained a loose foothold in the waking world. It was amazing how just a few medications can bring a man back amongst the living. As I lay there remembering what I could, I could only really focus on one thing. How easy it is for a man to die. I was hurt that the world hadn't stopped, but ultimately not surprised. We always think ourselves the hero. The mighty hero that dictates the pages of the world's story, even if we know that isn't true. It can be humbling, even if I thought I already understood. Then I remembered the true author of this story and the secrets she shared. The calm reassurance of nothing that was waiting for me. I didn't want to die, but at least when I do, I know she'll be there waiting. For I and I alone understood the great secret. For this is the great dream from which we wake. A reward of nothing to rid us from the burden of knowing eternity. We enjoy life while we can, we realize that when it's bad it really isn't so bad, if for no other reason than it still is. To me that is the most calming and beautiful truth. That day I realized that life is full of answers; we just need to know the right questions. I've known nothing and will know it again, and it's given me an appreciation of something, of anything, of everything else.

James Winston

An Isle of Flightless Hopes

The grass is always greener on the other side
Unless there happens to be no grass there
Rather just empty promises of grass
And the irreparable smell of stale city air

To the metropolitan lights I hold a grudge
For claiming that they will hold the key to your dream
The truth is that the island will chew you up
And spit you back out broken mentally to the extreme

Now I lie on the peak of a mountain upstate
I look back in fear and look forward with no avenue
Staring up at the judge in the hollow black sky
I want answers as to why this disaster came

Still back upstate from which I had run
I face a repetitive and lonely reality I cannot leave
Memories here create painful waves of nostalgia
Alone again, I must face my pain and in silence I'll grieve

A.S.



~Karl Platt

You see me poised,
Prepared and ready.
You see no shaking,
My hands appear steady.

Inside I'm a mess,
Almost in a heap.
Tear filled eyes waiting,
For a moment to weep.

The eyes are all looking,
Stoic and alert.
My voice it begins,
Revealing my hurt.

The words they are flowing,
Blood mixed with rhyme,
But no one can see,
What I've left behind.

My pen slices memory,
The pages grab thought,
In my cheap little notebook,
I so lovingly bought.

I've no one to share with,
No one who'd care.
To listen to the horror,
I need to lay bare.

The paper - it listens.
It gives me a place,
To show the whole world,
My unhappy face.

I don't have to smile,
Or pretend to be alright,
I don't have to be charming,
Or sickeningly polite.

Here, I am me -
Alone in the ink.
I unleash my nightmares,
The evils I think.

As each line progresses,
It's a sense of relief.
The book steals my sorrow,
The pen is its thief.

Mary Hribar



- Donata Koegel