



ALLEGANY
COLLEGE
of
MARYLAND

2023
EXPRESSIONS

Essays, Fiction, Poetry & Artwork



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ALLEGANY COLLEGE *of* MARYLAND

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STUDENT EDITOR'S Introduction

Dear Reader,

I am so glad that you decided to view this edition of *Expressions*. While viewing this publication, I encourage you to keep in mind all of the hard work and dedication that was put into each writing and piece of imagery. I would like to personally congratulate everyone who submitted a writing piece and/or visual work. It is a great honor for your work to be selected and recognized throughout the college. Special thanks is also owed to all those who make this magazine possible.

For those you may not know, our *Expressions 2022* magazine was named “Best Magazine in 2022” by the Community College Humanities Association! That is a great honor to have bestowed upon ACM, fellow students, and staff. To me, this just goes to show how fantastic we can be when creative minds come together. Many students use their creativity as an outlet, and it is important and necessary for this process to take place. The purpose of this magazine is to put student inspirations out into the world.

I truly enjoy reading *Expressions* year after year. I was the student editor for last year’s edition of *Expressions 2022*, and I was bestowed the honor of being student editor for this year’s edition. This has truly

been a wonderful experience. I have seen so many talented individuals, and each edition of *Expressions* is truly one-of-a-kind. I will leave you with this quote by Robert Greene, “The truth is that creative activity is one that involves the entire self—our emotions, our levels of energy, our characters, and our minds.”

I proudly present to you, *Expressions 2023*.

Denna J. Morgan

Student Editor



SINGLE

Photograph

by Mariah Sunday

DEAR UNIVERSE

Poem

by Courtney Shaffer

Dear Universe—

I am thankful for the days I've had here on Earth and
hopeful for more to come.

I am thankful for the ability to see the beauty that makes up
this existence.

I want to live my life with
less stress,
less worry, and
less uncertainty.

I am open to solutions.

I am open to change.

I am open to new experiences and
new opportunities.

I am open to new perspectives and
enlightenment.

XO,

1 in 7.9 billion



A FULL HUNTER'S MOON RISES ABOVE THE TREES

| Photograph

| *by Isaac Kneisley*

JAXON AND JULIUS

Poem

by *Rachelle Thomas*

Jaxon and Julius, my two shining lights,
Twin stars that shine, both day and night,

In the cosmos above, you light up my way,
Bringing joy and love, to every single day.

Jaxon Patrick, with a smile so bright,
A ray of sunshine, shining so warm and bright,
You bring laughter and joy, wherever you go,
And I'm grateful to call you, a part of my soul.

Julius Christopher, my moon and my sun,
Bringing balance and peace, to everyone,
With your kindness and grace, you light up my day,
And I am thankful, in every single way.

My dad, thank you, for all you've done,
For the sacrifices made, for your love and care,
You've taught me so much, and shown me the way,
And I am grateful, for you every single day.

Jaxon and Julius, my two shining stars,
Twin lights that brighten up my days,

With love and joy, you fill my life.



SOUL WINDOW

Photograph | *by Harmony Fetterman*

HOME

Poem

by Breton Steele

The touch of your skin against mine,
the way my hand fits in yours.
When our lips meet
and our two bodies become one,
I am home.

Laying in your arms,
The dull ache I once felt
is erased by your scent.
I am home.

Your words, your eyes
Your smell, your smile
I am home.

With you I have found my love
With you I have found my life
With you, I found my everything.

With you, I am home.

SWIM WITH FATE

Essay

by April M H Yeager

When your soul bears the emotional state of the world, any sufferings, anxieties, trauma, and pain that is within, is like a grain of sand in the vastness of the bottom of the sea. Realizing that the more attachment one has to someone or something, there is a magnetic pull to attract worry, fear and anxiety over the loss or death of these people and attachments. How can yin exist without yang, or love without fear of loss, on this earthy plane? Even more of a reason to appreciate the present in this moment you are gifted. Embrace the eternal bond of the spirit that goes beyond the flesh suit. Swimming deeper into my mind I crystalized the realization that we have no true control. We can't control the weather, our families or friends, our career or even our life purpose. It's even hard to control what we say and do, if out of synchronicity. It is uncomfortable at first to realize our lack of control. But there is still hope for the future, the guide of the heart, the instincts of our nature, the committee in the mind, the vibration of the voice, strength of the thoughts, impact of the actions, and the focus of the intentions. These are our tools to paddle through

the flow of fate. We have to make one decision truly. To flow like water with life and resonant or to crash against, hold on to tightly or to resist with dissonance. To resonate means to listen to that authentic silence within the space between thoughts. For I am not my thoughts but the experienter of what is vibrated and projected into outer and inner reality. When we go against what is being felt authentically, that's when dissonance starts to affect your ripple. When we don't listen to our hearts, as when we say yes, when we want to say no, or when we say no when we want to say yes. When we get stuck in this unharmonious state of being we have pent up energy. This is when we get stuck into the chaotic subcortical looping of the mind, creating problems with that energy not released through expression or movement. This is when we lose our keys, forget where we parked, rush through a meal or life, or stay up to late and sleep in too late, get frustrated over nothing, and cry over spilt milk. It starts to echo out into our thinking habits, decision making, eating habits, interactions with others, and the motions of life. The same can be reflected into the

resonance spectrum. Experiencing being at one with the breath, brain, heart, gut connection. Balanced in spirit, mind, and body. One starts to with ease move through the motions of life. That's when the law of attraction kicks into overdrive and you start to manifest the greater things in life that you visualize and not just problems and worries you try to predict. Life opens up when your heart opens up. Bringing me back to having no control, and what helped me accept and even find peace within the notion of lacking control. I found this peace of mind while noticing the definition of fate in my biology text book for college: "A fixed decree by which the order of things is prescribed; the immutable law of the universe; inevitable necessity; the force by which all existence is determined and conditioned." I have had this same realization through deep meditation. I used to feel powerless in this concept, but now I see clearly we are all flowers that start as seeds. There is a process, a reason and a rhyme for everything. Every broken window lets in fresh air. My life, my path, my process. Every decision I believe I make is the decision which I was ultimately fated to make. If I change my mind last minute, that was my fate. If I stay, If I go, If I win, if I lose—it is all part of the sacred design. It all rippled from that drop of water that echoed out into the pond by the pebble at conception. Rippling creating your own unique current. Only I will vibrate that way. Be careful what

you focus your thought into, thoughts are seeds to cast your Vibration in the ocean of your perception of reality. But be with the feelings, thoughts, emotions, the good, the bad, and the ugly. Embrace it, feel it, accept it, face it, release, and let it go. Resonating is not about only embracing the positive, to resonate means to flow within your authenticity. To let that light shine. Sometimes that light needs to shine into the darkest deepest Marina trench of the mind and to challenge deeply what society has implanted and indoctrinated into you. Always act in the mode of goodness in the moment, as well as paying respect to your past. To acknowledge the gassho growth that occurs from building up rocks to climb out of the cave of what was, to embrace what is, and can be. You have two choices in the river of fate. Hold to the rocks and cling and hope that something changes, or surrender to the river, let go and swim where the current takes you. Your path is the gift given to you before birth was taken place. Trust in your path, embrace your purpose, with the simple joy of being, existing and experiencing. Ram Das shared, "The spiritual journey is not about acquiring something outside yourself. Rather you are penetrating the layers and veils to return to the deepest truth of your own being." Things are going to happen the way they are going to happen. I am just going to submerge in the flow, instead of trying to fly away while clinging to a rock.



THE SHEEP

Soft Pastel | *by Kali Laird*

EVERLASTING LIFE

Poem

by *Becca Wharton*

The sky cries when you're in sorrow.
Today is the present and the future is tomorrow.
Each life is a wave of the coast.
Family is what is cherished the most.

When you feel like you're starting to sway.
Just know your family will make the hurt go away.
Spend every moment you can with the ones you love.
Someday, even I, will be in the skies above.

But don't fret, don't fear, have no doubt.
Sharing all the time you have with family is what living is all about.
When the time comes for you to reach the sky.
Just know that it is never goodbye.

Everyone's waiting for you above.
A true reunion filled with nothing but love.

THE LAST GOODBYE IS ALWAYS THE HARDEST

Essay

by Ashley Rose Sileo

We say “Goodbye,” every day, whether hanging up on a phone call or leaving our friends for the day. There’s never really much thought behind a daily goodbye. It’s in human nature to say goodbye a lot in our lifetime. We say goodbye to our schools, relationships, jobs, homes, and possessions. Then there’s the last goodbye, the real goodbye. This one is the hardest of them all. The reality of this goodbye will be the most challenging thing you may ever have to do. Richard Collision, author of the blog post “Why is it so Hard to Say Goodbye?” writes, “It’s hard because such moments remind us of the impermanence of existence. One day it will all end, everything we have and who we are will be gone. Saying goodbye is to acknowledge that wheels turn and time passes. It also teaches us what’s important.”

With a final goodbye, you are losing someone. For me, it’s my sister Amanda. I never thought this day would come, I mean I did, because death is inevitable right? But I never thought it would happen this soon. Amanda was always by my side since the day I was born. Not only is she my big sister, she’s also my

friend, my partner in crime, and my yellow. Since 2016, she has been in an exhausting battle against gastroparesis. Amanda has not been able to eat for the last three years. Since 2019 she has been receiving all her nutrition through total parenteral nutrition, which means she has not taken a bite of food or a drink by mouth for the last three years. She has had every possible treatment and procedure with no success. In March of 2022 my sister had all of her colon removed along with the majority of her stomach and some of her small intestine. My sister is strong and determined, and she has fought for years. Until late September of 2022, we were told: “there’s nothing left that can be done.” This is when my reality hit me. I was going to have to prepare myself for the last goodbye. The feeling of sadness overwhelms me at times. If it’s not sadness, it’s rage, with thoughts of “Why? How is this fair? She’s so young.”

The final goodbye means you must face the reality that this person will no longer be there. My sister won’t physically be there for my graduation or my daughter’s. The thought of this alone breaks my heart. Since birth

I had my sister by my side, she was always there. I think about when we were kids and how close we were. I think about how amazing my sister is as an aunt. I realize by saying our goodbyes that she would no longer be around to watch my daughter grow into a young lady. I won't have her around to confide in or vent to. Saying our final goodbye means I will grow older than my older sister.

The final goodbye means you reflect on your life together. You play back all the memories you have with that person. You feel almost every single emotion possible, anger, love, happiness, fear, and sadness. Anger. I say this one more than once because this is the emotion that gets me. Anger. Every time I think of my sister not being there, I get this fire in the pit of my stomach. A fire very hard to put out. It enrages me when I think about not being able to save my sister the way she saved me, when I think there is nothing possible I can do to ease her pain and have her stay, when I realize it's all out of my control. Although it's hard to think of all the memories, as the emotions you experience become overwhelming, the memories are essential because they are all you will have. These memories will carry you through the rest of your life, and it's necessary to hold on to them. But sometimes memories fade as time passes. You try to hold on to them, but they slip right through your fingers. As time passes my sister will

become only a memory. But Amanda is so much more than a memory, and I will fight every day for the rest of my life to keep her an active part of my life, to make her proud of who I am, and to keep her in my heart and my daughter's heart forever.

The final goodbye means you must prepare what you will say. You want the person to know how much they mean to you, how much they are loved, and how much you will miss them. For my sister, this is what I will say: My dear Amanda, this is for you. This is my way of saying I will always love and cherish you. You were always there for me. You were there when I needed a co-signer to be able to have an apartment on my own and when I needed a sitter for Peyton. You were there when I moved from New Jersey to Maryland to start a new chapter. You were there when I felt like my whole heart left, and I was utterly broken after my breakup. And although we won't be creating any new memories together, I will hold on to the ones we made. You taught me how to be a sister, how to love, and how to be a strong woman. Although this goodbye is the hardest yet, I understand why you must leave. You will always be someone I admire and remain in my heart forever. I will always share our childhood memories with my daughter and remind her how much you cherished her. Even though you will be gone, you will never be forgotten.

This brings us to the hardest reason of them all, understanding the decision. When your loved one is terminal and decides to end all life-sustaining measures, it's human nature to ask them to stay. You want them around as long as possible; you don't want to imagine a life without them. The reality is that these are all the exact thoughts the person making this decision is going through. They know how your heart feels, but they also know they gave it their all, and there's nothing left for them to give. Understanding the decision doesn't mean you want the person to leave. Instead, it's a way of providing the person you love peace of mind. The blog from Hospice Red River Valley explains it best by stating, "You may not be able to tell your loved one it's OK for them to go, but perhaps you can tell them you understand they need to go. It will never feel OK to you. But sometimes, people are waiting for a cue that they can go. People who are dying may not feel they can pass if they are too worried about how the family will cope without them." Loving someone is putting aside your feelings to do what's best for the person you love, and sometimes that means letting go.

The last goodbye isn't hard because you lose memories. It's the hardest because you lose the chance of making new ones. There's never a right time to say your last goodbye, but knowing the value

of time can help you realize that now is all you have. There is no time for pride, rage, or regret. We are not promised tomorrow. All we can do now is let our loved ones know what they mean to us today. Nothing can prepare you for this goodbye, and with it comes grief. Everyone says that grief comes in waves. That's a lie. Grief comes at you like an enormous high-speed train ramming into your soul. It will hit you and knock you on your ass in the happiest moments. Of course, you will stop and think of your loved ones and how strong they were. So, I stand strong for Amanda even in the most challenging moments. Sometimes that grief train slows its speed, but it's constantly still moving, and you never know when it will hit you the hardest next.

The hardest goodbyes are the last and final goodbyes. They teach you the harsh lesson that this life is too short; it causes you grief and teaches you the importance of memories. So, I ask that you treat every goodbye as your last. Even though it's hard if you make every goodbye meaningful, each goodbye after that will be a blessing. Hug your loved ones, especially your sister(s).

In loving Memory of
Amanda DeAngelis, 2/19/1988-11/13/2022

To read more about Amanda's story and help raise awareness about gastroparesis, please visit:

[Facing death, NJ woman's body weakens while her spirit stays strong](https://www.fox5ny.com/news/amanda-chris-deangelis-share-story-gastroparesis-battle)

<https://www.fox5ny.com/news/amanda-chris-deangelis-share-story-gastroparesis-battle>

[Down to 76 pounds, N.J. woman's condition is 'ultra rare.' But her spirit remains unbroken](https://www.nj.com/mercer/2022/09/down-to-76-pounds-nj-womans-condition-is-ultra-rare-but-her-spirit-remains-unbroken.html)

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GRANDMA'S HANDY WORK

Colored Pencil | *by Patricia Maddy*

Essay

by Jolene DePiro-Walters

Roses. This was the scent that wafted through the air and took over my nasal passages as I closed my eyes. I imagine being in a wild garden, browsing all of the beautiful flowers on a warm sunny day. I envision myself strolling through the garden, occasionally pausing to smell the roses, and appreciating each one's beauty. Closing my eyes just to feel the rays of sunshine against my skin, and to work on my breathing.

"Breathe Jolene," I say to myself.

I don't want to open my eyes. I want this vision to go on for as long as possible, and I wish more than anything that I could always be here in this moment.

As opened my eyes, panic and anxiety took over my breathing. No more garden, no more sunshine. It's mid-October, and I'm in my parent's bedroom staring at my mother in her hospital bed. The hospital bed is nothing new, but the yellow roses on her bedside table, they're new. A few hours ago, my best friend Kimberly brought those flowers here, since my mom is dying and all.

"I decided to go with yellow because the color yellow represents happiness." Kimberly said while handing me the flowers and trying to hold back her tears. "Can I go say my goodbyes to Mama DePiro, I don't want to interrupt your time with her."

"Of course, she was like a second mom to you," I replied reassuringly.

I watched as my best friend walked over to my mom's bed, leaned in to whisper in her ear, and then kissed her on the forehead. It hit me all over again; my best friend just kissed my mom for the last time.

"Call me tonight, to update me," she said while giving me what felt like one of the longest hugs we have ever shared.

She was bawling now, and it took me a moment to realize tears were also rolling down my cheeks. I was trying so hard not to lose my composure for my dad's sake. "*Shit, where's my dad?*" I thought as I looked around the room. I let go of my best friend, finally, and walked her to the back door. We waved bye to one another, not knowing that it would only be a few short hours until I would be calling her.

My mom's name is Darlene, she was born November 5th, 1956. She was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) in her late 20s, almost twenty years before the first MS drug hit the markets. She developed early onset dementia in her 50s, and was wheelchair bound since I was 11 years old. My parents met in 1984, fell in love, and had two beautiful children, my brother and I. I remember my mom being healthy and vibrant when I was younger. She was one of the most beautiful women that I have ever met, and my dad said that she just got more and more beautiful as she aged. When my mother's disease progressed in 2005, my father dropped everything to become her primary caretaker all while raising my brother and I. During my adolescent years, my parents were busy with doctor appointments, hospitals visits, and specialty appointments for my mom. My parents may not have been able to give my brother and I everything we ever wanted, but we never needed for anything. My dad made sure my mom was taken care of and kept her home so that no matter what she could watch us grow, and even if she didn't always remember us, I know she *knew* us.

"Her doctor suggested that we stop all oral medications, and we feel it's time to start her on her comfort kit that we provide," the hospice nurse said as she continued to list all the medications, followed by explanations for what each medication was used for: "Roxanol . . . Ativan . . . Atropine . . ."

I was staring at the floor. At this point I was finding it hard to focus. Between the lack of sleep and not wanting to leave mom's bedside, my anxiety and my emotions were well heightened. Giving my nursing background, I had already known what each medication was and what it was used for, so I didn't feel too terrible about the lack of focus. However, I wanted the nurse to continue with her explanations, because I wanted my dad to hear it from someone who wasn't his daughter. I felt that hearing it from another nurse would help him to cope with the fact that we had done everything that we possibly could for my mom. My dad is a very knowledgeable man, and he also has common sense, but grief can really mess with a person's thought process.

"What do you think Jolene? Are we there yet? My dad asked.

We're definitely here. "Mom is there, dad. We have done everything we can, it's time to keep her comfortable."

My dad is the most stoic man that I have ever met in

my life, but my heart sank when I saw the single tear roll down his cheek. He quickly turned his face into the yellow roses to hide the fact that he was about to cry.

"The color of those damn roses wasn't matching the mood of this room; happiness doesn't reside here right now," I thought to myself. As soon as I thought it, I immediately felt guilty. It had to have been the grief, and I was just experiencing a temporary moment of anger.

The next few hours consisted of me giving mom her medications from her comfort kit, wetting her lips, keeping mom as comfortable as possible, and calling everyone in our family for updates. My dad; my brother, Michael; my brother's husband, Tyler; my fiancé, Tony; my two children, Uriah and Ellianna; and my mom's best friend, Aunt Cindy, were with me throughout this whole process. We all divided our time either at mom's bedside or roaming around my parents' house trying to distract ourselves from what was going on at mom's bedside. While getting mom cleaned up with the help of the nursing staff, I really took this time to look over all of my mom's features. She was actively dying at this point. My mom has always been a petite woman, but in this moment, I had never seen her frailer. I knew my mom didn't have long for this world. *Hours at most.* The anger

side of grief was surrounding me. I kept trying to keep my thoughts to myself, but I was starting to project.

"How could this possibly make sense, that a woman fighting such a disease also gets her life cut so short at the age of 65? Get it together, Jolene. You and Michael spent most of your lives preparing for this exact moment." I look over at my brother, and I could tell he was thinking the same things I was. It doesn't matter how much a person prepares, nobody could ever prepare for this. Nobody in this world can prepare for a world without their mom.

I have a very realistic parenting style. Uriah, knew exactly what was going on and knew he was allowed to grieve just as everyone else was grieving. He, of course, had many questions and many tears followed when the realization sunk in, but even at 8-years-old he was familiar with death and knew it was permanent. He would run back and forth between his tablet in the living room and my mom in her bedroom.

"She's still breathing, Mama. That's a good thing she's breathing for now, that means Grandma can still hear you," Uriah whispered to me while giving me a big squeeze.

The biggest smile came across my face as I watched my little man run back to his tablet. Kids see things

from such a positive perspective. It was refreshing to have his little comments throughout this hectic day. It was getting later in the evening and we were all at mom's bedside, aside from Uriah who continued to keep himself busy. We had been sharing stories about mom's life, and we were now on the topic of "what happens after a person's time Earthside." Each of us had very different ideas on the subject, but each idea brought me peace of mind.

I was sitting on my dad's bed playing with my daughter, Ellianna. We were directly across from mom. I began to look back and forth between the two of them. On my left side, was my mother. The woman who had given me life. The woman who taught me to love unconditionally despite the cards a person is dealt. A woman who was on her way out of this life, and getting ready to start a new one elsewhere. On my right side, was my 7-month-old. A tiny human full of light and excitement. A tiny human looking to me to guide her in this crazy world. A tiny human who just started her journey here. *The circle of life*. The parallelism of this moment of clarity. We all have a beginning, and we all have an end. We were all present for mom's last breath. We saw her chest rise and fall for the last time.

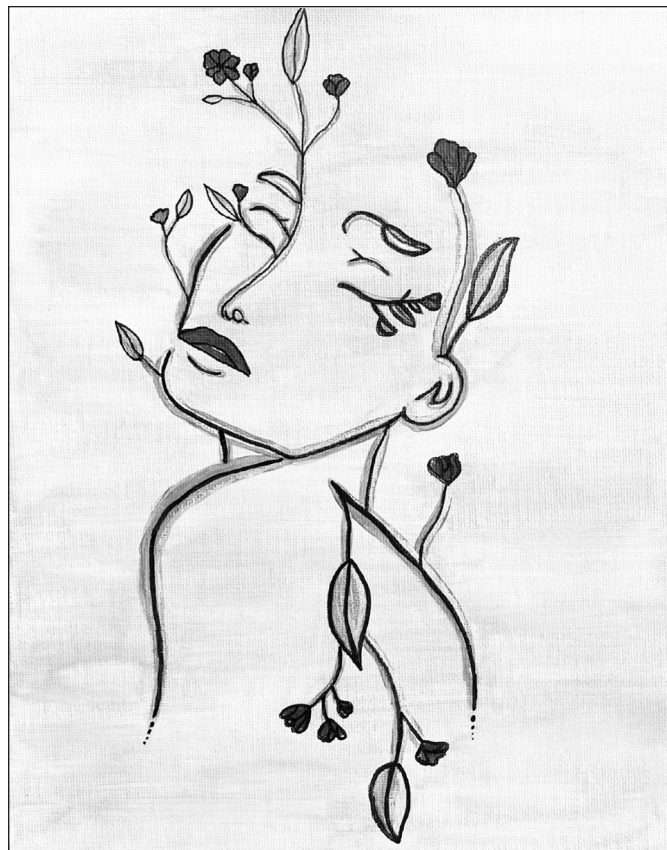
"October 19th, 2022, 7:15pm"

A few hours later I was holding Ellianna, in my parents' room. She pulled me out of my thoughts as she began to reach out toward mom's bedside table. I stood up, allowing my daughter to take her turn at smelling the roses. Yellow roses and a new baby taking time to enjoy them. The perfect picture of *Happiness*.

ONE WITH THE EARTH

Painting

by Sophie Replugle



FOR MY MOTHER

Poem

by A. Wade

"Come hither", Winter says to Spring

But Spring does not come.

The snow falls

 Wind blows

 air is icy

 bites your nose.

And as you walk beyond the corner of her street you look down at the man there who sells single cigarettes for a quarter a piece and wonder

If the mother popping pills like Tic Tacs knows what she has done to her daughter?

Her nails painted red and eyes painted wide

she uses up every ounce of energy inside

to get up

 out of bed

 to reach for the pills above her head there, on the nightstand next to the Bible and the crucifix and the holy water and the tarot cards.

"Come hither", Mother says to Daughter

And Daughter does come.

She brings water

 and toast

 and Tylenol

 then she goes.

And as she walks beyond the hallway of her home she thinks a rash thought—"I could go... it could be a new day"
Must she stay? And wait for the sun to shine again? Says who? Mother? Ha! She's not seen the sun in 27 years.

And just as Daughter reaches the front door there you are at the stoop.

"Winter!" she cries.

You smile at the woman you love.

Her warm embrace takes the chill from your bones and you take off your hat and your coat.

You go to enter the house of the damned but she stops you there.

"I will leave her. I'll leave Mother in this house to rot away on her own and we'll be together."

Spring has never shone more brightly than now. Her eyes beam with hope and unsightly optimism, how then will you tell her?

Mother will follow. She'll push Spring right out into the open, show her off like a prized trophy and use her all up until there's nothing left to do but sit at Mother's bedside and wither right along with her

"We can try," Winter says to Spring

And as they cross the threshold Mother wails from her bedroom post

Desperate to hold onto the Daughter who has kept her alive for all these years.

Winter takes one step further,

Spring looks back.

"Come hither," Winter says to Spring

But Spring does not come.

STAY AWAKE

Poem

by *Sophie Replogle*

I see you in my sleep.
I keep busy and blare
music, all forms of
distraction,
but the resting mind subconsciously keeps you around, keeps you
near.

Last night you were with me.
You hugged me and finally
for a moment
I felt peaceful . . . calm.
That feeling isn't new, but old.

How I felt around you at the playground
after the game
in the sparkling room.

You were kind, loving.
The emptiness you left me with is slowly being refilled
although not in the same shade
or color.

The distance between us will continue to grow
but the time forever stopped in June
standing in the rocks
watching your evil words turn blurry
as I blink away tears.

You are unrecognizable, and I am a stranger.

SHE'S A JINX?

Watercolor and Acrylic Paint Markers

by Del Mullenax



TIRED ARMS

Poem

by Sophie Replogle

Yes, my heart hurts, but I hurt for him too.

And the poor, naive girl.

If only I could wrap my tired arms around them,

cry with them,

protect them...

from my own best friend.

I used to carry the guilt I wished you felt.

How do I feel okay

when you were never sorry?

AFRAID

Poem

by Hailie Whetstone

I gave my heart to you
Then lost it all for you
I walked down those halls afraid I'd see the real you
 A side of hurt
 A side of pain
 A side that would never leave
 That would never take the blame
The boy who left me hurt
But I'd never let anyone see it
I put on a fake smile so everyone would believe it and sadly they all believed it
 No one knew my pain
 No one saw my hurt
 No one would ever believe me
 Because I experienced it first
I found the light in the dark
It was hard to leave
But I found someone better
 Someone who knew my pain
 Someone who knew my hurt
 But wasn't afraid of who had put me at my worst.



CROCKETT

Pencil | *by Abby Walters*

STICK AND STONES MAY BREAK MY BONES, BUT WORDS WILL NEVER HURT ME!

Essay

by Alex Davis

For as long as I can remember, my father was always verbally abusive toward me and my older brother, always saying cruel words that really hurt our feelings. He often called us names, bullied us, and said words that would break a child's heart. Growing up with him always had a negative impact on my mental health because the constant yelling and name-calling made me depressed and scared to make small mistakes. My dad was not an alcoholic or a drug abuser. He was just really hard on us and wanted my brother and I to become men at an early age, just like he did, even if we were not ready for it. I remember when I was having a hard time understanding fractions, just like any other kid. My dad found out and he tried to help me, but my low understanding of math only made him frustrated with me. He would yell at me, shout all types of insults at me, beat me, and punish me. The more my dad was frustrated at me, the more depressed I would become because all I wanted to do was make my dad proud of me. In the end, it made me feel soft and weak like a muffin.

As time went on, I thought to myself "if I wanted to make him proud of me, I would do things that would make most dads proud of their son." I started doing the things he loved even if I had no interest or love in doing the activities and hobbies he liked. I started playing football, I learned how to play chess, I tried going fishing, and I even tried to be as strong as him by working out and trying a dangerous diet that could have ended with me in the hospital. But all these efforts made me hate myself and forget who I was. Despite everything I tried, my father's attitude toward me did not change as I developed and changed myself.

After months of therapy, I learned that I should not live my life for the approval of others and that I should live my life the way I want it to be, even if others may not agree with me. So instead of doing things that make my dad happy, I started diving into activities in which I myself found enjoyment, like cooking, drawing, joining the wrestling team, and learning a new language. I was happier with myself, and it was

those activities/hobbies that brought joy to my life and provided me a purpose in life.

My biggest advice for anyone who is going through a similar experience is to live your life the way you want to live, never let someone tell you how to live your life, no matter who they are or what they mean to you, and always remind yourself that it's your life. Take some time to invest in yourself. Pick up a new hobby or skill that will make you happy. Consider where you want to be in five years and focus on taking steps towards that goal rather than being preoccupied with what others think about you. The best part about life is that you are the author of your own story.

MINI ME

Pencil

by Alivia Appel



COCOON

Poem

by Jenny Krampf

She feels heavy
Her body a weighed down cocoon
A butterfly not yet complete
 Wishing
 Hoping
 Waiting

Praying for the colors of life to appear
Rainbows lost in the past
Listlessly aching to rise
 A lost sunset
 A hopeful sunrise

A moth dusting off her wings
Flying through the rainbow
Emerging as the butterfly meant to be
 Visions of present
 Colors of the future

She flies

UNDER THE WILDFLOWERS

Photograph

by Matti McMillen



HOW MANY MOVIES SHOULD A SERIES HAVE?

Essay

by Daniel Highland

Over the decades, movies have continued to grow in popularity, whether it be because of fantastic scriptwriting, an outstanding cast of actors and actresses, or CGI (Computer-Generated Imagery) that makes it look like a specific item or creature is real. Movies continue to develop into franchises, making sequels and expanding the storylines of those beloved characters. In some cases, extending the franchise and exploring new places and characters while revisiting old ones creates a whole new perspective of the films. However, many franchises will continue to make more and more movies, so that the series becomes old, no one cares about it anymore, or people think that a specific franchise or company becomes greedy with money. Keeping a series at two or three films helps to make the series feel more valuable, doesn't let the films fail by ruining or making too many stories, and keeps the ideas fresh and original.

Just because I argue that a movie series should only have two to three movies, does not mean all franchises

should never expand in the future. There are so many franchises that are continuously expanding. The Marvel Cinematic Universe and Star Wars Universe are always developing new movies and TV shows that expand their franchise and tell their stories. They have so many new and varying shows, ranging from era to era, genre to genre, but they make it work. Other film series have developed differently when continuously telling stories for years in a row. An example of this is the *Fast and Furious* series. It is a popular franchise that has a lot of action, but the new films come out every two to three years with barely any time in between. So many movies now are just not as gripping story-wise as when the first movie was released. Similar is the case in *Home Alone*. The first two movies with Kevin McCallister were the best in the series, but with new films and nearly the same plot in all of them, they can get repetitive. With so many movies in a franchise that are all similar in so many ways, people don't want to see essentially the same movie, just a different variation over and over again.

Keeping a series of two to three films keeps the ideas fresh and original.

Audience favorability can go down drastically from the first film to the latest sequel. An example is the *Transformers* series directed by Michael Bay. The film series started off with the original *Transformers* in 2007 with a balance of good and bad reviews at *Rottentomatoes.com*, a popular critic/audience review site. A review from a top reviewer, Mike Pearson states “*Transformers* is the comic-book movie on steroids, a fusion of sound and fury and sci-fi plotting that leaves plenty of room for a franchise.” The movie itself had a decent score on *Rotten Tomatoes* at 58% for critics and an 85% for the audience score. But as the series continued the scores went up and down and four movies later *Transformers: The Last Knight* in 2017 had one of the worst ratings of the series. The movie had a 16% critic score and a 43% audience score with one top critic, Anton Bitel, saying the movie was “An exhausting distillation of everything that can possibly go wrong with a blockbuster.” The last few movies made the series take a turn for the worse. Everyone still knew the name *Transformers*, but not in the way fans wanted. Taking a look at the times of release for the *Transformers* series, it is nearly a new movie every two years with five movies

coming out between 2007 and 2017. Rather than taking a year or two more to write a better script or improve scenes, the company Paramount continuously made *Transformers* movies faster and faster, barely giving any time in between. *Transformers* is a story that can and will continue to grow into a larger saga of movies, exploring the variety of characters and stories—the problem that remains is there needs to be time in between to develop the script and make the actual movie better, rather than pumping out a new movie every two years. Paramount, as well as other companies, needs to start taking their time with the movies rather than rushing through them or keep the movie as a trilogy of films rather than making storylines that fail.

A lot of good franchises had great ideas that worked for a trilogy, but after the third movie, the series still had popular movies but they were not as good as the original trio of films. An example of this is the *Toy Story* trilogy. Made by Disney and Pixar, the *Toy Story* franchise is one of their most recognizable franchises with iconic songs and characters. I grew up watching *Toy Story 1, 2, and 3* and I loved every one of them. *Toy Story 4* came out in 2019 and performed amazingly at the box office and was adored by critics. But there was something off about the movie. It didn’t feel the same watching the 4th as it did

the other three. There were choices that this film made that didn't make any sense when watching it beside *Toy Story 3*. For example, Bonnie loved Woody in the 3rd, but then straight-up abandoned him in the 4th. It was a great movie, but it was inconsistent with the prior films and just didn't hit as hard as the original three did. Many fans say this film was made just for merchandising or to make money. I do not think that is entirely the case, but I agree it has a different feeling than the others.

The same is the case for the recent *Lightyear* movie in 2022. *Lightyear* tells the origin story of Buzz Lightyear. Lightyear was an epic sci-fi adventure and again a great film. However, a few things threw everyone off of the film, although it was mostly having Chris Evans voice Buzz rather than Tim Allen. The film's reasoning was that Allen was the voice of the toy Buzz, while Evans was the voice of the actual Lightyear. While Evans did an amazing job as Lightyear, there is no replacing Tim Allen as Buzz/Lightyear. The *Indiana Jones* trilogy is another great trilogy, but the 4th film didn't do as well as the other three and even started over-reaching for ideas to continue Indy's adventure. The first three films of the series were iconic films of the 80s, but the 4th decided to try something new. According to Jason Wiese at *Cinema Blend*, because of the box office success of *E.T.*,

George Lucas thought about trying to bring in aliens into the next installment. But director Steven Spielberg was against it, so both agreed "instead of extraterrestrials, the creatures would be 'inter-dimensional beings.'" Bringing in these beings gave a different take on the Indiana Jones franchise, one fans did not enjoy as much as the other three. So while there can be good ideas for any story to continue, some series start to fall flat after the original trilogy.

Keeping a film series at two to three films helps us appreciate the films more, and makes them feel more valuable. If we look at franchises that only have a few films in them, we see how popular they really are. The *Back to The Future* franchise is a great example. The time-traveling duo of Doc and Marty and their famous DeLorean are among the most recognizable characters in film history. Looking at all three films of this franchise, this film series is one of the greatest trilogies of all time. What makes this valuable is the series only has three films and is still so popular and beloved by fans. It doesn't need to be a full-out 5 to 6 movie franchise to be popular. It has also found other ways to continue telling the story (such as in a Broadway play) and still be relevant without expanding the original story or making a new one. It was a fresh and original idea, and unlike certain franchises, it

has not been rebooted or given a sequel (at least not yet) and fans continue to love the series. I personally love the series and would not want to see a sequel that would likely ruin the franchise.

Keeping a franchise at two to three films helps keep the series fresh despite its age. Although most franchises will continue to make sequels until their pockets are over-filled, we can still appreciate the original films of the trilogy. Movies will continue to grow in different ways we can't possibly imagine, but in the end, nothing can beat a great movie.

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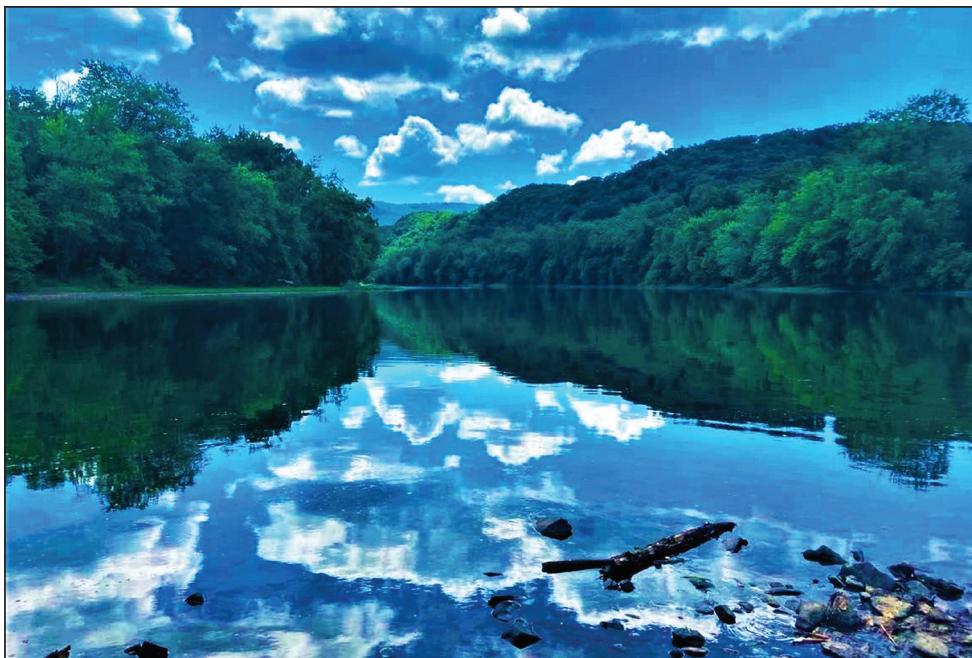
Visit Daniel's *YouTube* channel
"Entertainment Highlights"
which tapes here at ACM.





CATCHING LIFE LESSONS

Photograph | *by Ciara Alisha*



LITTLE ORLEANS, MD

Photograph | *by Ciara Alisha*



BLUE BERRY LEMONADE

Photograph | *by Matti McMillen*



DAY IS DONE

Photograph | *by Donna J. Morgan*



FREEDOM LIVES HERE

Colored Pencil | *by Patricia Maddy*



SURREAL LANDSCAPE

Based on the work of Kseniya Kurbatov

Pencil | *by Rebekah George*



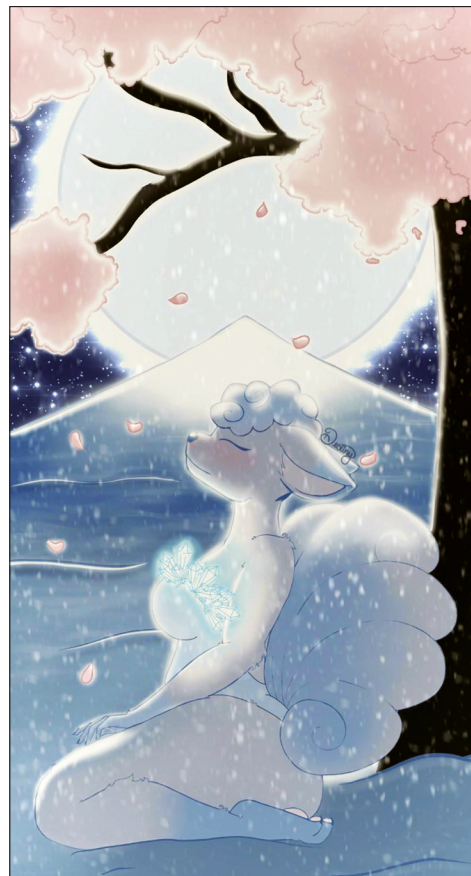
MAW MAW MAGNOLIA

Soft Pastel | by Kali Laird

ALOLAN MOON

Digital Art

by *Destiny Zembower*



ACHIEVING PEACE

Poem

by Yvette Grim

Sounds so easy, to just stay grounded,
Let everything in the world pass by,
Stay focused on Love and Peace, our founding,
In each Divine Spark therein lies.
The Creator's Path is clear,
To come together in Harmony,
The total reason we are all here,
To celebrate the Earth's diversity.
Difficult when it has now been over a year,
That the Ukrainian people have kept their nation alive.
Their success comes from letting go all fear,
And not just trying to survive,
But taking time to rejoice and convey,
That Life is a Gift in every way.
So let us honor their standing up bravely against wrong,
And make each beautiful moment count as we also sing our song.

THE US/UKRAINE ENGIN PROGRAM

Essay

by A. Wade

I had the privilege of being introduced to a non-profit organization called ENGIN for a class project in my Social Problems class with Dr. Diane McMahon at ACM. The overall objective of the ENGIN program is to match native English-speaking volunteers with Ukrainian students to improve their English skills. This could include reading, writing, speaking, and grammar and usage. What initially started as a small undertaking quickly grew into an organization, and ENGIN has now served over 9,500 students studying to improve their English skills. The non-profit's founder, Katerina Manoff, has readily made changes and updates to adapt to current events with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

ENGIN worked to match me and a student together and that is how I met my Ukrainian student and friend, Natalya, a young woman currently living near her extended family in Florida to escape the war in Ukraine. She lives with her daughter and her husband, and they are from a village in Ukraine called Voskresenka in the Polohy district, Zaporizhzhia region. Natalya was formerly a teacher in Ukraine and taught English and

language to primary school students. She is a current student in an IT program in Ukraine and works online to complete her coursework. She also has continued to study English throughout her adult life.

Throughout this project there has been so much to learn from and about Natalya and her home country. Over the course of ten short weeks we have talked, laughed, and cried together. We have learned about each other's homes, families, jobs, and dreams. We discovered pleasant similarities in where we originate, from the small towns to the changing seasons. Natalya is interested in cooking, music, and dancing. She misses her home in Ukraine very much, especially her parents. She often talked about how the war has affected her parents and how they have kept a positive outlook throughout this difficult time. They keep in touch as often as possible, usually only getting to talk every couple of weeks due to poor internet connection.

The war in Ukraine has been a sensitive topic to discuss with Natalya. She expressed her sadness and anger over these past weeks and waits anxiously as

she continues to get updates from friends and family when they are able to get through to her. Often, when the war would come up in conversation, we would turn to other topics about Ukraine that she wanted to talk about such as her family, home, traditions; she even shared some comics and cartoons with me.

In discussing social problems, we covered topics such as LGBT rights, economics, the elderly, schools, and healthcare. Natalya has shown me time and again that younger generations in Ukraine may not be as conservative as I expected. She describes many social movements as progressive and open-minded. Still, we discovered, there is always room for growth and reform. It has been refreshing to have an adult from another part of the world to speak to and learn from. I am grateful we were able to find common ground on many issues during our discussions of social issues. I have truly gained a new appreciation for other cultures and perspectives because of this experience, and Natalya and I plan to continue our friendship after this project's end.

For more information about the ENGIN program or to become involved, visit:

ENGIN Program

<https://www.enginprogram.org/>

KING OF THE CLUB KIDS

Essay

by Jenifer Frazier

Michael Alig has been known as many things. At one time he was heralded as the King of the Club Kids. He was a legendary and innovative club promoter who completely changed the 1980's club scene and filled a void left by the loss of Andy Warhol and his superstars. Later things turned from fame and fun and Michael became infamous. He became known as a killer, synonymous with how wrong things can go in the nightlife, and a stark example of how dark this type of counterculture can become when drug use becomes heavy. He's been a mythical figure in the New York City club scene, for good or ill. Alig's rise was nearly meteoric and his fall just as fast. As notorious as he'd become, his legacy is not just one of drugs and death, and his impact on the event industry is undeniable as many of his ideas continue to shape today's nightlife and the electronic dance music (EDM) event industry today.

Michael Alig became a staple in the New York nightlife scene and carefully crafted an entire culture. He gained popularity for unique theme parties and outlaw parties that took place in anywhere from a

moving truck, a fast food restaurant, and abandoned spaces. This practice continued long after Alig was out of the picture, though this began to phase out after the passing of the RAVE Act in 2002, which changed the entire landscape of the industry as a whole. In his book *Michael Alig: Letters from a Club Kid Killer*, Danny Corvini quotes Alig as saying the outlaw parties were his favorite and they were, "a way to thumb our noses at the more established clubs and say we don't need you" (11). He went on to describe a monthly party "in an abandoned boathouse on the Hudson River where you had to crawl thru [sic] a hole in the wall to get to. We'd set up a bar, a thousand candles in glasses, music . . . everyone dressed elegantly and crawling into an abandoned building. I loved that. The dichotomy: crumbling buildings/elegance" (11).

Alig had a flair for creating personas and perfecting aesthetics. He was known for being outlandish and loved to make an entrance. He clawed his way up from a bus boy at Danceteria to a fullblown icon to "a legion of kids in outfits, wanting to be famous" according

to Michael Musto, who writing for *The Daily Beast*, notes that they “followed his lead as they came of age at a time when you couldn’t have sex, or weren’t supposed to. But with Alig at the helm, outside rules barely even existed, as long as you were fabulous and willing to flaunt it on a nightly basis.” He acquired people who were already fabulous. but just as he reinvented himself, he would reinvent others into new ‘superstar’ personas, giving them new names and new styles of fashion that better suited the world he was trying to create. He attracted misfits from the outskirts of society, people who were less embraced, such as members of the LGBTQIA+ community, some in the closet, some out. People who wanted to express themselves and experience a sense of belonging were drawn to what Michael Alig was doing in clubs and around the city. Among these people were DJ Keoki, Andre “Angel” Melendez, Ernie Glam AKA Clara the Carefree Chicken, Amanda Lepore, and James St. James, who later wrote the book *Disco Bloodbath* on his experiences as a prominent member of the club scene and on his friendship with Michael Alig.

They were ambitious with goals of fame and creating a utopia of their own in the New York nightlife, but Frank Owen of the *Village Voice* writes of darker influences upon the mindset of the Club Kids:

Alig is very much the product of the new drug culture that arose in the late ‘80s as a new generation began experimenting with mind-bending chemicals and dancing to acid house. What began as a burst of creativity and optimism eventually degenerated into a maelstrom of bad vibes and bum trips, as the relatively benign drug Ecstasy was replaced by harder substances like heroin, crack, and Special K. Just as in the ‘60s, the music and the fun fashions took a backseat to the drug-taking.

By the middle of the 90’s, Alig’s recreational drug use had turned into a habit and his behavior was becoming increasingly erratic and even violent at times (Owen).

Michael Alig had been promoting at the Limelight, a club run by a man named Peter Gatien, who over the years has been painted as something of a mythical legend of the club scene himself. He ran several of the most well-known clubs in the New York City club scene. Gatien is a Canadian man with an eye patch who cut a striking figure next to Alig, who was often pictured in wigs, lederhosen, or corsets with red lipstick. There have been almost as many rumors about Gatien’s behavior as there have been about Alig. He’s been rumored to have done everything from engaging in prostitution to running drug operations out of his clubs. The events in the clubs themselves had begun

to become more known for the open drug use than for anything else. The Limelight was raided by the police in 1995 which put pressure on Gatien to clean up the reputation of his establishments and made Alig into more of a liability than an asset (Owen). Gatien reportedly loved Michael Alig like a father loves a son and did attempt to help the troubled promoter. He was given leeway when he stopped showing up for work and Gatien helped get him into a rehab facility, but Alig left after only a few days. Shortly after this time, Michael Alig was fired from his position at Limelight and replaced with another promoter who Alig had known, Walt Piper (Owen).

Then there was Andre "Angel" Melendez, a Club Kid known for a pair of expansive white feathered wings that he wore in the scene. Angel did not use drugs but he was a drug dealer. He was a well-known associate of Michael Alig and often supplied him drugs (Owen). Owen writes, "Gatien has denied ever knowing Angel. According to new information, however, Angel was not only on the payroll of Gatien's organization, he also supplied the drugs that fueled the sex orgies Gatien and Alig used to throw at upscale hotels like the Mayfair and the Four Seasons."

In the *Advocate*, Erik Meers compared the similarities of Alig and Melendez and described them

both as "typical of New York City's club kids--youths, mostly gay, who live for the city's offbeat night-clubs with their ambience [sic] of decadent chic." Meers writes that "both Alig and Melendez were gay misfits at home. When they arrived in New York in the 80's, they discovered a world in which they not only belonged but also could be stars—a world in which eccentricity was, in fact, a marketable commodity." Angel shared drugs with Alig and other Club Kids to ingratiate himself with the group (Meers), but it was not long until problems began to arise over the money associated with Alig's usage. It was somewhat common knowledge that the two had been having disputes over money, with allegations that Alig had stolen thousands of dollars from Melendez (Owen). It was also alleged that they had a physical altercation in which Melendez hit Alig over the head with a platform shoe over the money Alig had stolen (Owen).

Then Andre "Angel" Melendez disappeared. Rumors spread almost immediately that Michael Alig had something to do with his disappearance. Details rumors spread about Alig murdering Melendez and dumping his dismembered corpse into the Hudson because Melendez had wanted the money Alig owed him (Meers). People seemed uncertain about how to respond to these rumors. No one who knew Michael

Alig had difficulty believing that this might be the sort of thing he would make up for press or attention. Rather than deny the rumors, he had confessed to friends and club-goers that he had, in fact, killed Angel Melendez, but no one went to the police about the rumors they'd heard. The rumors had become so prevalent that Michael Musto had even published it without naming anyone involved (Meers). The rumors could no longer be ignored when a body that had washed up on Staten Island was finally identified as Angel.

Jerry Portwood for *Rolling Stone* wrote, "A dispute over drug-money turned violent, leading to a grisly affair: Robert 'Freeze' Riggs bashed Melendez with a hammer to the head, then Alig suffocated him with a sweatshirt until he died." Melendez's body was discarded in the bathtub. The pair continued to party in the apartment for more than a week, even inviting over guests, until the smell of decomposition inside became unbearable. They decided to dismember the body and dispose of it in the Hudson River (Portwood).

Michael Alig was sentenced to 10-20 years in prison. He went to prison addicted to heroin and struggled with his addiction throughout his time inside. He spent a fair amount of time in solitary confinement for testing positive for drugs inside prison. Alig was released from prison in 2014 and he returned to New York City, and in 2017 he completed his parole (Portwood). After his

release, Musto discussed Alig's feelings about the crime and quoted him as saying, "Of course I'm sorry. But that sounds trite. No words can make any difference anymore. It's actions. There's a charity element to every one of my projects." Michael Alig tried briefly to reignite his career as a promoter and threw a party to celebrate the end of his parole conditions but apparently received death threats (Portwood). Alig seemed to remain hopeful about future projects despite this, but ultimately he continued to struggle with substance abuse. Michael Alig died of an apparent overdose on December 25, 2020. He was 54 years old. Jerry Portwood wrote that according to reports, "Alig was doing heroin shortly before he lost consciousness around 3 a.m. . . . and medics found him dead at the scene."

Michael Alig's impact continues to be felt in spite of the legacy left behind by his crime. He was instrumental in shaping the club industry, and the type of theme parties that he created live on in new forms today. It's likely that the EDM festival industry, which has become a major money maker, would exist in the form that it does without the influence of Michael Alig and the Club Kid pioneers that burst onto the scene with him. Their influence on current artists like Lady Gaga in her early days are easily apparent, though many would argue that the negatives of Alig far outweigh the good. Alig undoubtedly caused a ripple effect that

would be felt in the crackdown on the New York club scene by Rudy Guiliani in attempts to clean up the reputation of the city. Alig's addiction had a ripple effect that rocked an entire industry and completely reshaped the way that its business is done.

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C&O 2-6-6-2 MALLET STEAM ENGINE 1309

Photograph
by Isaac Kneisley

I AM ... (AFRICA)

Poem

by Jaleyhia 'Nicki' Smith

I am Africa.

From bloody cotton to shackled queens.

From imprisoned kings to envious children.

I am from the dust that turned into ashes.

I am from parties that speak for the dead.

From respectable Josephine to upholding Justice.

Monsoons in November while the turkey is still hot.

I am from the Atlantic Ocean and damp dungeons.

I'm from a corrupted land between America and Ghana.

From a barrel of humans to a barrel over my shoulders.

The Georgia lines that Lou cannot skip.

The blood on leaves, not only for the deceased.

From Nina preaching as a mother is weeping.

I am Africa.

I am generational scars and mental wounds.

The crying baby being snatched by the white claw.

Sounds of the *Hannibal* leaving shore.

Will I ever know if I'm worth more?

I am freedom from shackles into the slaves of the government.

I am the twists and turns of D.N.A and movement.

I am more than an orange and black serial number.

I am Africa.

REQUIEM

Poem

by *URBuddha2!*

Talented, inquisitive, gifted, raising a gentle stir;
The most vibrant kid on our block, you were.
The early 1980's brought violence -
In D.C. the race riots, smoke bombs, and barbed wire fence.
And you, my friend, brown skin inherited
A minority of minorities at our high school in Maryland.
A shadow you became to your pregnant sister who was older;
You were barely noticed as she was more outgoing and bolder.
Both sisters, pretty, became more accepted
While you, by a racist society, rejected.
Deep in your core you felt the racial tension -
You'd act out in class just to get the attention;
And, for a moment, to be included
About this let no one be deluded.

Your father in the military experienced racism differently:
Pull yourself up by your bootstraps; don't feel, just think cognitively.

Your mother did not know what to do

Society's ills threatened you.

You did not have the emotional ability to respond
To the threat, some way overwhelmed, so beyond.

You lost your connection to world, other, and self

Your self-esteem was put on the shelf.

In order to avoid, you limited your choices

Of places, situations, feelings and voices.

The result of this constriction of freedom it seems
Was the loss of the potential for fulfilling your dreams.

This is the definition of trauma itself

For which you were given no help.

Your final decision was about release from the pain

That a culture of hatred had instilled in your brain.

It was in horror that your father cut you down.

Cradling you, he sobbed, "My son! My son!"



APPLE BASKET

Tempera Paint | *by Patricia Maddy*

COLORISM IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Essay

by Fatima Drammeh

White colonialism more or less affected the whole world. This summer while I was in my parents' country, The Gambia, I noticed the amount of skin bleaching billboards and products being sold daily. Most citizens in the country have a dark skin complexion because the country is in west Africa, and it is unsettling that they subscribe to a belief that lighter skin is more beautiful. I don't want to admit this, but even my own mother submits to these ideals. She uses those skin bleaching lotions and would say to my darker sister and I that we should "stay out of the sun." She even treated her darker children differently from her lighter ones, calling the lighter children pretty or beautiful more often. Slavery and segregation were generations ago in America and we like to say that racism and colorism are abolished, but they are still here but seen in different forms. Colorism is when lighter skin is held to a higher standard than darker skin tones, and in the black community, colorism still exists, and it affects the community negatively. Colorism affects black representation in the media, causes infatuations

with Eurocentric features, and it affects confidence and femininity in black women.

Colorism is predominant in media representation of black people. Notice there are barely any darker skinned celebrities and superstars compared to lighter ones. According to Hope Moses, Editor of Diversity and Inclusion at the *Marquette Wire*, "according to the African American Policy Forum, representation of Black women in media is 'dis-proportionally sparse' and when Black women are incorporated into mainstream media, they often regulate negative stereotypes." In certain television shows, there is always a "token black character" to make the show seem more diverse, but the character is purposely loud and aggressive, especially if they are a woman. An example of this is Dr. Bailey from the show *Grey's Anatomy*. Such stereotypes are harmful to the community, especially when the stereotypes are the main thing representing black women in the media. Moses, who is a young black woman, says "personally, every time I watched films with conventionally beautiful

white woman, I felt worse about myself. I knew I did not look like them and therefore, I was ugly. Lack of representation takes a toll on self-confidence and can even affect an individual's mental health." Some black people see these characters and must question their own blackness because they don't act like these stereotypical characters, while others may emulate their personalities, especially younger children.

Colorism causes an infatuation with Eurocentric features and there is a deep history involved in this one. During slavery, Europeans created excuses to make sense of the enslavement of Africans, involving their beauty, to show that they were ugly and not on the same level as white people (Moses). According to psychologists Ekeoma E. Uzogara and James S. Jackson, "dark slaves were assigned physically strenuous fieldwork in plantations and considered ugly or inferior (Bond and Cash; Herring et al.). The favored indoor 'house slaves' (who were often biracial women with Eurocentric features) were light-skinned and regarded as more attractive" (Uzogara and Jackson 148). In the present day, we can see that the community still upholds these colorist and racist values from hundreds of years ago. In the black community, many people grow up seeing black people with thinner noses and smaller lips as public figures, noting that

those features are the standard and not their bigger noses and bigger lips. White people are more likely to start friendships with black people whose features are closer to Eurocentric (Hebl et al. as cited in Uzogara and Jackson 148). The beauty standard in America is based on the white race, which favors their Eurocentric features and with white people picking out people to represent each black person, they don't really get accurate representation. This negatively affects the community because a false sense of identity is given, thinking that their hair is supposed to be curly or that their noses are supposed to be thinner.

Colorism affects the confidence and femininity of black women because it also creates an idea that darker skin is masculine and light skin is feminine. This doesn't affect light skin men the same way it affects dark skin women because the women have two features working against them, their race/color and their gender. According to student activist Awara Barnie-Duah, "There also has to be a distinction made, among the black community that light-skin privilege exists, but that doesn't mean they don't get discriminated against for being black. It means darker women are just seen as lesser because they don't have the femininity associated with light skin." Let's compare Beyonce to another successful black woman, Megan

Thee Stallion. Megan is not necessarily dark skin, but she is a rapper and is a taller and thicker woman. People used to make fun of her on the internet, saying that she was a transgender woman, even though she was born a female and identifies herself as a female. Dark skin women must work twice as hard to be seen as attractive or feminine to men outside of their race and even to black men. For example, according to *Barnie-Duah*, “in an episode of their family reality show, *Krista*, famed gospel singer Erica Campbell’s daughter, opened up to her mother about the bullying she was enduring due to her skin color . . . She states how she is not seen as pretty and noticed that black men don’t usually date darker-skinned women, especially the men in her family.” As a dark skin black woman, I have never met someone with my skin tone or darker that hasn’t been bullied just for having darker skin, and it was almost always by our own people.

Colorism still exists and affects the community negatively. But times are changing. We are seeing better representation of black women in the media slowly, whether it be musical artists, models, or actors in popular TV shows and movies. We are slowly demolishing the negative stereotypes and even reclaiming them as comedy in shows like *The Boondocks* and the various Tyler Perry movies. But learning and preventing are the next steps. Seeing

diversity early in childhood can influence someone’s life, and slowly but surely, we are getting to that point. My mom is naturally lighter than her family and she grew up thinking that her skin tone was better than her siblings’ because everyone told her that. When I was younger, I had people make fun of me in school for having darker skin and I hated it. But as I saw more representation of my skin tone, my confidence grew. Colorism is something that is taught—we are not born to think that lighter skin tones are better than darker skin tones.

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EMERGING FROM SILENCE

Poem

by URBuddha2!

My spoken voice is heard by others naught
For oft they give me blatant disrespect -
And hear not wisdom that I could have taught.
Frustration builds and I come to expect
The same response from many that I meet -
In my world and from strangers on the street.

This blatant disrespect can be defined
As other persons over me who talk;
Response to me may simply be denied;
Or, I may be dismissed - at which I balk.
Within this karmic vise in which I live,
A jewel is there for me, as well to give.

In speaking there is trouble that I find
In memory as well as word recall
My brain with White Matter Disease confined
Need I not mention anxiety at all.
It's like a game when others try to guess
The word I cannot find under duress.

In tension do my words originate,
In mind where synapses receive and send
Each message by which cells communicate;
And chemicals together which portend
Mood fluctuations vastly which prevail.
Weak hinders; weak, though, strong just like a gale!

I come uniquely strong into my own,
The pen more so than speech reveals its might.
Rise to my purpose into which I've grown,
A poet who's developing insight.
A voice I've always had - I realize,
Through writing it is how I actualize!

My mission is to bring awareness here -
To write of peace; injustice here on earth;
And, teaching others happiness - not fear
By bringing light to their inherent worth!
To start, I must affect change within me
So that the world may find peace and be free!

THE WEIGHT OF KEEPING YOUR HEAD HIGH

Poem

by Ky Bittner

We are the people living in the glass castles
Every day walking the streets, driving the roads
Giving the outward impression that everything is fine
But it is our bodies filling up hospitals and psych wards,
Police station morgues, roadside ditches, and the bottoms of rivers

We are the people living in the glass castles
Every day toeing the edge of the abyss, staring down
Carrying on with caution lest we look too long
But it is that evil driving us to our bolted doors
Loaded guns in bedside drawers, murders and suicides

We are the people living in the glass castles
Every day plugging our ears to have a coherent thought
Scrambling through those with too much to say
But it is in that cacophony we lose ourselves
Falling into the silence of the apathetic, angry and alone

We are the people living in the glass castles
Every day dragging ourselves on and on
Wading across a world eating itself alive
But in this flood we learn to sink or swim
So focused on keeping our heads above water
I don't know if I know how to be alive

WHAT I SEE

Poem

by Nakira 'Shayy' Burroughs

Yeah—

I inhale all these chemicals, drugs, smells
I hear sirens, arguments, yelling, and screaming

Why, oh, why?

I walk down the street and see men outside houses
Smoking, drinking, doing
Whatever

I wonder why they do this to themselves—
Is it because they have been through it?

I've been through it too, but
You don't see me going around stealing and killing.
I've been through it all, if you ask me.
I'm the bravest of them all.

Yeah—

I might cry a little.
I still wonder, why they do what they do?

Is it because they can't get their lives straight?

They're afraid that their "men" that really act like boys
Might have something to say—
Think they're not "tuff" or
Cool enough

Man— forget that you don't want to be
A 40-year-old fool staying at yo mamma's house
Or going from couch to couch because you can't figure out
What you want to do.

If you want something, you have to work for it.
Stop being afraid of what anyone thinks.

I left to better myself.
I left to get my two degrees.
I left nothing.

Moving forward to work on what I want and what
I need—



WHATCHA DOING?

Photograph

by *Ethan Hawk*

DECISIONS

Fiction

by Carina Haines

The table was cold. The chair was cold. The whole room was cold. He stared at the one-way mirror, peering into the eyes of the people he knew stood behind the charading glass. He tapped his fingers on the cool surface, dissipating the silence. His right leg jiggled under the table to the phantom music that played in his mind. As the tune echoed, he began bobbing his head with the beat. His mind was blank as he stared straight ahead. His vision phased in and out of focus. What was the use of thinking anyway? It would all disappear within the next minute.

The door to his left finally opened. A woman dressed in a blazer and slacks with heels appeared in the doorway, her hair wound in a tight bun. Her eyes were pools of midnight that concealed all emotions or thoughts within them. She carried a glass case and set it on the table. His eyes watched her silk hands snap each lock on either end of the case. The lid slowly folded toward him, eventually lying flat on the table. She lifted the glass case so the inside was visible. There were five different colored vials, each with a

singular pill. She put the case on the floor beside her and pushed the glass vials toward him, removing the transparent cover. The vials jingled with the movement then settled. He blankly stared at each left to right: red, blue, green, purple, yellow. She sat in a chair across the table, folding her hands on top, watching him.

She said but one word to him, "Choose." Behind her, he could feel the deceitful eyes from the mirror on the wall, watching him with curiosity. Looking down the row again, he fidgeted with his fingers under the table. He hated everything about this. The room was more silent than any exam day classroom he had ever been in. Silence meant tests. Tests meant punishment.

Punishment meant death . . . or worse. His body remained fixed on fidgeting. An impulse of smashing each and every one of those vials without anyone stopping him trickled into his racing thoughts.

"Mr. Walker." Her flat voice snapped his attention. "Choose one now. Or we will choose for you." Her mouth barely moved. How she managed to speak so firmly yet move her pale lips so very little intrigued him.

His eyes watched her ebony pupils twitch. Her hands squeezed together making her snowy knuckles even whiter. He smirked slightly, satisfied with himself. Her shallow breath sighed. "Shall I go over the pills and their properties again, so you are more familiar with them?" She received no response from his upturned lips.

She gestured to the first vial. "The red pill grants you the power of mind control, mind reading, and telekinesis, with your usual strength. If you can lift it now, you can lift it with this."

"The blue pill grants you 10,000,000 dollars every year, along with immunity to all drugs. You still get the effects and the money doesn't arouse suspicions. The green pill grants you the strength to lift five tons and your skin is impervious to bullets smaller than a .45 caliber round, while larger calibers do little damage. You are also able to run 30 KM/S."

"The purple pill grants you the power to teleport yourself in a radius of 100m with a 10 second cool down. If the space is occupied, you appear in front of it."

"Lastly, the yellow pill. It grants you the mastery of all types of combat skills. You become the best soldier in history, on par with an entire platoon of elite soldiers."

She paused after each vial to let him ponder the powers each possessed. "5 pills. 5 paths. Which will you choose?" She set herself back into position, watching him keenly again. Each and every word was

well rehearsed and practiced. The same script for each person who entered the room. Each would choose. Each would leave with new found powers to be groomed later.

He knew the crap they sold. He didn't fall for it. That probably was why he was here. One of their citizens refusing to be controlled by their strings—this was not looked kindly upon. The riots, the rebellions, the countless times he tried to prevent others from falling under their control, he would pay for it now, just like . . . he shoved the thought away before it could be fully realized. Reminiscing over someone already gone would not help.

"Now, Mr. Walker, what will it be?" This was out of character. Then again, he was an out of character candidate. He took his hands up from under the table and made himself comfortable, leaning toward her. His pesky grin was back again. She stood like a stone.

"What would happen if I refused to take any?" Her eyes didn't waver from his. Her lips drew a thin line before barely opening to refute his statement.

"It is not possible. You stay until you have consumed one." His smile retreated. Hopeless to hope. He knew he was getting out of here one way or another. Whether he walked on his own two feet or was carried out limp in some stranger's arms was yet to be determined. He leaned back in his chair contemplating

his choices. "There are no loopholes, Mr. Walker. We are familiar with what you do. There is a fail-safe. Not even you could outsmart this test. Stop continuing to look for one. You will not find it." Her mouth twisted slightly during the speech. Walker couldn't help but smirk a little. Sure gave them the dickens. That's the way he liked it.

"*You won't find it.*" He scoffed at her comment. "*That's what you think at least.*" He always found a way. Always.

"Time is of the essence, Mr. Walker. We have other candidates to see other than you today." She tapped her heel on the floor to mimic a rhythmic clock in the small room. He sat up and picked each vile out of the container, examining it with an irritating amount of caution. He could feel all eyes watching him expectantly through the walls. He poured the pills out in order. He placed them in front of their marked vials with prestigious care. Changing their position to all face in the same direction and the same side up. He peered eye-level with the table arranging them meticulously, moving every one a centimeter. His eyes darted to the invisible anticipating audience every once in a while. The woman glared at him. He smiled, shrugging his shoulders, fixing a pill again.

"Mr. Walker." His head snapped up as her bland voice became agitated. "Choose. Now." He climbed

back up in his seat. His right hand took all the pills and scooped them into his cupped left one. They remained mixed. Walker picked one at random from his hand, lifting it slowly to his eye. He put it back, only pausing to watch her satisfaction with his decision before her frustration set back in. He fingered another. His head looked up once more. He took a deep breath and dumped his whole cupped hand into his mouth.

WE DREAM IN BLUE

Fiction

by Syd Wilfong

It was a nice little house. The idyllic hills where the house was settled gave me a feeling of warmth, a feeling of love. I'd yet to enter into it, and yet I can't remember the last time a house made me feel that way. My Aunt Naegae, however, felt the opposite, claiming the house was pedestrian, which is the reason she gifted me the small cottage I now will call home. After taking my time admiring the charming exterior, I walked in and wandered around the small house, examining the rooms that were now my own. Nothing too ostentatious, and I much enjoyed the simplicity of the house—although I wish I could now remember what was within the rooms, as the walls were all I could look at during that time. Dark blue walls surrounded me. I found it odd how every room I walked into, every hallway, and every ceiling I looked upon were all painted in this deep, dark color. It seemed as if the house was consumed by this dark blue—what a bothersome color.

I made it an early job of mine to paint the walls, doing so even before I unpacked my belongings. I painted the

walls a variation of grays and whites, and the new colors provided me a feeling of serenity. I found that the day itself became light, that the colors of gray and white contributed greatly to my sudden burst of happiness. I danced and twirled around the small room to my own cadence. Twirling, twirling, twirling, and then, all at once, I stopped . . . I had seen a spot of blue. Carefully, I approached the painted walls. *How had I not recognized this?* I brushed my fingers along the gray paint. Dry. I shook my head in consternation; the walls that were once gray seemed to reveal a tint of blue. *It is almost as if the blue is seeping through.* I pulled myself from my thoughts; yet, I couldn't help but notice that the blue seemed to glow, as if it was calling to me, reaching out from beneath the gray and trying, trying to be . . . how ridiculous. The paint was blameless. It was nothing but a fault of my own—how silly of me! Purchasing the cheapest paint without realizing it, I then needed at least three coats for the job to be completed. Perhaps it was the advertising of the cheap paint that fooled me, but,

regardless, my initial plans for the night had changed. The matter of the blue was something I needed to attend to now, as I doubted I would be able to sleep with the blue walls surrounding me. Once again, I slathered the walls in gray and white, painting thick strokes with my paintbrush. One stroke, then two, in a singular motion, painting up and down and up and down, and my movements became rote. I had painted each room, each wall, each ceiling that had remnants of the color blue. I lost count of how many coats of paint I covered the walls. More than six layers I imagine, in some areas possibly as high as ten. It wasn't until I finished my last ceiling that I realized how tired I was, my arms feeling detached, my hands numb and cramped. I was wary about inspecting—what seemed to be—the ever-changing walls. To my relief, I found nothing but gray and white colors. Surrounded by the light hues that initially gave me serenity now seemed to also give me a sense of security that I longed for. The home was finally mine.

My body ached as I awoke and stretched, preparing for the day. I had a great deal of work. I planned on finally unpacking, although I dreaded the thought of it, and cursed myself for the list of things I had yet to do. I forced myself to awake fully and limped toward the living room. The sun peeked through the closed blinds,

and in wanting the feel of natural light, I welcomed the sun. I opened the blinds to illuminate my house . . . and immediately *it* had caught my eye—the incipient color of blue. I could see it. Bleeding through the thickly painted walls, I recognized the familiar tint. I struggled to comprehend what was happening. I was looking at the blue, staring at it, yet I couldn't believe it. Quickly, I ran to the other rooms of the house, desperately hoping those walls had not changed. Yet, in an act of duplicity, the walls that were once gray and white were now entirely blue. I looked up at the ceilings—the blue was as present as the day I first arrived. All of the grays and whites had faded as if they had never been applied. My senses were overpowered by rage. How dare it. The temerity of it—of these walls. I raced around the small house, my hate for the blue color only exacerbating at every step. Frantically looking in my packed belongings, I pulled everything I could find. Old pictures and new pictures and posters—I even hung up artwork I had made when I was in third grade. I glued these pictures to the blue walls, nailing large wooden picture frames to the blue ceilings, refusing to allow even a speck of blue to show. However, no matter how quickly I hung these pictures, no matter how quickly I nailed them to the walls, the blue was spreading, growing rapidly. The blue was faster than

me, faster than my hands. It was nonsensical: the paint, the walls, the ceilings, everything—I was in utter shock. The blue paint was leaking through, staining the posters, staining the pictures through the frames.

Whatever confidence I once had was no longer present; I struggled to breathe, my breaths sharp and unwilling to calm. I was suddenly consumed by fatigue; I felt incapacitated, perhaps on the verge of death itself. I closed my eyes in an attempt to leave behind the blue that threatened me. But, those blue walls remained with me, the dark color never leaving no matter how hard I pressed on my eyes, trying to squeeze the blue out. But as I dug my nails into the skin of my eyelids, I saw black. The further my fingers would sink, the color of black became the only thing I could see. I smiled. I couldn't believe I had been lying to myself, hiding the truth I had been desperately searching for. The blue wasn't surrounding me. The blue was *inside* me. Inside my eyes, underneath my eyelids—I could see it clearly now. I tore at my eyes, digging my fingernails into the flesh of my eyelids, ripping the blue out of me. I could feel the blue being pulled away, like strings, untangling from me. The trepidation I once had was fading, my senses returning . . . as I gouged and as I clawed, I could hear screams. I felt the hands of my Aunt Naegea grasping me. Her

arms fought with mine, begging and pleading, but I didn't dare to stop my fingers from prying. I took annoyance in the way she shook me, after all, didn't she want me to be *free*? The blue would be gone and I would no longer dream in blue. I would dream in black. How I wish to dream in such a color and be surrounded only in black. In darkness, no blue could ever harm me again.



BEE STILL

Pyrography | *by Kali Laird*

CHANGING YOUR OCEAN

Poem

by LM

Like the waves in the ocean
You live your life with commotion
It's time for a change
Although it feels strange
Being tired of the pain
Living with all your stains
Is it better to be real
And learn how to heal
No longer being suffocated by your trauma
That's captivated by life's drama
You must rediscover
To be recovered
Be true
To start a new
Find the you
That you want to pursue
Be a calm sea
As you are the one that holds the key

W.A.V.E.S

Fiction

by Jaleyhia 'Nicki' Smith

Ever feel the gritty sand in between your toes and the fierce wind of the Atlantic Ocean?

My hands flow within the ocean's currents, feeling the tide drive into my body. The big blue ocean complimented the sky like a mirror reflection, hearing my heart beat at the sound of the radio's drums that played alongside the lighting and thunder that roared across the dark grey skies. My feet dug deeper into the grand sand of the sea floor; my long hair flowed in the demure wind that softly whistled around me as small waves crashed against my torso.

I stand here, alone in the ocean, with my back facing a small crowd of "friends" that sit closely in front of a large bonfire. I see his hands pace over the blue sundress that laid upon my chocolate brown skin which shook at his whispers in my ear, as closely he said "you would look a lot better laying down," as the rapines in his voice echoed throughout my hollow body.

I was chasing him after four shots of Tequila,
my pudgy belly holding the warmth of this disgusting liquor. The sounds of owls hooting and crickets chirping covered
the ocean waves flapping against my rib cage.

My friends' laughter grew louder and louder
over the ukulele Josh had brought as he began to play adeptly. "Hands Down" will always haunt my ears, I could
slowly feel the summer heat close in around my chest and face, and I longed for the humidity.

He had said, “you know this is right for your body?” I felt he was only human within his questioning. Drunk and alone, the sound of the owls hooting grew louder; it felt like they were chanting my name in hopes that I would gain courage and be strong enough, as his rosy cheeks flushed across his pale face, filled with scratches from my fingernails. I could hear my friends’ laughter beginning to die down into song as they sang my favorite song by Wallows, “These Days.”

I believe that most broken things can be fixed.

Could he be fixed?

Maybe the absence of his father caused his actions or maybe the abuse he and his siblings endured from his alcoholic mother’s “boyfriends” caused the scars on my own body that were hard to heal. I tried to make sense of him, and I questioned if I was the only girl he had done this to. A pair of size thirteen brown boots sat beside the back tire, his sandalwood cologne was loud through the smell of rain that poured over us.

The texts inviting a select few to an upper-class beach party rang throughout the hallways, and he sent me a personal invite:

“I hope to see you tonight.”
“Wear the perfume you wore last week.”
“I’m bringing your favorite, Tequila!!”
“I also invited Jessica.”

Closing my phone, I hurried back home after two classes in tears, as disgust filled my body. Shutting down, I could feel my heart beat loud and slow.

1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . .
1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . .
1 . . . 2 . . . Until my last breath . . .

I gave my last breath in the form of a sigh, looking in the mirror, discovering the scar that sat upon my oily skin, as my dark brown eyes filled with tears. It was his mark, a mark of “territory” that scratched the surface of my left cheek.

FOUR HOURS until seven o’clock tonight. Jessica messaged me to get ready for a shopping spree with her and the twins, Leslie & Leila. I felt despondent but somewhat hopeful that shopping might be able to get me out of the gutter.

TWO HOURS passed as we wasted our last thirty minutes at the shoe store looking for Leila’s favorite seasonal Nike sandals that were covered in rhinestones. I thought to myself, maybe depression is blindsided happiness if we let it take us away. A small whiff of sandalwood floated into my nose as the man in front of me walked by to grab some socks, my body . . . frozen, not being able to move as the air began to cool and the salty sweat formed across my head, beading into my hairline.

ONE HOUR before the party, I tell Jessica that I was only anxious about tonight, that I haven’t been to any big parties in three years. Jessica told me her coping methods for social anxiety/events.

JUST. CALM. DOWN.
I read her lips as she dropped me off last on her ride back home. I could see the sunny afternoon sky turn into white, fluffy clouds that rested over top of the mountains that surrounded our town.

The water continued to slowly swallow my body. I can feel the salt in my mouth and smell the fish that reside in its water. My chest, covered in seaweed, and I'm coming home. I watch the water try and take me within its currents.

Putting my legs through the bikini,
I looked in the mirror and began to decry my wide body loudly as I choked on my tears, trying to keep them down in my heart where they belong. I heard the front door open and the sound of Jessica chatting respectfully with my parents, asking if I was in my room getting clothes for my stay at her house. My parents directed her to my bedroom, and as I heard her footsteps lightly approach my room, I quickly wiped my tears from my face.

I opened the door for
Jessica and went to my closet to look for a light sweater and a mini skirt. She leaned against the threshold between my room and the hallway, parting her lips to say my daddy is fine and the she would take him for a "ride" if my mother were to ever fall ill. I threw my pants at her face, put on my clothes, and we left the house.

The grey clouds burst open rain upon us and it became heavier into the rest of the party. I can hear her calling me to a sanguine paradise as I close my eyes, letting go of everything, the water soon consuming my whole body, nothing could compare to this feeling. The panic in my "friends," just floating. I feel my heart beat loud and slow:

1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4
1 . . . 2 . . . 3
1 . . . 2 . . .
1 . . . Until my last breath



Alivia Appel (*Mini Me*)

I believe to never give up on anything you start. I started this drawing two years ago after giving up but then decided to finish it for an assignment. I feel more complete knowing I did not leave behind what I started.



Harmony Fetterman (*Soul Window*)

It's been said that the eyes are the window to the soul. There may be uncertainties that surround the identification of this creature, and we can't know for sure if it indeed has a soul; but we can be confident that like humans, it was created for a purpose, and has intrinsic value. By demeaning, or unnecessarily harming these beings in any way, we are essentially doing the same to ourselves.

William Shakespeare "The Eyes are the window to the soul"
Biblical references that allude to this concept



Ethan Hawk (*Whatcha doing?*)

I would say about 20% of my inspiration comes from planning and storyboarding, while the other 80% comes in the moment. I find that ideas come much more naturally if you allow your plans to flow and take shape in ways you weren't expecting.



Kali Laird (*The Sheep, Maw Maw's Magnolia, Bee Still*)

I received inspirations from items around our ranch to complete these pieces of artwork.



Donna J. Morgan (*Day is done*)

"If people would just stop and take a look around them, they would be amazed at what they see." - Words of my late Grandfather, Irvin T. Morgan



Del Mullenax *(She's A Jinx?)*

Based on one of my favorite TV series, I drew & painted one of the main characters, Jinx. I painted her using watercolor markers & acrylic paint markers.



Drake Rose *(Sideling Sunset)*

When taking photos, I love to show action and movement. After learning about long exposures in class, I was inspired and I ventured out to take many highway pictures of cars moving. This picture of Sideling Hill is special to me; it's a beautiful photograph to the eye and it holds life inside of it. It's hard not to love it.



Mariah Sunday *(Single)*

The interconnection between the human body and nature.



Abby Walters (*Crockett*)

This was my childhood dog. We grew up together, and I had to say goodbye to him at the end of January. Crockett was almost 13 years old and I couldn't have asked for a better dog. I hope his happy face brings other people as much joy as it has brought me.

Syd Wilfong (*We Dream in Blue*)

This piece was inspired by Charlotte Perkins Gillman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," which is a story I read in high school introduced to me by my father. I fell in love with the story and how strange it was and wanted to write about something just as weird and unexplainable; however, instead of wallpaper, I wrote about paint!



Destiny Zembower (*Alolan Moon*)

Fan-Art inspired by the well-known anime “Pokémon,” the character in my art is my attempt of an anthropomorphic version of the Pokémon character named Alolan Vulpix. This is actually the first fully detailed artwork I’ve done; it was also my first attempt at light effects. I’ve been an artist since I was a child. However, only in the past two years have I been dedicating enough time to it to learn and improve myself, which I hope to continue to improve.



Jonathan Harper provided music for our Opening Reception on Sept 7, 2022.

Jonathan's work as the indie/alternative rock solo project known as Absolute Victory can be found via a free Spotify account at <https://open.spotify.com/artist/0KBuUoomQOkGe0o3J7tskT>



Taber Robinette provided music for our April 19, 2023 event in the Hazen Gallery.

His work is also available through Spotify at <https://open.spotify.com/artist/35goCtwZwEpbCAPIkthAtI?si=VJ26jrzyQDaU8cZdZps-dA>

Special thanks to our events sub-committee – Gilbert Cochrum, Roberta See, Wendy Knopsider, and Heather Greise – who launched both our inaugural 2022 reception and our 2023 celebration event.



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