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Visualize this thing that you want.
See it, feel it, believe in it,
make your mental blue print,
and begin to build...

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May it always take a
village to create
the worthwhile.

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Past Memories

an excerpt by Grant Hampton Glover

"Hostile vehicle moving to desired location," Ryan heard his spotter and put his handheld bible back into his shirt pocket. Ryan's face was smeared with camouflage paint, and his rifle was covered in a rifle wrap, with his Ghillie suit covering the rest of his body. "Two Charlies coming off the truck," the spotter was stating as he looked into his binoculars. "Looks like they are going to harass these innocent Southern Vietnam villagers... hold on...I think I have spotted the target."

"Confirm it," Ryan said in a commanding whisper.

"Yep, Trang Pham, target confirmed."

"Call him out."

"Target," Ryan put the butt of his rifle into his shoulder, and stared down his scope. "Sector bravo, Officer next the vehicle with the belt-fed weapon, wind four quarter value, push three left."

"Range it."

"500 meters."

"Hold scope...Fire when ready."

Ryan looked down his scope at his target. "Long target," he thought to himself. Ryan saw the target and waited to get a clear shot, two soldiers were blocking him, until Trang Pham came into view. The sniper began to steady his breathing. Trang grabbed a Vietnamese woman and began talking to her; she tried to get away from him. "I gotta nail this guy before things get ugly real fast." Ryan held his breath. He put his finger on the trigger and slowly began to pull it back to him. The shot surprised him a little.

His spotter whispered to him, "Hit, target down." It was like a whispering wind as he said it. So silent.

To read *Past Memories* & *The Wish Garden* in their entirety visit www.jocolibrary.org/stories

The Wish Garden

an excerpt by Andie Davidson

A mindless leaf fluttered out of nowhere and perched on my sandaled foot. In the distance, a disorganized medley of birdsong made up an unrehearsed orchestra. Idyllic as it was, I was in the middle of a fairly typical snapshot of spring. Yet I had somehow been thrown into the scene with no choice or knowledge. I never really understood how people could say "I have no idea how I got here." Even if you lost the memory of an actual event, you knew what led up to and followed it. Memory has to end somewhere, and surely those last few moments of knowledge could tell someone how they might have ended up wherever they were. It doesn't make any more sense to me now, but I scoff at it less. I had no idea how I ended up in this sleepy little town, under this burning sun, between these neat houses and picket fences. It didn't look all that different from home, but for some reason I half expected the manic smile of the Cheshire cat to creep up out of nowhere.

No cats—eerily grinning or not—crossed my path. What did pop up was a little cottage, straight out of Anne of Green Gables and swimming in a mass of colorful flowers. This seemed as good a place as any to try to figure out what was going on. After a fruitless few knocks on the door, though, I was as lost as ever.

"I'm out in the garden!" A voice suddenly floated out from the colorful pandemonium of the backyard.

elementia

creative sublime young adults

Poetry

Lost
by Catherine Strayhall 7

She who destroys the light
by Rachel Franklin 11

Oblivion
by Lauren McGrath 13

Driving
by Molly O. Allen 13

Self Imposed Silence
by Andie Davidson 14

Nightingale's Song
by Victoria Ross 14

Butterfly Touches
by Rachel Franklin 15

Soul of Night
by Catherine Strayhall 15

There Once Was...
by Hope Gardner 17

Hurricanes of War
by Julia Anne Ulmer 20

Mermaid for
a Moment by
Paige Bergan

What He Carries
by Kristen Zuchowski 24

Descent
by Michelle Chan 27

Pandemonium
by Lauren McGrath 29

Every Bit as Dark as You
by Blaire L. Ginsburg 31

I Would Say...
by Hannah Jenkins 32

The Voice of
Desperate Hearts
by Bailey Tulloch 33

Hot Blood Underground
by Ayah Abdul-Rauf 38

Fiction

April Ghoul's Day
by Jessica Toney 9

Wake
by Blaire L. Ginsburg 16

Choosing to Hurt
by Jessica Sutter 20

Storm's Song
by Kalie Fisher 22

The Evanescent
by Paige Bergan 25

Jewel
by Angela Clem 28

The Comet
by Holden Meier 34



The Book Thief by Markus Zusak
inspired the poem on
pg. 33.

pg. 12



pg. 14



pg. 17



pg. 18



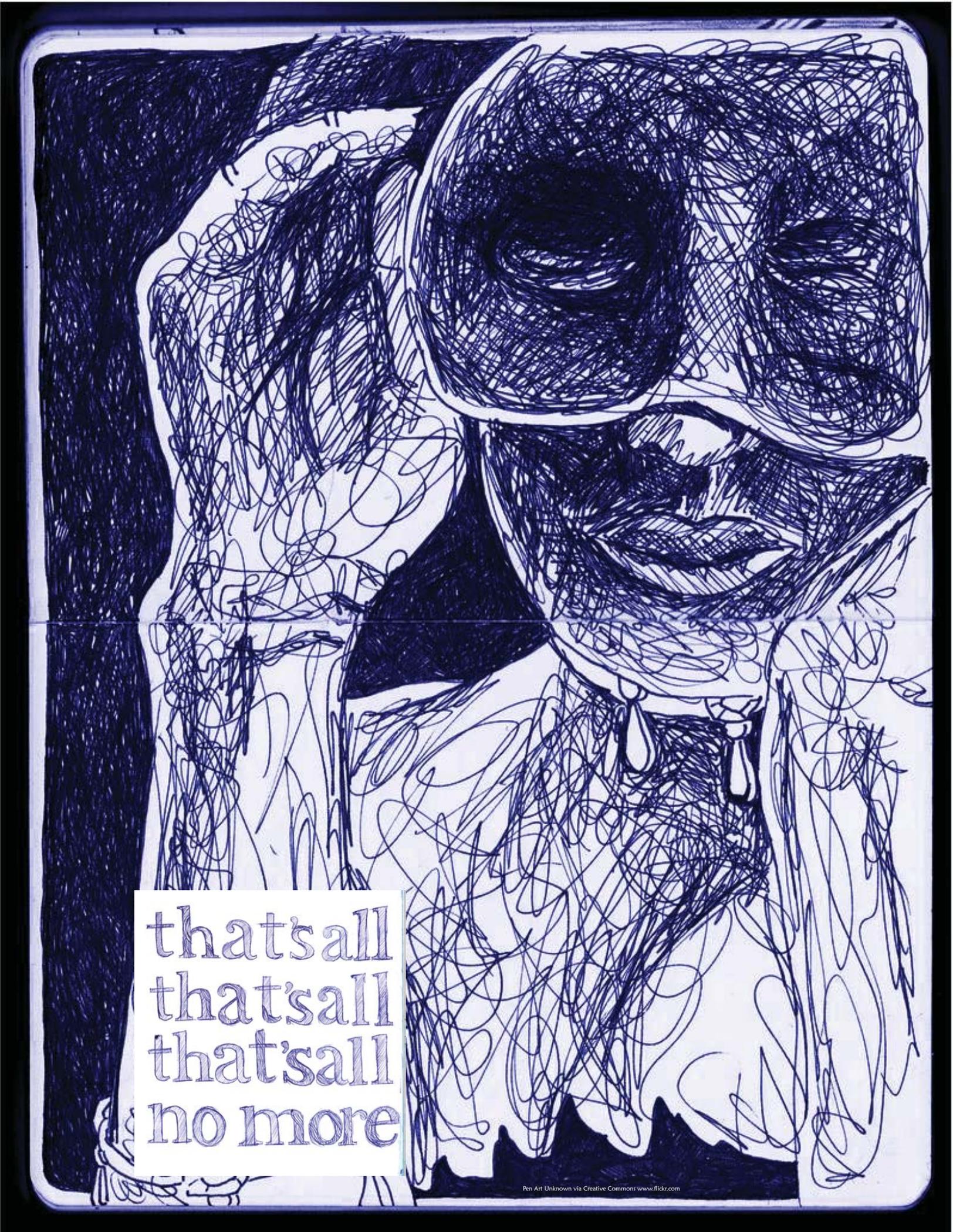
pg. 29



pg. 34



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that's all
that's all
that's all
no more

There is a stillness in the air
I can feel it everywhere

Heavy darkness
Airy light
Loud silence
Empty night

It seems as though with every
breath
There is a little bit of death

Choking sadness
Endless days
Dark corners
New pathways

The loneliness that's all around
Pulses with a throbbing sound

Welcome isolation
Quiet place
Missing comfort
Stolen grace

This world is coming to an end
Swept clean by autumn's changing wind

Unknown future
Hidden past
Shaky present
Nothing lasts

The storm is coming; it's almost here
It strengthens with my every fear

Long road
Black night
Chilling echoes
Dimming light

Things are falling apart for me
Beginnings and endings I cannot see

Haunting memories
Dying dreams
Lost hopes
Ripped seams

And still the dark keeps coming nearer
Reflected in a shattered mirror

Jagged pieces
Wasted years
Fading photos
Bitter tears

My mind is spinning out of control
I'm trying to protect my soul

Chaotic ideas
Warped thoughts
Twisted plans
Intricate plots

I fight hard so all my woes
Won't leave me in a fetal pose

Stark truth
Harsh lies
Fallen flight
Bleak skies

I see freedom coming soon
The way lit by a soft, faint moon

Cold sun
Stirring wind
Weary runner
Sudden end.

Lost

Catherine Strayhall

April Ghoul's Day

Jessica Toney

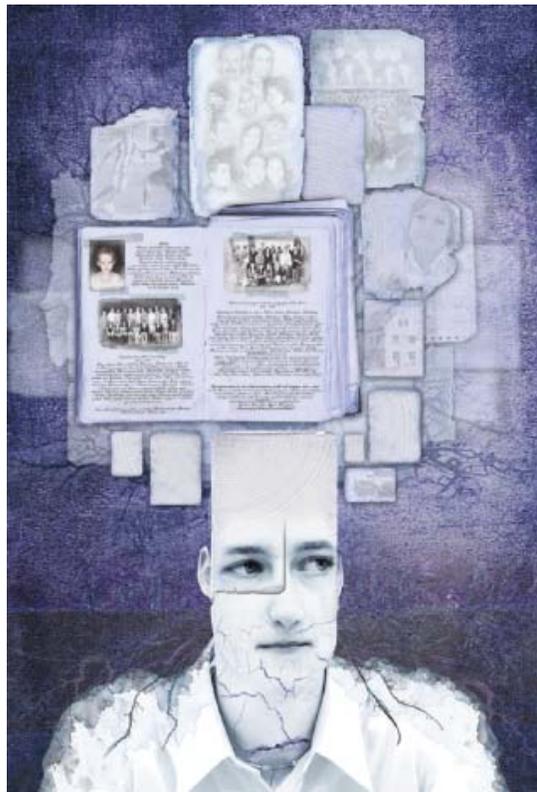


He woke up shivering, the cold hard floor having been his bed for the night. His brain throbbed as he pushed himself up, making it hard to remember what last happened. He held his head in his hands as he thought it over until an eerie sob bounced off the walls. Alex ignored his headache to go down the stairs from his lone room upstairs. Across the hall was a little boy with wet eyes and messy hair.

“Henry? Why are you crying?” Alex knelt down to his little brother’s height, but Henry wouldn’t look at him. “Come on, you thin hen.” He spoke to him, trying to get a smile from using his nickname, yet none appeared. He tried a more assertive method. “Henry, you are a Taylor boy, so you better act like a Taylor boy. Wipe those eyes and get back to bed.” Again, no reaction at all. Henry just stood there whimpering. Alex couldn’t resist those big blue eyes.

He leaned in for a hug, but Henry must have backed away for Alex just ended up tripping onto the floor. He rolled

to his side and looked up at the unmoved Henry. What? He slowly reached his hand out to his brother’s, but they never made contact. Alex’s just passed right through like he was...like he was a ghost!



He scrambled up on his feet and raced to the nearest mirror. He hoped with every bit of his body to see his reflection staring back at him, but all that the mirror showed was the room behind him. He felt all the blood flush out of his body and become numb.

He snapped his head over towards the door when he saw a flash of movement. His mother stood there, looking very fragile. She picked Henry up and settled him into the crook of her arm. A soft lullaby flowed from her lips like sweet honey. As Henry was relaxing into a sleep she whispered to him, “It is always tough to lose someone, especially someone so nice, smart, and young. He was going to be a great adult some day, I’m sure of it.” Henry was already asleep, but she continued. “Getting through this will be incredibly hard. Alex never deserved to die.” She kept talking, but Alex couldn’t

hear anymore. I’m a, he stuttered in his mind, ghost?

She who destroys the light

Rachel Franklin

first seed

Darling, you and I both know
in a better world I could be your Lethe
wrap around you, drown you
erode everything that ever tried to bring your fate down on you.
Still if I picked up the pieces
I'd hear their soft hum-
the one shell moan for the sea-
for even then there would be places in you
still not free

second seed

Surely women must have learned by now
never to trust fruit.
A garden is a prison earned
and there is nothing satanic, nothing sacred
about hunger.
Yet when your body curls in on itself
seduced by not-seeds that need only thirst to root
you find your lips wet
and what might be blood or juice
becomes the same as sweat.

third seed

Your skin is singing
I swear, hymns to the colors
the way the world's ringing hurts your ears
the salt of the Dead Sea come alive in your tears
the smell only in the sky as the rain clears
the poppy-eyed bud people who spend years
walking around, faces turned toward the light
thrusting pomegranate crown
fingers up up up to pray
as if the good lord giveth for reasons
other than to contrast what happens
when he taketh away.

fourth seed

If I was brave enough
I would plant my spit
and bones and fingernails
and grow roses
when you build
glass houses for your stones.
But I am no iron queen
content to perfectly
decompose. All I can do is
lay down on your altar
dream of making the world
barren as my organs
feel it must be.
When things that flowed
under me have dried
screaming echos
into spiral shells
will never change
the tide.

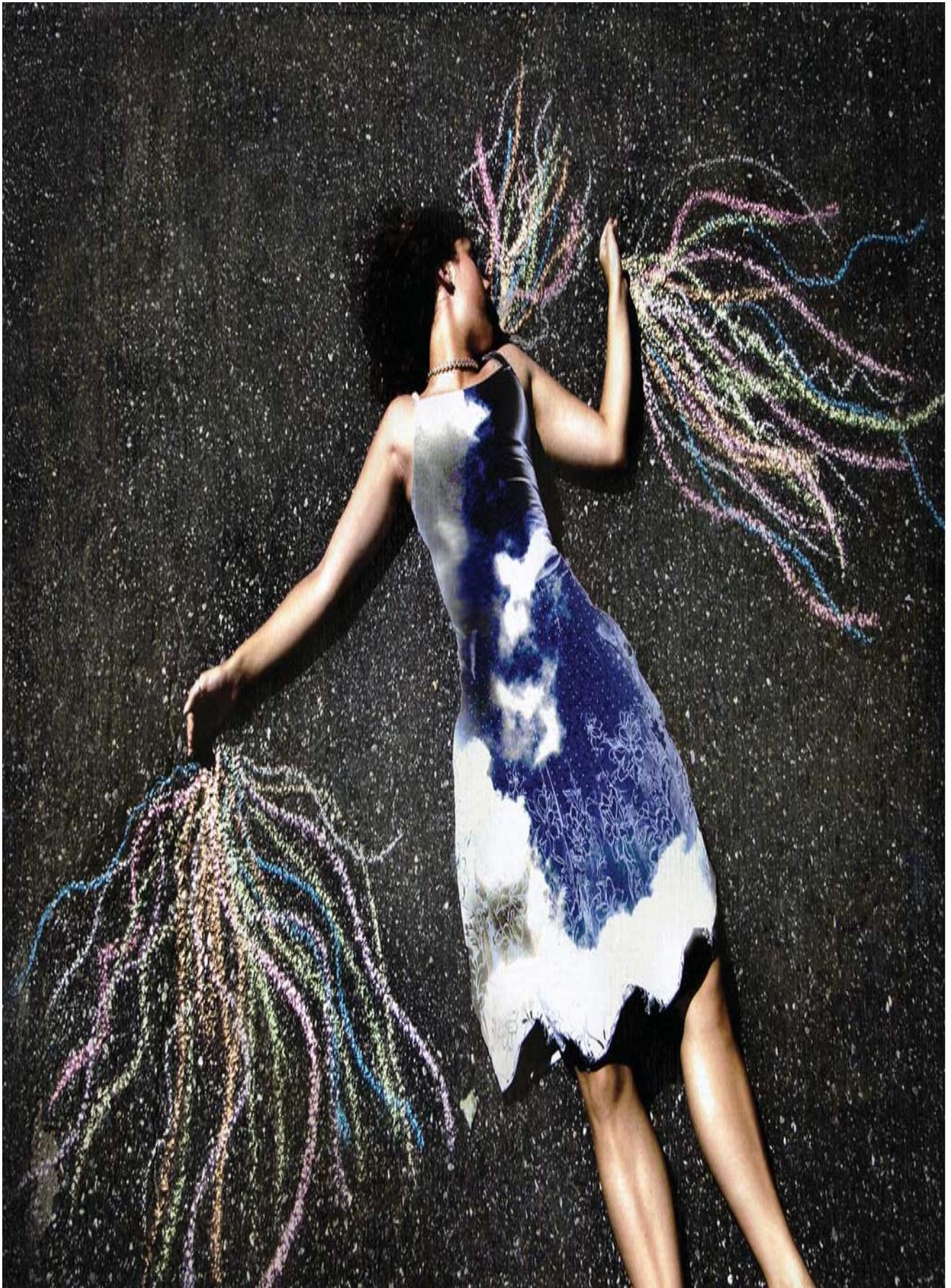
fifth seed

If only there would
not be seasons
but, oh, darling
I know he's idling between
nerve endings
painting wine wings
on your shoulder blades
his words sticking between
the back of your throat and swallowing
and I don't care, now.



You will, I hope you won't,
but you will and still
the world is alight.
Tinged in green,
fit to bursting
it cascades through
gaps in the boughs
of our tree of
you're the one who
gives me life.

sixth seed
Persephone,
if this curse would let me
before you next depart
I would crown
you queen of queens
give you rule
over your 613-chamber
heart.



Oblivion

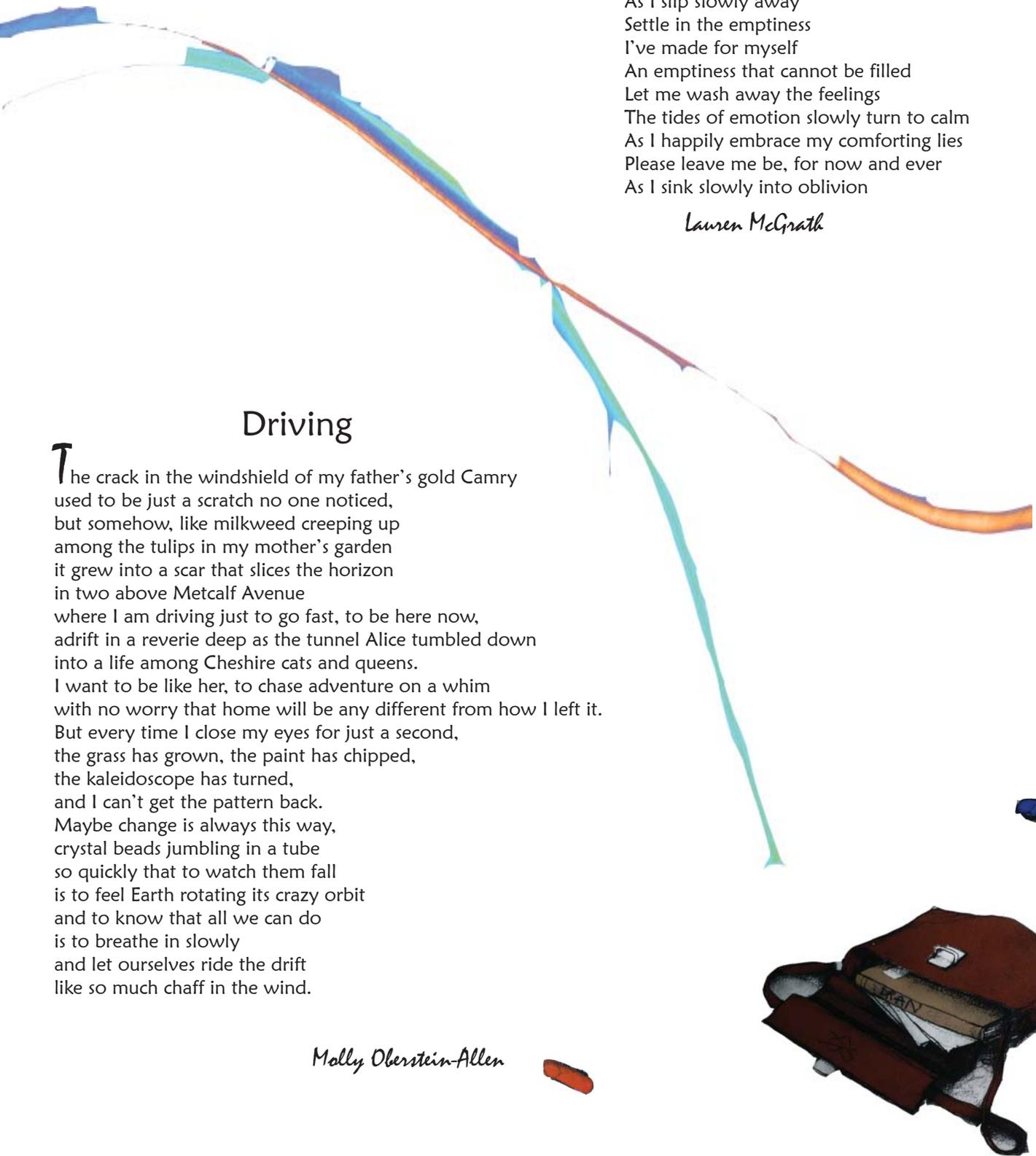
Go away, and leave me be
Let me rest eternally
Shroud myself in darkness
Where I can never be hurt
Close my eyes and sigh
As I slip slowly away
Settle in the emptiness
I've made for myself
An emptiness that cannot be filled
Let me wash away the feelings
The tides of emotion slowly turn to calm
As I happily embrace my comforting lies
Please leave me be, for now and ever
As I sink slowly into oblivion

Lauren McGrath

Driving

The crack in the windshield of my father's gold Camry used to be just a scratch no one noticed, but somehow, like milkweed creeping up among the tulips in my mother's garden it grew into a scar that slices the horizon in two above Metcalf Avenue where I am driving just to go fast, to be here now, adrift in a reverie deep as the tunnel Alice tumbled down into a life among Cheshire cats and queens. I want to be like her, to chase adventure on a whim with no worry that home will be any different from how I left it. But every time I close my eyes for just a second, the grass has grown, the paint has chipped, the kaleidoscope has turned, and I can't get the pattern back. Maybe change is always this way, crystal beads jumbling in a tube so quickly that to watch them fall is to feel Earth rotating its crazy orbit and to know that all we can do is to breathe in slowly and let ourselves ride the drift like so much chaff in the wind.

Molly Oberstein-Allen



Nightingale's Song

Victoria Ross

All and silence,
And softly whispered
Breath.

Caresses petal soft
And feather
Light.

Delicate,
Like lace and spiders' webs,
The light plays on the rain.

Like the sound
Of snow
Falling.

A melodious tune,
Nightingale's voice at dusk,
Sings the setting sun.

Butterfly Touches

In my mind
you were
colored
the lightest
blue
Like butterfly
wings
Shine rubbing
off on your
fingers
at a touch.
You loved them
Because
they were so
pretty-fragile
And there's nothing
More beautiful
than effervescence.
I'm fragile too.
Fragile and trying
to get the me without
you back
One touch at a time
And it still feels like
butterflies alighting
on my arms
Tracing scars
On the most tender
of skin, the skin still
Aching from that touch
Because every time
your hands brushed mine
A little bit of me
Escaped to powder
your fingers.

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Self Imposed Silence

Words
Nudging, insisting
Struggle to escape
Perching on the tip of my tongue

A rising wall
Blocks phrases, words,
thoughts, ideas
Trapped inside my head
In a maze from brain to lips, lost

Whispers
Echo in my head
Silence as lips freeze

Queries
Fill my head
Too many questions,
suppressing the words
Will they sound out loud
the same as they do in my head?
What will people think?
Will anyone listen?
Too afraid to release
my thoughts to the outside
Too afraid to let them out,
to expose them to scrutiny
It's safer to keep them in
Others speak, mellifluous
words flowing around
While I sit, silent

The conversation ferries past
The words settle back down
To await patiently the next time I have something to say
While I sit, silent
As always

Andie Davidson

The Soul of Night

Night
It's the time I have dark thoughts;
When my fears stalk me, and my demons mock me.
At night, my imagination runs wild,
Conjuring things that make me want to hide like a child.

Night
Stops the setting sun, and fills every corner of the world;
It feeds upon my worry.
Its heavy silence enters my ears.
Night haunts me through the years.

Night
Ideas come easily at night.
The still quiet gives me time to think.
Its deep mystery that allows me to sink
Into sleep, to take a well-deserved flight.

Night
Only can reveal the stars and the moon,
And only during night can I really ponder life.
At night I can dream that sometime soon
Everything will be alright.

Night
In the soul of the night, I fight my personal wars
finding the strength to continue from the sight of the stars.

Catherine Strayball



Wake

Blaire Lauren Ginsburg

“My husband was not supposed to die young.”

This is my first thought as I settle into an Adirondack chair on the deck. I pretend not to hear my joints crack and gaze upon the lake. It is just before dusk, the sun sitting atop the high trees to the west, a band of the white light ringing its early autumn form. I know far too well how in only a few moments, the east will be painted dusk rose, pale saffron and lavender.

The trill of my grandchildren’s laughter from the dock below catches my attention, suddenly, and I grin softly at their antics. My sons always bring them here for the Labor Day weekend, and now they are coming in from the boat. The boys shove at each other as they hop over the sides, pretending that they’ll push one another back into the water and guffawing as they lunge and dodge. The girls laugh as they push their sopping hair out of their faces, no doubt recounting who held onto the water tube the longest. They all leave puddles for footprints as their fathers hand them towels to dry off with, their swimsuits drip, drip, dripping onto the faded, rust-tinted wood of the dock. I try to recall how long Daniel’s been promising to repaint it and find that I cannot. It’s really no matter, though. Those bright, red faces are my joy.

“Oh, Henry, don’t you remember when it was us?” I wonder.

I gaze out to the west again, only to find that the sun has gone down now, and that the hundreds of thousands of trillions of peaks of the lake’s surface no longer reflect the golden glare, but the periwinkle

light of the evening sky...

“He says to go faster!” I shouted over the roar of the engine and the wake. “What???” “Go faster, Drew!” I cried at the back of the salt-and-peppered head of the boat driver.

“The gauge is already at 3,000, Tess, so you can tell my son that if he wants to go faster he can get his ass off that tube and into a class for his license!” Drew shouted back.

I was still at the impressionable age between childhood and my teenage years where I found curse words hilariously taboo and clapped my hands over my mouth to laugh as I turned back to spot Henry. We took a sudden sharp turn that threw him outside of the boat’s wake, and he was skipping across the water like a well-thrown rock. Then he hit a wave that rolled in from the left, lifting the entire tube three feet off the water, and Henry at least another two. He lost his grip on the handles then and flew back to hit the water as I turned to Drew and shouted:

“DOWN!”

Drew gave a wide turn and circled back to where Henry lay floating in the water. “That fast enough for you, boy?” Drew called over the windshield with a chuckle. Henry tossed his mop of wet hair out of his face and pulled himself up onto the back of the boat with one haul. Once there, he unclipped his life-jacket, wiped the remains of the spray from his face, and said, “You couldn’t pick it up a bit more, Dad?”

I could see, then, how the entire right side of his body was bright red from hitting the water, save

where the nylon-lined padding had covered his chest, and I winced as I imagined the sting, but it didn’t seem to bother him. Henry was the strong, invincible age of fourteen, when nothing hurt.

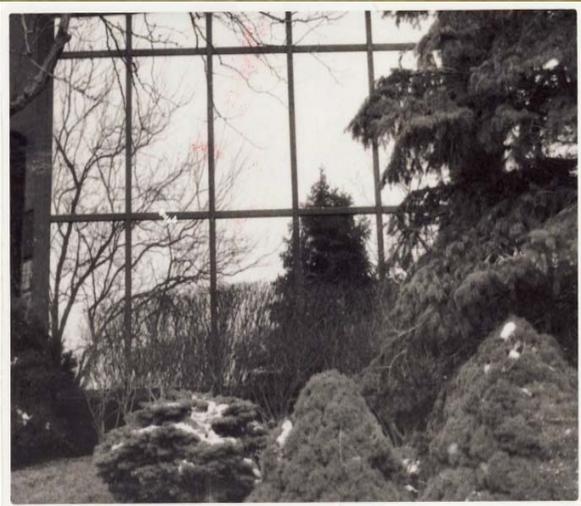
“Well, Tess, are you up for another run, or should we pull it in for the night?” Drew asked. I handed Henry his towel as I checked the sky. It was just before dusk, and in only a few moments, the sun would sink beyond the trees and leave the sky to darken for the stars.

“Let’s head back,” I said. I slid into one of the open seats and wrapped my jacket tight around my still-damp suit. The wind was already starting to pick up off the water.

“You sure? I bet Dad could throw you like he did me,” Henry laughed as he dropped down next to me. He playfully prodded me in the side, and I squirmed away, trying to dodge his pokes and jests. I eventually ended up laughing with him as Drew started driving us back into the cove. Henry was my oldest friend, as he couldn’t afford not to be what with our parents sharing the lake house since before either of us was born. “Alright, here we are,” Drew said as we pulled up to the boat lift. He and Henry jumped out the sides and held the boat steady while I stood in the center floor to balance the weight. Up above the deck, I could hear my mom and Julie laughing quietly over evening glasses of wine, and I could smell the burgers my dad was flipping on the grill.

“C’mon, kids,” Drew called, already ambling up the ramp towards the house.

Continued on page 18



Photographs by Nicole Lally.

There Once was...

There once was a girl from Kentucky,
she always won at games
but, all the same she had a pet gerbil
named "Unlucky."

There once was a boy from Maine,
but he dreamed of living in Spain,
And try as he might he could never find
the right ticket as he boarded the plane.

There once was a woman from Minnesota,
her father lived in South Dakota,
She visited him yearly
'Cause she loved him dearly
And her favorite food was bologna.

There once was a man from Tennessee,
When he went shopping he would buy a new
golf tree, his wife told him "Stop it!"
But he couldn't just drop it
And in the end he had one hundred and three.

Hope Gardner



Henry leaned down and clasped my forearm, effectively hauling me up and out of the boat. I stumbled for a moment, the dock too sturdy beneath my feet, and nearly pitched sideways, catching myself at the last moment. "Careful there," Henry said. He tossed his towel under his arm and settled his t-shirt around his neck before starting up the ramp. I shook my head slightly to clear the traces of dizziness and followed after him.

The last one to make it off the dock, I cleared the jump from the end of the ramp to the concrete to avoid the ever-wobbling last few red-painted boards. Mom had been pestering Dad to fix those for weeks, but Henry and I enjoyed the game of who could leap the furthest over them. I landed with a smile, pausing for a moment to curl my toes against the ground. Summer was gone, but Labor Day always held the promise of recreating the season for a weekend and the reminder of what it was to walk barefoot on dusk-cool cornet.

We ate dinner slowly, enjoying our last evening on the water. Julie had lit mosquito-repelling candles around the deck and we sat outside, the parents sitting around the picnic table while Henry and I curled up in the maple-stained Adirondack chairs. We sat in a quiet sort of comfort, watching as evening boats headed across the jade green water, zipping in and out of the cove and back to their own docks.

As the sky began to darken, I smiled, thinking about the weekend. Like every year, it had been a lot of fun. Dad had let Henry power-wash the concrete patio. Mom and I had lain out on the dock in the lazy parts of the af-

ternoon until we were evenly tanned. Julie and I baked homemade Monkey Bread together because my mother can't bake instant cookies. Drew took Henry and me out on the boat for hours while the sun kissed my hair copper and Henry's cheeks burned ruddy.

Henry...He was my best friend, and this Labor Day weekend had been much the same as all the ones before it, but something was different about him this year. Maybe it was the fact that he had started high school, and I was still stuck in junior high. Or maybe it was the way he'd shot up four inches overnight in July. It might've even been the way he smiled at me every time he helped me on and off the boat; the way the left corner of his lips lifted just a bit higher than the right, and he looked so valiantly sly...

Oh G-d. "Pull yourself together, Tess," I thought. "This is Henry, not some trim-and-cool city boy from all of Lilly's silly trashy teen-romance novels..."

...but still...

I leaned my chin into my hand and gave a sigh as my thoughts fought with one another. I was completely wrapped up in the World War III of my mind until I felt something prod my elbow right out from under me. I jerked forward and nearly fell out of the Adirondack I was sitting in, but a hand caught my elbow and pulled me back. I looked up with my heart in my throat to see Henry leaning over me, a concerned look marring his features.

"Careful there, Tess," he said, his hand lingering on my arm as I caught my breath. I looked past

him to the lake and saw that I'd been sitting out there for much longer than I'd thought. The landscape was painted seven shades of navy and the stars were dotting up above through the trees.

"Sorry...I didn't realize it was late," I murmured.

"You're alright," Henry said. He let go of me and sat on the arm of the chair next to mine, crossing his arms over his chest and gazing out onto the water. He'd changed into a pair of cargo shorts and a gray tee, and his hair had dried into a mess of dark waves. His cheeks glowed red in the evening darkness, and I noticed how the corner of his lips faintly twitched up as he stood there, thinking.

"It's a shame we can't stay longer, isn't it?" he asked quietly, his tone wistful. "Yeah," I nodded, drawing my knees up into my chest. "We'll come back next year, though," he said with a sudden grin. I glanced up to see him looking down at me and couldn't help smiling in return. "We will," I said, standing up next to him. This was our beginning.

He had the stroke when he was just thirty-four. I was thirty-two. Daniel was three and Nathan had just turned ten months. A blood clot. A blood clot had killed my husband—my Henry, when he was thirty four. It had been a "Thrombotic stroke," the doctors called it. I had no name for it. All I knew at the time was that I was young and scared, and I'd never see the man I loved again. I'd never hear him say my name, never see him toss the boys into the air when he got home from work, never wake up to him in

the morning again. Henry was gone.

It took a year to fully wake up from the shock, but I eventually understood that while I couldn't make new memories with Henry, I could always cherish our old ones. I could remember all the Labor Day weekends we spent together at the lake.

I could remember the day our parents gave us the keys to the lake house. I could remember the tears of joy Henry cried when Daniel was born, and again when we had Nathan.

I still grieved, of course. My sons would know no father, and I couldn't even think of trying to find another life partner. Henry had been it for me. But still, I smiled on his memory. I smiled on the days in the passing years that would've marked his fortieth birthday, Daniel's graduation from MIT, Nathan's first novel publication, the births of our grandchildren, our fiftieth wedding anniversary.

And, of course, I smiled every Labor Day.

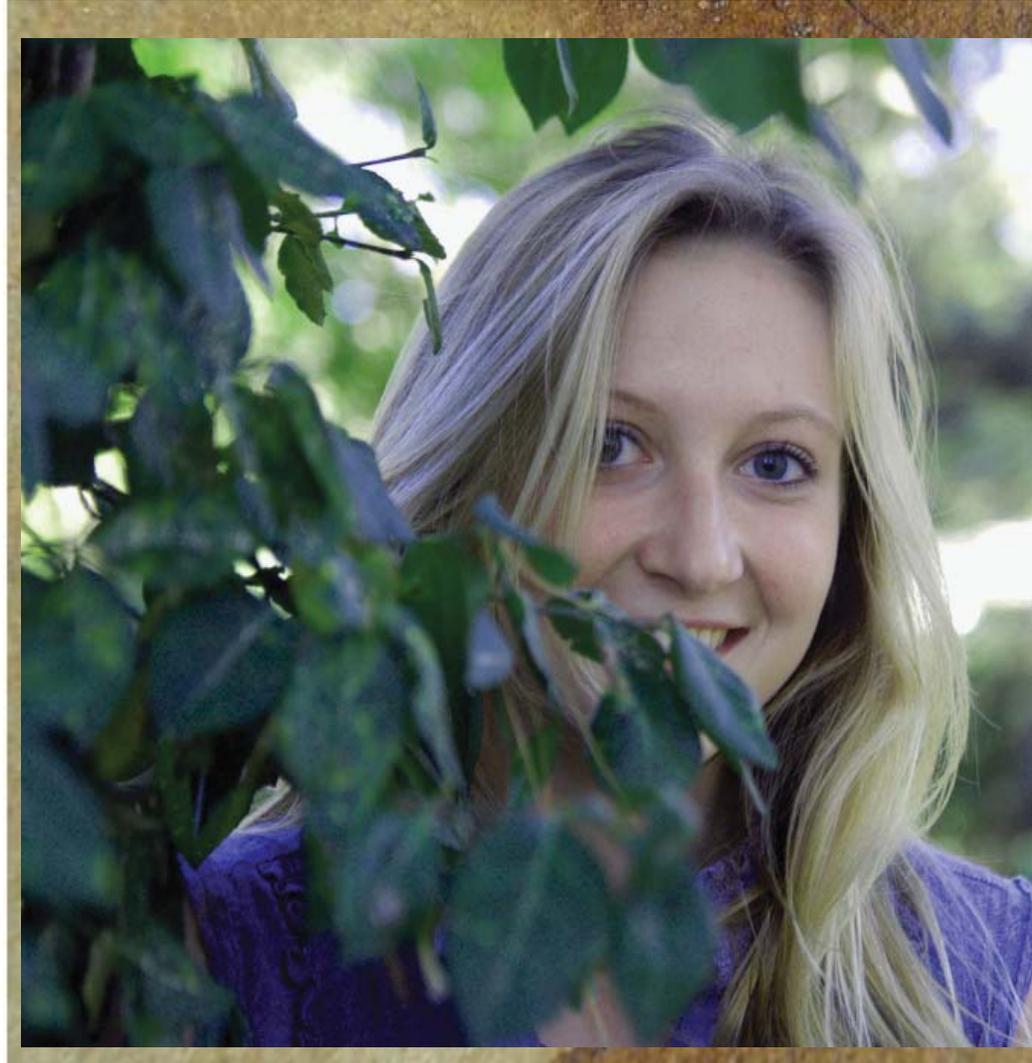
"Gran, why are you so quiet?"

I shake out of my silent reverie to find Tristan, my youngest grandson, leaning against the arm of the chair I'm sitting in. He's so like Henry, with his ruddy cheeks, dark waves, and eyes bright with concern.

"Oh, I'm just remembering ancient history, dear," I grin, reaching out to pat the back of his hand. Over Tristan's shoulder, Daniel smiles at me, and I watch as he guides his son back into the house.

I rise slowly from my seat and shoot one last glance towards the evening sky. The sun has set behind the trees, now, and the world is shading indigo with the night. The stars begin to twinkle overhead, and I whisper into the evening breeze, "Happy Birthday, Henry..."

The End



Photograph by Brook Barnes.

Hurricanes of War

Our world is a sea
From the oceans to the shore
Not of water

But of colors, textures, sounds, and war.

You look around to see the green waves of grass. And hold the
Smoothness of your pen as you sit at your desk; you hear the
Breeze as it ruffles through the new spring trees
But you feel the storms of war
As they rage from shore to shore
Causing more hurricanes
Than there ever were before.

Julia Anne Ulmer

Mermaid for a Moment

Sunbeam, slices of wet light
The coral reef filled with dreams
glossy fish murmur-
swirling, swishing, swimming
envy of the rainbow
crimson, sapphire, persimmon, lime
Colors never seen by human eyes before
Ebony hair dances, harmony to the waves
Flipping on her back
gaze through the cobalt
sparkling and insubstantial doorway between worlds
Drifting below her solid home
this speechless shattered kaleidoscope.
Almost belonging, surrendering blue
Mermaid for a moment

Paige Bergan

He leaves his shoes on the doorstep. Size twelve and a half, wearing through the toes and curling with wrinkles of use. He stopped working at the orchard in November, but red Oklahoma mud still caulks the crevices and holes, stains the laces. I stare at the pile of scuffed rubber, a testimony of the time that's melted and seeped across the seasons without seeing him here. The last time these shoes walked up to my door, they were nearly brand new, and so were we.

"Hey." He coughs nervously and loops his thumbs in his pockets once he's inside. I close the house to the shivery heat.

"It's been a while." My words are thin droops that ring in our ears and leave ripples of unspoken understanding.

"Yeah. It has."

The silence is loud and mocking. *Stupidstupidstupid*. This wasn't a good idea. I bite my lip until it hurts. I partway open my mouth, though there are no words waiting behind it. I risk a glance at his face for the first time.

Oh. The sky hasn't known the color of blue in James Henrison's eyes.

He turns away. My heart is shattered glass. Sweat trickles down my neck behind my curly hair and the seconds count themselves as they



Choosing to Hurt

Jessica Sutter

tick away on the clock behind me.

"If I knew you'd be this excited to come over, I'd of asked you a long time ago," I joke.

One side of his mouth lifts up in a grin that makes the glass pieces inside me ache.

"If I knew you had such exciting plans, I would've been dying for the invitation."

"Oh, I know you would." I laugh sarcastically, feeling the knots release their nervous grip in my stomach.

"Let's go for a drive."

His car smells like it always did--old upholstery, rain, and cigarettes. When he's this close I can smell him, too, though I can never put my finger on what about it gives me that feeling. Like a nosedive on a rollercoaster. It makes me forget things. Important things I have to remember, like Evan.

I turn and watch him. Stoplight, brake, green light, gearshift. He's driving barefoot, like he always did. I smile. The old habit reminds me of the James I used to know. The boy who never said I love you, but held me like he did.

"I'm bad for you," he says. Out of the blue, matter of fact. "We're just in such different places right now."

He always told me that.

"I like you. That's not the problem here."

"I know." My voice is soothing honey. No expectations, no pressure. Just the way he likes it.

I think for a moment to gather my words.

"When I'm what's important to you, you won't hurt me. I trust that."

"But you are what's important to me!" He's agitated now, indcision taking center stage. It's never as simple as caring or wanting. There's always a catch.

I twist my fingers in my lap. I think about Evan. He's important, too. I hold onto the thought before James's next words blow it into the wind, where it won't matter anymore. It's starting to storm outside. A strange, humid chill finds its way into the car. Rain taps the windows and fogs the glass. The sky is grey, the exact shade of Evan's eyes. I let out a shaky breath.

"So be honest. How do you feel about me?"

He's given me the bait, and he doesn't even know it. This is the question I can't lie about. I take it as a sign and spill my guts.

"Honestly? You make me crazy. I'm with you, and I forget everything, I hate being close to you. I'm dying just to hold your hand, anything."

He lets out a groaning, humorless laugh. "Don't say that."

"Why not?" I'm pushing it, but it's too late. I'm done waiting.

"It's just...I don't know."

"Okay." The patient acceptance is back in my voice, but the tension in this tiny space is suffocating. The radio scratches out a song in the thick air. It has the kind of lyrics that make me wonder if he thinks of me when he listens to it.

"Where do we go from here?" Those blue, blue eyes are locked on mine, and my words catch in my throat. He was wrong; we aren't in different places at all. He's with me now, close enough to touch, burning at my heart.

"Kiss me."

I've scared him. He exhales slowly. "Don't say that," he says again, but softer. He doesn't mean it. Seconds pass. I'm suspended in midair, trying to figure out if I jumped too soon.

"I'm tired of driving," he says, pulling over to a parking lot. As soon as we've stopped, it's last summer all over again. Time isn't running straight, I can't think. His mouth is familiar after all these months, but different somehow. Because of Evan. The memory of him is distant now. James kisses me like he's starving for it, desperate and almost frantic. But his thumb is gentle as it rubs against my cheek, close to my mouth, holding me there. I wouldn't pull away for anything.

I can feel our heartbeats jumping out of our skin. I'm breathless, in that strange way you get when something you've been longing for is finally real.

He's shaking as he pulls back, and I realize he's holding my hand. He never did that last summer. I brush my lips against his sandpaper cheek.

Guilt is delayed a few more seconds before it hits me smack on the head. I just cheated on Evan. Seven months, my personal record, shattered in minutes. I lean against James's shoulder, look up at his perfect face. I've realized what it is--he smells like secrets. The delicious, dangerous kind you want to keep private. The kind that brings people together, or tears them apart.

Storm's Song

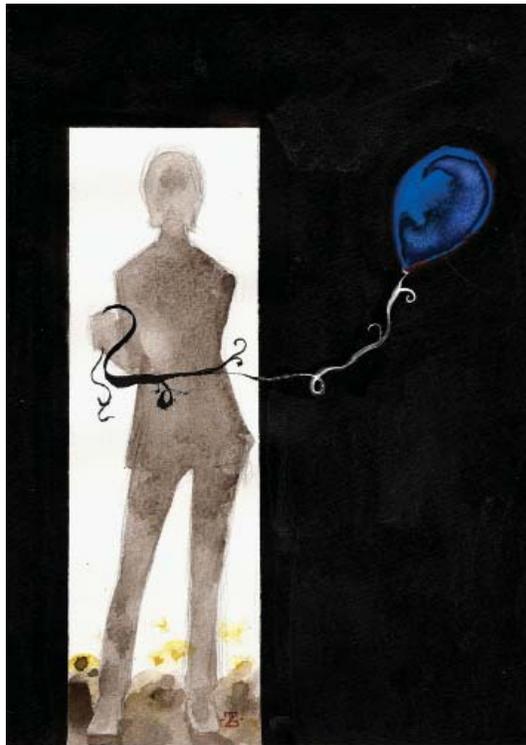
Kalie Fisher

"Come on, Jenny, you might beat me this time," David teases trying to coax me into running with him after work. Yeah right, I couldn't beat him even if he was missing a leg. It's not like I am slow or anything, it's just that David is a hell of a lot faster. "You know I don't care about winning," I say as I duck into his car and shut the door behind me. David and I work at Botticelli's (a high class and very expensive restaurant), and since I don't have a car I hitch a ride from him. I watch as he gets in and starts the car. "I don't think we should go because it's supposed to thunderstorm tonight," I explain, as I glance out the window at the threatening clouds above. "Well, well, well, the almighty captain is afraid to run in the rain," he teases. David and I are the senior captains of the Green Oaken High School track team, which by the way, is the number one ranked team in the state of Illinois. "Fine," I sigh, "but if I get sick and die I will haunt you." Smiling he turns the car out the parking lot and heads towards my house.

I change and give my mom an edited version of my plans for the night. "I am going to David Mulky's house, so we can work on conditioning and go over ideas for the track season." I wouldn't dare tell her we are planning to do our conditioning outside while there is a 95% chance of severe thunderstorms. Gosh, I'm stupid. I climb back into David's car. "So, where are we going?" I ask while he drives out of my neighborhood. "Let's go to Ant Hill Trails," he replies, "the woods are thick, so they should keep us dry if it starts to rain." Ant Hill Trails is a private wooded area about twenty minutes away from my house. When Mr. Ulner died last winter, Mrs. Ulner decided to allow the public access to the Trails. She must get very lonely because very few people visit due to all the ghost stories that kids made up when Mr. Ulner passed away. "Sounds good to me," I respond more worried about the storm than the stories.

David turns down a dirt road and parks the car just outside the entrance of the Trails. I get out and look around as an uncanny feeling comes upon me. I shake it off and start to

stretch while David changes in the car. I put my feet together and grab the cold grass with my hands feeling the familiar stretch of my muscles. Still touching the ground I spread my legs shoulder length apart. I grab my ankles and pull myself towards my legs. I look under them and see David leaning up against his car watching me. I blush as I realize what he's seeing. "Like what you see?" I ask almost seductively trying to make him feel at least a little embarrassed for being caught. He shifts his focus downwards finding my eyes, "Yes, but as much as I would love to stand here and watch you stretch, we really should get going before it rains." He glances at the clouds above and starts walking towards the woods. I let out a little yelp as I fall on my face struck dumb by his blunt response. I stand rubbing my face where it hit the ground and run to catch up with him.



Thunder booms above us as trees sway with the wind. We run side by side at a steady pace avoiding tree limbs and random dips in the dirt trail. As the sun begins to set we reach the middle of the Trail where the trees are less dense. We keep running using the sporadic lightning as our guide. It starts pouring rain and the wind seems to be ripping the trees from the ground. For a startling second the whistling of the wind, the roar of the thunder, the patter of the rain, the sound of our feet slapping against mud; all seem to symphonize with the

beating of my heart. I feel tears prickling my eyes as a wave of sorrow and grief slams into me. In that brief moment I feel as if the storm is singing a song. I want to stop running. I want to listen to the sad song of the storm. I try to understand it as a burst of lightning blinds me causing my heart to leap in my chest and the melody to fade away.

We can no longer run as the storm gets fiercer. "What now?" I shout over the noise. "We have to find shelter," I scarcely hear David respond as thunder explodes shaking the ground. A flash of lightning allows me to see his face and I understand what he was implying. I nod my head

and he grabs my hand and pulls me along through the ferocious storm. We turn onto a narrower trail, and I can barely make out a clearing ahead. A tree falls to the ground behind me. I turn to see the damage rolling my ankle as my foot slides into an unseen dip in the ground. David helps me up, and I attempt to keep going. I take one step then cry out in pain as my ankle protests. Before I know it I am in David's arms, and he is carrying me the rest of the way towards the clearing.

We break through the last of the trees and come upon a house. I laugh in relief at the sight of shelter. I am still in David's arms as he bangs his fist upon the big red door. It swings open revealing an elderly lady that I recognize as Mrs. Ulner beckoning us inside. The door slams shut behind us just as another roar of thunder shakes the ground. Mrs. Ulner leads us into a well lit room full of bright hues and outdated furniture. This is odd. How can the house still have electricity? It's a pretty bad storm and with all the thunder and lightning, a tree is sure to have fallen on the power lines. I shove my thoughts away and focus on what's happening around me. "Leave the girl here," Mrs. Ulner says while pointing to the couch facing an unlit fireplace. David obeys and gently places me on the couch. "Down the hall and to the left you will find a closet full of towels and blankets," she tells David, "I suggest you dry yourselves off and stay the night here." He thanks her and walks down the hallway towards the closet. "Now dear," she turns to me, "You are welcome to anything in the house ,but I must tell you to stay away from the attic." I feel the energy draining from my body as a hint of the sadness from before

settles over me. "Tell your friend there is a first aid kit in the bathroom, and he can find an ice pack in the freezer," her voice gets softer as I get even weaker. My eyes shut and I hear her voice somewhere off in the distance say, "Take care dear, I have to go now," before I drift into unconsciousness.

I wake up to find my ankle wrapped, and David watching me with a worried look on his face. "How is your ankle?" he asks. "Better," I reply. "Where is Mrs. Ulner," I ask as I make room on the couch for David. "I don't know," he says with a shrug, "When I came back into the room, you were asleep, and she was gone." Chills prickle my skull as I recall the last words she said to me. I can't help feeling something is wrong. I get up and hop around on my good foot looking for Mrs. Ulner. She has to be here. We can't find her, and I start to wonder if she left before we woke up.

As we are about to leave I remember the attic. "Let's check the attic," I say as my heart pounds against my chest. We find the entrance to the attic in the closet of the master bedroom. David opens the hatch, and the most putrid smell assaults our noses. Oh no! I think I'm going to faint, my heart is racing, and my mind doesn't want to accept what I already know is true. I climb up the ladder as my soul is racing. I climb up the another step; my soul wincing with each step. And then--I feel nothing; I am numb to all feeling as I step into the attic and see the decaying body swinging from the rafters. I hear the storm's song in my head as I understand the sorrow it sung.



What He Carries

He carries his equipment
He carries his uniform
He carries his ammunition
And his weapons
But he carries much more
He carries his heart
His memories
Though most importantly
He carries his bandana with Psalm 91 printed on it
The bandana is everything
It's his inspiration
To keep going
He already carries the weight of
lives on his shoulders.
Why not carry something light?
All he has is weight and thoughts.
Though quoting,
"I will rescue him; I will protect him"
Again in his head
He can keep going
He can keep hauling
What he carries is something else
Something that will never leave him
Something worth fighting for...



(Sergeant Winston Daley wears a bandana with
Psalms 91 printed on it.)

Kristen Zuchowski

The Evanescent

Paige Bergan



Every so often there are nights when the veil between worlds is so gauzy and thin, that travel from one to the next can happen as easily as crossing a bridge. Some of these nights follow the rigid calendar journey of the earth, moon, and sun. Others are seemingly random, when the air is completely still and the stars seem to dance in the heavens. When everything is so quiet you can hear the silence. When it feels like even the laws of gravity could be untrue and nothing is completely as it seems. This was one such night.

A young man rode swiftly through the brisk fall night. Carrying a letter of great importance, he needed to reach its destination in haste. This simple piece of paper could change his life – many lives – forever. He was impatient and anxious, but the horse needed rest if it was to make the journey, so he slowed to a walk and took in the still air, the sounds of the night, and the light of the full moon that allowed him to make this perilous trip.

In an instant everything became quiet, the sudden calm unsettled him as the horse tensed and whinnied nervously. He shuddered and shook his head as if to shake the cold fear creeping up inside him. He was enlightened, a man of reason! But however hard he tried to block them with cool calculated thoughts, the stories his grandmother used to tell him of the creatures of the Otherworld crowded the edges of his thoughts.



He was about to kick the horse into a gallop, anything to escape that feeling, when he saw her. Fleeting, unreal, the image was seared into his memory- a woman, unearthly, evanescent - wild pale hair, silver, iridescent, yet youthful. A cloak of butterflies, a myriad of fluttering sacrifices was the only color about her- lemon, vermilion, aquamarine- her marble stature was too big, too much- everything exaggerated, everything beautiful; most of all the eyes- breathtaking orbs, black that was deep as the night and revealed nothing, nothing at all. Was she real? Was he mad? He had no laws to apply to her, she was not bound by the explicable assumptions of mere mortals.

Without warning, his horse reared, shrieking, he tried to hold on, but he felt himself slipping, falling, it was like leaving and returning, dying and being born. The letter slipped from his belt, never to fulfill its destined purpose, but it didn't matter. He was free from the laws of this world – he was gone.



Descent

Falling , falling down to earth
toward the place I was given birth
I close my eyes and count to three
A sad requiem for an unknown dream.
Why is it that people of this nation
Are only in it for the fascination?
Always on the run
Just looking for more fun?
When no ones there
to even give a single care?
I look back and ask my friend this strange question
She looks out with the oddest expression,
and said, "We can change the world if we wanted"
A grin stretched across her face as she taunted.
I say, "Why can't we change the world now?
Before it all comes tumbling down?"
People cry from the streets,
"Someone save me from this path.
Why did I deserve such wrath?"
It may sound greedy
And really quite needy
But I ask to travel to a land of perfection
Away from this world's awful reflection.
Carry me off into the air
Lift me with care.
Spinning, twirling, and floating aimlessly around.
My head feels a bit airy.
Taken to a far away land
Hopefully it will be easier to understand.
As I picture a perfect world of gold
A venture thought of by young and old
The images pass by with the speed of light
Endlessly reaching out into the night
Clouds gray upon the disappearance of the sun
Why stop now the journey has begun
Excitement is bursting in me
As my eyes turn away to see
That this new world is just made of plastic
a world of uniformity
Everyone is swallowed up by their own stupidity
Their hearts of glass are fragile as such
And crumble with the slightest touch
Carry on by crying to sleep in their beds
Pretending that there was nothing wrong with their head.
They laugh the same, they talk the same
And wonder who is to blame

These people's lies
Pile up towards the sky.
Is it impossible even for the wise
To think how these people can
Have a peaceful demise
My head tries to think up an action
To stop my heart from crushing
Under this reaction.
This place is no different than
The one before.
A realization that leaves me
Wailing on the floor.
A shadow figure comes from the alley
Leads me away from this sad reality
A shadow's voice rings
"Quickly before you are
consumed by the darkness.
Go home where you belong,
back to Kansas."
I came to behold
That what I was told
Was nothing but my blinded ambitions
To achieve my so called world peace visions.
On that journey to find my way
I learned an important lesson that day
Sometimes our suffering
Our every, waking, aching pains
Cannot be erased by the cold rains.
There is no youth or money flowing
From the fountains just a life of
Mountains hidden behind mountains.
Sometime thunder can't block out
The noise, even those obnoxious
Teenage boys. Love and hate are
Two sides of the same coin
In life these two must join
My friend's voice still rings clear,
"Give the world a second chance,
Like the time you thought you couldn't dance."
I'll show all the rest
I won't settle for the second best
My experiences from Oz
Were not a total lost cause
Just know that paths don't always lead
To happy endings; be creative and stand out
And be known--this is your life--all your own.
My slow descent revealed that my reality
was never that distant.
And so I'll tell you something,
"Only boring people are boring..."

Michelle Chan



Jewel

Even now that she's gone they won't stop moving and knocking, I wanted to say How could you say that you love her when you won't leave her alone, and Darl knows it and instead he sets fire to the goddamn barn. The goddamn barn. I saw it and I knew and I looked at Darl and he knew that I knew that he was the one who set it, just like he was the one who made us leave to earn three goddamn dollars. I knew then. I knew that she would be gone by the time we got back, but now the goddamn barn is on fire and it's just me doing everything by myself again

And all them others fluttering about like those buzzards in the sky, waiting to pick at her, but they won't do anything about it they never will

The goddamn barn is on fire, sparks are in my eyes and on my hands and all I can see in the burning building is the , I have to get it out I have to save her

I hear Darl behind me, yelling Here Jewel come on, but he sounds far away. His voice intermingles with the screams of the horse and the distant thunder of the flames. It's not important. In my head I hear Darl's voice saying Jewel whose son are you your mother was a horse but who was your father Jewel and I want to turn and yell at him You goddamn lying son of a bitch, because he doesn't know what he's talking about and I do know, and because he set the goddamn barn on fire, the lying son of a bitch

If it was just me and her she wouldn't be here she would be quiet, but she isn't quiet, all of a sudden it is very loud and as I lift one end up tilting that goddamn , I call out Darl Darl. He can't hear me. None of them can. They won't do anything they never will, it is just me and her and for a moment I almost want to pull her back inside the barn and lie down with her, let the goddamn barn burn around us, it would just be me and her

One last push one last push until she is quiet

Angela Clem



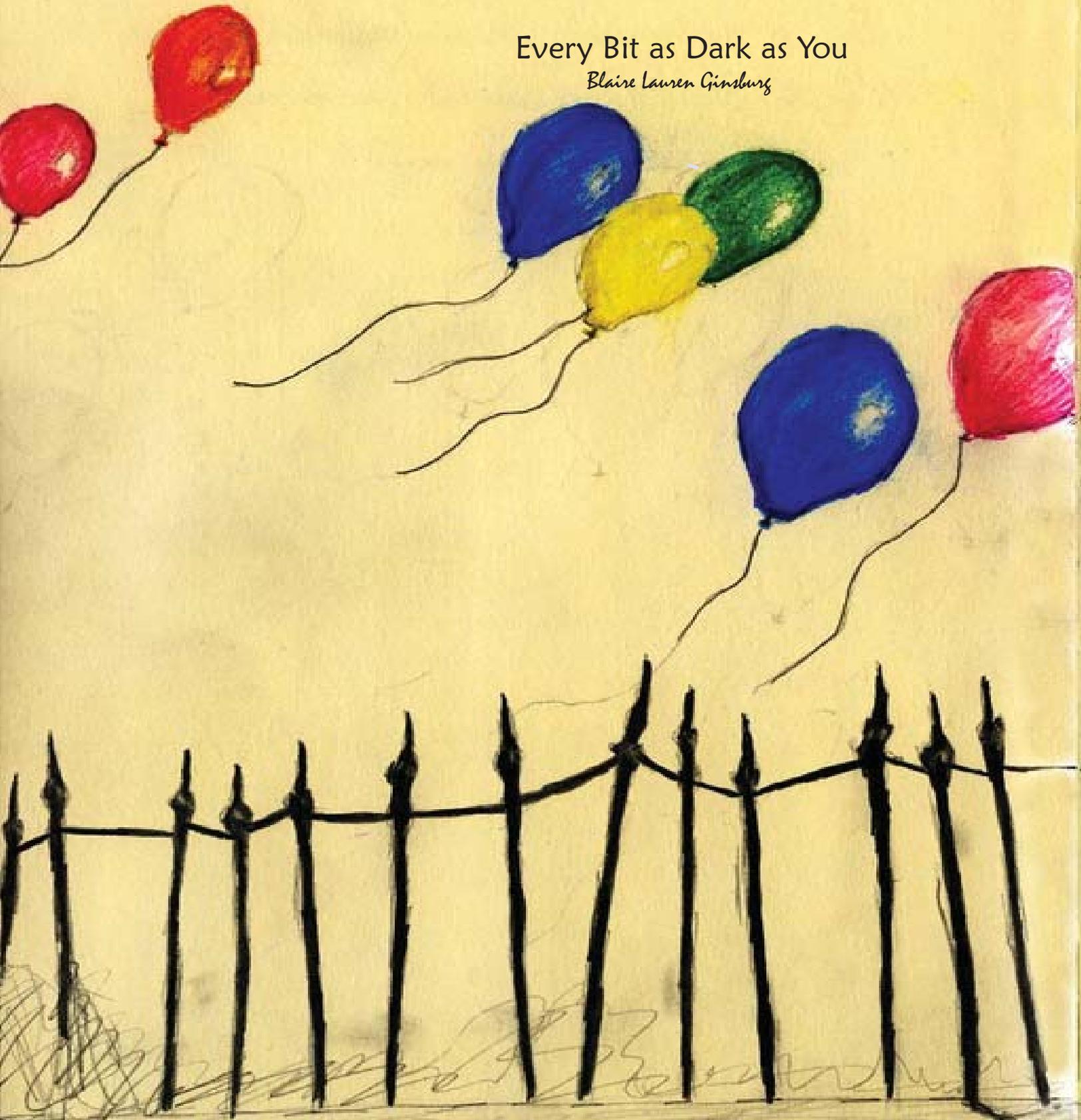
Pandemonium

Melodies of pandemonium
Fill my ears with a silent hum
Black is everything we have found
White is everything without sound
And as lunacy ensues without ceasing
And pain takes hold without releasing
Swirling colors cease to blend
As slowly, my mind will mend
From the madness that drove me
To the brink of all insanity
Perhaps now sense will come
As threads of time appear undone
And my temper is cut short
As all my rational thoughts abort
And a red haze clouds my vision
As voices cloud my mind with such derision
Perhaps now it is time to leave
As now I begin to grieve
For all was lost so long ago
And all the insanity that came in tow

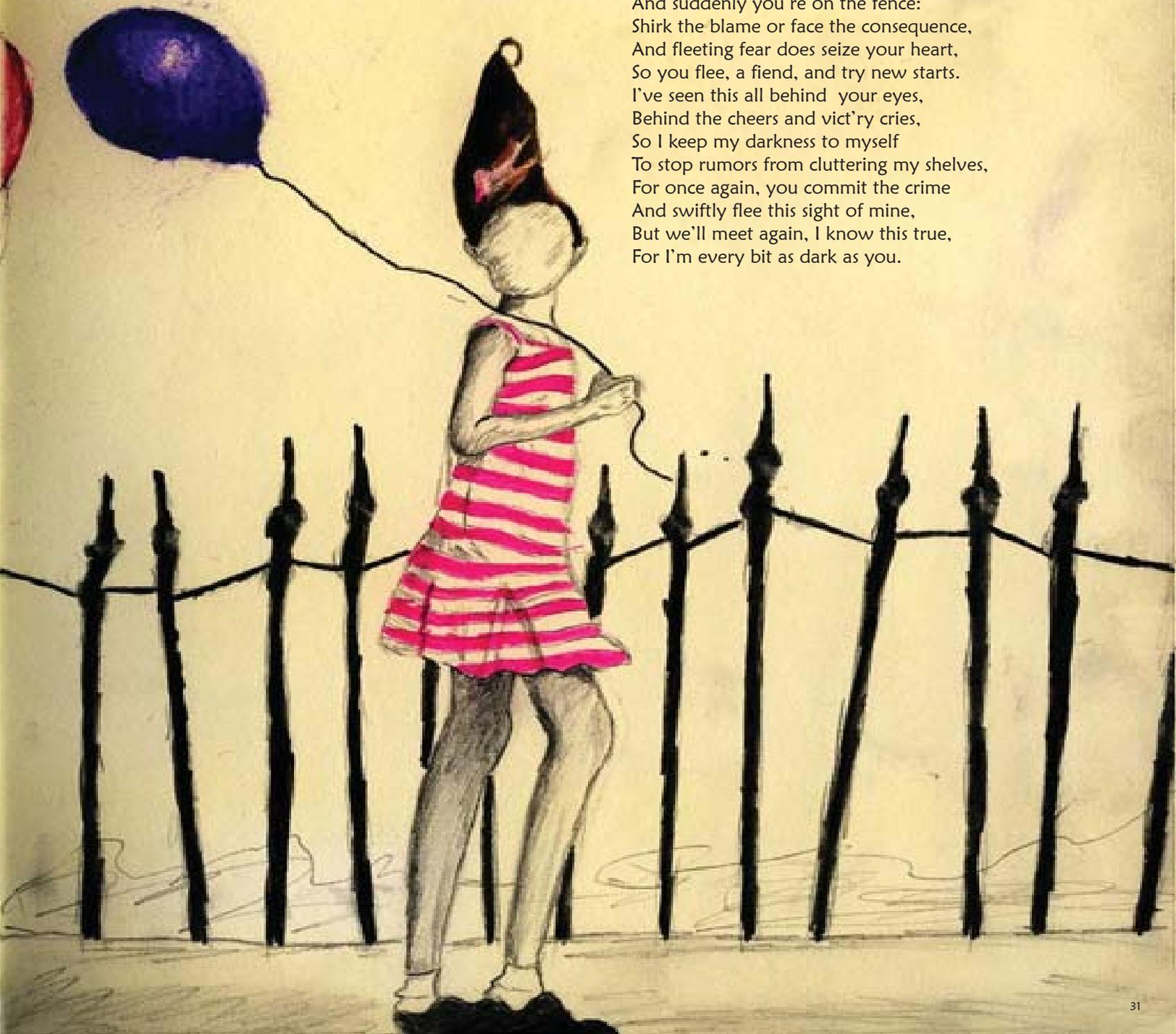
Lauren McGrath



Every Bit as Dark as You
Blaire Lauren Ginsburg



Just as wild and just as true,
I'm every bit as dark as you.
I would not show it on my face,
But I've learned your secret, silent grace.
Your gait is sure as the day is fair
And filled with ling'ring subtle air,
But I won't let it fool me so;
I know your mind, like mine, in woe
With thoughts that come without command
That unwillingly take your hand
And carry out forbidden deed
Before your conscience can take heed,
And suddenly you're on the fence:
Shirk the blame or face the consequence,
And fleeting fear does seize your heart,
So you flee, a fiend, and try new starts.
I've seen this all behind your eyes,
Behind the cheers and vict'ry cries,
So I keep my darkness to myself
To stop rumors from cluttering my shelves,
For once again, you commit the crime
And swiftly flee this sight of mine,
But we'll meet again, I know this true,
For I'm every bit as dark as you.





I Would Say..

I would say that by noon
Heart really knew my purpose
My goals, the plan for rescue

I would say that it's better
To never regret, never take back,
Try not to be a brat.

I know that life is better when
One is not alone.
Imagination without God
Is a living dead zone.
Reacting instead of listening, leads
To broken hearts.
Hurting instead of healing
Ends in worlds torn apart

The best action, I say is speak
The truth from the start
Don't let small pains grow large
Only to ruin your start.

Hannah Jenkins



The Voice of Desperate Hearts

Bailey Tulloch

Among the freezing breeze of swastikas,
The only awakened robot
Was the word of the innocent.

II
She was of three hearts,
Like a sphinx,
Child, escapist, and thief.

III
The small girl whirled in the whip of tongues
And let the words flow, falling, and flailing.

IV
A fervent Soliloquist and a Jew,
United.
A Soliloquist and a Jew and a Thief,
United.

V
She knew now which to prefer,
The beauty of the alleged,
Or the beauty of destruction;
The Whistler whistling
From the silence after.

VI
Death consumes the long cold walls.
With a barbaric laugh,
The shadow of the Soliloquist
Crossed it, to and fro.
The laugh
Echoed in the shadow,
The humming of a thieving heart.

VII
Oh, voice of desperate hearts,
Why do you imagine a golden blue world?
Do you not see how the darkness
Wobbles, defies the tears
That you have so promptly set before it?

VIII
There are no noble accents,
Only poundings of agonized cries.
You know, I know, she knew,
That the stars swallowed in the darkness
Weren't shining as meant to.

IX
When the night flew out of sight,
Death scraped the edge
Of one of many chains.

X
At the sight of a finally risen star,
Swimming in the pink of beginning,
Even the eyes of a spoken word
Would cry out sharply.

XI
Death soared out of their sanctuary
And into another,
Once a scream pierced him.
In that he cried out,
The shadow of the Soliloquist
Haunted ever after.

XII
Her presence
The river must be flowing.

XIII
It was night for an eternity.
It was ashen,
And it was going to be a luscious midnight.
All the winking stars went to sleep,
And Death shuffled on.

Inspired by "The Book Thief" by Markus Zusack and "The Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" by Wallace Stevens.

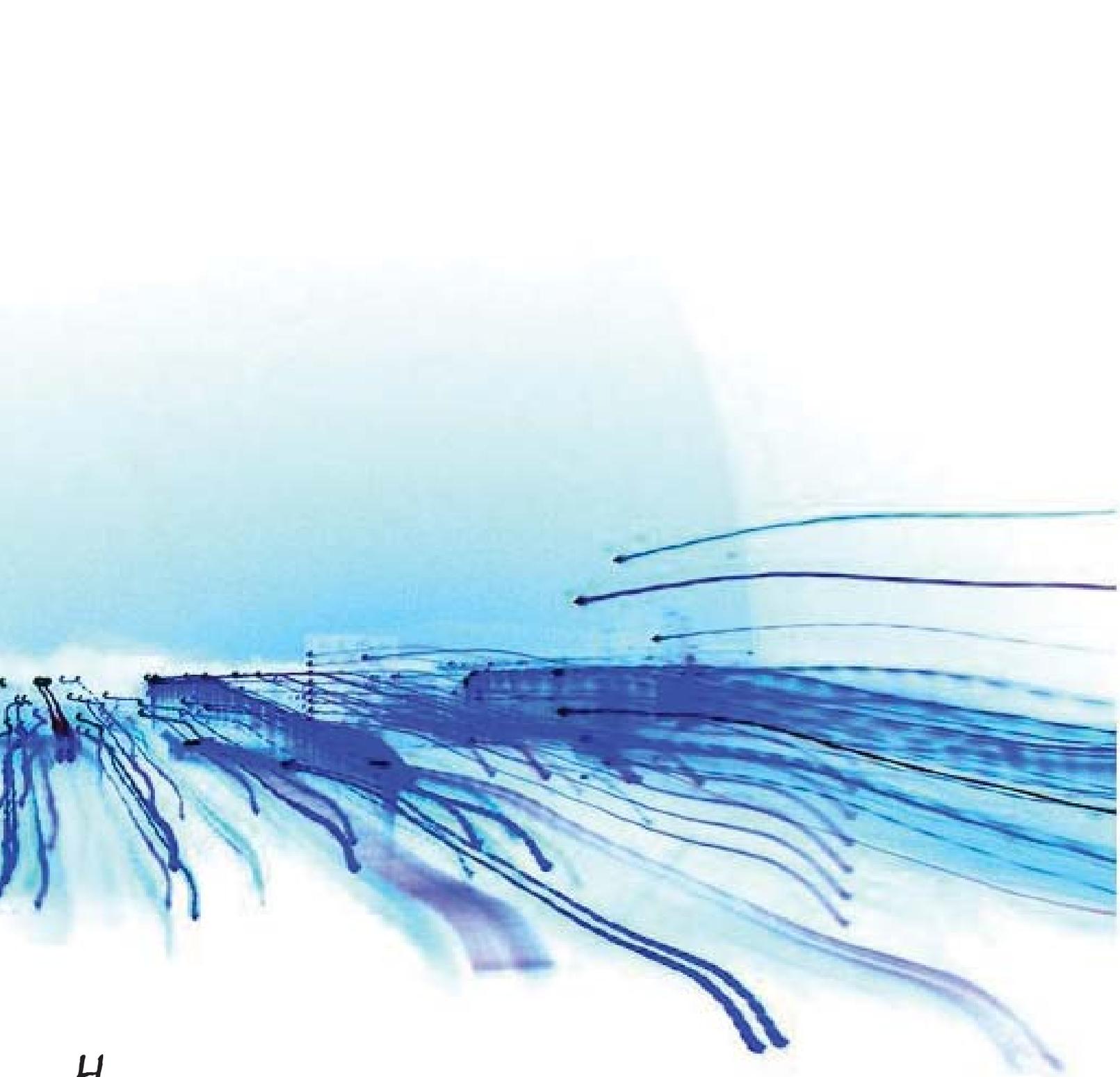
The Comet

Holden Meier



Billions of miles away, the Oort Cloud orbited the Sun in silence. The cloud, consisting of thousands upon thousands of chunks of ice and rock, formed the edge of the Solar System, millions of miles past Neptune. The cloud had remained relatively unchanged for billions of years, but now, for a small portion of the cloud, that was about to change. The orbit of an asteroid had been slowly decaying. And at last, it passed too close to a small, generic block of ice. The orbit of this block of ice changed almost undetectably. But it was enough. This block of ice, a comet, now had a date with destiny in the inner solar system, with one of the planets. This planet was a small spheroid of rock, the third such planet from the Sun.

On Earth, reptiles began to leave the sea for the first time, and to breathe the cool night air.



Had the comet possessed any sort of brain, it would have become indescribably bored. It had been millions and millions of years, since it had left the Oort Cloud and very little had changed. Had the comet possessed a brain, it would have been overwhelmingly relieved to notice a small blue dot nearby; the first solid object it had encountered during its journey. But this blue dot was soon far behind, and the comet was again hurtling through oblivion.

On Earth, NASA detected a small comet passing near Neptune. It was an interesting discovery, but nothing more, and any note of it was buried under stacks of paperwork.

The comet moved ever closer to Earth, but it was apparent to any observer that it would miss the blue planet. If there had been anyone on Venus, they would have a right to be worried, but certainly none of the silly, furless primates wandering Earth had any reason to worry.

But then, the comet came too close to one of the many rogue asteroids wandering the solar system.

On Earth, warning sirens began to sound at NASA.

Continued on page 36

To think that just a few hours ago, I had been sitting in school, doing my math, when the principal had rushed in. He had spoken urgently and quietly with our teacher. Halfway through the conversation, she gasped, and the principal shushed her. Soon our teacher walked to the front of the room. Her face was white.

“Class,” she had said, “school is being dismissed early today. The office has called your parents already. Please proceed outside as if this were a normal dismissal. All students will be required to leave the school.”

There was much confusion among the students, although none of us were sad to leave early. We left without complaint. But I knew something really serious was going on the moment I got into the car. My mother always, always listened to the radio while driving. But not today.

Luckily, my mother never tries to hide anything from me. She told me straight up what had happened, but with a more light-hearted view than what they likely were saying on NPR.

“Honey, they don’t want us to panic, but they think a comet could hit.” Those had been her very words. I sat in the backseat with my mouth open, dumbfounded.

“Now, they only think so. I heard a very encouraging statement on CNN before I came to pick you up. They say that the United Nations is required to issue a warning if there is a one percent chance a comet the size of Whitehead-Meyers will hit. But it’s best to be prepared. Your father and I are going to go shopping as soon as I drop you off at home.”

And now, my parents were off to a free-for-all at Costco. It was announced that all food and survival gear was free to members; half of the town was off to the store. My parents predicted chaos, so I was made to stay home. I sighed and glanced around. There was nothing else to do. I picked up my history textbook. That was the first time in my life I did my homework to calm myself down.

“You have got to be kidding me...,” I mumbled, as my parents walked in with their finds from Costco. An hour of shopping totaled: two flashlights, two packs of granola bars, and an empty water bottle. “Oh, honey, it’s alright. It probably won’t hit us anyway...and then what fools those other shoppers will look like! We’ll be fine...”

The government had advised everyone to seek shelter as far below ground as they could. If the comet struck, it would create a massive cloud of super-heated gas that would spread across the Earth at the speed of sound. The temperature would rise drastically, and debris would fly everywhere. The safest place to be was underground. But people who lived along the coast, like us, needed to be able to move at a moment’s notice in case the comet struck the ocean.

My dad worked at a large communications company downtown. They had a 35-story skyscraper with a 5-story basement. All company families were allowed to take shelter down there, and that is where we went. The company would also have several buses waiting outside in case they needed to bus us to high ground.

Once the last family had reached the basement, we bolted the door behind us. My father was very vague about why we had to do this, but I eventually figured it out. “You’re locking desperate people out!” I accused him.

“Calm down. There are going to be thousands and thousands of people trying to get in here when that thing hits. People who don’t believe anything the government says, people who just couldn’t believe that something like this would happen, and people who couldn’t find shelter. We are trying to survive, and if we let them all in, that will not happen. I’m sorry. But have you seen what some people are doing?”

I stormed off to my own little corner of the shelter, but I had to agree with him on some level. It had been amazing what some people were doing.

In Houston, a church group had blocked off the entry to a subway station, claiming that it was “God’s Will” that all sinners were to die under the wrath of the comet.

In London, a crazy bunch of animal rights activists had broken into the zoo, gone after the cages with sledgehammers, and set free some of the animals. Now the city was overrun with lions, tigers, bears, and a plethora of other deadly creatures. The activists claimed to be “saving” the animals from “sure death.”

And of course, in almost every city in the world, looters ran rampant.

Suddenly there was a loud crash down the hall. I raced down to find an old lady holding a lamp over the bleeding corpse of a young man.

“I had to do it!” she shouted, her face crazed, “One less person means more survival gear for us all, and he doesn’t have a family at home or anything.” A couple of burly guys stepped forward to restrain her, but she screamed wildly and swung the lamp at the men, hitting them both on their heads. The men fell backwards, bleeding. Soon it became a free-for-all, with everybody swinging at everybody. I screamed and ran up the stairs to the lobby.

I banged on the glass doors of the lobby, but they were locked, and my father, still downstairs, had the only key. “Help! Oh, please help us!” I screamed at the top of my lungs. But nobody heard me. The noise was dying down in the basement, but I was too afraid to go see what had happened. I leaned up against a pillar and started to cry.

Footsteps. I jerked up and looked to my left, where I had heard them.

“Hello?” I whispered. “Dad? Mom?”

Suddenly, searing pain. I’m on the ground. I can feel blood running down my face.

A man’s voice: How could I!? What’s happening to me?

Then nothing.

The comet inched closer and closer. If it had possessed eyes, it could have glimpsed the bright lights of the cities. Explosions, too. Riots in Rio. Terrorism in London. Prayers at the Vatican, Jerusalem, and Mecca.

It edged ever closer. The comet entered the atmosphere, and began to glow. A steady trail of fire grew behind it, as it sped toward Earth at thousands and thousands of miles an hour.

Then the glow began to fade. The fire went out. And, to the disbelief of the seven billion inhabitants of Earth, the comet went on its way.

On Earth, the comet had done its share of harm, though it missed. Across the planet, thousands lie dead as the result of riots, terrorism, petty crime, selfishness and panic. It was the largest disaster in the history of civilization.

A century from now, humanity may have spread colonies across the solar system, preventing extinction in the event of a planet-wide catastrophe.

A century from now, humanity may have the technology to avert an asteroid impact.

A century from now, humanity may obtain the trust in government that would prevent panic in the event of an impending disaster. Of course, a century from now, humanity may have wiped itself off the face of the Earth. But one thing is certain. A century from now, the comet will return.

And this time, it will not miss.

The End



I never
unwind.

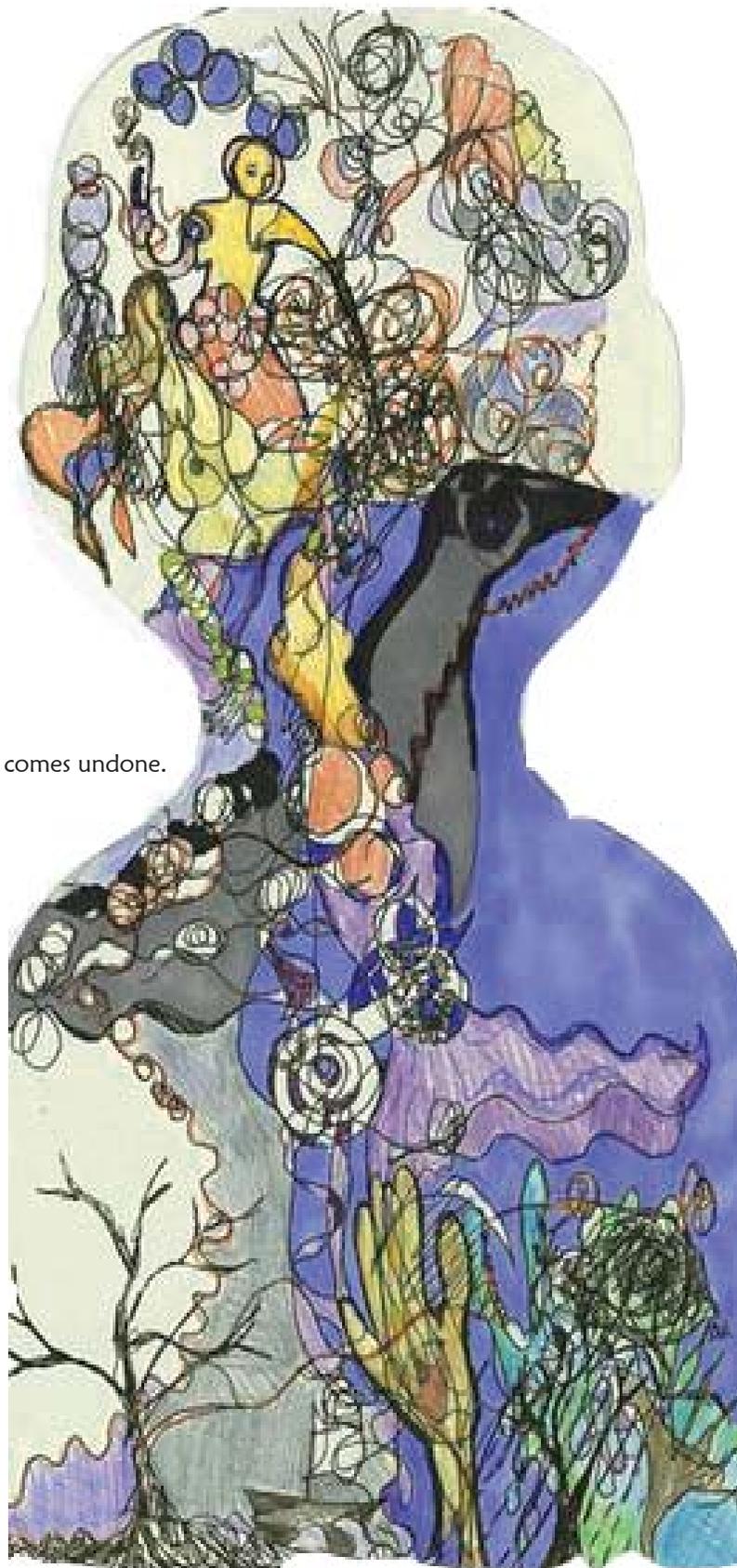


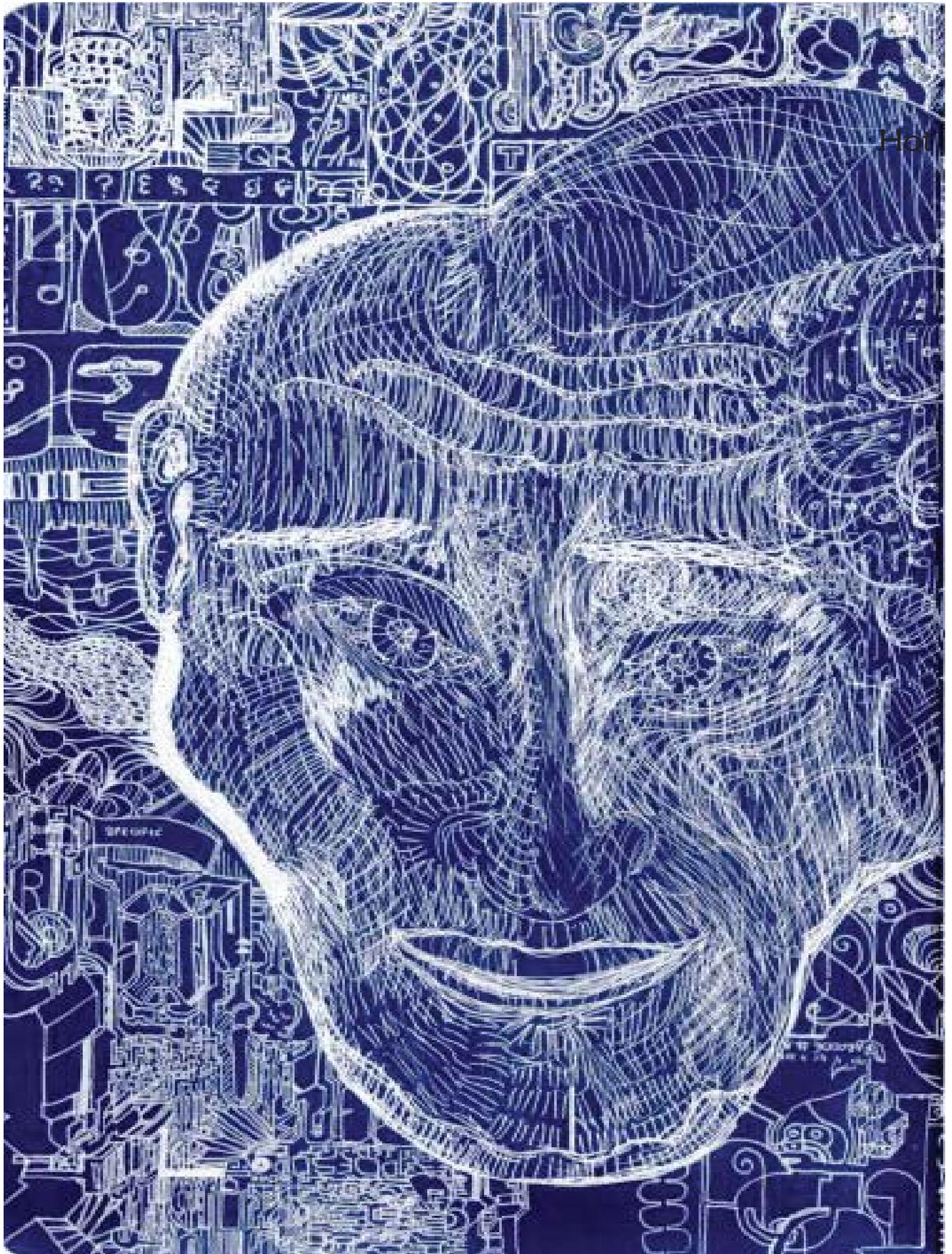
Hot Blood Underground

Ayah Abdul-Rauf

He is anchored to the cold room's center
By metallic, unused fetters
Reluctance is his parapet and it's likely to collapse
He lies amidst rusted traps
He is the first catch.

His thoughts are connected by sloppy toy seams
The reports about him are printed in reams
His limbs are connected by sloppy toy seams. Sometimes he comes undone.
Sometimes he comes undone.
Sometimes, he comes: undone.





Hot