

2024

# *The Community Quill*



Saint Elizabeth University





# **The Community Quill**

## **The Saint Elizabeth University**

### **Literary Journal**

#### **Editorial Board**

Co-Editors - Tyson Berardo & Matthew Lowke

Assistant Editors - Emily Cruz-Gil & Madison Dodds

Advisors - Carla Ferreira & Dr. Laura Winters

English Dept. Chair: Lynne McEniry

## **Mission & Vision**

The Community Quill, the literary journal of Saint Elizabeth University, is a publication that celebrates the talents of the campus community through a collection of creative writing and art. We strive to provide a space where literary and visual artists can share their work as an expression of their human experience. We welcome students, faculty, staff, and alumni to share their work and collaborate to contribute to our literary community. We encourage diversity and variety in style and voice and will highlight the meaningful work of the community while maintaining our core values of integrity, social responsibility, leadership, and excellence in teaching and learning.



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# Letters from the Editors

Dear Readers,

What a semester it has been! Sifting through submissions and compiling completed creations has been such an experience. I am ever so grateful for this opportunity to put together such wonderful words and works of art. I thank you for reading, perusing, and supporting our talented writers and artists! I commend the work that they have put together throughout this semester, and hope that every one of them continues to pursue publishing their work further.

Being a published poet, I will say that publishing work is such a rewarding experience, and if presented with the opportunity to submit work, everyone should try it. As I further my writing career with an MFA in Creative Writing, I can confidently say that I will always find sharing my work with others to be my favorite part of the process.

Sitting on the editorial side of things now, working on this semester's publication of the Quill has been eye-opening to say the least. I have learned so much about formatting, selecting pieces, and all of the work that editing teams go through in order to create a quality publication. I like to think that we achieved such in only a semester. Working as a part of this editorial team has been such a privilege and honor. My colleagues and Co-Editor Matthew Lowke have been essential to the success of this edition of the Community Quill. This project has truly helped me grow as a writer and as an individual. Thank you and I hope you enjoy it!

**Tyson Berardo**



# Letters from the Editors

First and foremost, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to read our work, but more importantly, the work of so many others who have contributed. This entire issue of the Community Quill was put together in a semester, and the collaboration was done mostly through zoom meetings and emails. Despite our constraints, I feel quite proud with how it all came together in the end.

In the past, I've often been asked to edit people's papers and writing in general—but just in the capacity of one peer helping another in a classroom setting. I've been paid a pittance to look over other student's papers—but the only real difference between the professional and casual processes of editing was that one of the two put money in my bank account. Both have not felt without satisfaction, but I've gone through the motions of editing three-page papers, ad-nauseum.

The Community Quill became a breath of fresh air for me, as I learned new skills—such as working with Canva, and how to compile large amounts of work together—as well as becoming more comfortable with reaching out to people on a regular basis; in fact, at times I felt like the unofficial PR person for the Quill.

Frankly, it's been exciting to work on a big project which has kept my hands from being idle playthings for the devil. Also, thanks to my incredibly reliable Co-Editor, we only entered mortal kombat once or twice throughout the editing period.

Not to sound cliché, but I'm glad to have been able to see this through to the end. It's been fun.

**Matthew Lowke**



## *Note from Our Chair*

We in the English Department are so happy to share the Fourth Annual Community Quill with you, our community of readers and writers. As I finish my first year as Chair of the department, it is a pleasure to reflect on all that our majors have accomplished: presenting their scholarly research at conferences and on campus, attending writing workshops and readings in the local community while also hosting their own here at SEU, starting the English Club this past November with about 12 founding members...and so much more!

If you have read each of the issues of the Community Quill before this one, you will note that there are various changes both in style and content from year to year. This year's editors, Tyson and Matt, have brought their own creative ideas into the mix. They looked back over the first three issues to create a 2024 magazine that nods to the past while looking toward the future, with room for next year's editors to solidify some choices on style and content.

I hope you find some words and images that bring you comfort and understanding, beauty and community, and invite you to feel seen, while also challenging you to explore outside your comfort zone. Enjoy!

Lynne McEniry, MFA







**Elisha Rockson**

## **Painting Freely**

In a quiet room, where the only sound is the soft brush of paint against canvas,  
I find solace in the act of creation,  
Each stroke of color a reflection of my innermost thoughts and emotions.

I dip my brush into a pool of vibrant red,  
And watch as the color dances across the blank surface,  
Creating patterns and shapes that come alive before my eyes.

The canvas becomes a window into my soul,  
A mirror reflecting my joys and sorrows,  
My fears and hopes, laid bare for all to see.

I lose myself in the world of colors and textures,  
Each stroke a story waiting to be told,  
Each hue a melody waiting to be sung.

I blend blues and greens to create a tranquil landscape,  
With rolling hills and peaceful lakes,  
A place where the mind can wander and find peace.

I splash gold and silver across the canvas,  
Creating a shimmering tapestry of light and shadow,  
A reflection of the beauty and chaos of the world around me.

And when I finally step back and behold my creation,  
I see not just a painting,  
But a piece of myself, laid bare for all to see.

For in the act of painting, I am truly free,  
Free to express my innermost thoughts and emotions,  
Free to create a world of beauty and wonder that is uniquely my own.



# Flowing Colors



**Kathy Francis**



Theresa Marie Lewis

## Blue

Blue,  
Falls from the sky  
Drenching my hair like the sorrow soaked inside.  
Dripping down my eyes lids as they close *shut*  
Trying to remember.  
Shower me with its hues.  
*Saturate my mind with the memories of you.*  
Whispering its soft embrace in my ear bypassing my heart's plea to hear  
your voice a little  
louder.

## LOUDER!

I beg you so I know you are real!  
Don't tickle my soul with your sweet melodies I command you, ol' blue.  
*Engulf me.*  
*Overtake me.*  
*Empower me* Blue  
To embrace you.

Oh beautiful shades of blue  
Surround me from beneath as I sink within you,  
Have your arms wrap around me stopping me from joining you, blue.  
Shelter me from the pain soaking up what's left of you inside  
Protect me ... BLUE.  
I yearn for you to be near me



Release your grip so I can float

I **demand** you

Oh blue,

*Save me.*

Pull me away from the grief sent to drown me

Oh blue *rescue* me.

Lift me higher!

Far beyond the grips of this world

Transport me to your ancestral plane

*Fly with me,*

Blue.

Don't keep me still...

Let me *glide* with you.

Staring up at you I feel you *staring* at me,

Oh blue..

Reminding me not to be afraid of

You,

*Sweet blue.*



## Beautifully Bruised Flower

We learn very young:  
Fear to be touched,  
for it may destroy  
all opportunities of potential happiness.

A paper that's crumbled,  
a toy oozing fluff  
a flower bruised by the society  
in which it blossoms with its beauty.

The world shouts and screams  
"Temptations and desires,  
for they are the devils song"  
"Be a good girl and save yourself"

Perhaps the crumbled paper was beautiful  
before it got condensed into its spherical form,  
and unraveled into such,  
but its creases add character.

Maybe they were trying to prevent us  
from becoming unwanted.  
Possibly it was to protect us  
from a heart in anguish.

From the feeling of falling,  
and never knowing when you will finally  
hit the floor.

For even a bruised flower  
can grow,  
with the right amount of  
love.





**Tim Geary**

## **The Poem**

The result may be unknown

The people couldn't believe the painting was as silky as  
the colors dripped off the sculpture

The man was guilty of making his paintings so cultured  
The structure of his art was complex

The way he used vertex in the art brought the picture out  
to the human eyes in an orbit

The picture of the flower was so blooming

It was like an illusion

The man was proven to be the most talented contribution

The art he put out was the solution in conclusion



# Fiesta



**Kathy Francis**



**Sydney Salomon**

## **Golden Tears:**

### **The Secret Sorrows of a Barbie**

A year has passed since my presence as a poet,  
A title that's left its mark,  
defining my writer's grace.

With pen in hand, I break the ink's embrace,  
Translating thoughts to paper,  
in a never-ending race.

Each day, I crack my knuckles, seeking a brief release,  
From the burdens weighing heavy, my weary soul to ease.  
Nights stretch into mornings, as I struggle to find peace,  
With thoughts that dance 'til dawn, refusing to cease.

2 am doubts and dreams come into my world of stars and moon,  
Conversing with the universe, beneath the night's soft crescent.  
Yet by 8 am, reality intrudes, far too soon,  
With an expired coffee cup, a reminder of the impending noon.  
The mundane tasks of life, like repurchasing a new coffee machine  
From Amazon or the nearest Target

Are overshadowed by the thrill of the adventures I pursue.  
In the exhilaration of it all, relaxation feels overdue,  
A luxury I yearn for, yet struggle to pursue.

Barbie writes. Barbie sleeps. Barbie weeps.

In the morning's quiet, I fight to rise,  
A black coffee from the Keurig's dusty guise.

But the bitter brew can't mend my sorrow's stain,  
As I lie in luxury, yet still in pain.

Within these walls of opulence, I dwell,



Hoping for a knock, a friend to tell  
Of whispered tales of my supposed bliss,  
Yearning for connection, forced to reminisce.  
Yet behind this facade of glamour bright,  
Lies a soul engulfed in the depths of night.  
Longing for someone to see past the show,  
To understand the depths of my shadow.  
In this world of glitz and sparkling lights,  
The loneliness lingers through the nights.  
For true solace lies not in riches or fame,  
But in the warmth of a heart that knows my name.

Time is ticking and I only have 10 minutes,  
Until reality barges through my room,  
To force a façade of cheer to mask my sorrows,  
Discouraging my mental illness because  
The world knows that sunlight is the best medicine.

Maybe I'll pretend I'm sick, skip the day,  
With a note from my teacher to clear my way  
No energy for hair or makeup to feel like a Barbie, I confess,  
Although, I am yearning for that feeling, even when I am feeling gray.  
Perhaps I feel sad because the walls talk to me,  
Promising a grander life come what may.  
As April showers weep on my rose flowers,  
While the grass is greener on the other side.  
Yet cannot tell if they are faking it until they make it,  
Like I once did but gave up with the act



Because the role I was cast to play wasn't worth  
The pleasure I got as I accepted depression and slept all year.  
Delusion greets me as reality as I lay in bed,  
With time still ticking to make my 8am brew,  
That no one will come by to help with me,  
Because my door is a barrier locks me away from the outside,  
Where the sky outside mirrors the blues within  
Without anyone knowing the storm that swirls therein.  
As I lay in my bed, sinking deep into its embrace,  
In a lonely paradise, where socialization I must chase.  
I find myself wandering, seeking the truth of my being,  
What am I truly searching for, as I navigate this life I'm seeing?  
Perhaps I envy those who have others,  
The happy ones with effortless smiles,  
Who can easily turn a bad day bright.

Maybe I envy myself,  
Not the girl I am today,  
Yet the woman I fail to prepare to be.  
For she has yet to grasp the worth of each moment,  
And how it ripples out, beyond her atonement.  
Perhaps I envy the love I lacked for some time,  
Friends who've pieced their lives together, a climb.  
They understand the need to take a pause,  
To cherish the moments, without any cause.

Maybe I pretended to close my eyes tight,  
For my mother to sleep in, just an extra night.

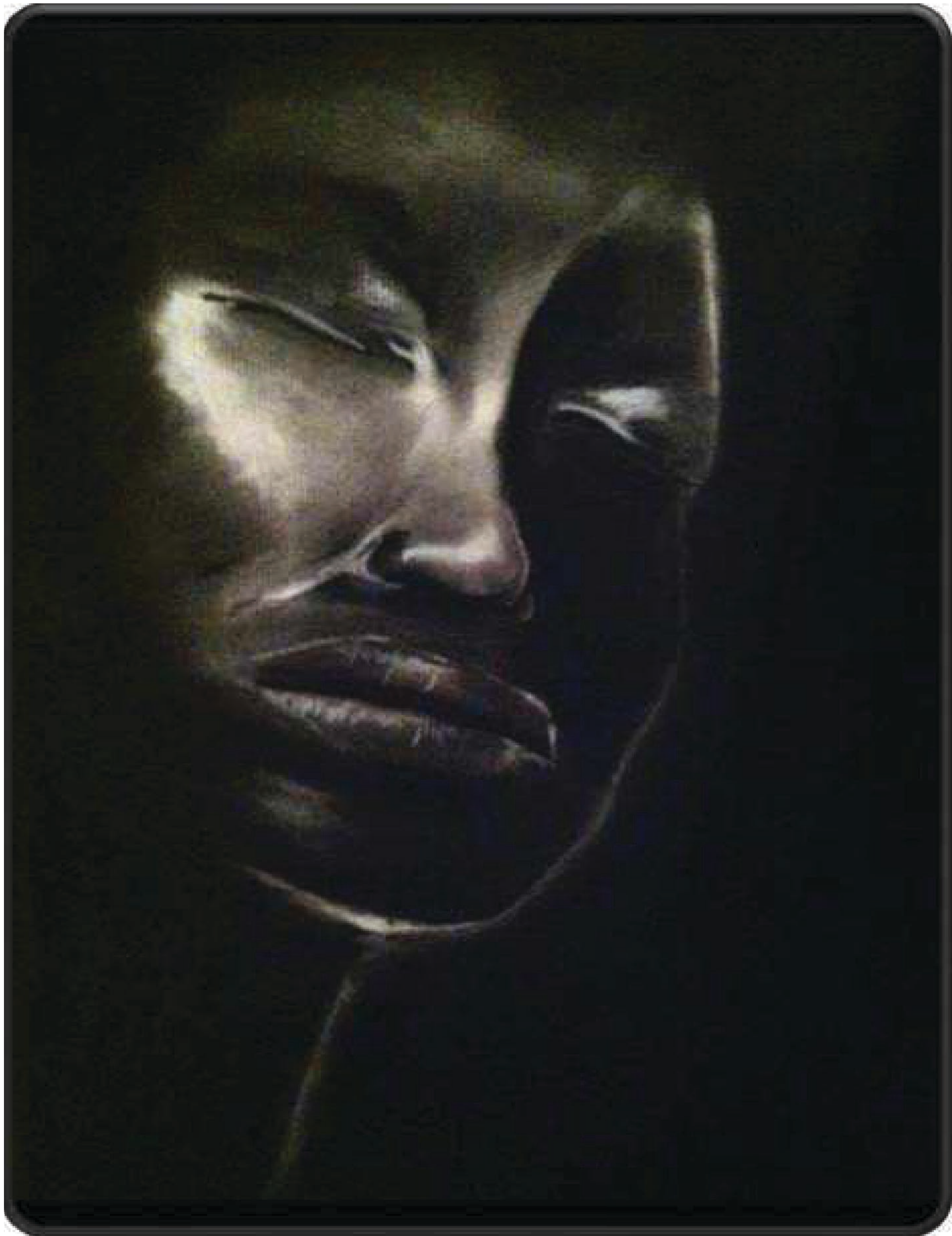


Like the times I didn't answer her call,  
So she could breathe, without worries at all.  
Perhaps I stayed away when I said I'd be near,  
To shield her from the storm, to lessen her fear.  
Waiting to pour out my silent tears,  
Away from her, so she wouldn't hear.

Or maybe I didn't want to be the girl she envisioned,  
Forced into college, her decision.  
Perhaps she saw success in every path I took,  
But didn't realize I was following a different book.  
Or maybe she thought I had a chance at redemption,  
But I never spoke up about my true affection.  
I fell in love with a foolish affair,  
Choosing college over him, a decision unfair.  
Barbie obeys. Barbie learns. Barbie achieves.  
Maybe it wasn't the eagle soaring across my view,  
Or the early morning noise, disrupting my snooze.  
Perhaps it was the broken wing I sought to mend,  
And the community that offered a hand to extend.  
Maybe it was the future they envisioned,  
Taking a pause for my journey to begin.  
Or perhaps it was my daydreams, now turned real,  
Forced into reality by a community's zeal.  
Maybe it was the silence I enjoyed as I sat alone in the lunchroom,  
As I wrote poetry, absorbing the presence of those  
Who wanted a piece of me that I couldn't provide,  
Because my energy told the world I was not worthy of a presence.

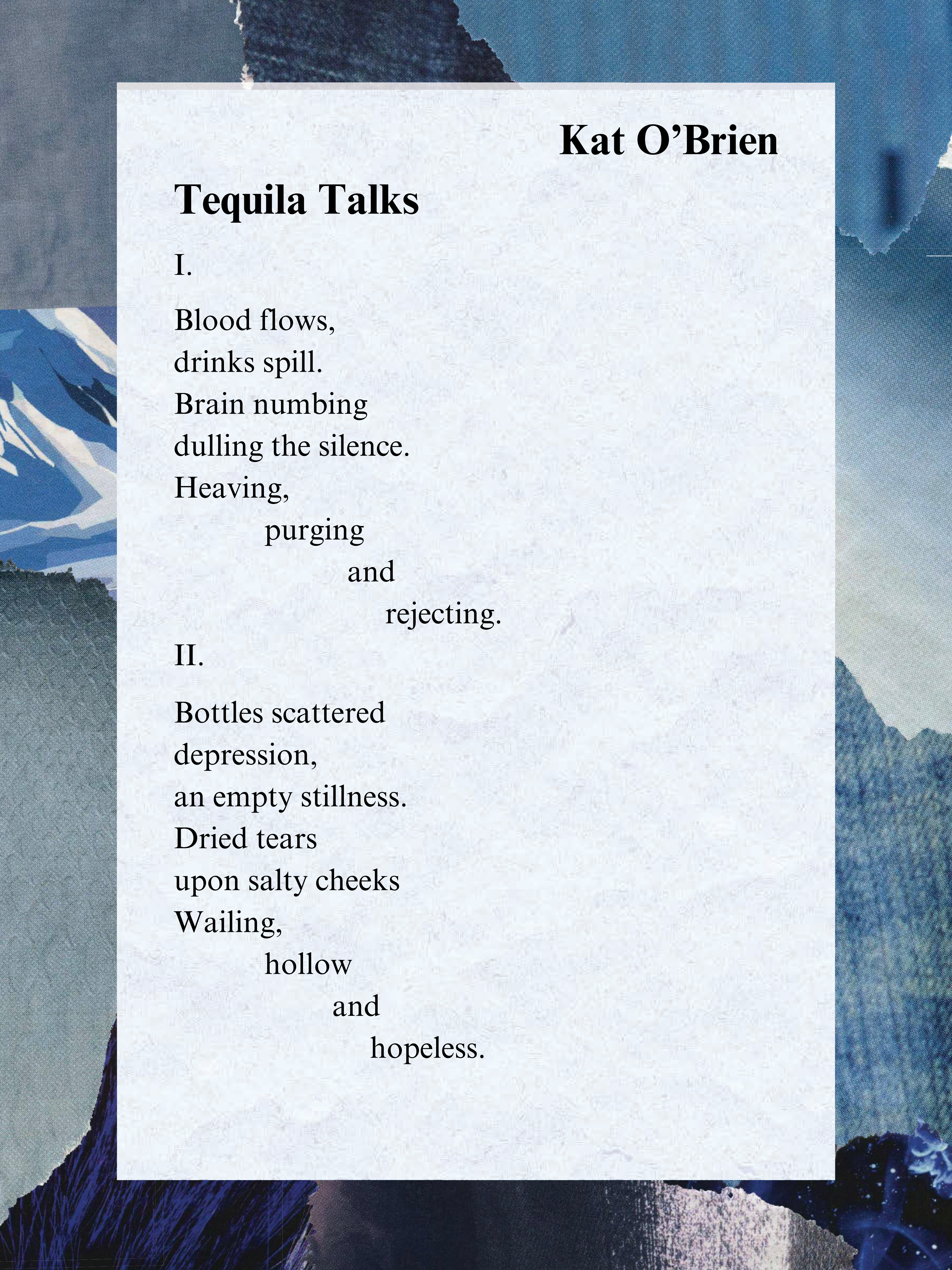


# **My Weary Soul**



**Theresa Lewis**





Kat O'Brien

## Tequila Talks

I.

Blood flows,  
drinks spill.  
Brain numbing  
dulling the silence.  
Heaving,  
        purging  
                and  
                        rejecting.

II.

Bottles scattered  
depression,  
an empty stillness.  
Dried tears  
upon salty cheeks  
Wailing,  
        hollow  
                and  
                        hopeless.





III.

Voices

loud,

keening –

ever present

ever changing.

Cacophonies,

shrieking

and

melancholic.

IV.

Tequila,

never friends

always foes.

Finally,

calmness

and

peace.





Tyson Berardo

## Ode to Student Teaching

the day begins abruptly  
—weary—half-awake  
desperately clutching a redbull  
in this dazed state

talking about *hamlet*  
and tons of soliloquies  
for a group of zombies  
that wish you hadn't woken them up

it flips to yet another group  
of groggy-eyed ogres  
who grumble when i plead: “who wants to read!?”  
the answer—simple as *odysseus*' retort: *no man!*  
...either that or they keep staring into space—what  
mastery it takes to sleep with your eyes open

though it is just as hard  
to stand in front of the room  
as it is to sit at a desk on zoom  
maybe a second redbull can end this doom?

though preparing is tougher  
researching—writing—rambling  
fumbling out words that sound like lesson planning  
instead of this insanity that i am feeling



the lesson begins to get the better of me  
pausing—pacing—pleading  
for the word that has hightailed it out of my head  
—i stammer

confidence begins to waiver  
like *a raisin in the sun*—  
THIS LESSON IS DRY  
please won't you give it some flavor?

still—no matter how desperate  
sometimes it can be worth it  
when somebody snickers  
at something stupid i said

energy somehow found  
—from the third redbull—no doubt  
crumpled up pages soar through the air  
hilarious insults hurled here and there

the underscore of a chuckle  
so sly and subtle  
about sister shakespeare's inclusion of words  
never intended for the walls of a classroom

the good days go by—  
in the blink of an eye  
can't help but wonder why  
i have to say —goodbye



Matthew Lowke

## The Writer's Process of Grief

It's a new day—

I want desperately to write something witty or  
profound

—*dare I say—wittily profound—*

& despite swallowing my pride—down with  
yesterday's takeout—

burned-up together with three-fingers of Jack

—my fingers still seize-up upon connecting with the  
keyboard

So I tried using my head to express my words instead  
—

as maybe a more forceful approach to drafting is key

Indenting my face into A-Z yielded something alright  
—

the perfection that is—

LKJAhaJSdsFDShdsalfafalkdadsfdsa

—as well as another trip to Best Buy

& a lesson on skimping on the warranty

...



Okay—

It's a new week with a new keyboard—  
*plus—half-off—half a cursed typewriter*  
—with some new wording to click-off my fingers  
as I took a Webster's Dictionary  
—& an Oxford for good measure  
& tossed them into a food processor—  
*add 1 oz of kale—avocado—and some Elmer's glue*  
—then I drank it all down in a glug or two

Unfortunately—

I had little time with my Reader's Digest—  
as by total mystery I found myself bowing before  
the ivory throne  
—seeing mushy page after page—swirled away  
An unfathomably unfortunate sacrifice to the  
writer's process

.....

FUCK!—



It's a new month with a new grievance  
—& I still haven't churned out shit  
yet still I sit on my ass typing  
Maybe I'd do better typing with my rear at this rate

So I sat on the keyboard—incubating my words  
eating some cup-noodles & watching the words spell-  
out—  
a no-doubt profound message of cosmic greatness

& so—

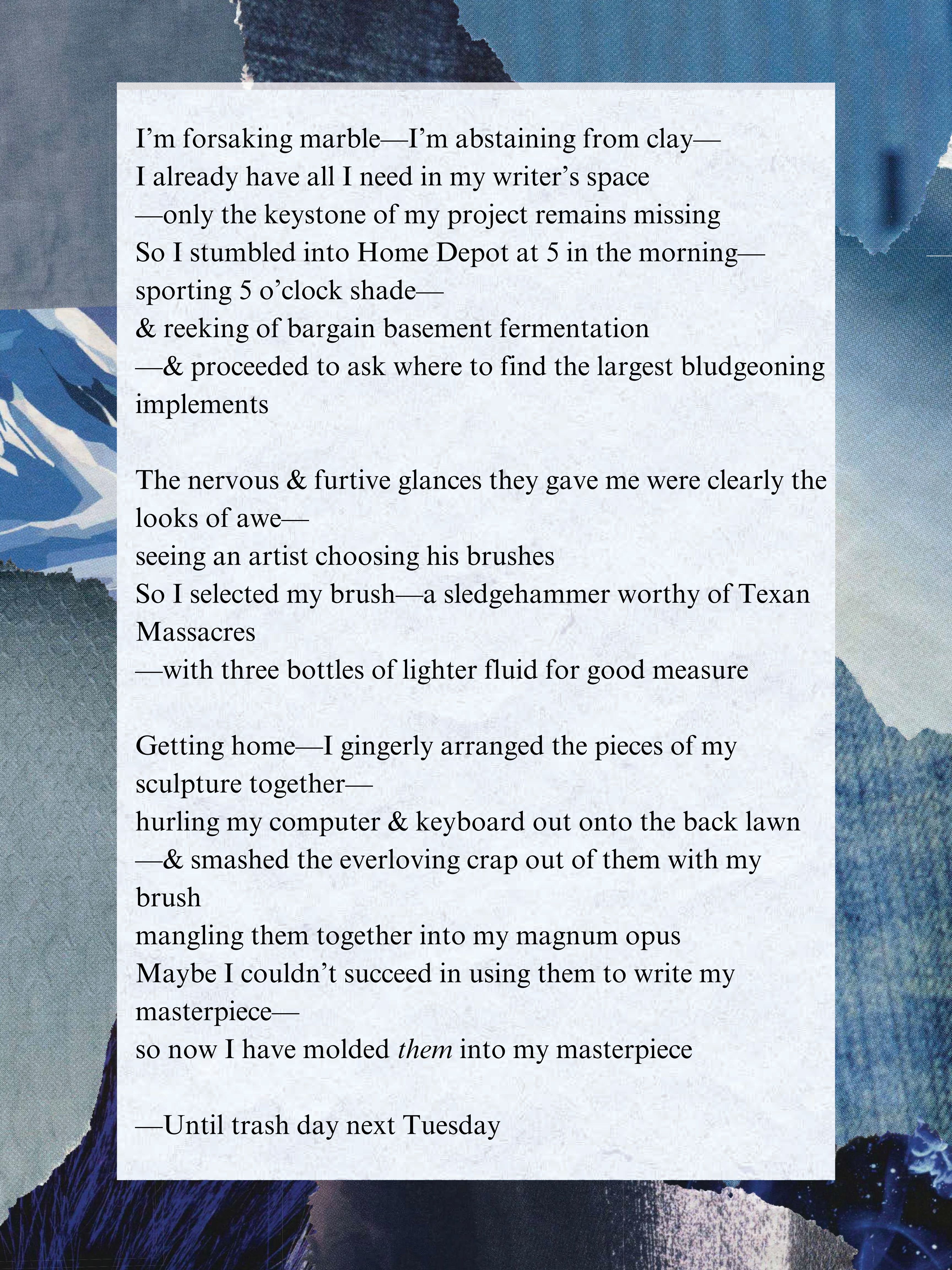
Upon removing myself from my keys—my screen  
beheld to me—  
*you have a fat ass dude—quit with the cheese!*

.....

FUCKINGSHITFUCKSFUCKITYFUCK!!!—

Six months now  
I'm beginning to think that maybe writing isn't for me  
—  
but my muse hasn't abandoned me quite yet  
—so I'm moving onto avant-garde sculpture





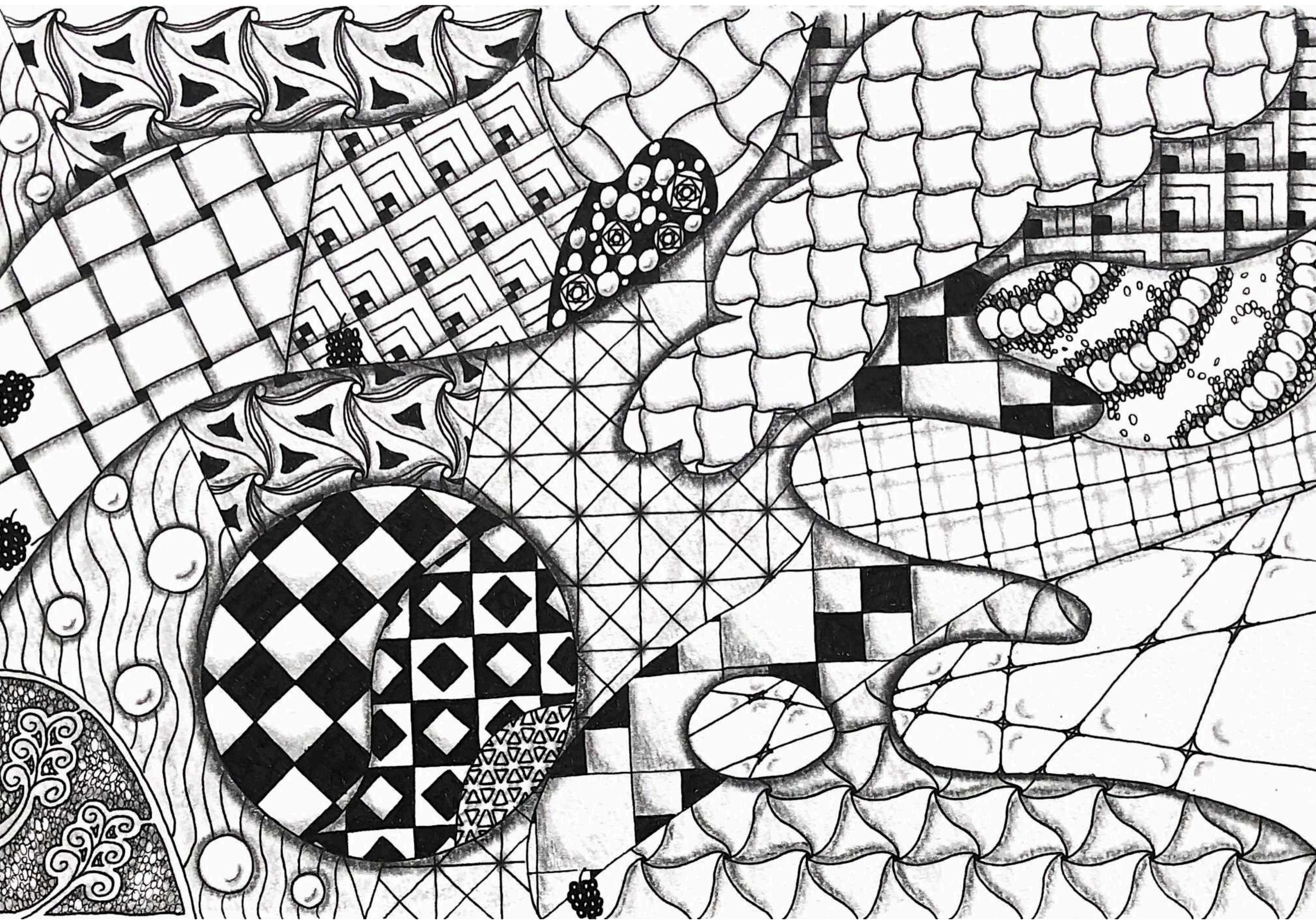
I'm forsaking marble—I'm abstaining from clay—  
I already have all I need in my writer's space  
—only the keystone of my project remains missing  
So I stumbled into Home Depot at 5 in the morning—  
sporting 5 o'clock shade—  
& reeking of bargain basement fermentation  
—& proceeded to ask where to find the largest bludgeoning  
implements

The nervous & furtive glances they gave me were clearly the  
looks of awe—  
seeing an artist choosing his brushes  
So I selected my brush—a sledgehammer worthy of Texan  
Massacres  
—with three bottles of lighter fluid for good measure

Getting home—I gingerly arranged the pieces of my  
sculpture together—  
hurling my computer & keyboard out onto the back lawn  
—& smashed the everloving crap out of them with my  
brush  
mangling them together into my magnum opus  
Maybe I couldn't succeed in using them to write my  
masterpiece—  
so now I have molded *them* into my masterpiece  
  
—Until trash day next Tuesday



# Choko Natto



Sumika Arakawa





**Zaa'min Jones**

## **Clouded Mind**

At night I try to go to sleep having a lot on my mind  
Most likely thinking about tomorrow's time.  
The noise of the future clouds my mind.  
Noisy fog, hawking the time.  
Controlling things out of my control, I lost track of time.  
Brainstorms fill a tub of uncertainty  
Even in a quiet room there is  
never really a moment of silence  
In the noisiness of sleep.





**Destiny Taliaferro**

## **This House Is Haunted**

This house is haunted  
Haunted by younger versions of me  
who i could've been what i could've done  
My inner child constantly follows me around  
asking me if we could do something fun  
she possesses me during certain times of neglect  
it's what's most familiar to her, like there's nothing left  
i sense my inner child in the room where i sleep  
when i receive flashbacks of things that make me cry  
from my childhood when i used to want to die  
as a child i would think it'd be easier to not exist  
sometimes these memories or thoughts tend to shift  
they shift to the most recent parts of my brain  
causing me to to endure the pain  
my inner child never gets enough sleep  
her mind never shuts off which causes me to weep  
sometimes i cry myself to bed  
when thinking about what someone else said  
whether it was last month, a few years ago, or today  
these past feelings never seem to go away  
— i need to heal this ghost inside me



# **Ta’Nasha Samuels Wilkerson**

## **The Valley**

She was a lady of the valley  
Heartbreak lingers, drowning in sorrow's alley  
She was just like me  
She was a sweet young thing  
Her hair was dark as the dawn  
When you cried her name  
Now you can't escape from the shackles that she faked  
When the rain falls  
And the rain falls down to my face  
Please come rescue me  
I feel the pain on my skin  
In my soul's darkness, there's no light to embrace





**Zaa'min Jones**

**Stuck in my mind**

**after “The Longest Day of the Year”**

**by Louis Frantino**

The eye-shaped lamp beaming like the sun  
after a long day trapped in with no fun.  
Seeing I am so bored out my mind  
with nothing moving but the time.  
I tried everything  
but found nothing to do  
I stay stuck in the house  
like my body has glue to the couch  
Glued to the floors, stuck to the table I stay stuck in  
the house mentally unstable.  
My thoughts are weary, no one can hear me  
no one else to talk to just me and misery.  
I stare, I think, I do not blink  
I sit in silence while my thoughts loose like a sink.  
My recycled thoughts ping and pong playing over and  
over like a favorite song.  
Playing over and over again.



# **Drown The Noise**



**Viviana Vargas**





**Mia Testa**

## **Keys**

How do you manage  
to hide behind that mask?

Filled with deception and mockery,  
coined to trick fools like myself.

You once held the keys  
that unlocked the power of my deepest vulnerabilities.

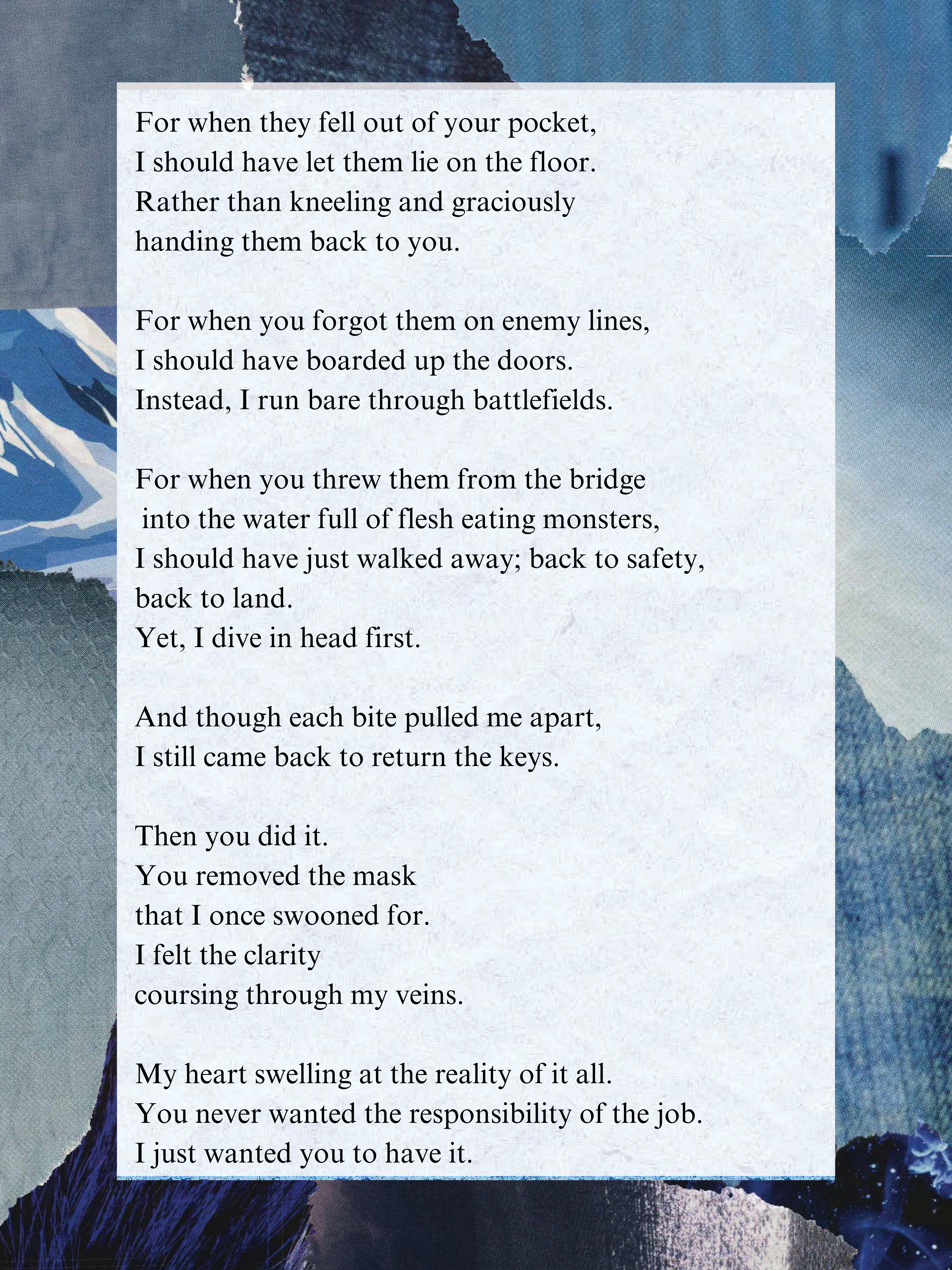
To truly and fully love,  
and to truly and fully be loved.

It's a small job  
of many responsibilities.

Yet still you lose them.  
It's okay though, dear friend.

You kept them in your possession  
longer than anticipated.





For when they fell out of your pocket,  
I should have let them lie on the floor.  
Rather than kneeling and graciously  
handing them back to you.

For when you forgot them on enemy lines,  
I should have boarded up the doors.  
Instead, I run bare through battlefields.

For when you threw them from the bridge  
into the water full of flesh eating monsters,  
I should have just walked away; back to safety,  
back to land.  
Yet, I dive in head first.

And though each bite pulled me apart,  
I still came back to return the keys.

Then you did it.  
You removed the mask  
that I once swooned for.  
I felt the clarity  
coursing through my veins.

My heart swelling at the reality of it all.  
You never wanted the responsibility of the job.  
I just wanted you to have it.





**Kaylee Davis**

## **Never Stop Saying “I Love You”**

I didn't know much about my identity coming into high school. But in high school, all you want to do is fit in. You never realized the danger behind it all until it comes to an end. High school parties, football games, Instagram followers, trying to become one of the popular kids. This meant never saying no. Do you want to come party with us this weekend? Do you want to try this, do you want to try that? There was never a moment to say no because you had to say yes to fit in. To be them, to be popular. That's all you ever wanted, that's all anyone ever wanted at 16. But what do we know at a young age, all we ever wanted was our peers' approval. So we did that, we went out on those party nights, we did things we wanted to say "no" to but felt like "yes" was the only right option.

My friends and I wanted to be popular. This was the identity I chased after. We wanted that approval every high school student begged for. So we went for it. We went to the parties, we tried this and that, and we never said no. We were now “cool”, everyone knew us because we went to the parties we were known for the wrong reasons. But this was us becoming popular. It was a group of us who loved the satisfaction of other people's opinions and invites. We didn't care about what we were doing, saying or acting. Because we were popular. We became followers. I became a follower. But then it became addicting. The fun, the people, the noticeability from others, it was like a drug, even with the drugs. Every night was a yes night.



But one night I decided to say no. And my friends still said yes. This night was different. I stayed in to get some homework done. I was trying to become responsible again like I was before all the partying and the madness. That night, I remember my friends FaceTiming me when they were getting ready to go out. I felt jealous in a way, but I knew I was so behind in my school work I had to stay in. After they hung up I don't remember if I told them "I love you" or not. This party wasn't supposed to be a big one, so that was another reason I decided to stay in. But my mind wasn't ready to hear the news I got the next day. I got a phone call. "She passed away last night. Kaylee, she overdosed on something. What happened, what happened to my sister!" She cried to me. My heart dropped, I didn't realize what actually was being said to me. I was in shock. "What happened?" I asked myself. I wasn't there, I wasn't with her. I fell to the ground. I cried and cried. I couldn't even express to my parents how I was feeling, because I couldn't even feel. I was numb. She was not supposed to leave just yet. We were just kids.

She is Emily, aka Em. She had the most amazing smile, laugh, humor, the best person to ask advice to, the one who would tell you if your outfit looked good or not. Em was the one who wanted everyone to be happy. She was the one who pieced all the friends together. The girl who wanted to be popular. Em never made it past 16. This night was one I regret the most. My mind races and I question everything. What if I said yes? Why was it that out of all nights, I stayed in? Or maybe God told me to stay back for a reason. What happened that night? What did she take?



Drugs ruined her and so many others. Em wasn't meant to leave. Who gave her these pills? Who offered them to her? Why didn't she say no? My next question to myself was "how can I help now?" This is when I decided to spend almost every day with her family. I told them I used to go out with her and do a lot of partying where there was drinking and smaller drugs like weed and nicotine involved. It was never supposed to get this far, and never was it supposed to be this way.

After long days and nights with her family, her boyfriend started coming by. This is where the story starts to get interesting. I personally didn't like him, and after that night, I despised him even more. There were so many rumors going around saying he gave her the drugs. There were many more going around saying it was our friends. So obviously Em's parents didn't want this guy around. He and I talked, and it started becoming more clear on who actually was at that party, and what actually happened that night. He was there. He was with her. He knew what happened. But was it a lie? Was he hiding something? These were some questions I had about the night. He admitted he knew who gave her the drugs. And this was 2 weeks after her passing. He admitted it was his friend. He was told it was just a Xanax. It was more than that. Em took what she thought was Xanax. It was laced with fentanyl.

"Pills, they kill". He didn't take this saying seriously enough. I know he regrets a lot. But I don't think I can ever forgive him. I still have regret in my mind about what if I was there, would I have had the chance to save her? Or could have it been me? He



shouldn't have let her take it, she overdosed under his care and eyes. This will probably be something that won't ever be forgotten. His friend ended up getting in trouble with the law and it gave justice to the family. But at the end of the day, Em is not coming back. Her smile will now forever be in our pictures, memories and hearts.

I struggled a lot understanding what happened that night. I struggled with who I was as a person. I used this as an excuse to keep partying. I didn't like where I was going with myself in life. And even after this happened, every major incident in my life that happened that ended up being traumatic to me, I used it as an excuse to party. All I wanted to do was drink, to go out, and feel like I had no responsibilities. I would party to forget. This is what my identity was starting to be like. It took me a while to get out of my head to understand everything happens for a reason, and I don't have to ruin myself because of events occurring in my life. I can do better, I can be better for me and others around me. This is where I learned to love myself because of this experience. I have to keep those memories with me and work on myself everyday to be better, and love those around me because you never know where and when you'll ever be in this place in your life again. So enjoy every moment.



This experience made me realize the little things in life that make the most of everything. After that night, I always said “I love you” to all my friends. Because you never know when it's the last time you'll ever talk to them again. This also improved my social awareness with everyone. I want everyone to be safe, and know who they are with during “fun times” because actions have consequences. And it took a while for me to realize. But always remember to tell your friends and family you love them, because you never know when it will be the last time they'll be able to say it back.

Going through the “no responsibilities phase”, I wanted to change who I was, but I didn't know how. I realized to appreciate every moment with these people. It made me realize things about myself as well. I am kind. I am a good friend. I am more than what people think about me. I am more than a girl who wants to be cool and popular. I am still developing who I am, and I don't need to try to become someone I'm not. I struggled to realize this. I was hard on myself within this incident and every one after it. I'm still growing within who I am, and accepting certain things in life as they go on. I am now at an acceptance with myself and her passing. She now has God by her side, and she is watching over everyone now.

I love you Em, forever and always.





**A'quilnasha Jordan**

## **This Is How It Will All End**

I notice a storm heading our way  
The dark grey clouds over our heads  
Seems like it's taking days  
I can't help but wonder  
Is this how it will end?  
My life feels like a long, lonely winter  
And the seasonal depression intensifies day by day  
I can see the sadness it's insane  
It begins to clear  
As I begin to fear  
And I question  
Is this how it will end?

As each night comes and I have to sleep alone  
with no one by my side  
My dog keeps me company and snuggles  
with me as emotional support  
To bring a morning to watch the kids  
make snow angels on a February snow day  
As I await my happily ever after  
Until the snow melts and the grass is greener  
on the other side  
This is how it will all end



# The Path of No Beginning Nor End



Zavier Bell





**Kat O'Brien**

## **The Smell of People's Houses**

I find that the smell of people's houses  
Told a lot about their cooking and baking.  
Their hearts poured out into the soup simmering on the stovetop  
Blood, sweat and tears placed achingly gently into the cupcakes cooling  
on the counter.  
The smell of people's houses showed their hard work,  
Their minimal work.  
Kids lined up at the countertop to show their gratitude in chowing down  
Filling their hungry little bellies with comfort foods.  
The smell of people's houses accentuates what kind of spices they use  
Certain people's houses smell like nothing,  
like mine unless there's a burned hamburger sitting on the table.  
The smell wafting up the stairs, making its way into the bathroom.



## **I'll Love You Til It Hurts**

A love like yours will always end with me  
Begging for you to  
Choose me and you refuse which leads to me  
Driving myself crazy and always living in  
Envy of her and all the other girls you  
Fuck around town with, in plain sight  
Giving them the treatment I wish you'd give me which is  
Haunting me and my spirit constantly and  
I would give anything in this world  
Just to be the one you give your everything to,  
Killing me softly with your song or whatever  
Lauryn Hill said when she still sang with the Fugees  
Making me suffer through this like I don't exist, like I'm  
Nothing if I don't have you and your constant attention and devotion  
Only having eyes for you and having this urge to constantly  
Please you and only you  
Questioning whether or not I'm going insane  
Reevaluating what we we have going on and if this is a  
Situation that's good for either or of us or even worth  
Trying over anymore and feeling absolutely  
Useless over my feelings for you and trying to reject the  
Venom of this toxic relationship and constantly  
Wondering if this is something that I'll ever be able to recover from and if  
we will ever go back to being  
Xenial with each other and keep one another at arms length instead of  
chest to chest  
Yearning and longing to be with you, to be held by you and having the most  
Zealous pursuit of having what I imagine to be a perfect life with you.





**Tyrese Conover**

## **Untitled**

In the hustle of life, we often forget,  
To pause, breathe, and let our minds reset  
We chase our dreams with relentless pace,  
Forgetting to enjoy the present space  
Hustle hard, but remember to find,  
Moments of joy, peace of mind  
For life is momentary, and time is short,  
Make each moment a vibrant fort  
In the rush to achieve and to win,  
Don't lose the beauty that lies within  
Enjoy the moment let it last,  
For tomorrow is never and time is past





Sydney Salomon

## A Million Letters with One Message

the sky rises for **you** to shine another day  
because you **are** worthy of life  
as your beauty radiates brighter than **the** sun  
take my hand and let me guide you to **paradise**  
to show you what **you** have been searching for  
through others who do not **have**  
what you **always** needed because  
it has been within yourself if you **wanted**  
to find **it** through faith and belief



**Ashley Joseph**

## **A Graduation Celebration?**

A Graduation Celebration?

A hot summer day, waves of heat

Beaming through the windows from all over the house

Covering my eyes as I walk outside to greet everyone

Did I miss summer?

Everything sizzling to the touch, even the leather seats

Forgot how bad it can truly get dealing with life in the heat

Gathering everyone outside, oh how excited should I be

How everyone comes together in this very place to see me.

How they come together to celebrate me

I can't get myself to stop overthinking

Just waiting for someone, anyone to notice, and help me snap out of it

Knocking over the happy thoughts are thoughts of worry and fear. They constantly overburden me

Loudly, I finally say. Does anyone even see me?

Many turn to face me, their faces in shock and confusion

Now that I have your attention. Does anyone even see me?

Oh how I have been wanting your attention



Oh how in distress I am. How worried and scared I am of this new chapter.

Put aside the happy thoughts, the delusional, and allow reality to sink in  
Quiet they all stand facing me, not a murmur I hear

Ready? I say to myself in my head. I am ready to speak the truth

Slowly I state my worries and concerns, all my emotions come pouring out

Thoughts consist of, what will happen if I don't succeed?

Thoughts of what will happen when things get too hard? What if...

Upon finishing my sentence, my friends step in to comfort me

Veronica, we will be here with you. No matter how far you are or how late in the night it is. We will be here for you

What ifs, they explain to me, don't exist when surrounded by those who love and care for you

'Xactly what I needed to hear!

Yes, how I wished their words would truly bring me comfort and peace

Yes, how much better do I feel knowing I am surrounded by those who love me.

Zero worries or fears. I am surrounded by those who love me whether I am far or near.



# 501st Legion Clone Trooper Carving



Frank DeRogatis





# Elisha Rockson

-after Robert Frost's "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening"

## Disturbed Love

Whose love is that? I think I know.

Its owner is quite angry though.

She was cross like a dark potato.

I watch her pace. I cry hello.

She gives her love a shake,

And screams I've made a bad mistake.

The only other sound's the break,

Of distant waves and birds awake.

The love is petty, dishonest, and deep,

But she has promises to keep,

Tormented with nightmares she never sleeps.

Revenge is a promise a girl should keep.

She rises from her cursed bed,

With thoughts of violence in her head,

A flash of rage and she sees red.

Without a pause I turned and fled.





**Katherine Morales**

## **To My Dad**

Only a dad with a bond of love  
Only a dad who worries  
Only a dad who overreacts  
Only a dad who doesn't  
Know much about being a girl dad  
But taught me how to dream  
And reach for the sky,  
To stand tall and spread my wings

And fly

Only a dad who taught me  
How to be treated  
Like a princess  
And with respect  
Only a dad who's trying to learn  
Not only a dad learning how  
To raise a girl  
To become a woman  
But who gives his all  
And does everything to keep  
His only treasure happy and safe  
And give his most for her to be  
Successful in life  
And become something  
Beautiful and Amazing





Ashley Joseph

## Did You Leave Because of Me?

Did you leave because of me?  
Was it something I said, or failed to do?  
The mornings and nights filled with laughter and joy  
Were they not enough?  
My constant questions of worry and delusion  
Did it become too much?  
Memories fading like echoes, but yet I still remember  
I remember the long conversations about the future  
The feeling of relief having someone to lean on  
Whispers of love lost, fragile in its might.  
Do you yearn for me?  
The winds of change have carried you far  
But do you think of me in the darkest hour?  
How I ache for your embrace  
Was I ever enough?  
The truth, they say, will set you free  
But what about me?  
Those nights of tender love  
The gentle touch I felt when you were near  
Did you leave because of me?



# Untitled



Isa Muhammad



**A'quilnasha Jordan**

## **Hair Poem**

My hair, your hair, our hair  
Do you remember your hair brush days just  
Singing in the mirror  
Day after day  
Each glorious silky curl and wave  
Enveloping your cheeks and eyelashes  
The memory of you brushing it .... softly  
As it swings softly to the back of your head and neck  
My hair, your hair, our hair  
My hair shrinks when wet  
Like pine cones in autumn  
A girl whose hair flows like a black river  
Getting ready to walk outside with so much beauty  
With one last kiss to the mirror  
My hair, your hair, our hair





# Theresa Marie Lewis

## My Psalm

Ashes to Ashes,  
Dust to dust,  
From whence we were created,  
We shall return.

At least that is the lesson left for  
Sunday mornings.  
Wednesday evenings were dedicated for something else,  
Something greater,  
Something grander,  
Someone brighter than this.

Ash, painted on foreheads once a year,  
Ash, slipped through my fingers multiple times that year.  
Dust, filling in the in-between  
This life and the next.  
Wondering what will come next after the dust settled.



Ashes turned to dust  
Collecting my tears into capsules  
Tasting sweeter with honey,  
Than the heartache I'm served.

Ashes to ashes,  
Complementing each other  
Like the bride *adorned* for her groom,  
Like the church preparing its Holy arrival,  
Like the Lord standing outstretched  
For me to return to my beginning.  
Before it all turns into dust,  
Before my soul is scorched from  
Grief's debris.

At least that's the idea of it, right?  
Piece together all that is broken before the timer runs out.  
At another point in time, the conclusion was reached  
That we all came from it.

Ashes to ashes,  
Dust to dust.  
Existing only for one purpose.  
To be cleansed from oneself  
If only for a moment  
Before it all blows away.

*Selah.*



# Fall at Saint E's



**Kathy Francis**





**Lucas Aquino**

## **Thai Iced Tea**

When it comes to food, there might have been something that attracted me at a young age. It might have been the aroma of the fresh A/C, which pushed the breeze of the scented air into my face, followed by the wonderful fragrance of these exotic dishes which to my eyes I've not averted just yet. Yet my father pointed to a diamond shaped table towards the back corner of that restaurant, and then, to the delight of my eyes, I knew I could keep coming back to this place, with a peculiar smile on my face. No negativity, only an intrigued sense and awe of what was about to be placed in front of me.

But with every entree must come an appetizer. Who made this rule? Who dictates when I can eat a certain meal before I proceed to stuff my face with the next? The wonderful thing about rules is that they can be broken, mended, and habituated to the extent of your innermost desires, or in this case, your palette, because I am very hungry as I'm writing this. My father ordered something which I have never even thought of imagining, as it was a rather silky and glowing orange/yellow plate of noodles, coupled with vegetables and other toppings.



As I proceeded to try whatever was on that plate, to my surprise, it was almost as if a sort of innate feeling was putting a pause to my tastes. Years later, I ended up liking that dish, but to my dismay, there was nothing else that I was missing, for my parents were going to be ordering my food for me, so I was very excited; the suspense was trying to drown me in these aromas.

At last, my sister and I got a shared platter of chicken fingers and french fries, what seemed to be the most basic food selection of all time in American restaurants, was something that was out of this world for me. And don't get me wrong, I've had my fair share of fast food selections, and yogurts and all that (I was around 10 years old during this time, so I had a limited variety of food selections during this time), but this had to be the best chicken fingers and french fries I've ever had in my life. I didn't really eat much of it, but I couldn't say that it was the thing that attracted me the most. It was something that I had before I even started to figure out what my parents were going to order.

It was the Thai Iced Tea.

That sold it for me.



# Calvary



# Theresa Lewis





**Madison Dodds**

## **A Trip to See the Gilmores**

**After “Where You Lead” by Carole King”**

“Where you lead, I will follow anywhere that you tell me to”  
down the streets of Stars Hollow  
the little town we know and love  
where friends turn into family  
Taylor is always cooking up a new idea  
and Kirk always has a new job  
so let's take a trip  
to see  
the Gilmore Girls

“Where you lead, I will follow anywhere that you tell me to”  
to Luke's diner  
where Lorelai fell in love  
with a man in a backwards baseball hat  
who pined for her  
for 8 years  
through endless failed relationships  
and her coffee addiction  
a real life rom com



“Where you lead, I will follow anywhere that you tell me to”  
to New Haven we go  
stealing yachts,  
writing for the Yale Daily News,  
and falling in love  
again  
but this time  
the love is real

“Where you lead, I will follow anywhere that you tell me to”  
to the house  
that the girls have made a home  
all by themselves  
through their love and laughter  
and endless amounts of takeout from Al's Pancake World  
which ironically doesn't sell pancakes,  
and coffee,  
lots of coffee  
Did I mention these girls drink way too much coffee?

“Where you lead, I will follow anywhere that you tell me to”  
to Richard and Emily's  
for Friday night dinners  
to repair a relationship  
broken by society  
and beyond repair  
so,  
let's turn on the tv  
and take a trip  
to Stars Hollow  
and always follow  
“where you lead”



## **My 9/11 Story**

Think about this month, date, and year. My parents wake up at 7:00am to go to work every day. My mom worked at one of the Twin Towers, I do not remember which floor she worked in. Not only did my mom have to work, I was in my mom's womb. Think about the pain she had to go through. She worked in a peaceful space until 8:14am. She didn't know why people were running, jumping out the windows, and screaming. My mom of course ran and she called my father because even my father did not know what was going on either until he turned on the news and saw what was happening. My father drove his car to go get my mom out of the Twin Towers because all the trains were closed. My father parked his car in the parking lot and ran to the Twin Towers, and my father said, "Stop running." My father picked her up and rescued her from the smoke that was coming from the Twin Towers. My mom prayed to God for her and my father and me to make it out safely. She closed her eyes while my father was still running and carrying her. My mom opened her eyes, saw the outside, and my father. My father cried because he thought that both of them would not survive this traumatic experience. More than that, they thought I was never going to be born, so they cried and prayed because that was only what they could do. The firefighters and the police officers asked both of them if they were okay. My mom responded, "I felt so scared until my husband came and rescued me from an endgame." One of the police officers said, "Your husband is a real hero." My father replied, "Thank you officer," and my parents drove back home. When they got back home, my father asked, "Is the baby ok?" My mom replied, "Yes the baby is fine. She has been kicking and moving in my stomach." October 14th, 2001 came, they went to the hospital and I was freshly born. My parents cried with happiness and joy because God was on their side the whole time and they believed that a miracle can happen to a person when they pray on it. Now, since I am turning 22 in 2 weeks, hearing the story from my parents for the first time, I never knew that a traumatic experience can affect you even when you think about it and imagine it.



# Stairs at the Motherhouse



**Kathy Francis**



**Emily Cruz-Gil**

## **My Poem of Protest**

I am told to be proud of who I am  
To be proud to come from descendants of Latin roots  
To live in a country that values its different cultures  
Yet myself and fellow Latinos are outcast on multiple occasions  
I see on social media, news channels, and Facebook a lot of lost love  
Being told to go back to our country yet some us were born here  
I have been told to speak English before while on the phone  
with a friend  
I have been given nasty looks before while helping customers  
find products  
I have seen how the country treats immigrants old and young  
I see how we still love this country because even though there are many  
who do not like us  
There are more who do

I am proud to be Latina  
I am proud to come from descendants of Latin roots  
I am proud to speak a language that is considered a Romance language  
I am proud to be hanging my flag for all to see



## **Ode Poems**

Oh, my dear friend, how you shine so bright,  
A beacon of joy in my life's darkened night  
Your laughter echoes, a melodious tune,  
Lifting my spirits, like the rising moon.  
Your unwavering support, a constant embrace,  
Guides me through life's trials, with a gentle grace  
Your wisdom, a compass, points me true,  
Reminding me always, of what I can do  
A true companion, a kindred spirit found,  
Your presence, a blessing, on this earthly ground  
I'm grateful to know you, my treasured friend,  
Our bond, a connection, that will never end

Oh, driver of the road, your car a chariot,  
Transporting us swiftly without a care  
Your skilled hands guiding the wheel with might,  
Navigating the streets with utmost care  
Your knowledge of the city, a map in your mind,  
Effortlessly guiding us to our destination  
Your friendly demeanor, a comfort to find,  
Easing our journey with warm conversation.  
You are the unsung hero of our daily commute,  
Providing a service that we so often pursue  
For this, we thank you, our Uber driver so astute,  
Your role in our lives, is truly worth its due



# GENESIS DESTRUCTION COVER



Zavier Bell



**Jasanny De Leon**

## **Ode to Jasa's Body**

I've had the most grueling relationship with you. Not with my first boyfriend, or my last, not with my mother or my father but with my own body. I've worked so hard to accept things about you that can only change if I do the work myself. I've worked hard to be able to look at you during the day, in different kinds of clothes, different kinds of colors, different kinds of states and angles. We're like sisters who can't stand each other and yet can't be apart from each other. I compliment you, then you compliment me and we live in harmony, and other days you give me hell because I had a craving for the wrong thing and caved in. One part is too big, another not big enough, this is squishy, this feels out of place, other days it all feels put together. I've always wondered what I looked like to others, is it the same overly critical way I look at myself? Or is it something people don't think twice about? Do they see the hair on the parts of my body that I don't think should have hair or the stretch marks on my shoulders and biceps when I wear a halter top? Or maybe they don't see any of it and just view me as a regular person.



**Katherine Morales**

## **Ode to a Best Friend**

How to explain  
This love for others  
For furry creatures  
For those who say  
It's just a pet  
Some will say to us  
But they love complete  
Until their dying day  
They know our love  
And love returns  
Stay by our sides  
Their memories learn  
To be our friend  
Is all they know  
To please and love  
And not let go  
They hold our hearts  
Give joy and laughter  
They romp and play  
Our lives surround  
Them



# Write Our Story



**Viviana Vargas**



**Kat O'Brien**

## **Ode to my former best friend/partner**

For the longest time,  
My phone would recommend your pictures to me  
What it didn't know was: you were no longer here.  
You weren't dead, you just no longer existed in my life  
You weren't the nicest person, but I attached myself to you  
anyway.  
You were a spider that wove its web around my head and my  
heart.

Yet, you saved me from myself  
You sat there in times of grief, hardship and flat out wallowing  
You heard that stupid theme song too many times to count  
You lit up my life like a damn firework and aimed it straight for  
my heart.

You promised me the world,  
You promised me everything.  
Did you really mean it?  
Obviously you didn't since I'm here and you're there.

You used to be on the forefront of my mind,  
Now you're just part of my melancholic memories.





**Jasanny De Leon**

## **The Hands That Feed**

A clean plate, and a full belly  
Comes at the cost of scorched and sliced fingers  
The endless need to satisfy everyone before yourself

Mixing, boiling, attending to so many things at once  
Making sure everything is perfect  
No one left hungry, no one left out

Everyone smiling, laughing, sharing  
Compliments left and right, a room filled with  
happiness and praise  
a full heart and nothing on your plate





**Elisha Rockson**

## **The Food Poem**

He gullibly ate the fake food  
Thinking that its quality was good  
Labeled with a bogus humus  
Food's packing too was a sham  
Then he was prescribed a fake drug  
By a doctor who was a thug  
In spite of that he was healed  
Because of his faith in food, doctor and pill.





# **SOCIAL JUSTICE COMPETITION WINNERS**

**April 2024**



## First Place in Literary Art

# Outcasted: Rejecting Silence and Recognizing the Need for Equity

Tyson Berardo

## The Wall of the Dead

the blank space seeps out—the in-between these pictures  
who is missing? *The Black Sheep*—the gaps of ancestry  
those left out—who are they? *The Bad Eggs*—crammed  
into corners—hiding among the history layered in pounds  
of dust—silencing their stories what did they do wrong? *The  
Ne'er-Do-Wells*—why aren't they on the wall? *The Good For  
Nothings*—the lost boys and girls—shunned by the rest—the  
so-called failures and accidents ignored too often and  
forgotten if possible why are they lost? *The Lowlifes*  
—why are they left behind? *Rejects*—while those gifted and  
grand are so proudly displayed like a report card on the fridge  
the hanging frames though clashing still are not cracked—  
yet the tattered frames and photos become quickly concealed  
—all those who are not the picture-perfect people the family  
forgets

*Outcasts*



Tyson Berardo

## what can You do?

After Stephen Laurence Shwartz and Alan Irwin Menken's *God Help The Outcasts*

i look to You—for what am i to do?  
i pray that You'll hear i begin to fear  
they need Your watchful eye—far more than i  
*hungry from birth    show them the mercy they don't find on earth*

helpless hopeless depraved—still need to be saved  
take action now—someday somehow  
all of the anguish Your son went through—to make life brand new  
makes me wonder about You—*were You once an outcast too?*

Your son is the one who showed how its done  
poor crippled lame blind—he was so kind  
myself i have tried still i need You to guide  
*i ask for nothing, i can get by—but i know so many less lucky than i*

looking for brevity in striving for equity  
please i pray for You to display  
the much needed aid for all those afraid  
*the poor and down trod    i thought we all were the children of God*



**Tyson Berardo**

## **laying the foundation**

### **After Rebekah Greer Melocik's Building Momentum**

*but the hardest part was to start—action aiding—lifting—  
lending a hand—where to begin? i know what i'll do—if you  
join me too—We can launch into serving—assisting—leveling  
the playing-field building a balance beam—with a few  
extra places to lean—can help us set in motion the steps they  
cry out for—reframing—regenerating—reinventing a life by  
giving attention to what needs improving—the unguarded  
others at the mercy of there must be a way—i know  
there is—start at the very beginning the first step to succeed  
is building momentum*



**First Place in Visual Art  
Banned in France, Burned in Iran:  
The Choice to Wear the Hijab**

**Amanda Pillati**





## **Second Place in Literary Art**

**Sydney Salomon**

### **The Ballads of Tragedy: America's School Shooting Saga (Excerpt)**

This just in:

Breaking news—

Three dead on a local college campus.

Now all rise for The Pledge of Allegiance.

I pledge allegiance to the guns of the United States of Shootings.

Drafted messages stay saved in my notes app on my phone.

If I am granted a few moments to send an “I love you” message to my parents

As I bleed away on a floor of other students

Whose eyes stare blankly into mine

As their final moments flash back to the best moments of their lives,

While mine remember how America never did anything to protect me.

As guns hold more popularity than the money in our pockets,

To be put towards the end of violence,

And as students in elementary school wave goodbye to their parents

At the morning bus stop to never come back,

I hold the same fate as I drive back to 2 Convent Road



from visiting my hometown  
On a Sunday night for a morning class, praying  
I won't be on the morning news, but it won't matter,  
Because it'll be another skipped episode of a student killed on  
school grounds,  
Since this has been our daily broadcast news for the past  
years.  
A female killed on school grounds,  
A Black female killed on school grounds,  
So my pillow kisses me to sleep as I endure the ticking clock  
of doom,  
And I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep.  
For if I die before I wake,  
I pray thee, Lord, to make the pain quick,  
Because that was always my fate.  
Debating to hold my nightly bathroom run,  
As I hear unfamiliar sounds in the hallway as a resident  
student,  
Until I realize that morning doesn't guarantee any safety  
either,  
Because "This Is America," as Childish Gambino assured.  
I have never heard the sound of gunshots in real life,  
But the sound of Fourth of July fireworks  
Is enough to wake me from my dreams after laying my body  
peacefully to rest at 10 pm  
In my O'Connor Hall dorm room, praying that the sound is  
just a hallucination  
And not the alarm to trigger my "how to stay alive with a  
shooter present" plan.



So give me a weapon and I will leave a legacy with some time to face,

But give me a pen only to plead for change to a nation that will do nothing,

And I will still wake up the next day with the same fate of being shot at school.

It's terrifying to know that my last breath may be as a student

Who sent a saved message to my loved ones,

Because today I am more likely to get shot in school than die any other way.

I think about dying more than I imagine myself graduating from college.

Will my final hours be lying in a pool of blood struggling to hit send

On the "I love you always" text to my family group chat,

As they bite their fingernails watching the news for updates

On rather how many students were found dead than safe and alive,

Because we are trained to expect the worst than hope for the best in America.

Will I die alone in my dorm with my door busted down?

Will the bullets that break through my window hit my heart to let me go beautifully?

Will I be with my best friend walking to the cafeteria and we lay together on the sidewalk?



As I bow for the home of the free and the land of the brave,

2

## Ballads of Tragedy

I wave my national anthem flag to my chest to be shot at as I  
walk outside,

To wrap the flag as the country it is over my wounded body in  
memory

Of not only the red stripes of the soldiers who fought and died  
for this nation,

But also the survivors of today's soldiers who are students  
protecting others

In school shootings whose tears bleed more blue than the red  
we have seen in years.

As gun laws weaken, the death toll for gun deaths rise.

The U.S. News stated that there were 346 school shooting  
incidents in 2023,

Which averages to nearly one incident every day.

California, Ohio, and Texas rank top for these incidents.

The nation must open its eyes to recognize that

Guns are the leading cause of death for American students

Before it is too late and we question where have all the children  
gone.

Every single human person has immeasurable dignity,

But our infinite worth is put to the test

Once a gun is pointed at our face,

And we finally know who is in control of our lives.

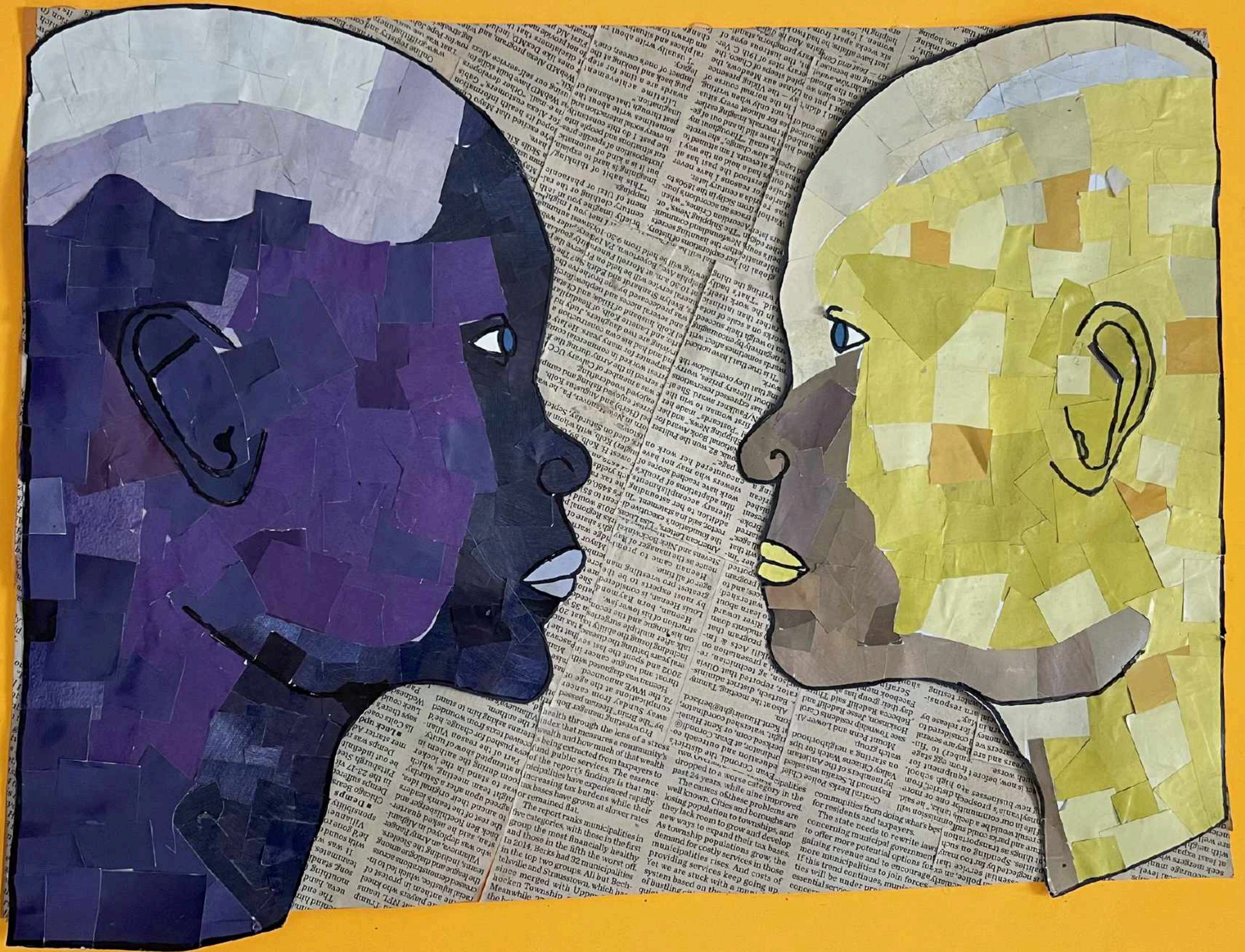
We claim that humans have unbreakable rights and significant  
responsibilities, [. . . .]

*For full ballad and Works Cited/Resources, please contact the English Department.*



# Second Place in Visual Art

## The Art of Perception



**Kristina Ashton**



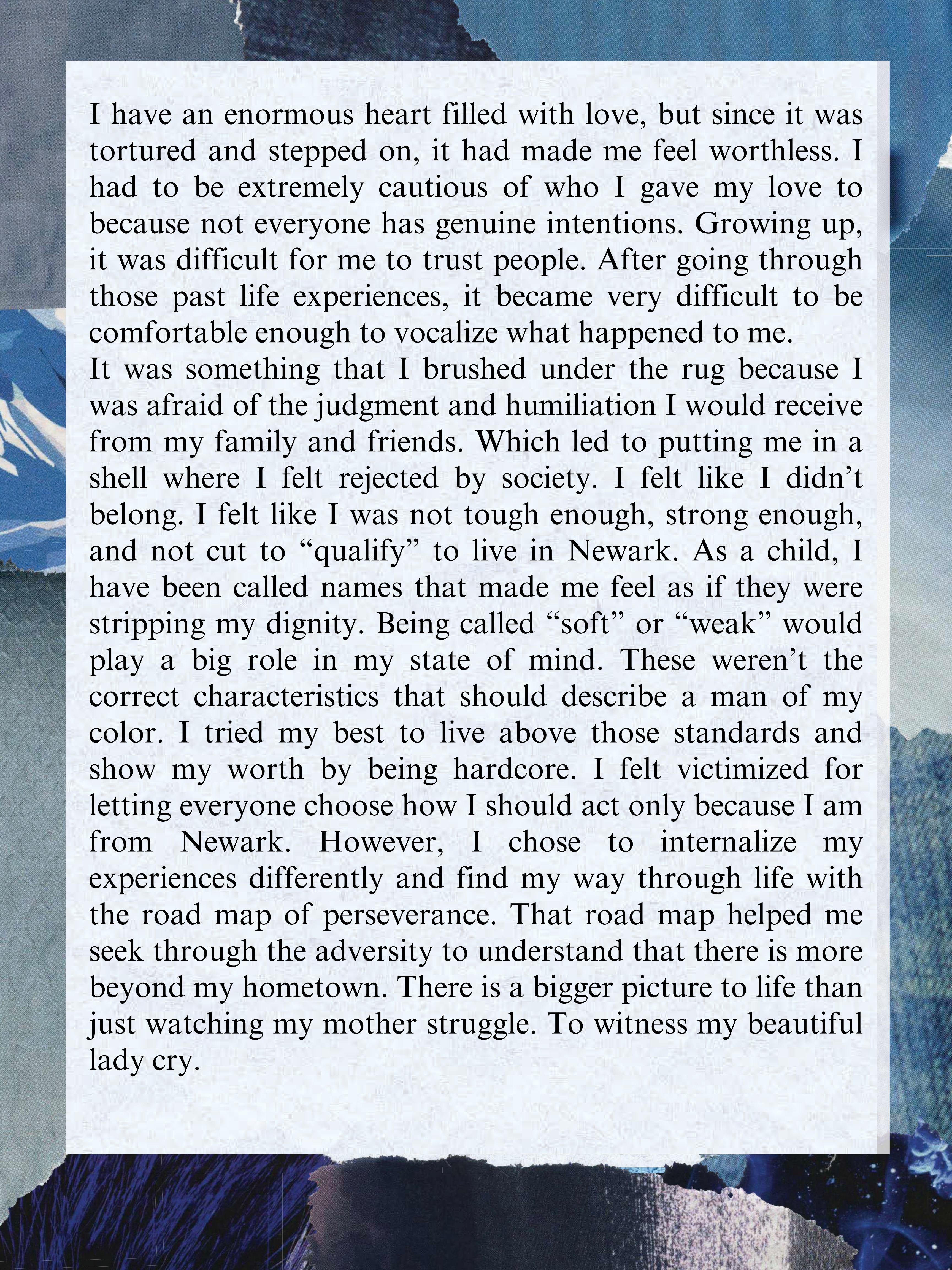
# Third Place in Literary Art

Zaa'min Jones

## My Purpose is My Road map

“The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain” - Dolly Parton. Being borned and raised in Newark, I always had to be on guard and in survival mode. Oftentimes as a child I felt helpless. For instance, when it came to being punished by my family for things that were out of my control, I felt defenseless and had no voice. It got to the point where I couldn't stand up for myself and couldn't give my point of view. I became so traumatized, that I couldn't express myself to my full potential. Growing up, I was taught to defend those that I love and care for. As the youngest child, I was non confrontational when it came to standing up for my brother. I was forced to develop a rough personality and fight. I witnessed my brother get jumped, bullied and humiliated at a young age. It built up rage, guilt and shame that I carried with me throughout my life. I didn't have the chance to voice my feelings, anger, or frustration about the situation for quite some time. When I was 8 years old, I was strangled by someone I thought was my friend. He pretended to be part of my support system but in reality, he wanted to harm me because he didn't like my brother. I can honestly say that being the kind person I was growing up in Newark didn't serve me a purpose.





I have an enormous heart filled with love, but since it was tortured and stepped on, it had made me feel worthless. I had to be extremely cautious of who I gave my love to because not everyone has genuine intentions. Growing up, it was difficult for me to trust people. After going through those past life experiences, it became very difficult to be comfortable enough to vocalize what happened to me.

It was something that I brushed under the rug because I was afraid of the judgment and humiliation I would receive from my family and friends. Which led to putting me in a shell where I felt rejected by society. I felt like I didn't belong. I felt like I was not tough enough, strong enough, and not cut to "qualify" to live in Newark. As a child, I have been called names that made me feel as if they were stripping my dignity. Being called "soft" or "weak" would play a big role in my state of mind. These weren't the correct characteristics that should describe a man of my color. I tried my best to live above those standards and show my worth by being hardcore. I felt victimized for letting everyone choose how I should act only because I am from Newark. However, I chose to internalize my experiences differently and find my way through life with the road map of perseverance. That road map helped me seek through the adversity to understand that there is more beyond my hometown. There is a bigger picture to life than just watching my mother struggle. To witness my beautiful lady cry.



To hear stories of her being homeless when she was younger. To see her unemployed and still be able to support my siblings and I. My traumatic experiences were meant to be all a part of the journey. These experiences fueled me to continue to be great because I perceived it in a different way. I wasn't fortunate to come up and just have everything handed to me. I am from Newark! We all had bad experiences, I wasn't always sheltered in the house when I had my freedom outside it was a mixture of fun and danger. I come from a rough city just like many others. Of course I experienced feelings of loneliness, loss of hope like I wasn't going to make it out. I dealt with similar things as everyone else, but I paid close attention to the opportunities and resources in my face. It was my responsibility to make use of the tools. I had to look beyond adversity, and I saw beyond the obstacles when I noticed the people I had in my life who were willing to do whatever it took to pour into me. There was immense support from family, teachers, staff at my schools, and many mentors who instilled that belief in me that I could make it out. When we talk about purpose, we talk about our why. I really want to make a change in the world and be able to make an impact on all of the little boys and girls from my community who had their innocence stripped away from them by society. All those helpless young individuals who had to be put in a system where they were uncomfortable being themselves. I want to encourage them that they can be whoever they want to be. I want to be able to cultivate many other lives who feel helpless, who feel defenseless, who feel defeated by the outweighs of society's opinions, judgments and the beliefs set for them. So many young men lost their lives to the system all because of the struggles they had to go through to support their families.



Along with the negative influences they had growing up, and the lack of foundation in the community but most importantly in their homes. Plenty of them had families of explosiveness and dysfunction which affected who they were as a person. Giving back to my community has been a long time dream of achieving since I was young. Newark has established a framework for me in both a negative and positive impact. Luckily, it created a structure of belief in myself along with fearlessness. Being raised there could either make you or break you. That road map helped me seek through the adversity to understand that there is more beyond my hometown. There is a bigger picture to life than just watching my mother struggle. To witness my beautiful lady cry. To hear stories of her being homeless when she was younger. To see her unemployed and still be able to support my siblings and I. My traumatic experiences were meant to be all a part of the journey. These experiences fueled me to continue to be great because I perceived it in a different way. I wasn't fortunate to come up and just have everything handed to me. I am from Newark! We all had bad experiences, I wasn't always sheltered in the house when I had my freedom outside it was a mixture of fun and danger. I come from a rough city just like many others. Of course I experienced feelings of loneliness, loss of hope like I wasn't going to make it out. I dealt with similar things as everyone else, but I paid close attention to the opportunities and resources in my face. It was my responsibility to make use of the tools. I had to look beyond adversity, and I saw beyond the obstacles when I noticed the people I had in my life who were willing to do whatever it took to pour into me. There was immense support from family, teachers, staff at my schools [. . . .]

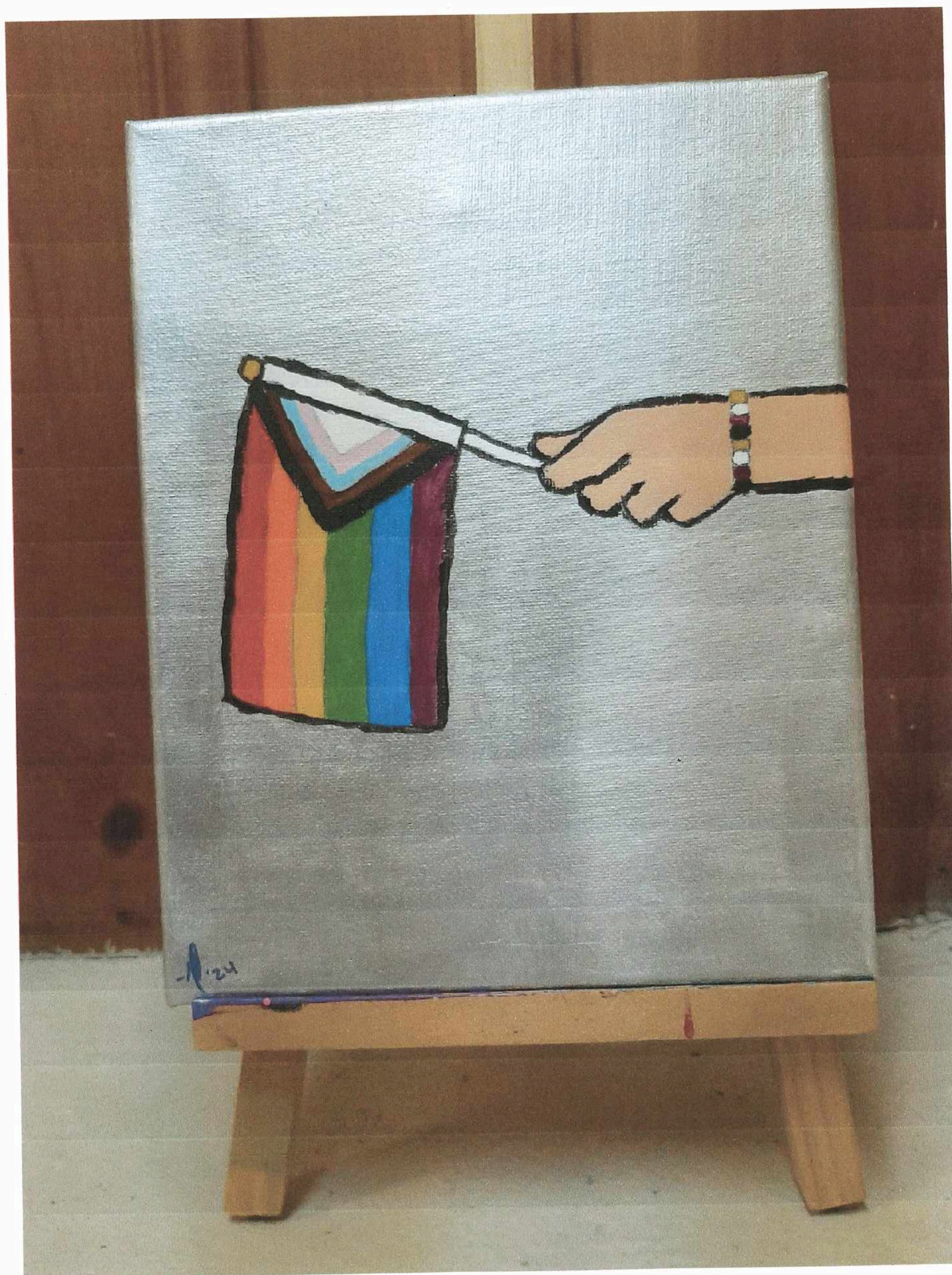
*For full essay, please contact the English Department.*



# Third Place in Visual Art Proud To Be

**Mel Evers**

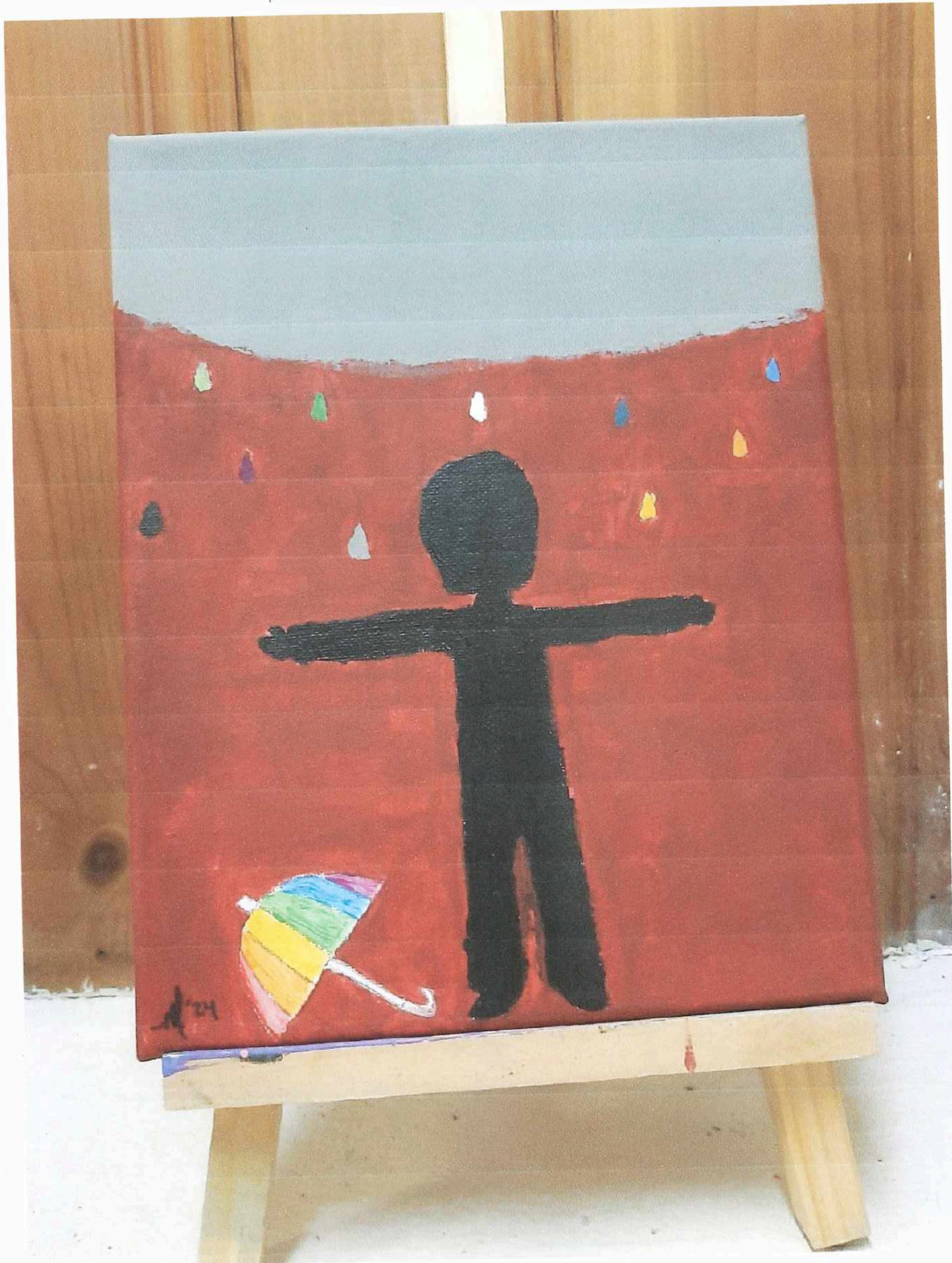
Here & Queer





# Proud To Be

Asexual Acceptance



**Mel Evers**



# **Honorable Mention in Literary Art**

**Charles Rupprecht**

## **The Dime is the New Penny**

The dime is the new penny  
Used to be only pennies were unwanted,  
Now people throw away dimes as well.  
It's crazy how some people don't care about money.  
Did you ever think about how money  
Has different values  
To different people?  
It's crazy how some people don't care about money.  
Your weekly coffee shop addiction  
Could make a big difference  
to someone without enough money for food.  
It's crazy how some people don't care about money.  
On the other other hand,  
Some people will spend a lot to give food  
To those who are in need  
It's crazy (in a good way!) how some people don't  
care about money.  
I'm not trying  
To guilt trip you,  
But let's be crazy about money, and care about it by  
Sharing it for good



# **Honorable Mention in Literary Art**

## **Frank DeRogatis**

### **Suffering: Life in North Korea**

**NARRATOR :** You may have heard the tales of North Korea in the news; the comedic comments on the country's leader, Kim Jong Un, the "coincidental" deaths of people he feels threatened by, the scarcity of food, the "coincidental" death of an American citizen, and of course, North Korea's nuclear test program. Yes, of course, all these things are jarring, but alone they only scratch the surface of what goes on in this so-called "hermit kingdom".

**NARRATOR STOPS AT CS.**

**NARRATOR :** To begin with, life in North Korea, like life in most other similar dictatorships, has many additional laws that are petty, unnatural, and oppressive to the most basic rights of the people. Several of these laws surround loyalty to the Kim family and the state and are essentially forced patriotism.

**LIGHTS ON SL REVEAL KOREAN CITIZEN ONE DEFACING AN IMAGE OF KIM JONG UN. A GUARD ENTERS, GRABS HIM, AND BEATS HIM.**



**NARRATOR :** The citizens are expected to follow the Kim family's "cult of personality" and to essentially worship them as deities. They are told to believe outlandish stories surrounding the family, which involve supernatural occurrences and superhuman feats. They are also required to attend state sponsored events, some of which are held in the world's largest stadium, constructed mainly for this purpose of gratifying the Kim family.

**SCENE WITH CITIZEN AND GUARD FINISHES  
BY THIS POINT  
LIGHTS FADE ON SL.**

**NARRATOR :** Citizens, both male and female, are also mandated to serve in the North Korean military in some regard.

**LIGHTS ON SR SHOW THE GUARD HANDING  
KOREAN CITIZEN TWO A MILITARY HAT TO  
SIGNIFY THAT HE HAS BEEN CONSCRIPTED  
INTO MILITARY SERVICE.**

**NARRATOR :** While North Korean military service does consist of typical military exercises, a large portion is focused on farming, rebuilding the country's dilapidated infrastructure, and other government related projects.

**LIGHTS OFF SL**



**NARRATOR :** Any and all Western goods are banned in North Korea, especially those coming from the United States or from South Korea. This includes all media, such as films, music, and books; fashion, jeans are highly illegal; and any and all other Western imported goods.

**LIGHTS ON SR REVEAL KOREAN CITIZEN ONE AND TWO WITH PROHIBITED ITEMS. THEY ARE SPOTTED BY THE GUARD WHO BECKONS THEM OVER WITH AN AUTHORITATIVE GESTURE. THEY NERVOUSLY PROCEED TOWARDS HIM AND HE GRABS/KNOCKS THESE ITEMS DOWN ONTO THE FLOOR AND CRUSHES THEM UNDER HIS BOOT HEEL. HE GRABS THEM BY THEIR COLLARS AND MENACINGLY ESCORTS THEM OFFSTAGE.**

**LIGHTS OFF SR.**

**NARRATOR :** As far as legal media goes in North Korea, there is some, albeit a small amount compared to what a non-North Korean has access to. There is a handpicked list of songs that are legal, along with state run television shows, state run phone service, and state run internet reserved only for the military and other elites.



LIGHTS ON SL REVEAL KOREAN CITIZEN ONE AND KOREAN CITIZEN TWO FILMING A NEWSCAST. THE GUARD WALKS UP, ROUGHLY SEIZES THEIR CAMERA AND MICROPHONE, AND WALKS OFFSTAGE.

NARRATOR : Of course, the press is also run entirely by the state, and there is no such thing as free speech or freedom of religion, especially any form of Christianity. Any kind of criticism of the Kim family or the North Korean government is inexcusable and will be punished severely.

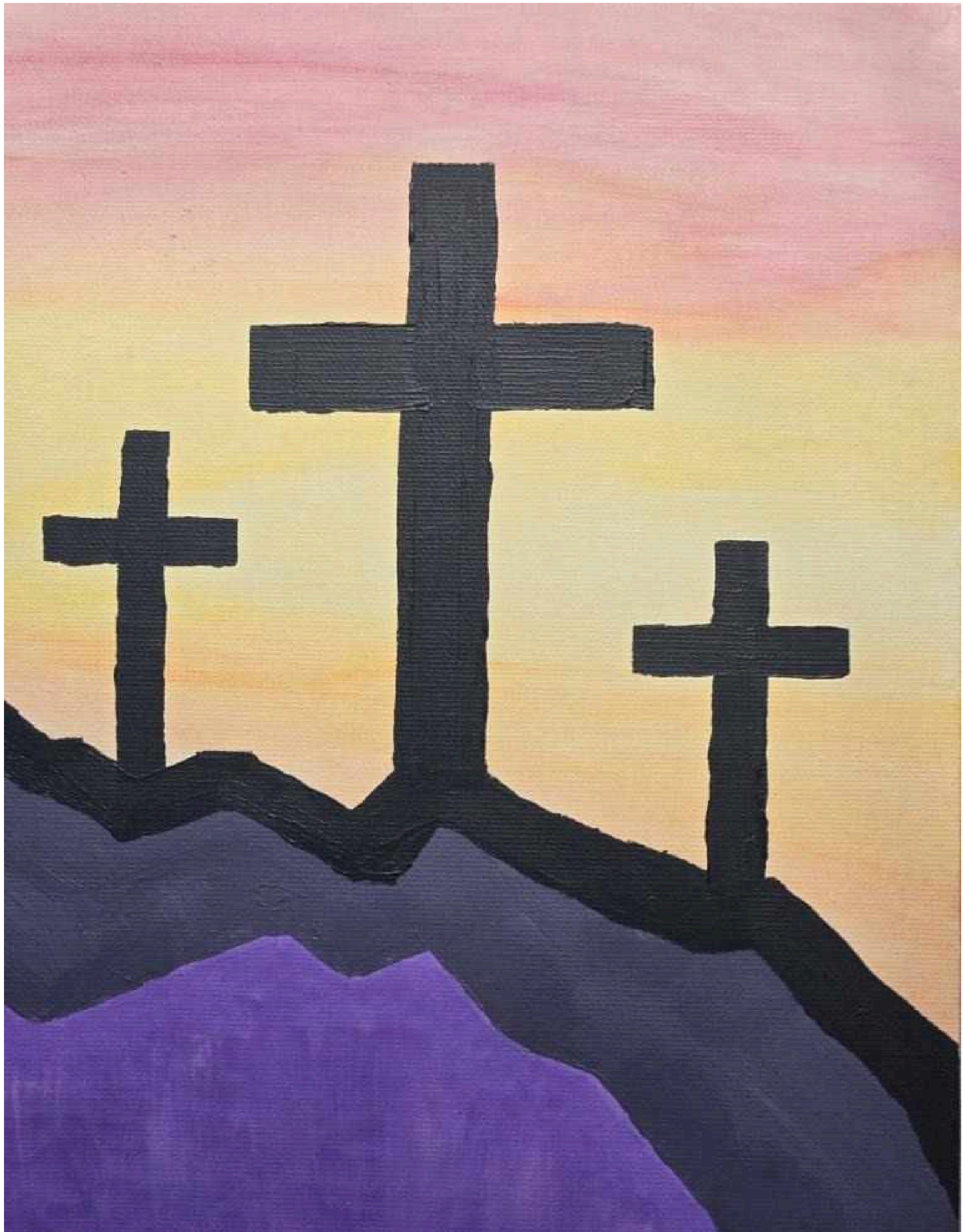
LIGHTS OFF SL.

LIGHTS ON SR SHOW A TOURIST BEING LED BY THE GUARD. THE TOURIST HAS A CAMERA AND TAKES MULTIPLE PICTURES. AFTER TWO OR THREE SNAPS OF THE CAMERA, THE GUARD REALIZES WHAT IS GOING ON AND YANKS THE CAMERA FROM THE TOURIST'S HAND. THE GUARD RAISES A HAND AS IF TO STRIKE THE TOURIST, THE TOURIST COWERS, AND THE GUARD RELENTS.



# **Honorable Mention in Visual Art**

## **It's Not What it Seems**



**Zharia Crawford**



# Faculty and Staff Summer Reading Suggestions

**James Adams, Athletics:** *Battle Cry* by Jason Wilson and *Talent is Overrated* by Geoff Colvin

**Victor Alcindor, English:** *They Can't Kill Us, Until They Kill Us*, by Hanif Abdurraqib. Through a deeply personal and unapologetic lens, these personal essays explore how music serves as a source of resistance and communal connection, especially for marginalized communities.

**Adrienne Bröss, Librarian:** *Things You May Find Hidden In My Ear: Poems from Gaza*, by Mosab Abu Toha. This poetry collection confronts the realities of Gaza through the eyes of a child, young man, and then father who has witnessed the violent cycle of oppression and destruction over and over but still finds humanity in the depths of the experiences.

**Lauren Busfield, Social Work:** Contemporary: *Half of a Yellow Sun*--Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie The subject of war is always a heavy read, but Adichie is a masterful, graceful storyteller; as a reader, you are invested in her characters and story. You glimpse the lives of Nigerians and the heart wrenching consequences of the rarely discussed Biafran war on lives, cultures, and families. Classic: *The Fellowship of the Ring*--J.R.R. Tolkien Reading a few modern books in this genre lately and then going back to the classic Lord of the Rings leaves me regretting reading contemporary fantasy novels; the comparison is too stark and reminds me why some books have deserved the 'classic' designation. Tolkien is known for his world-building, and it's obvious that he was a master of creating peoples, languages, and entire realms that all work together to weave an epic story.



# Faculty and Staff Summer Reading Suggestions

**Patty Devlin, Conferences and Events:** *Trinity, a novel of Ireland*, by *Leon Uris* is a captivating historical novel, a multi-family saga, stretching from the mid-19th-century famine to the Easter Rising of 1916. A sweeping and powerful epic adventure that captures the "terrible beauty" of Ireland during its long and bloody struggle for freedom—a magnificent portrait of a people divided by class, faith, and prejudice—an unforgettable saga of the fires that devastated a majestic land... and the unquenchable flames that burn in the human heart.

**Chris Doster, Facilities:** *Under the Eagle*, by *Simon Scarrow*, historical fiction about the Roman Legions in England

**Dr. Delores Sarfo-Darko Farmer, Student Success:** *The Alchemist*, by *Paulo Coelho* encourages us to move past fear and go after your dreams, and *Americanah*, by *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie* broadens our horizons and it's so beautifully written.

**Dr. Karen Fasanella, Education:** *Cape Cod* by *William Martin* is historical fiction, which is also a mystery. It is written in a dual timeline which I feel Martin executes seamlessly. On my summer reading list this year is *Reader Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World* by *Maryanne Wolf* because I want to learn more about the impact of digital reading and what this means for educators and education.

**Carla Ferreira, English:** I want everyone to read *Rachel Carson's* nonfiction book *Silent Spring*, written by a groundbreaking scientist with the tender vision and linguistic brilliance of a poet; her courage in speaking against the indiscriminate use of pesticides, documenting its harms to the natural world of which we humans (she reminds us) are a part, when it was deeply unpopular to do so, inspires me decades after the book's original publication. The previous single sentence was made possible by my general overindulgence in semicolons and parentheses. ;)



# Faculty and Staff Summer Reading Suggestions

**Dr. Kim Grant, Chemistry:** I recommend *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot. It connects the medical ethics to race in a profound way. It has changed modern medical research in an unprecedented way at the detriment of her privacy.

**Wendy Hahn, Business Administration:** *Lessons in Chemistry*, by Bonnie Garmus. Life throws us a lot of curveballs; take these as challenges and opportunities. This story shows how the main character's life changes significantly, and while not always applauded, she was working to change the norm!

**Maurice Hines, Librarian:** *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters*, by Tom Nichols. This book is a light read and sparks some interesting discussions around Americans' relationship with knowledge given technological advancements, trends in media, and new directions in higher education.

**Dr. Melissa Jones, EOF:** I am reading James McBride's *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store*. This excites me. Why should everyone read this book: it explores family ties and cultural identity in a Brooklyn neighborhood. Great for all ages to read.

**Ellen Loshen, Professional Studies:** *The Invention of Wings*, by Sue Monk Kidd. Based on a true story, the novel is a deeply moving exploration of the themes of racism and feminism, focused on the main characters, Handful and Sarah.

**Dr. Gina Marcello, Communication:** *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Neil Postman. It's even more relevant now than it was in 1985.



# Faculty and Staff Summer Reading Suggestions

**Lynne McEniry, English:** *There, There*, by Tommy Orange Through the complex identity of characters who are navigating their cultural heritage alongside contemporary life as they deal with social issues including coming of age, mortality, intergenerational traditions and traumas. this novel provides a perspective of Native American life that is often ignored or misrepresented, and Orange's beautiful prose and vivid imagery keep us reading and considering community and resilience from beginning to end....AND, there is a brand new prequel, *Wandering Stars* that's at the top of my summer reading pile. POETRY: *Hanif Abdurraqib: The Crown Ain't Worth Much*, and *Su Hwang: Bodega*

**Dr. Regina Riccione, Health Administration:** *The Vanishing Half*, by Brit Bennett. This book is a great reminder that we all make decisions about our lives that have personal impacts but also impact the lives of those we love. We all have histories and families and friends that have shaped us and who will always have a presence in our lives even from a distance.

**Jake Rogers, College of Arts and Sciences:** *Inherent Vice*, by Thomas Pynchon: A psychedelic private eye stumbles through the secret history of the 60's trying to track down his ex-old-lady's new real estate mogul boyfriend who's recently gone missing in this hilarious and insightful LA noir novel. There is also an excellent film adaptation by *Paul Thomas Anderson*. One of my all time favorites, fun and not too tough to get through :)

**Dr. Paul Rossi, Math:** I recommend *Replay*, by Ken Grimwood. It is an interesting take on what a person would do if they had the chance to relive their life over and over again.



# Faculty and Staff Summer Reading Suggestions

**Dr. Glen Sherman, Psychology:** *Herman Hesse's Siddhartha*. is a beautifully written story, a fictionalized account of a historically important spiritual leader's path to spiritual awakening, especially in relation to life in the secular world.

**Franz Vintschger, English:** *Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man*. It is a journey from the South to the basements of Harlem revealing the nature of bigotry and its impact on victims and perpetrators. There is also an infusion of references to a variety of jazz.

**Dr. Hamza Seidu Wedam, Admissions:** *The Richest Man in Babylon, by George S. Clason* is a book to study. Anyone who spends time studying the lessons highlighted in this book would gain the fundamentals of earning and using their earnings to build a stable financial future.

**Dr. Laura Winters, English:** *Somehow: Thoughts on Love, by Anne Lamott*. This short work provides hope, as Lamott acknowledges her own shortcomings as well as the work of God's grace in our lives.

**Dr. Nicole Yanoso, Arts and Sciences:** *The Fountainhead by Ayn Rand* is controversial (for good reason); she celebrated the immense power of the human mind and defended the right of every human to possess every product of their mind's work! My favorite quote: "I do not recognize anyone's right to one minute of my life. Nor to any part of my energy. Nor to any achievement of mine. No matter who makes the claim, how large their number or how great their need."



# Afterword

As someone who lives in words and loves exploring the worlds they create, I've had the joy of participating in several literary magazines at different schools, both as a writer and editor. Across these adventures, however, there has only been one literary magazine that I've participated in that had the word "community" in its title and that is Saint Elizabeth University's very own Community Quill. I think this speaks to the heart of what we are trying to do with our magazine.

Writing, at its most vibrant and alive, can be an act of community, of calling together diverse perspectives, of bearing witness, of reaching across to someone else from across the way and saying, *Listen!*— and I would argue, too, that writing itself can be an act of listening. June Jordan, one of our greatest American poets and activists, once wrote:

These poems  
they are things that I do  
in the dark  
reaching for you  
whoever you are  
and  
are you ready?

These brilliant poems, these luminous stories, these shimmering nonfiction pieces, these radiant pieces of art— they are "reaching for you." They have come together in our literary magazine as many interconnected acts of community. They are asking you "are you ready?"— ready to listen to our artists' hearts, to pay attention to the world, and to join the conversation? Your readership makes the Community Quill come alive.



# Afterword

As faculty advisor to the Community Quill, I am tremendously grateful for our student editors Tyson Berardo and Matthew Lowke for their dedication, creativity, and patience in putting together this magazine. The English Department faculty, including our department chair Lynne McEniry and Dr. Laura Winters, are deeply proud of their growth and brilliance as writers and scholars. We are also deeply grateful for everyone who submitted their work, which is an act of courage and a gift to our community.

I want to especially thank Lynne for her sharp editing and careful proofreading, and send many thanks to Dr. Ryan McLaughlin for his amazing work with the Catholic Social Teaching Competition. This competition has highlighted so many urgent issues and important voices, and the Community Quill is proud to feature this year's winners.

Lastly, like any community, the Quill is a work in progress. We hope to continue growing and we want to see next year's edition reflect an even broader variety of SEU's talents. This is still a fledgling magazine, in its early years. While there is so much to already be proud of, we are also taking the lessons learned as a foundation for future literary and artistic excellence— with an eye always towards how to better create community, community that includes and transforms.

Writers and artists, thank you for trusting us with your work. Readers, thank you for being here with us.

Till next year,  
Carla Ferreira

