

COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES

# HIGH GRADE

JOURNAL OF THE ARTS

# SPECIAL THANKS

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# LETTERS FROM THE EDITORS

I catch your eye on the battlefield. My hair is sticky and my nails are stained with ink, and I want to look back down, but I don't.

We have fought for a long time. We have struggled to hear the language of the seas and the pleas of the land and the old stories of the stones. Our enemy is so mixed and blurred, after all these years, that we don't know to which side we belong to. I fly the flag of nature, but I have sap and extinction blood on my hands the same as you. I look at the ground, most days, because there's still joy in forgetting. The ground never looks back, though. Ignorance can be bliss, but not safety—that comes with art. It all comes with art.

When our eyes meet across these pages, don't look away. There are codes here. There is intelligence that can win us the war. Trust the language of your world and your humanity, because in the end, we aren't so different from the seas and the lands and the stone.

Our language is art.  
Speak.

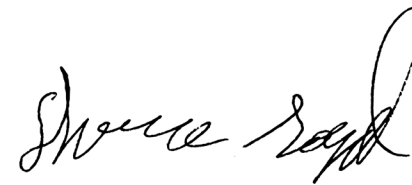


TOBIN HOUCHIN

My fingers are numb, I'm uncontrollably shivering, and each inhale freezes my nostrils. I'm sitting hunched over the handlebars of my bike overlooking the 5 miles of scenic byway that lie between me and an 8:00am probability lecture. I push off.

As I pick up speed each image will rapidly blur past my eyes—a rabbit, then a magpie, then a columbine. The sound of birds, wind in the evergreens, and distant cars will be cut by the sharp hiss of my brakes. Inward growing cold and numbness is countered by the warm feeling of adrenaline on each hairpin turn.

Excitement, wonder, and hope all come together, compressing into a knot pressing against my sternum. I exist here in perfect harmony—a man and his emotions and his machine, all hurtling through nature.

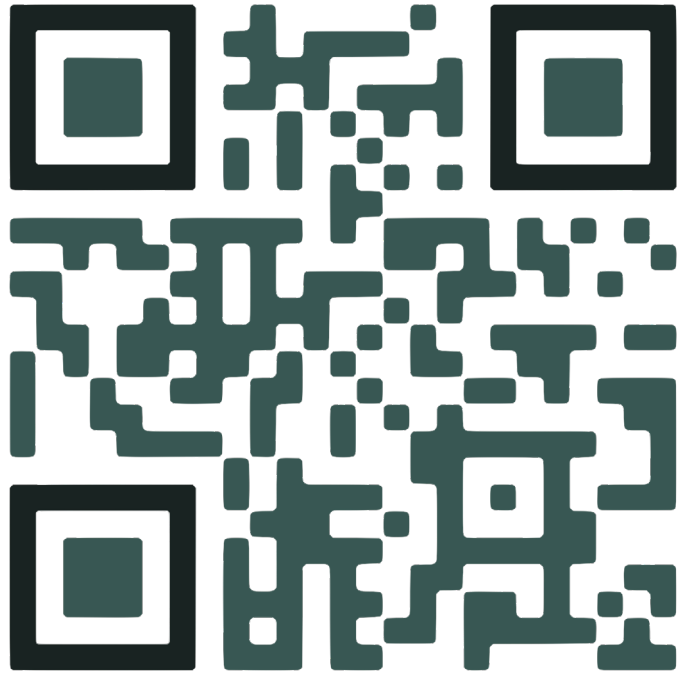


DHRUVA SOGAL



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# METEOR FALL

Cliff Ghiglieri

A peach blossom  
has not enough red.  
Not quite a star, but  
a lonely twinkling bug  
in a millennia flight  
to drift down and die.  
Looking up at the great pond  
of silence, the peach blossom bug  
will just skitter on the surface  
until

# THE WANDERER

George Goldade





## NOWHERE TO BE

Henry Rothert

My mistress is calling. The winds of the desert are blowing towards me, carrying the smell of juniper and dust, whispering my name and beckoning me towards her. It has been too long. Time to lose myself out there, and in doing so, find that which really matters to me.

I reach the town of Moab well after dark. What had once been a modest town of a few thousand back in the days of Edward Abbey was now bloated with dozens of Delicate Arch Inns, Double Arch Inns, Landscape Arch Inns. *Explore the beauty of Canyon Country!* the sign proclaims, *Right here from Navajo Arch Inn!* “No thanks,” I murmur, speeding past. Neon signs assault the eyes, bright streetlights and the headlights of cars paint the sky an unnatural orange glow, hiding the stars from view; a harsh contrast to the quiet, dark serenity of the surrounding country.

I blast along the highway, music blaring from the radio gradually becoming static as I fly farther and farther from the transmitter in Moab, the lights of the city fading over the horizon. Soon after, I reach a dirt road and turn off onto it. The road leads to an old uranium mine way up in the hills. I find a derelict side road overlooking a valley, not a bad spot to bed down. No heated pool, cable TV, or complimentary continental breakfast, but I have my own luxuries out here. It is a

warm, cloudless night, every star of the milky way visible for my eyes to drink in. There’s no chance of rain, so I’ll sleep out under a projection far grander than all 1000 channels of cable TV on offer back at the Navajo Arch Inn in Moab.

In the morning I awaken, far later than I would have liked, to the bright glare of the sun, high in the sky, sending its harsh rays of light through the opening in my sleeping bag, as if to say, *Wake up! This light spent tens of thousands of years waiting to be born and traveled ninety-three million miles to get here, and you can’t be awake to welcome it?!* Begrudgingly, I oblige. I pack up quickly, and hit the road. No time for breakfast, it’s close enough to noon already that I’ll have lunch in a few hours.

I stop in the town of Blanding, at a small restaurant, for my last civilized meal for the next few days. I’d been there years before, and I seem to remember the milkshakes being good. I order a burger and a shake. The burger is good; the shake is not.

I travel from highway to county road, gravel to dirt, the quality of road degrading as distance increases from the last town, finally reaching the trailhead. I pack up my things, and begin towards the canyon. I have a general destination in mind, and the rough idea of a route back, but I don’t much care if I stick to it or not. Out here, the desert makes her own plans, and I have no choice but to follow, to go where she takes me.

The soil here is made up of what is known as cryptobiotic soil, a rough, bumpy mat created by lichen and bacteria growing upon the sand. This stuff is essential to life in the desert, preventing the winds and the rain from eroding away the entire landscape and returning nitrogen and nutrients into the earth, forming the foundation from which all other plant life is able to survive and grow. It is also very fragile. One misplaced step can shatter the crust, which can take up to a century to regrow. I’ve learned from my mother to avoid breaking the crust, to stick to slick rock, grassy patches, existing trails, and washes wherever possible. After a bit of hopscotching from rock to rock, I find myself on a trail, and soon come to the edge of the canyon. I find a path down and descend, until I reach the dried-out wash at the center of the canyon. The sloping, gradual walls of the canyon at my point of entry soon give way to sheer cliffs, dropping down hundreds of feet from the desert surface above, topped with spires and hoodoos, casting their long, phallic shadows across the golden late-afternoon walls of the ravine.

I take a detour to investigate some old ruins, of which there are many in these canyons. After climbing a short ways up the side of the canyon, I come to find that what had appeared from below to be a measly pile of bricks, is in fact an almost

perfectly preserved two-room kiva. One room has been built into the ground, with a square hole in the center of the roof for entry, and a small chute built into the front for ventilation. The second story of the kiva is set back a bit, closer to the back wall of the alcove. This one has a more standard doorway, and I peer through it to see a dark, cramped room inside. The Basketweavers, or the Puebloans, or whichever tribe inhabited this structure, would likely have preferred to spend as much time outside of these dim, enclosed dwellings as possible, and who could blame them? They lived in these beautiful canyons, their very own gardens of Eden. As I sit there, pondering the nature of life for the people here a thousand years ago, the last rays of sun fade from the rim of the canyon. Daylight is running out. I stand up, grab my pack, and head back down towards the riverbed below.

I spend the night in a large alcove I find carved into one wall of the canyon. The cave is perfect, around twenty feet tall and another twenty deep, with a perfectly flat floor. I'm surprised not to find any ruins here, as this seems to be an ideal spot for habitation. I set up my tent in the darkness, and like the night before, elect not to put on the rain fly so I can best enjoy the stars. I eat my dinner of rice and potatoes and lentils, drink my tea, and look out across the night sky. The milky way streaks across the hemisphere, shining bright in a sky unadulterated by the bright lights of any towns or cities. As I admire the beauty of the night, I swear I can see the stars moving with the rotation of the earth. Not much, an indescribably small amount when compared to any point of reference, but an amount nonetheless, as slow and steady as the passage of time. This must be exactly what life would've been like for the Basketweavers, spending their nights in protected alcoves, gazing up at the infinite celestial beauty of the cosmos. The illusion is shattered as a plane appears upon the theater of the night sky, its flashing lights undoubtedly moving. Another appears, and then a third. Their sound rattles throughout the canyon a minute later, a deep, grating, mechanical roar that seems to originate from everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

I fall asleep under the stars. At points throughout the night, I awaken briefly, and in my half-conscious state note that I may have been wrong before: the stars, over the course of hours, seem to have shifted in the opposite direction. Perhaps I'm wrong now, and was right before; that could be a different star. It doesn't matter, and I fall back asleep.

I awaken to the intermittent chirping of birds and a cloudy sky. Rain is coming. I leave my cave to find myself in the vicinity of another set of ruins, a fortress

in a crack along the cliff wall, decorated with the painted visage of a haunting white mask, as round and pale as the moon, the face of an ancient, powerful warrior of days long past and battles long fought, surrounded by dozens of blood red handprints. An aged, whitish grey juniper branch sticks out from the wall, perhaps a former flagpole of sorts? What was the garrison protecting? These canyons? If so, here's to hoping their spirits continue to watch over, may the empty eyes of the painted white warrior mask continue to stand guard over these lands, keep it safe from the greedy prospector, the irreverent rancher, the meddling government bureaucrat.

~

As I descend deeper and deeper into the canyon, it is revealed to be merely a tributary of a larger, even grander canyon. Far below the surface of the earth, miles away from the nearest human being, I find myself in this grand cathedral crafted by God himself, to which all of our Notre Dames and Sagrada Familias are merely blasphemous imitations. The walls near a thousand feet high, decorated with delicately arranged sandstone, topped with magnificent stone spires, and adorned with stalwart juniper trees growing on small ledges like a choir of angels. Sunbeams shine through the clouds like light through stained glass windows.

Deer tracks in the mud lead me to a puddle of water at the base of a dried-out waterfall, where a steady stream had carved a polished chute right through the rock. Something flits above my head, and I look up to see a swallow, with remarkable elegance and precision, swoop expertly into its nest, one of many tiny mud structures tucked into an alcove adjacent to the waterfall. The resemblance to the Puebloan settlements is striking. Viewed without a sense of distance, one might struggle to differentiate the two. The swallows were here, living like this long before the first humans resided in these canyons, and have remained long after they left.

~

I reach the opening to another grandiose canyon. There's allegedly a spring a little ways up there, so I elect to find a spot for the night by the spring. Darkness is not far off, so I'll have to hurry. On top of that, the clouds are looking angry, the taste of imminent rain hangs in the air. I throw my rain jacket on and hurry through the canyon, crashing through the brush to reach my destination. I arrive at the general location of the spring just as the first drops of rain begin to fall. I look up, the skies



are darker and angrier than ever. I don't want to spend the night here by the banks of the riverbed, I've learned that lesson the hard way. Best case scenario, all the rain flowing down the side of the canyon collects where I've pitched my tent, and I spend my night wet and cold and miserable. Worst case scenario, the downpour is too much for the stone walls and parched mud of the canyon to handle, and it forms a flash flood, a fast-moving wall of water roaring through the wash, scooping up or drowning anything in its path—including me. Perhaps I can find something akin to what I had last night, some sort of cave or alcove where I can spend the night safe and dry. I leave my pack at a relatively flat spot among the cottonwoods, protected from one side by a wall of sandstone. I'll be able to scope out the area faster without it, and worse comes to worse, if there's no other options available, I can just spend the night here, and pray no flash flood sweeps me away while I sleep.

More raindrops fall on my head; I need to find that cave quickly. I pick a side of the canyon and start climbing up. Fifty feet or so above the basin, the slope levels slightly for a bit, before sharply rising up again into sheer walls that stretch hundreds of feet upwards, all the way to the world above. While by no means flat enough to camp on, the ledge facilitates relatively easy movement along the canyon, allowing me to look for any caves carved into the walls. A heavy mist hangs in the air, making it even harder to see through the twilight. I run across the rock, desperately looking for anywhere dry enough for a campsite, but every alcove I spot is too exposed or not flat enough for my tent. A harsh wind assaults my face, sending stinging raindrops into my eyes.

The canyon turns a bit just up ahead, if I can get around that point, maybe I'll find the cave I'm looking for. I run across the rock, now slick with rain, nearly losing my footing and falling back into the basin below. The point, finally reached, reveals more of a beautiful canyon, stretching off into the fog, but not my cave. I look up. It appears I might be able to climb up a ways to another flat area. It's getting darker. Options are running out. I start to climb, pushing higher and higher as the wind and the rain try to force me back down to the riverbed. *You can't win*, I yell at the storm, and that may be true. But the canyon, as mighty and immovable as it is, certainly can. The way ahead is blocked, I can't reach that higher ledge, at least not with this wind and rain at my back. The storm assails me, trying to batter me into submission, force me to my knees, and hammer me into the rock. A sudden violent stream of water rains down upon me, as if from a firehose. I look up, and see hundreds of feet above, like a downspout off the side of a cathedral, a waterfall of runoff arcing over the rim of the canyon, soaring through the air, and crashing down upon my location. Hopelessness sets in. I'm soaked to the bone, freezing cold, and without anywhere I

could set up a shelter. Everywhere I look is either too steep, too rough, or too exposed for me to even entertain the possibility of setting up my tent there. The rock at my feet is getting hard to see. I grab my headlamp from my pocket, but its weak light is little help. In the dim twilight of the canyon, and through the curtain of cold rain, I can barely make out the faint shadows of two potential caves across from me. I rush back down the side of the canyon, crushing the delicate cryptobiotic crust carelessly under my feet with every step.

I climb straight up the rock, out of a tangle of willows, pulling myself over and onto a flat stretch of cryptobiotic soil. Looking up, I can barely make out the two alcoves above me and to my right, and I rush across the soil and up the sandstone to them. I shine my light into the alcove. Nothing. Not deep enough, not tall enough, too steep for me or my tent. Useless. The second alcove is 30 feet or so beyond, hidden behind a slight bend in the canyon. *That'll be more of the same*, a voice in my head says, *a waste of time. You're soaking and miserable, let's just go back to that spot below and try and get dry. Besides, if a flash flood comes, at least it can put you out of your misery.* I almost listen to the voice, but decide to check anyway. After precariously crossing the slick, wet, sandstone, I reach a cavity in the wall, about a dozen feet across, five feet tall, and just as many deep, with a perfectly flat floor. I rush inside, and am provided a wonderful respite from the rain. Perfect. Although not as roomy as the cave from the night before, in the moment, surrounded by the storm and the wind and rain and the darkness, it doesn't matter. This is good enough, just big enough for my tent. I lay there for a moment, enjoying the sanctuary of the cave, before I remember I need to get my pack. I look down towards the trees below. Total darkness. All light has left the canyon; in order to find my pack again I will need to rely on the dim light of my headlamp.

Heading back down the sandstone, I make my way back into the dense foliage along the river, but the zealous guard of brush acts to impede my path. I finally fight my way down to the riverbed, and quickly realize I have no idea where I am. I look around, and see only darkness. Darkness and trees and bushes, stretching out in all directions, all indistinguishable under the weak light of my headlamp. I pick a direction and charge through the brush, keeping my head down to avoid the sting of the branches snapping into my face. I look up—the trees all appear identical. I keep moving, desperate for a recognizable landmark. I come to a familiar-looking rock wall, and my spirits immediately rise. I follow the rock for a ways, until it peters off into the dirt. Worried now, I run the other way, but still no sign of my pack. I head off in a different direction, and continue until I rise above the trees and a ways up the wall of the canyon. There are no discernable landmarks visible to me through

the darkness, nothing to even tell me which side of the canyon I am currently on. I try to retrace my steps, but the path I left is indistinguishable in the darkness, and I find myself only more lost than before, in a worse position than before. Separated from my pack, and all my gear, and no way to find the shelter of the cave, I stand there amongst the cacti and cottonwoods, the rain pouring on my head. I want to give up, but I have no way to do so. What can I do? Dropping to my knees and lying down here in the mud will take just as much strength to make it through the night as continuing to push forwards. I make it to the other side of the canyon again, still unsure exactly which side it is. I look over the edge of the small butte I find myself on, and peer into the bushes below. I lean over a bit too much, and lose my footing, falling into the foliage. Fortunately, the branches of the willows do their best to catch me, saving me from face-planting into a cluster of cactus thorns. Standing up, I brush myself off, and look around. There, in front of me, sits my pack, still leaning against the tree where I left it.

Exhausted and on the verge of defeat, I stumble over to it, collapsing against the cottonwood. I debate just staying here, but my cold, wet clothes and the ever-present danger of a flash flood brings me to my feet. I grab my pack and climb up to the cave.

My tent fits perfectly within the tiny confines of the alcove, and I dry off, eat my dinner, and look out at the darkness in front of me. Like the night before, I find myself looking through the eyes of the Basketweavers and Puebloans centuries prior, in their small, cramped, but ultimately dry hollows in the rock, waiting for day to finally break. A smile crosses my face.

The next morning, I return to the main canyon and find the river (for it is veritably a river now) carrying the reddish-brown runoff of last night's storm, and the tiny grains of sand from the canyon wall and floors, all the way to the Colorado river, 50 miles to the southwest. That water, and the sediment, will likely never reach the Pacific Ocean. The sediment will make it no farther than Lake Powell, sinking to the bottom and burying the nooks and crannies of Glen Canyon under millions of pounds of mud. The water will be snatched up by the insatiable appetites of the cities and farms of four US states (and two in Mexico). For now though, the water is here, flowing confidently and steadily and bringing with it a cool breeze. At least I won't have to worry about finding water anymore.

The river meanders, and I meander with it, winding from one side of the canyon to the other, slowly making my way forward. There is a trail through the canyon, but I only follow it occasionally, forging my own path through the brush and

grass. I cross the river periodically, sometimes wading through, other times balancing my way across logs precariously resting from one steep slope of the river channel to the other. I'm going nowhere quickly, and this is fine, for I have nowhere to be.

I stop by dozens of ruins, some entire cities built into the cliffs, where the gravel under your feet reveals itself to be hundreds of thousands of shards of pottery, each piece ingrained with small markings, designs, patterns; A different type of art to the drawings plastered all across the walls of their alcoves, but beautiful nonetheless. In some spots, on or near these murals, one can, if they look closely, find the names of early explorers etched into the rock, the mark of the first westerners to recognize the sacred nature of these lands. These signatures, just like the ancient murals, are protected by law, sacred due to their historic nature. I envy these early explorers, able to love this land without worrying about setting a good example, no expectation of treating the land the way they want others to treat it, as there were no others there to mistreat it.

I reach my final destination for the night once again under the cover of darkness, a junction at the intersection of a few canyons. Exhausted, I collapse on the ground, staring up at the stars until I can be certain that they are indeed moving. I light a fire in the dirt, and it soon roars up, casting golden light across the trees and leaves of the cottonwood grove. Too tired to set up my stove, I place my dinner on a flat rock and push it into the fire, grilling it with a fine seasoning of ash and dirt. I gather a bit more firewood for the night, and fall into a blissful and well-earned sleep on the dirt, within arm's reach of the warmth of the fire, and under the celestial eyes of millions of stars.

I wake up a few hours later, the fire has died down. It is colder now, so I throw some more logs on the fire and grab my sleeping bag, crawling into it next to the rekindled fire.

I wake up again. The light of the fire has completely died out, but it has been replaced by the bright light of the risen moon, a powerful waning gibbous. It casts soft shadows across the junction, blotting out some of the dimmer stars. No matter, the moon is a beauty in and of herself, and so I hold no resentment towards her for stealing the spotlight from her costars. I don't feel like grabbing more firewood, and there's no point lying here on the ground without the fire. I grab my hammock, since I carried it all this way, I might as well use it, and have no desire to set up my tent. I tie my hammock up a ways from the embers, along the banks of the once again dried-up riverbed. I fall back asleep for the third and final time that night, dry and utterly content.

The light of morning reveals another cliff city right above me, larger than any of the others I've encountered before. I send a silent thank you towards the city and the ghosts that may or may not inhabit it, thanking them for sharing their sacred space with me. Whether with their blessing or not, I hope I have been a good enough steward of this land for them.

I don't get back to my car until late that afternoon. There's a reluctance to return to civilization, I'm content out here, and a part of me prays that my car won't start, perhaps I left a light on and the battery is dead, or perhaps a mouse chewed through the ignition wires—anything to force me back into the canyons, to hunt deer and eat berries and live wild and naked and free, my only responsibility as a steward, priest, husband, to this land I have fallen so deeply in love with. Alas, the car starts, and I have no choice but to return to civilization, for tomorrow, as much as I want not to, I do in fact have somewhere to be.

GEODE  
Isabelle Harris





# SUNRISE OVER GOLDEN GATE CANYON

Patrick Barringer





# A CATALOGUE OF MEMORIES WORTH KEEPING

Isabella Walsh

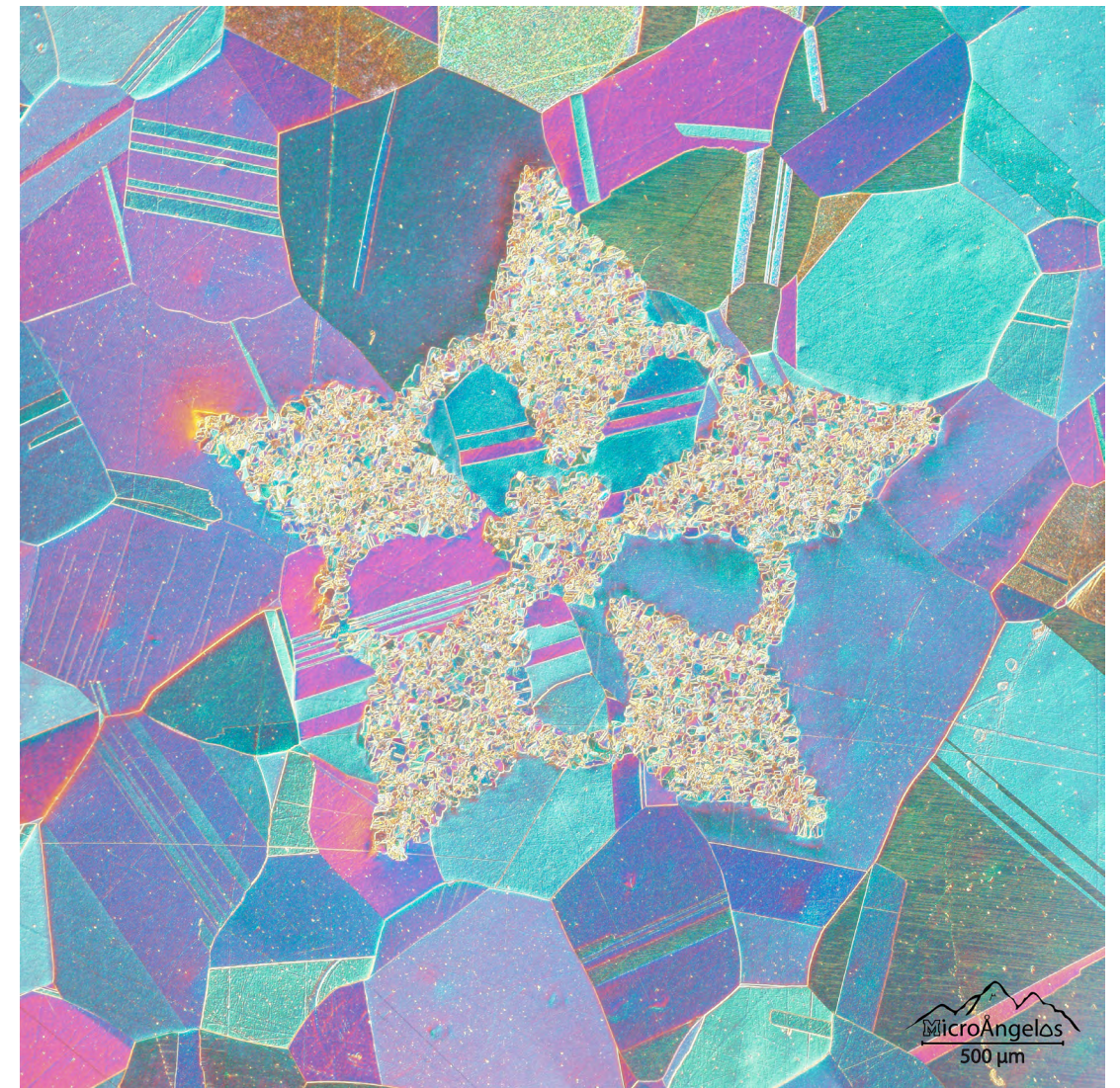
And in that summer heat where the rays came down  
to assault my every sense  
The blinding light and scorching upon my skin  
there I pumped my small legs willing that little bike  
into locomotion to pedal away from her laughter the red,  
white, and blue covering her head to toe  
Amidst that backdrop of vivid green watered regularly  
by sprinklers timed to go off at even intervals in the evening  
came rushing towards me  
On that leather couch I wrote my name and drew stick horses  
my sister's curly scrawl underneath our dining room table  
because even then! We knew we were artists and that  
house was ours, that home that was our canvas  
That home where balloons appeared every morning  
over our bedside every birthday  
The strings cut off because our cat would eat them otherwise  
That home where after fourteen hours of roiling stomachs,  
lightheaded chills, and stuffy air I made it to the crowded  
market and said, "screw that" to the heady scents  
of fish and livestock and unmentionable sludge beneath carts  
and from that plane-induced haze on the chicken riddled  
streets of China came a little girl with hands so tiny  
Mine covered them completely in my palm  
And for a hundred kisses that girl bought me a panting,  
damp-tongued, brown and white tumble of fluff  
my wonderful souvenir from Kansas  
That family in the home of red and green walls  
The many walls she tore down to  
Crash! Storm into my life that torrent of  
grey and pain to whom I owe due gratitude  
for reaching past the mortar, brick by brick, opened it

to the sky above took my hand and said, "I see you"  
I see you and how you sing, getting so into the part with your  
wild gestures, I see you calculating answers and working  
Haphazardly because you still have an hour to turn it in anyway  
And your succulents on your desk and that weight upon  
your shoulders, the pressure, those arthritic joints carrying everyone  
with you on your back because it's nobody left behind  
I see you on this tightrope walk this balancing act I know all too well  
I see you; I see you, and I love you  
That cool breeze on my face, how the church lights illuminated the night  
around it in heavenly visage as the cross He bore from me looks  
down over the grassy knoll where He first embraced me close  
And the sharp clarity of the snow between my fingers  
we throw to each other, that laughter, the buzzer in my hands  
Correct! We made it, the laughter in those crowded Chicago streets  
of pastel colors, the heat rising from the asphalt below to meet my feet  
In that tangled mess of unspeakably dirty subways  
Where shiny Magic cards are displayed on our cardboard table  
we fashioned because the school store had none  
and those faces as we sang sea shanties so loudly  
our bus driver wore headphones—  
he enjoyed our performance that much  
The beautiful stage of a theatre fathoms high  
columns of spotlights, streaming down upon the actors bathed  
in the glow of their song  
Her face aglow as those words we know by heart after hours  
of singing in the car and at home "studying"  
Seeing that warm glow on her face from watching such a pure form  
of art and human expression, that language of my very soul  
she spoke to me, communicated with a single look  
the utter joy of that moment  
The joy on my sister's face, dancing there in an empty room  
of all of us watching and trying to join along because the music of  
her swaying feet, wide-sweeping motions, her erratic hands,  
is infectious  
I adore her earnest, unabashedly genuine laugh  
Not that she never cried, no when my sister was upset  
Hurricane Daisy is making landfall and everyone in a ten-meter radius

had either to evacuate or face the brunt of her wrath  
blown away by the sheer capacity of those lungs of hers  
To scream like a gale coming over the beaches  
an entire drive home from my aunt's house  
But as surely the storm passes through, we always saw the sun  
return from the clouds  
And our sunshine was back  
She had the most giving heart of anyone I knew  
she would give the very shirt off her back if you said you were cold  
and if anyone ever asked, she would run to her piggy bank  
or drawer and take all the money she had to give  
I won't forget any of them  
All those times we shared together, not even for a moment  
For memory is synonymous to treasure

# MICROCOLUMBINE IN BLUE

## The MicroAngelos





# THE COOK AND THE CRAFTER

Max D'Agnese

As I entered the room, stale air coated the inside of my mouth. The uneven surface of the tile vexed my toes as I traversed its many crevasses, navigating to the familiar floorcloth. Speakers blast sporadically as the gunshots from the old westerns ring through the high-ceilinged room. Hundreds of records haphazardly stacked on the shelf ranging from Billy Joel's greatest hits to the folk songs of an old Italian village. And between the handcrafted, makeshift trunk and mass-produced tray table, lies two chairs. One sounds like the Grand Ole Opry, housing Dolly, and Kenny Rogers. The other was full of vigor, ringing like the big bands of Ellington, and Miller.

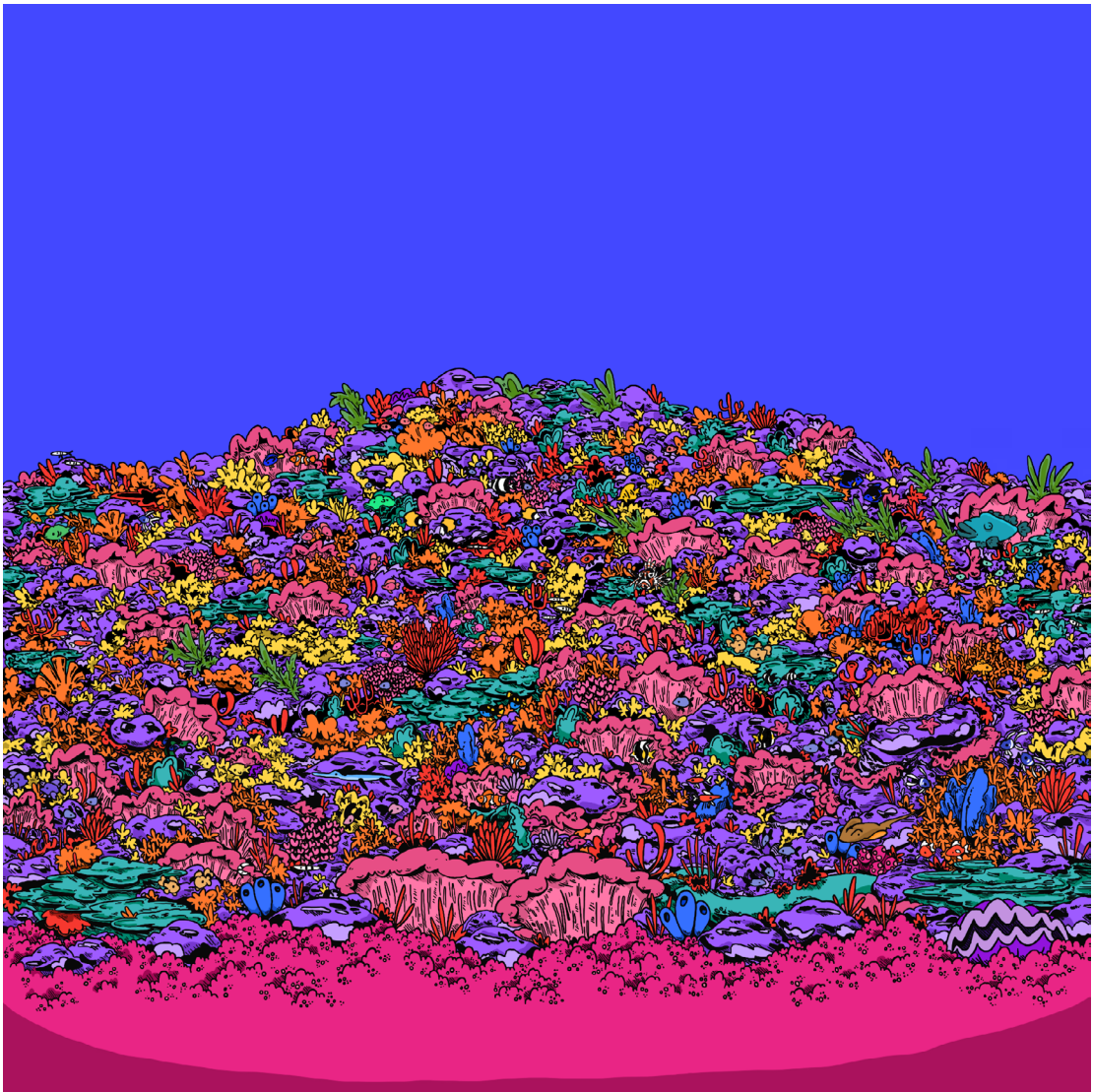
My nose twitches at the scent of the boiling of pasta water and sizzle of sausages as I turn toward the kitchen. An expert chef once here, with pots and pans stacked meticulously in the maple cabinets. Dishes still in the sink. Leftovers organized in old Pyrex. Mozzarella, and prosciutto still in the icebox. Shelves and shelves of handmade tomato sauces, and varieties of pastas ready for the cook's hand. The table set for the next meal.

The garage was the woodworker's domain. Four workbenches pushed against the walls and thousands of tools strewn across them. Stacks of extra plywood waiting to be used. Millions of mason jars packed full of nuts, bolts, and screws. Every chisel, every size, used by the master crafter. And in the middle of the room sits an unfinished trunk, made of oak and pine. Surrounded by the mounds of sawdust one could only imagine where they came from. A make-do stool resides over the trunk, indent still in the upholstery like the designer had been plucked from the scene.

Mozart in bronze, overwatching from the pedestal from the corner. Porcelain Pinocchio among the teacups in the cupboard. The mahogany flip-up table centered in front of the pink and white banded loveseat. The wall lined with painted stages like portals to another world. Anywhere but here. The living room rests, now dead, quiet and still. A place where they would once entertain, and tell tales from the city, the School of Hard Knocks, baseball, and next-door neighbors. And even though they have passed, when I stand in this home, they still feel alive.

# THE RAINBOW REEF

Adio Estridge



# MINUTE AFTER MIDNIGHT

Weston Gary

In the black mirrored window  
My figure reflects back at me  
The moment before  
Mirrors the moment now  
The moment to come  
Is as well  
The same

Sleep brings fast the day  
The day is shattered glass  
Each moment changing  
Like the rush of falling coins  
The lonely rot festers in the sunlight  
It burns a hole in my chest

Here now the moments are eternities  
The lonely rot is stilled  
Its corrupted hooks leave me be  
The weight of my mind bends  
The mirrored glass goes empty

So rapid with such fury does sleep bring the day  
A violent hammer against my temple  
A roiling angry growth of loneliness  
A hot humid desperation

But now here the dark mirrored glass  
Reflects back towards me  
A solemn warden of the secret night

Sleep comes at last  
It cradles me gently beyond the mirror

Too soon sleep brings the day





# CHAOS OF LIFE

Gemma Ponce



# PICKING

Edward B. Emmons

If my nails would grow fast enough to pick fresh,  
To leave small specks of skin and bits of flesh alone,  
I could learn to stomach a new dish.

Fingertips make for poor steak—raw and bleeding,  
But this meat is not rare,  
It is sliced, peeled, and julienned daily.

Until my fingers cease to move,  
Until my skin rots away  
I will bite the hand that feeds, with tooth and nail.

Or until I take up knitting.



# THERE ARE ROACHES UNDER CEDER ST. ZOO

Lucas Baumgartner

A magnificent monument here once stood proud  
Lively and colorful, the animals once roared  
But now I stare ahead upon the creaking wood  
“Cedar St. Zoo”—and it’s all gray

Gray-stained by the time it has corroded  
An epitaph forgotten, “forgotten”  
It might say to the creatures who owed it  
—to those more terrestrial, buried down, gray

Star-like dust fills the hollow space  
Wandering aimless through a void  
The iron cage ajar, displaced  
I’m welcomed in; how kind of you, Gray!

Starlight and I in solitude  
With not another human soul  
The cosmic brine, however,  
Whistles its deep cry. A tone of black.

Surrounded by naught except that null void  
Now absent of those dust-like stars, I listen.  
The lifeless, pure noise I cannot avoid

Now joined by a color I cannot see—BLACK.

With immense speed, the color swims past sight  
A thing shaped by cosmos, tendrils ablaze  
of a rubbery flesh paired with a bite  
hungry for existence, a torso lay  
long enough to wrap the stars boa-tight

I ran for my life, or what I had known of it  
Away from the thing I dare not perceive  
A mind minced, tangled like worn yarn  
Who are you? Who is me?  
There are only two things I am sure of now.

One. Closer did we near to the thing which flew.  
Two. There are roaches under Cedar St. Zoo.



# FROM ONE INTO ANOTHER

Alexandra Brunson





# ECOSYSTEM

Dhruva Sogal





# WILDFIRE TIME

## Kimberly O'Connor

June, you're blooming with roses,  
columbine, peonies, dandelions,  
store-bought petunias  
in balcony planters, irises,  
crows on the compost heap.

\*

A framed photo of my child  
and his cousin as toddlers,  
crouched in summer grass,  
faces captured in plotting,  
as on a great quest.

\*

It's June. The magpies are angry.  
It's June. Coyotes are calling.  
The new moon waxes in  
a smoky sky. The dog,  
grumbling, wakes me at dawn.

\*

An injured bird in the street  
sits still as a stone, and silent.  
We—the dog and I—approach.  
Though he lunges to finish  
the job, I turn away.

\*

The newspaper says sidewalks  
are giving people third  
degree burns. My throat hurts  
when I swallow from the constant trickle  
of snot and blood and ash.

\*

I thought we'd have longer,  
like I thought summer  
could come without smoke.  
But when I climb the mesa,  
I see the city choked in black.

\*

The mesa, wildflower-spangled.  
I hurt. I binge post-  
apocalyptic fantasy shows  
to get used to scorched landscapes.  
Primrose. Paintbrush. Fireweed.

\*

My child in preschool was  
a leader, tiny mini-teacher  
directing this or that child  
to do this or that, but somehow  
not bossy. A guide.

\*

The other children did  
what he said and loved him.  
A mother joked: *He'll lead  
them through the apocalypse.* I laughed,  
though I knew it was a prophecy.

\*

Most of us won't die  
by drowning, but some of us will,  
our streets become oceans.  
Most of us won't be caught  
in a hurricane of flame.

\*

I've been joking that Baptist preachers  
could scare sinners saved  
in this weather. We make  
ice baths in metal bowls  
to cool while we watch TV.

\*

The sun is rising, lighting  
the gray sky pink.  
The injured bird waits  
in the road, round as an earth.  
It hurts. It's going to hurt.

\*

In the not-so-distant future,

my skin is burned from radiation.  
My lips are oozing sores.  
The air is thick with ash.  
Fire scars the skyline.

\*

My child is holding  
his cousin's hand. Guiding him.  
Reassuring him.  
These are the children who  
inherit a burning world.

\*

A noose closing, a panther  
in her den, coiled snake.  
A saw gnawing bark,  
soaked blanket on my face.  
This world. I am afraid.



# ABOVE ALL ELSE

Alexandra Brunson



# SENAWAHV IN THE VALLEY

Wenli Dickinson

*Ode to the Ancestral Rio Grande River*

when We were young, Mother  
washed the stars from mountain tops  
which ran, like an open vein,  
to the valleys of our bodies held close.  
Cranes migrated north to grassed swales  
but within the reeds the crickets were restless;  
mud churned; the birds flew on—

smoke stacks like sandstone buttes grew,  
like exhaust across hot red dirt.  
We ordered mesas leveled,  
water bodies siphoned from greenland  
to greenbacks.  
We have commanded monuments  
borne of outcrops razed  
to raise rooftops. in the shadow,  
dust powders the air, reminiscent  
of a comet shower.

a bird wails—  
but nothing echoes in this leveled desert.  
Senawahv weeps for her Children,  
  
but our prayers fly up as embers.



tears wash sand, which trickle downward,  
rooting underground,  
over blue clay. We feel it, like a full vein & remember  
our bodies are multitudes,  
braided rivers into rivers within a valley.

We accept rains  
with open hands. the Dead are buried  
facing East to meet the Sun.  
rabbitbrush wilds over graves and  
juniper roots interbed with concrete.

a bruise can heal from blue.

I drink from this stream and my thirst  
is satisfied, and does not greed  
for more.

when spring comes,  
the Bears emerge on fertile ground;  
solar winds banish smoke and ash;  
Cranes, in balanced trio, sing—

# FLOWSTATE

Carla Ellefsen





# THE SHOTGUN

Louis Cogan

“It’s only in case I ever need it,” proclaimed Donald Anderson, parading the shotgun he had just pulled out of his trunk. It was like a trophy buck shot with a much higher caliber firearm.

It was smooth and metallic; the wooden stock at the end held the only familiarity with natural materials. Ironic, considering it had been oiled up and down, up and down, up and down, every single night by the previous owner: a Vietnam War veteran. The wood no longer originated from the trees of its youth, trees that reminded the previous owner too much of his time in the service. Instead, it erupted as an invention of man’s inner nature, a perfect tool for claiming the lives of those who took up the effort to rob, rape, or murder the lucky sons of bitches that armed themselves.

The handgrip leaned forward in the cocked position, an advertisement to the fact that the weapon was loaded, as well as a warning that the user was not afraid to shoot first and ask questions later. As one dragged their hand across the lower grip for a zealous discharging of one shell for the next, the chamber gave off a clang which chimed in the form of vibrations throughout the steel skeleton.

Physically, these qualities gave off a cold feeling—to the touch—that might just stop a man’s heart when caught up in the moment.

While the rim at the end of the barrel could easily control the border between a hand’s wholeness and various pieces of fingers and palm on the ground, Donald set his thumb print on top of it like a race car driver clutching a bottle of frothing champagne in celebration. If anyone wanted to take the gun from him, they could go right ahead, but he refused to resign his right to protect himself in such a dangerous climate. Granted, the midwest did not exactly echo the riots of New York City, but President Carter paid about as much attention to domestic violence as President Ford did to anything at all. At least that was what Donald thought.

“How much it cost?” Bob asked.

“Is that a twelve gauge or a twenty gauge?” Randy probed.

“You plan on huntin’? Huntin’ Season hasn’t started yet, according to the Sheriff’s Office, Don.” Mitch was always one of the most paranoid of the town.

Donald answered with a nonchalant tone, since he expected these questions and many more from a town that had not seen let alone been within ten feet of a gun in the past two decades.

“Seventy-five dollars, twelve gauge, and no, Mitch, I don’t plan on hunting. Nothing much out here other than a few ducks near the end of Winter, anyway.”

Every minute, at least one more passerby stopped in their tracks to crowd around Donald and gawk at the mighty weapon that demanded all pairs of eyes fall upon it just because it challenged the very idea that all was hunky-dory. *Come one, come all! Gaze at Donald Anderson’s mighty cannon of wonder! You’ll never see anything like it anywhere else in town, so get your tickets now!* When Donald finished answering another question or introducing the shotgun to more of its soon-to-be friends, another pair of work boots or another denim jacket strolled up to learn about the newest citizen in town, the focus of a welcoming party where the attendants entered more scared of the newcomer than excited for them.

As the crowd continued to grow and encircle Donald around the trunk of his car, a familiar hand stuck up from the third row and started to hustle forward. Each finger wore cherry red nailpolish, reflecting the soft light of the overcast sky. Along with the hand came a beaded, dark blue bracelet on a pale, almost white arm that was attached to a teal waitress’s uniform. The wide frame identified who the hand belonged to immediately, since there were only three waitresses at Buck’s Diner, and two thirds of them happened to be young, pretty girls that could possibly model if their possessive boyfriends did not prevent them from leaving.

After subtly gritting his teeth, Donald greeted the waitress with, “Debra, come to see the new toy?”

Mitch’s wife. One could say that she and Donald often went into heated debate over the trivial matters in life. One could also say the two were Churchill and

Hitler reincarnated to settle their old contentions. Who had been reincarnated as who was just another one of their topics of discussion.

“Just wait a second,” Debra wanted to cut Donald off before another sentence even started, “Do you actually think that thing is going to do you any good?”

“What do you mean?” Donald almost scoffed.

“What I mean is that guns are nothing but trouble, end of story,” Debra exclaimed, “Like attracts like, as they say. Do you want to be the one responsible for an injury, God forbid, a death if that thing gets into the wrong hands? The sickening hands of a vagabond looking for the easiest way to take a hostage? Think of the children, Donald. There’s no reason to bring a killing machine into the community, let alone parade it around like the Stanley Cup when we haven’t even needed to call the Sheriff for a violent crime in the last few years. Well, nothing more than Bob getting drunk and rowdy in his front yard.”

Bob stuck his nose up from the middle of the crowd and called Debra a name that made his own wife smack him upside his bald head.

“See? It’s already started. First, it’s the drunks, then the veterans, and then the juvenile delinquents, and they’ll all be gettin’ together and thinking, ‘Wait, we want to run things on our own terms!’ Boom! Mutiny that you’ve caused with another one of your attention-grabbing stunts. We were doing just fine before you brought that thing into the community—”

“Nothing’s even happened yet, Debra,” Donald protested, “Look around. Everyone’s just having a good time. Right, people?” Only a few whoops came from the crowd, emasculating Donald’s limited argument for something that he did not really see the harm in keeping. In his heart, he knew it stood for protection and protection only. Maybe he’d go to the gun range a few counties over every now and then to make sure it still worked, but nothing other than that. What if a burglar was robbing his home? No, too pedestrian. What if an unknown pedophile plucked a child off of his street and tried to make off in a fast car? No to that too, since shooting the car might accidentally injure the child, or, worse, make the car explode (Donald often assumed what he saw in movies to be true).

A real argument dawned on him like a lightbulb over a cartoon character (another favorite medium of Donald’s).

“What if I saw the church being robbed, or, God forbid,” Donald liked to mock meticulous words Debra made the mistake of using, “the whole congregation gets taken hostage?”

Debra fell silent, and actual murmurs in agreement with Donald carried across the crowd, bacteria invading their new home on a dropped sandwich. To counter these whispers, individuals on the side of Debra also spoke, for they could not

see the logic in keeping the shotgun they had clamored so badly to see just minutes ago. When the two sides met, the area transformed into a battlefield of sound where Donald and Debra led as generals for their respective causes. It took a full two minutes for the troops to cease fire, and that was only because the real authority arrived.

A large, broad-shouldered man in a cedar colored wool jacket began walking through the crowd like Moses in the middle of the Red Sea. The top of his head was covered in a campaign hat, which tucked in his short, graying hair from public viewing. His shirt and slacks were starched from a few harsh laundry days, and these folds in the cloth only brought attention to their faded amber color. Below the slacks were two leather shoes, each scuffed from years of wear and tear, a clear sign that the owner could not afford a new pair. While these features told of the age of their owner, the sheriff’s badge on his right shirt pocket looked as if it came fresh from the box. A lot of downtime allowed for a lot of polishing in the office.

When he finally made it to the trunk of Donald’s car, Sheriff Tim Whitley made a stance between the two contenders before they could rip each other’s hair out. Neither Donald nor Debra wanted to fight, but Debra’s physical yet speechless anger made Whitley want to play it safe for once.

“Sheriff,” Donald solidly shook Whitley’s hand.

“Hello, Sheriff,” Debra put on a mother’s voice, refusing to acknowledge the gun nut’s presence as she committed both of her arms to her own handshake.

“Now what is it,” Whitley interrogated, “that you two are doing to stir up an actual mob?”

“It’s not a mob, Sheriff,” Donald protested, “They’re just curious people coming to see this beauty.” He pet the gun like it was a beloved dog.

“To a murder weapon!” Debra released with a disgusted gasp.

“No one’s been murdered, you old bag!”

“Yet! It comes eventually, always even—”

“Alright.” Whitley cut through the noise without raising his own voice at all. The service had gifted him that skill. “Here’s what we’re gonna do. First, Donald, you’re gonna put the firearm back into your trunk and close it. Then, this little party is going to disperse because there’s nothing more to see here, folks,” he gestured to the crowd, “Go on, get home to your children and anyone else who needs you more than these two do. They have enough of an audience with each other.”

Like a field of school children, the watchers and the onlookers and the spectators quickly moved along, each and every one of them returning to the regular games of their regular lives. Some looked back as they moved on, wondering if there would be any more of a show to catch. Others kept their heads straight and forward,



where they would not be confronted again by the authority for exploring their curiosities. Whitley held a firm stature up until the last stragglers had left. He refused to let this fester into worse behavior. It was not until the noise of the very last footsteps disappeared that he finally opened his mouth to finish his original instructions.

“Now, the two of you are gonna shake hands and apologize to each other like adults. You’ve both been acting like damn fools.”

“But—”

“No buts, Donald.”

“Ha! That’s wh—”

“And why are you laughing, Debra?”

“Because he’s wrong! I was right about the danger, clearly. I know that I got the people a teensy bit riled up, but that

“Debra, for the love of God, hear me. You’re both wrong.”

“What?!” The two adversaries aligned only on this word.

“Yes, you are! One of you refused to respect public decency, and the other didn’t know how to stop egging the first person on. It’s embarrassing. You need to do better and better to each other. Let people live their lives without having to make decisions for your little power struggle. This time, especially, over what? A shotgun that hasn’t even been properly used, yet. You want some advice? Something isn’t important until it’s done something, and that gun hasn’t done anything yet!”

Without another word or another look into their eyes, the sheriff walked back to his car across the lot, started the engine, and drove away. Those that were once dogs snapping at each other’s throats were now just two middle-aged fools without any supporters to rally. Only the sounds of the far-off highway could be heard, reminders of how everyone else moved on past the fad of the shotgun. Don leaned against his now-closed trunk to sigh and assess the talking-to he just received. Exhausted, Debra joined him in resting on the cool metal surface, against her better judgment. While they both felt too hot in the face to look at each other, Donald broke the silence first.

“I didn’t mean to make a show. Well, maybe I did. I didn’t want anyone to feel in danger, though. That’s for certain.”

“I know,” Debra admitted with a sheepish demeanor, “Once Tim got involved, it all became clear. I’m sorry for getting involved in your business.”

“I’m sorry for making business out of nothing. This was a good learning experience, I think. Hopefully we never have another talk from Whitley, again.”

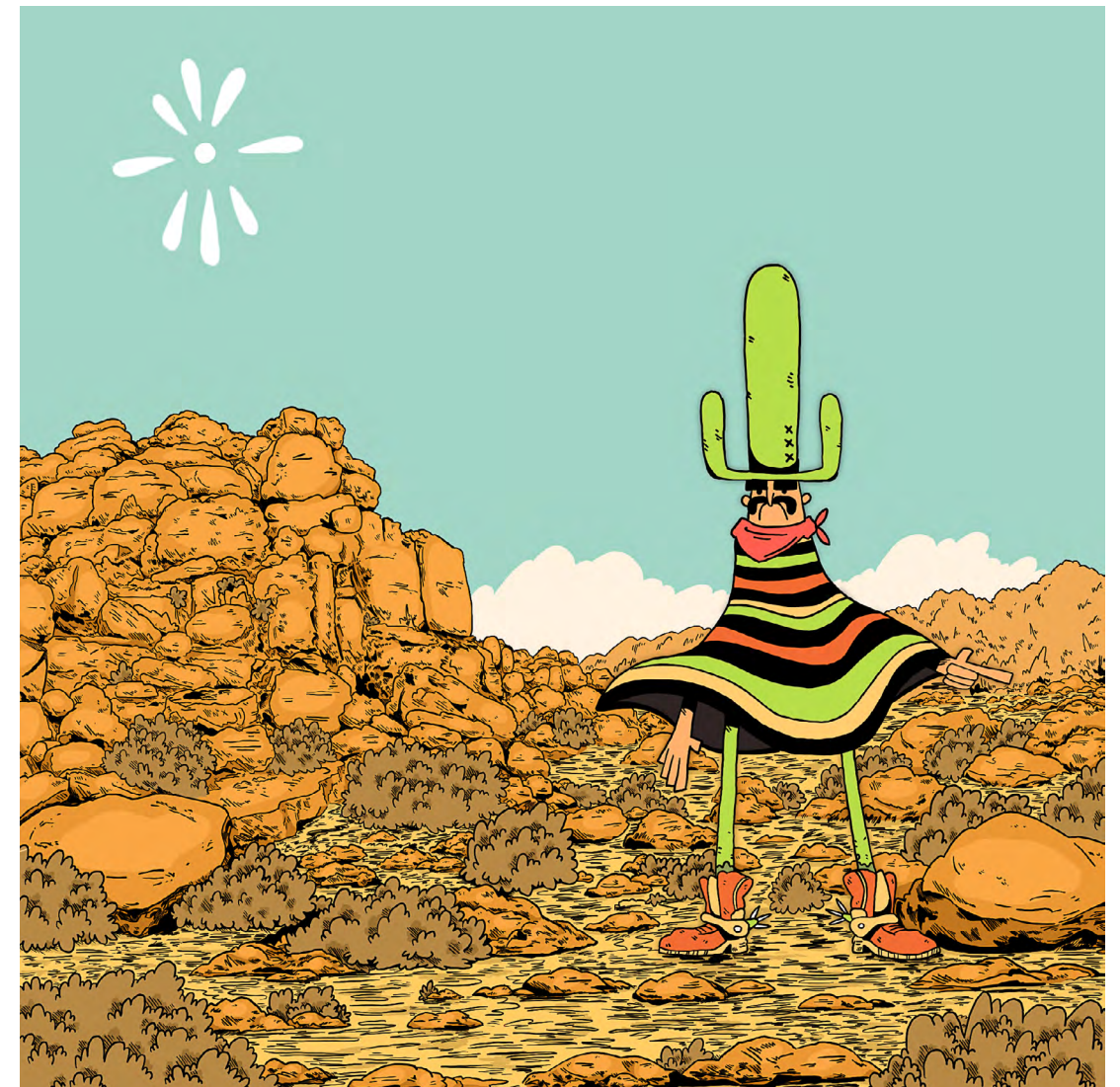
“Made me feel like a child, in all honesty.”

“Maybe that’s because we were acting like them.”

The two shared a laugh.

# THE DRIFTER

Adio Estridge







# A HUI HOU

Garrett Farrell



# HIGH GROUND

Benjamin Cleary

Still, I remain in the search  
fighting for a higher perch  
now it's liberal impassioned screeching  
the world needs teaching

Smoking only for the politics  
tote bag paired with a hybrid  
tattoos when bored poke and stick  
the naivety of a young kid

Reading just to be more referential  
or for pictures on a bumble profile  
comfort in the existential  
thrift store shopping; ironic style

Before was a love that was kind of pathetic  
a t-swift americana aesthetic  
back when you were lacking any sort of liberation  
frowning upon masturbation

Masculinity and hard work were my rulers  
a right-wing blue-collar middle schooler  
when faced with the right brain  
all I would do is complain

Consuming videos on the alpha male  
clean cut; fitted suit; christian bale  
when all I wanted to do was fit  
job with numbers; housewife; brad pitt

You say you are better, evolving  
this door is always revolving  
and to the search, you are bound  
looking for that high ground

ESNA  
Kass Bostwick





# SUNKEN EYES

Grant Weimer

Sunken eyes live in a neighborhood with a scornful HOA  
Lawns of rocks and facades of peeling paint  
Unapologetically existing in a *sympathetic* place

Sunken eyes know each other like two French men in Texas  
Walking in the same staggered groove  
Fraternity for the restless

Sunken eyes live as the driver of a puked in Lexus  
With a broken horn and a *highly functional* cup holder

Getting through the day  
just to get older

Sunken eyes love  
Dancing in the rain and smiling silent  
Warming new life in noncompliance  
Love like puzzle tabs in ill-fitting blanks  
Pressing firm until the piece either snaps  
or breaks.  
Space in throwing the puzzle away.

abandonment longing for space

# SMOKE ON THE LINE

Garrett Farrell





SET AGLOW

Annabel Lee



Painting

MAIA

Jade Njo



Colored Pencil



# CHAMOMILE DROPLET

Anna Corman



# H.O.M.

Briar Martin

The days flow by like rapids in a river:  
Loud, fast, indistinguishable.  
I try to separate where one ends and another begins,  
But I hit them so close together I just get dizzy.

I grasp for a landmark, for anything memorable, as I get more and more lost  
downstream.  
And as the water slips through my fingers I see:

Cooking in a tiny kitchen drinking wine from shot glasses.

-and-

Dinner for my birthday, private and soft with the world comfortably swallowing me  
in its kindness.

-and-

A tight hug in a Breckenridge motel with my best friends new name on my lips for the  
first time.

-and-

I stop searching.  
The days continue to slip by,  
I get dizzier and dizzier with each rapid,  
And I know I'll never find a landmark...  
But I have found home.



# POOLS

Carla Ellefsen





# PRETEEN BOYS

Will Hu

Preteen boys just want to be cool. Go back to the other city to hang with their uncle. Who shows them around, the nightlife of town, brings paddle boats onto lakes with too many mosquitoes.

Preteen boys just want to bend the rules. Some relatives would sneak me a sip or glass of wine, when eating at places proper, respected, and fine, hoping to feel something out of the excitement of feeling a new sensation. But my face never changed a hue.

Preteen boys don't think about others. They just look, laugh and wonder, about trivial things: of dreams of girls or slumbers of futures.

Preteen boys don't want to stay in Guang Zhou. The hotel there is the worst, and there isn't a nightlife except walking around, and my dad's side doesn't do anything exciting. It's not cool to visit a farm.

Preteen boys don't like simpler foods. The street food with uncle was always something different, and auntie's restaurant could make anything authentic.

Preteen boys don't want to see *nai nai*. They don't know when the last time they'll smell the incense of a hot apartment or feel the hot torn leather of a couch will be, so they don't risk it but are forced to.

Preteen boys don't deal with language barriers. It's hard to understand words from a different generation and dialect. And as soon as I start to get frustrated, I think back to times in class, where learning characters and pronunciations didn't seem to matter. Fuck, now I'm sadder. I feel like such a goddamn mess. I wish I could speak what needs to be said and have everyone understand—but

Preteen boys don't see into the future. They don't have a smoke-filled crystal ball or a fully developed mind. They can't predict their own self-inflicted pitfalls. It took going across the fucking ocean to learn about family. And when saying goodbye one last time,

Preteen boys cry in the back of a taxi without seatbelts, unaware of what *nai nai* would go through. How her sense of the present became smoggy like the Chinese sky. She met me for the first time the second time I went, and thirty minutes later, when I got back to her apartment, and the next day when we saw her again.

I wish preteen boys knew the pain in again. I wish preteen boys knew the full scope of what was going on. I wish I was a preteen boy, hanging in the humid hotels of Guang Zhou, eating simple vegetables with salt and pepper, speaking and understanding my native tongue.

I wish I was a preteen boy, seeing *nai nai* again.

# DRUM SET

Rita Kowalski





# DEAR MIMI, LOVE ERIN

Erin Burniece



## AUTO CON DOS RUEDAS

Kayla Long

She was tired. The long day was a weight on her slouched shoulders as she bent to put away the plates from supper. She closed the fridge, walked to the coat rack, and shrugged her coat over her apron. For today, she was finished at the big house. She would be back at dawn to start again: feed the dogs, breakfast for the kids, then the dueños. After cleaning the kitchen it was on to the house, only interrupted by lunch, back to cleaning, dinner and cleaning up. It was exhausting, but it was what work she had.

The trip home was always the worst part. It was an hour of slow walking, carrying the basket—at least it was empty on the way back. It was good it was down hill, too; if it wasn't her feet would probably give out before she returned. The house was dark when she finally lifted her feet over the threshold. Her son and daughter already back from school and eaten dinner she had made that morning, heated up by her mother-in-law, and her husband already abed, surely as exhausted as she was from his own workday. She set her coat on the cinder-block and raw-wood bench by the door. No light was needed to navigate the cookie-cutter rooms; she didn't want to use the electricity anyway, it was too expensive. She carefully set the basket on the kitchen floor. It took up almost all the space in between the cabinets. A rough, water-hardened hand let the tap run for a few seconds until the water changed from a light



brown to cloudy white. Slowly, so as not to wake the people upstairs, or the neighbors across the cardboard-thin walls, she set the plastic cup down on the counter. As the cloudy color settled she rested her elbows next to the lime green cup and dropped her head into her hands.

Cup in hand, she backtracked the three steps into the living room and one step to the steep stairs. She had never been tall, but she still had to stoop so as not to brush her thinning hair on the ceiling. There on the landing was the small drying rack, next to the chimney snaking from downstairs up out of the roof. She plucked a shirt off the rack; it was still warm from the dregs of the fire that had died a few hours before. To her left was the door to her son's bedroom, shut tightly against the drafts.

Winter was slow to release her claws this year, still sending rain to turn the dirt side street into a continuous mud puddle, and snow-nipped breezes to keep fires burning in the stove. Soon, though, all the windows would be wide open, hoping to catch a stirring of air blowing through the harsh summer sun.

One step past the chimney on her right was her daughter's room. If you could call it that. In reality it was a storage closet, and they had managed to squeeze in a tiny bed frame. It was too small for her almost-teenage daughter, but it was what they had, and she didn't want to sleep in the living room or with Abuela in the slightly bigger room off the kitchen. Maybe, if they could ever scrape together enough savings, they could construct another room off the kitchen, but it was unlikely, even if Abuela was able to sell all her kitting this summer.

She had made it the four steps down the narrow hall to her room. Slowly, closing the door she glanced at her husband, stirring in response to the sound of her steps. Finally, she untied the sides of her apron, pulled the fabric over her head and set it on the dresser. It was an old piece of furniture, at one point it had been very nice with polished wood. That was long before the dueños had thrown it out because of a broken leg. It had taken her son and husband the better part of an afternoon to carry it back home. Then her son had fixed the leg with a few nails and a piece of scrap wood he found by the soccer field. It might have drawers that got stuck now and then, but it felt good to have something in the house that used to be grand. She climbed onto the worn mattress and let her thoughts drift away on the waves of sleep.

Winter finally abated with the turn of the calendar from October to November. Her son and daughter were out of school for summer break and off to their seasonal jobs. Her daughter was old enough now to walk Abuela to the little stand by the lake, and knit with her as they sold the crafts to passing tourists. Her son would rise with her and they would walk together to where his road split towards the fields and she continued to the residential housing areas. She needed no coat to walk to the big house now, except when the torrential rain storms drowned the world. It

was warm rain at least, the kind small children run outside to play in; the kind that prompts you to run for cover under a tin-roof overhang and marvel at the amount of sound water can make. In this rain you didn't need a fire to heat the house, just a cup of tea or some strong coffee, and a window to watch the downpour.

The moras were just coming into season when her son came home one day at sunset half-carrying, half-dragging an odd metal frame. His explanation was that the farmer for whom he spent his hours had allowed him to take it after someone unceremoniously dumped the broken bicycle at the farm. He was determined to fix it so that she wouldn't have to walk the long distance to the big house every day. It took him two weekends, ten thousand pesos that he found on the ground, and a dig through the mechanic's trash to reattach the wheels to the frame, get the tires filled with air, make the brakes function, and attach a chain to the gears. It wasn't anything anyone with common sense would spend money on. It started as a hodgepodge of random parts, and with the new modifications it looked like someone threw a basket of fruit out to grow an orchard. But it worked. The wheels turned when you pedaled and the bicycle stopped when you pressed on the brakes. It had a seat and it turned with a twist of the handlebars.

The thought of riding and controlling something that went faster than walking was terrifying. There was so much risk, what if she fell and broke a bone? She did, however, watch her son teach himself to balance on the two wheels, then her daughter pick up the balancing act. Her husband even gave the bicycle a try on sunny Saturday in the park. No one ever took the bicycle to work. It was an unspoken rule that it was hers. Her daughter and Abuela would always set out, after cleaning breakfast, at a easy pace to the shop. Her husband would walk, sometimes with a heavy step sometimes light on his toes, off into the dawn. Her son would run out right after eating, in hopes of catching the farm truck heading to the fields.

A small knot of guilt made her take the bike from the front step and push it to the big house that morning. So much work had gone into getting it for her, at least she would take it with her. This ritual of pushing the bicycle to the big house grew familiar; she would tie the basket to the rack behind the seat, and her back started to hurt less from the weight. She still wouldn't take the bicycle with her to the store; it was too much of a hassle to try to carry the bags and push it back home. But with her morning commute she started to trust it a little more. One day, a few weeks after pushing the bicycle day after day, she decided to try a few meters riding across a grassy section.

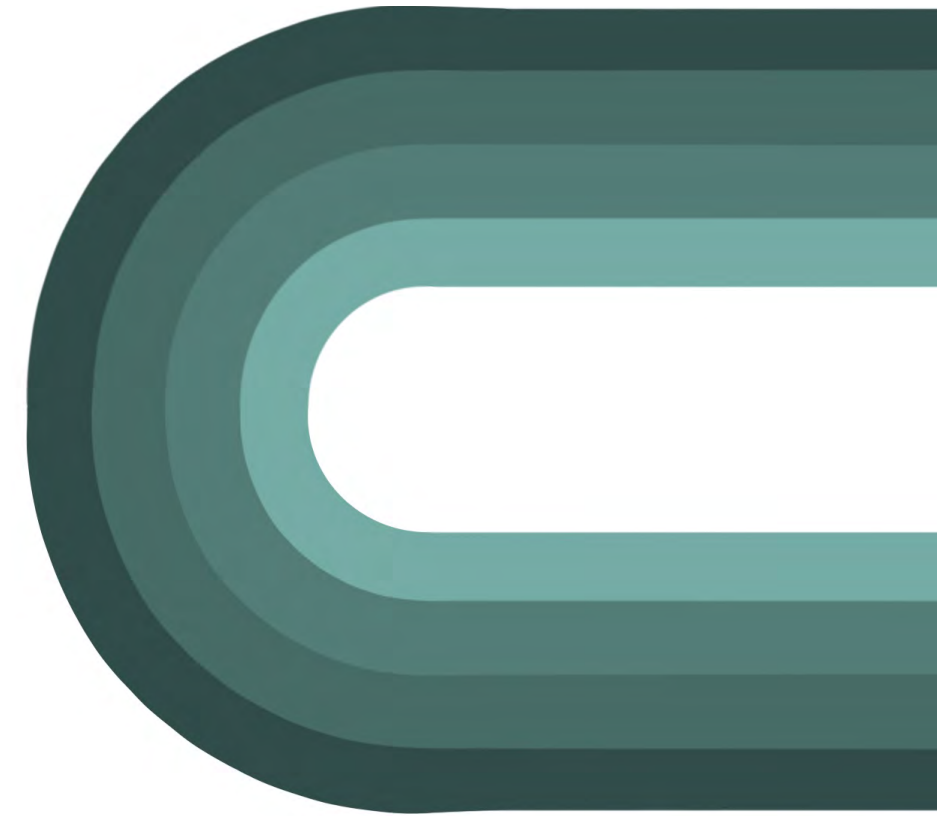
It took five minutes of staring at the grass to work up the courage to swing her leg over the frame. She arranged her skirt, and put one foot on the pedal as she had watched her son do many times before. A deep breath, a quick prayer and she pushed

down hard. She glided across the grass—it was simpler than she imagined—until she started to slow down and lose balance. Putting her foot down quickly to stop the wobbling she deftly climbed off the bicycle and marched up the road.

Thus began a new ritual of walking to the grass, riding across it, and carefully walking the rest of the way. As her pedaling became more confident and her balance less shaky, she started to ride farther beyond the strip of grass. The few meters that she added every day grew closer and closer to the big house, and started to creep towards home. Around the time the lake shore was crowded with tourists and the only relief from the sun was either the shade or the water, she started riding to and from the big house easily.

This sensation of transport was foreign to her. The time she saved in getting to the big house faster let her make dinner for her family, and relax in the evenings. It gave her the time to knit again, and her back stopped hurting so much from carrying the basket. Most startling was the fact that she could go places farther than she usually could. The speed that the bicycle lent her made her circle of travel bigger. Before she could only walk to the close store with the time she had, now she could go to the bigger store with lower prices and better things. She could visit friends that lived farther away. Her bicycle was a key to a freedom she never imagined.

She was tired. The work of the day weighed heavy on her shoulders. She whisked up the basket and walked out the door of the big house. She set the basket on the back of her bicycle. In the morning she would be back here, at the big house, to start her day again: feed the dogs, breakfast for the children, the dueños, cleaning, cleaning, and cleaning. She swung her leg over her bike frame and started out towards home.





# SUNLIGHT

Annabel Lee



Painting

# MY DOG WRITES POETRY

S.Y. Chen

My cat doesn't seem to know  
whether the seasons come or go  
purposeful paws prancing through grass or snow,  
tail twitching, stalking airplanes, or hunting crows

My dog follows wherever her sister goes  
springing from carpet to couch,  
a joint ball of claws and jaws  
until they collapse into an afternoon nap.  
The little one will give her the slip  
and when she's alone, my dog writes poetry.

She loves flowers when they bloom.  
at the slightest warm breeze, her coat recognizes warmth,  
likewise, sends dandelion plumes.  
Elbows warming on the patio, she lays, scenting in the wind  
sifting the air with her anteater tongue,  
searching for hints of honey and barbeque.

As the weather warms, she quells,  
dripping drool on the hardwood floor.  
Huddling by the windows, she smudges  
wistful nose-print paintings on the glass.  
Her paws twitch in dreams of cold weather,  
small howls coaxing the rise of the moon.



A second shedding precursors the first freeze  
A hint of cool sets her running free Tongue lolling,  
entranced the leaves' sudden spurts and limpness.  
Collapsed on the grass she ponders her purpose,  
stripping the bark from brittle sticks,  
eyeing the geese on the far side of the fence.

The color saps from the street as the storms rolls in  
It complements her coat, her pink nose the only hue  
We make the first footprints, she shuffles the drifts,  
dredging for ice and bunny homes,  
and after all her plays are through, she cozies by the vent,  
a doughnut dog, tucking her nostrils under her tail

Some evenings my dog and I sit on the couch  
pretending to read the same book.  
She subtly nibbles the binding  
while her sister sleeps on the dresser,  
and even though I'll never read it,  
I know my dog writes poetry

## MID OCEANIC RIDGE

Sebnem Düzgün





# COLLISION

Grace Strongman





# SONG OF SONGS

Kyle Markowski

*Accompanied by a chorus of sirenfolk*

We emerge from silence with a scream. Some  
about-face,  
marching/back/into/silence  
voice-first.

*Sirens whine under breath.*

We are incoherent; a frequency unattenuated  
to the ambient static bursts and shushes.

*Chorus:* High-low, fast-slow

We/learn/to/stand/in line. We articulate our cricoid ring\*, air ringing right  
as it slips past (leaving us behind).

Dampened—  
muted—  
measured—  
resonant.

We learn phrases.

*Chorus:* Always – only – one first time

We/toe/the/line.

We ride the wave; or,  
cacophony

-battered,  
we  
wind  
up  
under-  
tow.

*Chorus:* above-below, profound-shallow

We will be tuned  
down, year  
by  
year.

Our second primal scream will be silence.

*Sirens scream under breath.*

\*The cricoid cartilage (from Greek *krikoeides*, “ring-shaped”) is one of several cartilages used in the articulation of words. However, it distinguishes itself as the only ring of cartilage to fully surround the trachea.



# REEF

Annabel Lee



Painting



# SNOW ON THE TABLE

Spencer Walter



# RADIOSONDE

Tobin Houchin

It's dangerous to travel through the wildfires, but Theo doesn't wait. He'd tried, for his mother's sake, but as the smoke-soaked skies turned a little less harsh with the coming of night, the thought of losing another hour became unbearable. Pulling on his boots and tying his Clearbreath® behind his ears, he'd left as soon as the temperatures dropped.

A few of his neighbors are traveling east toward the city limits. He catches a ride on the back of the only trolley that still makes the eight mile journey, trundling over the packed dirt road every dusk. In the wet season, it makes the trip at midnight and dawn, too.

Theo rests his hand over the ties of his backpack, just in case one of the other passengers makes a grab for his supplies. He doesn't draw on the trolley anymore. Not since he got too enraptured and lost almost six dollars to his indistinct surroundings. Instead, he watches the gorgeous flare of gold on the horizon, casting out geysers of sparks as if trying to touch the faraway stars.

After seven miles, it's cold enough that he needs to layer on his jacket. After another mile, disembarking from the trolley and fading into the churning crowds behind the citylot, it's cold enough that he needs to re-tie the straps of his Clearbreath® over the fabric of his beanie. His mother made it. She'd made one for



Mariah, too, before she left for the stars.

His sister's hair had been the same color as the wildfires. But that's all Theo remembers. He'd drawn a piece of her using the fire to blast off, the colors of it reflected in the helmet of her suit, and sent the digitized signal to her five years ago. It will arrive in another seven, if it arrives at all.

Theo knows the addresses of the city streets in every season, and the ash that obscures the letters of the street signs doesn't slow him down. Mx. Bueler, sitting in the doorway of the public alerclast for this city district, looks up at him when he breezes in.

"Back so soon?" they say. Their voice crackles through their Clearbreath®.

"Sorry," Theo says. "Can I, um, I just need some directions."

Mx. Bueler frowns. "You aren't going anywhere while the fires are up, are you?"

Theo smiles nervously. Mx. Bueler stands and puts their hands on their hips, concern hidden in the cant of their eyebrows. "Theo... The wet season is—"

"I can't wait a few months," Theo tells them. His voice sounds uncertain, even though he is anything but.

"Alright... I just don't want to watch your mother lose what she has left."

Theo winces. "She won't. I'll be careful."

Mx. Bueler looks unconvinced, but they don't stop Theo as he pulls seven cents out of his backpack for the entry fee and moves past them. He stands before the alerclast. The machine purrs under his hands, flashing with orange numerals that shift at his touch. A heartbeat-like *thumping* of electricity from the guts of the alerclast, hidden in the walls and ceiling, encircles him.

This city district only provides access to an older alerclast model, and its packets are interrupted more often than not. Still, the access fee is cheap. Theo thinks *'Houston. Directions:::single-shelter.'*

The alerclast coughs. Orange light licks at Theo's fingers. Nothing happens, and Theo taps one of the nodes. "Come on," he coaxes.

Nothing. Theo kicks the base of the alerclast, twice in quick succession, and hears a spark from inside. A detailed image appears in his mind, names and contact information popping up alongside, and Theo takes a few moments to pull out his sketchbook and record the map.

*Three days.* He doesn't realize he's still commanding the alerclast until it produces the top rated album from the band Three Days, and Theo leaves the building humming their lyrics.

~

It costs a hefty ten dollars for a public ticket to Little Rock. It's on diesel, too, but Theo doesn't hesitate.

"Lucky to find something this fast this time of year!" says the smiling mother of the family that sits next to him in the truckbed. The three of them are the only other passengers. Once every hour or so, the truck will pass a corporate trolley. The youngest boy of the family always waves to the vehicles as they pass.

"Yeah," says Theo. He smiles too.

They don't ask each other why they're making the trip. Theo sketches a portrait of the youngest son, mostly just to entertain himself, but the boy squeals in delight loud enough to echo over the landscape. The cinder-barked trees are beautiful, like the stripes of a tiger. The perfect balance to icicles.

"You're amazing!" the woman says. "How long have you been practicing?"

Theo thanks her. "I, uh, not too long. I like drawing living things—all that movement, you know?"

"Movement," the woman agrees. "I'm a dancer, you know. I hope to see a proper ballet one day."

"That would be incredible," Theo says. He adds it to his list of dreams as they watch her younger son jump atop his brother. The two go down in a heap of dirt and flailing limbs. The older boy's Clearbreath® gets dislodged; the play stops for a moment as he readjusts it.

Theo settles into his coat and watches the snow start to fall as they cross the border to Oklahoma. It dusts his eyelashes. He can tell when it's ash instead, because the ash sticks long after the ice crystals have melted. It gives Theo more time to admire the color.

~

Little Rock is enormous. Larger than Houston, Theo remembers from his research, because of the hurricanes. A good three-fourths of the migrants from one of the Atlantis cities ended up here decades ago. Theo can't remember which one.

The streets are crowded with tents, and tarps hang between building windows to catch and divert the rain. The undersides are painted with bright graffiti. The mosaic of color and shape is enchanting. Theo walks with his head tipped upward—a mistake.

He looks like a newcomer, eyes up instead of on the night-time lurkings that surround him. He smells like someone the firelands might've spat out, and though he does manage to draw his knife in time to keep his money and sketchbook, his jacket doesn't survive the abuse. Neither does his Clearbreath®.

Coughing into his elbow, Theo draws his bruised knees up to his chest and

rolls upright. He presses his shoulders against the brick wall behind him. He thinks about what his mother would say, and his lips press together in the shape of the skeletons of the skyscrapers above him.

Forty hours to Houston. Theo brushes the blood off his lip and hobbles onward toward the single-shelter address the alerclast had found for him back home. His footprints are dry in the puddles of the streets. His exhaustion and the city's ambition mix until they are indecipherable.

He's surprised to find that the single-shelter is a proper building—small and crowded by others stacked atop it, but a building all the same. There's a bright green 72 painted on the front door. Theo's never stayed in a permanent shelter before while traveling; usually it's a wheelie or a tent.

He knocks with knuckles smeared with sticky alley mud. The door opens within a half-minute.

"Oh, shit," says the sharp-edged man on the other side. "Took the way in by Warwick, didn't you?"

Theo blinks. He doesn't get to say anything before the man's calloused fingers are curling around his arm and tugging him inside. It's a small, cozy space. There's a kitchen, multipurpose pots hanging from the ceiling, and an awkward looking heating unit that looks like it was assembled from scratch. It's warm enough that Theo stops missing his coat.

"Got a 'graphe from the network that said you were coming," says the man. "I'm Chase."

"Um, hi." Theo is tangled in place as Chase darts behind him to close the door, then out into the room to kick a few blankets out of a pile by the lightwork. It only takes seconds before he's in the kitchen, pulling a first-aid kit out of a drawer. The screen on the top of the kit flickers a bit, but seems mostly operational.

"Here, let's get those scrapes cleared up," says Chase.

"Thanks," Theo manages. "I'm—I can pay for—"

"No, it's fine," says Chase. "I've got plenty of charges."

"Oh. Thank you. Do your, um, lodgers usually show up injured and unprepared?" Theo tries for levity.

"You'd be surprised." Chase grins. "I get all sorts."

Theo, arms full of medical supplies, sits down against the wall. He tries to swallow his grunt as his scabbed skin cracks. "Lots of people come through here?"

Chase nods. "My place is open. To anyone—my dad made me promise I'd keep the door unlocked. Metaphorically, of course."

He laughs. It's bright and a little raspy, and Theo smiles too.

~

Hours later, Theo lies awake in the dark. He listens to the heating unit whir and click and thinks about the trolley back home and the note he should have left the farmhand before he left. He watches the shadows of the fallout sirens on the roof.

He thinks he hears Chase crying. He doesn't say anything.

He doesn't know if he likes this place.

~

"Do you guys have anywhere to access the 'graphe network around here?" Theo asks the next morning. He eats from his packed rations. Chase is generous, but food is something even he can't go throwing about to strangers in summer.

"Sure," says Chase. "Need to contact someone?"

"My mother. She'll be worried about me."

It would be faster to use the alerclast, but Theo's mother never visits the city. The network reaches all the way to the fields, luckily. Theo explains this, and Chase spoons the last of his oatmeal into his mouth with a nod of understanding. It's raining outside again. Theo shivers when he follows Chase into the street. The afternoon light makes the colored walls even more vibrant. Lights flicker, directing foot traffic in more directions than there are degrees in a circle, and Theo is lost before they turn the first corner.

"Have you lived here a long time?" Theo asks. Chase doesn't stop to read the street signs, their letters blurred by rain.

"Not really," says Chase. "I came here for the job... five years ago, maybe? I don't know, it all blurs together."

Theo understands. "Yeah."

"What brings you to the city in such a hurry?" Chase wonders. "It's not a great time for travel."

"It sounds stupid," Theo mutters. He shivers as the warm rain trickles down his spine. It's a strange, exotic sensation.

Chase's face lights up. "Oh? A stupid reason for risking your life—those are the best kinds." He elbows Theo, like they've known each other for months.

"I—I live out of town up near Fort Exon. I make the trip down into Cedar Rapids every other day or so, just to get the news. And I heard yesterday... two days ago? Two days ago."

Theo's hands flutter over the straps of his backpack as he forces himself to stop rambling. His face is warm with embarrassment and excitement and the same



lingering delight that the news had brought him when he'd first heard.

"They saw a heron on the coast again." Theo's fingers fold themselves around a pencil not yet in his hands.

Chase pauses. "A heron?"

"Yeah. It's a bird—everyone thought they were gone from the continent for good. But a meteorologist in Houston saw one."

"Oh, that sounds amazing," says Chase. "Are you a scientist then? Supposed to catch it or something?"

"No, actually. That's what's stupid, I... I want to draw it."

"What?"

Theo flushes again. "Um. I want to do a painting. They were—*are* my sister's favorite birds."

Once upon a time, at least. Before Mariah gave up on the herons, on humanity, on the whole damn world. Far away, spinning toward a future in the cosmos on the only mission ever sent, Theo is sure she's finally happy.

"That's not stupid at all," says Chase.

"It's not?"

"Course not. I wish I had that kinda dedication. You're pretty brave."

Theo doesn't feel brave. He feels like he's still the kid who used to gather all the strange rocks and charred sticks and stubborn flowers pressed between the pages of books in the spring and hold them under the bedclothes, terrified to insomnia that he'd lose everything. That all the beauty that he'd grown up with would be lost forever.

"Oh," he says.

"I wonder what a heron sounds like."

Theo hums. "Me too."

~

The trolley to Houston leaves at ten that night, and as soon as Chase learns of it, any thoughts Theo might have harbored of quiet recovery from yesterday's travel are forgotten. Chase suggests a laundry list of Little Rock's prettiest attractions. Already in debt to the man, Theo tries to let Chase get back to his work and his normal life, but Chase brushes him off.

"It's not every day I get to show off my city," he says, and Theo doesn't believe him.

But he lets Chase insist. He walks along the edge of the river and listens to this stranger's excited explanations of the complex solar network system the city

had implemented twenty years ago. They look at the gorgeous ruins of the ancient automotive bridges. The black river gleams like a bird's eye beneath. The smoke that hangs above the inner-city skyscrapers has blown in from the north, from home, and Theo draws and draws until there's no more light to see the paper, or the water's edge, or Chase stubbornly straighten his shoulders and force his breathing not to hitch with every shriek of a siren in the distance.

"Why did you come here?" Theo asks.

"For work," Chase says. He falls quiet.

"Oh."

"But it's been lonely here. So lonely. There's no one I can talk to."

Theo closes his journal, pressing it against his knees. He doesn't know what to say. "I'm scared too."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"I don't want to lose all this," Chase says. He gestures at the city, at the ebony water, at the gorgeous reflections of the city lights in the ash. "We have it good. Too good."

Theo nods. Imagines the galaxies, and nods.

On the way back to Chase's home, he shows him the drawings under the broken street lights. Chase says they're beautiful. How can they not be, when Theo's only drawn this world?

~

"Sorry kid. Trolley's not running tonight."

Theo's fingers freeze. A star crashes down somewhere in the base of his throat. "What?"

The security guard by the south Little Rock station hands him his ticket back. She's a stocky woman with short-cut hair, wearing no mask and rasping because of it. There are teeth missing in her frown.

"Hurricane hit Houston. There won't be any travel in until it's calmed," gravels the guard.

"Oh. Thank you for letting me know."

Numbly, Theo walks back north.

~

“You’re back?”

Theo closes his eyes, his hand fisting where it rests on Chase’s doorframe.

“Storm in Houston. My ticket’s useless.”

Chase’s face falls. “Shit. Maybe you could—I don’t know, if the corporates aren’t running their wheels we could find an unsanctioned one. It’d be a risk to drive with people who are probably looters, but—”

“No point,” Theo says. “The heron will have flown ahead of it. Or died in the wind.”

“I’m so sorry, Theo.”

“It’s fine. I never would have seen it anyway, I mean—just one bird on all the coast?” Theo laughs, and it lands like a broken bottle between them. “It was stupid.”

Chase doesn’t say anything. He steps out of the way of the door, gesturing toward the familiar interior, and Theo accepts the offer. He’ll find directions back to Fort Exon tomorrow. It’s too late now.

~

“Sometimes I feel like the world is ending,” Theo whispers.

He can hardly hear Chase’s reply over the sounds of the city. It’s too dark for him to pretend to be sleeping. “Why?”

“I don’t know. It just—it feels like no one’s ever going to do anything to make things better. The storms will kill the birds and the fires will take over the land and humanity will carve up what remains. If we don’t try to fix it, the only thing the world will become is worse. What’s even the point?”

Chase shifts in his blankets. His face is thoughtful in the shadows, or maybe Theo’s only imagining it.

“I still think it was brave of you to go looking for your sister’s heron.”

~

Theo resells the trolley ticket and uses the scraps of money it brings to buy a new Clearbreath®. He takes a deep breath through it and his throat stops burning a little bit.

“I’ll walk you to the station,” Chase says, holding his jacket above his head to stop the rain.

Theo nods distractedly. He’s uploading a ‘graphe to his mother into the network, and he keeps jumbling the words. He doesn’t want her to worry. More than that, he doesn’t want to be disappointed.

But really, who would she tell? Mariah’s flown ahead of the storm.

He breathes through his mask and misses the way the ash fell on his cheeks, cinder wind and smoke rain. He’s ready to go home.

~

“You said you have a ‘graphe intersection near your town?” Chase says. He stands by the back end of the rickety trolley that flashes with the address of Cedar Rapids, holding Theo’s backpack for him as Theo shrugs into his new jacket. It fits Theo’s shoulders well, but is a little short on his arms. It’s comfortable and waterproof.

“Yeah.”

“I also have one of those, as it happens,” says Chase with a smile. “Just saying.”

Theo snorts. He snatches his bag from Chase’s hands. “I’ll keep that in mind.”

The trolley shifts. In the crowded front, the engine turns over, and Theo stumbles before he catches his balance. Chase stands clear, brushing his wet hair out of his face. The paintings on the tarps that hang against the station walls make Theo think of old bridges. As the trolley trundles into motion, Theo grips one of the support bars.

“See you around, Theo.”

Theo stands, grinning, hand tight on that bar, and as the station side disappears into the haze, a pigeon pecks at the dust by Chase’s feet.



# DREAMCRASH

Garrett Farrell





# THE STARS AS SEEN FROM SEAT 12A: Grant Weimer

In a large darkness exists curious observers  
Peering in beyond the dome of the sky

Bunched together or standing on their own,  
I wonder if they whisper about us  
And how much they know.

Some would greet us if they could  
Others may prefer to keep their distance

To be on a stage with that audience awaiting my next line,  
That is the reality I choose,  
Filled with what I will say and what I will do.

They have seen many actors, some with love but many with fear  
They've seen the same arcs, over thousands of years

Some believe them a stiff crowd, but I believe them more patient.

So as an actor I will do my best to perform  
I will stumble and I will fall, just to get a *feel* for it all  
I will dance at my wedding  
And I will monologue when there is much to say  
And when there isn't, I will find something anyways

I will be brought to my knees and I will cry

The crowd seems quiet  
because they only applaud you  
After you die

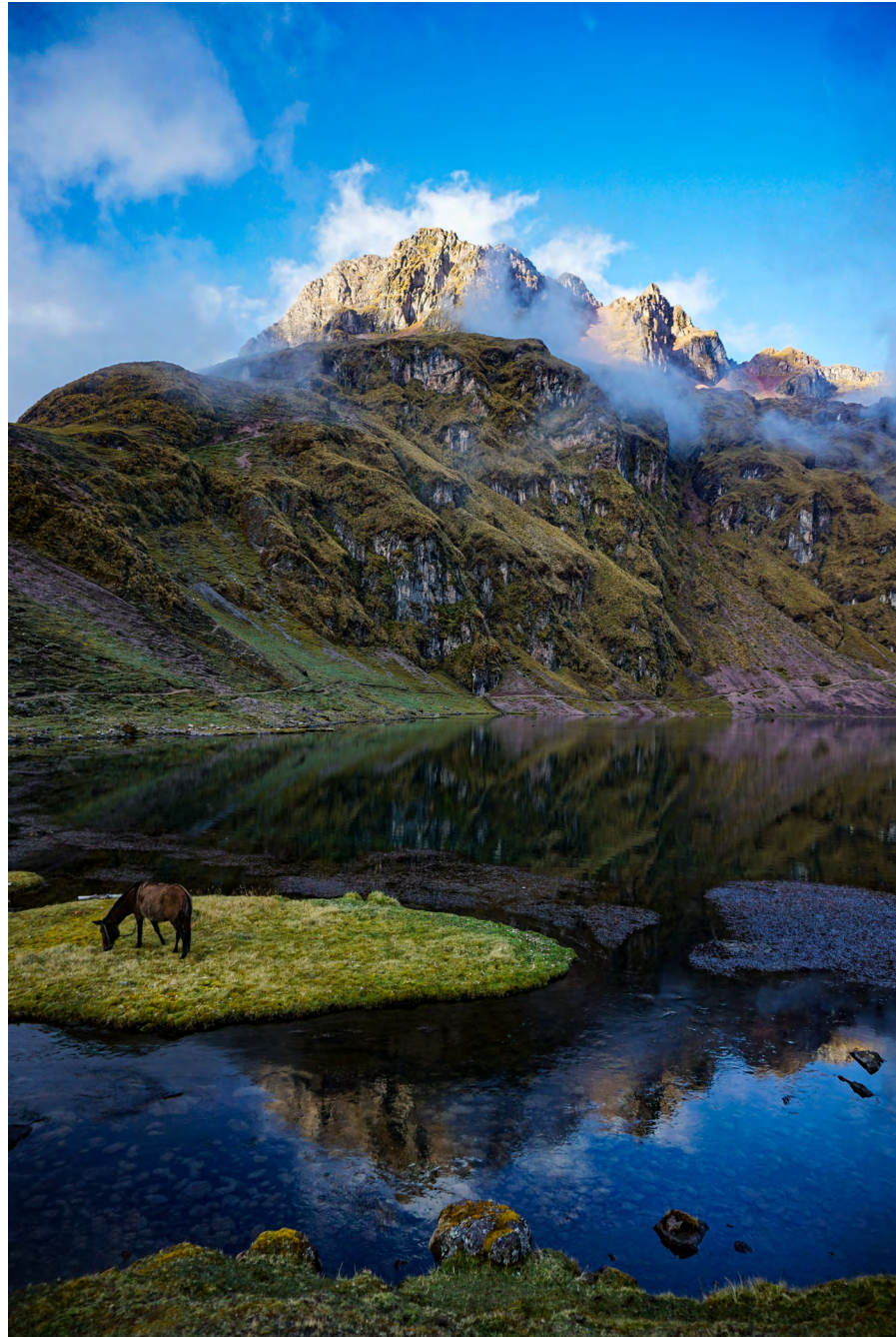
# ACRYLIC PAINTING Busra Bulbul





# INCOMPLETE REFLECTION

Marin Ward



# ARS POETICA #2

Caleb Rotello & Kayla Long

Look up see the way the light glimmers, how it shouts in the distance, a thousand diamonds in  
the deep night's granite. There, watch one grow and bloom and blossom see it in the distance  
pinpricks, spots, growing brighter pass by. Farther and farther  
bright white brilliant painful. Growing, colder breeze  
Warmth spilling through raises bumps across,  
Too warm, light sweat Across flesh. Find  
Sheen on skin, there exposed and yet  
unseen cold  
shouldered

cocooned in wool  
fibre, voiced  
with the sun  
Everliving  
in the light  
dapples the  
globe.  
counts orbits  
round the sun  
amid a circle  
of friends rings  
exchanged  
flaming hula hoops

whirl. Christmas balls  
Closer  
adorn the tree and embrace  
garlands sigh round everything

slain  
slain and reft  
exhales that

Our quiet star

pare down  
surrounding  
ringlets of  
influence are  
fat, bands of  
duty  
clasp branches.

and constrict. Closer tendrils  
claustrophobia, pull, clench,



# DISTRACTED

Dhruva Sogal

Man and our emotions and out machine.  
In the end, we aren't so different from the  
seas and the lands and the stone.

~





# CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

## Patrick Barringer

Patrick is a physicist and a Computer Science graduate ('14) and has now returned to get his EE masters degree ('??). He enjoys hiking with his camera, primarily around sunrise and sunset.

## Lucas Baumgartner

He writes whenever the exams get too heavy.

## Kass Bostwick

Kass is a freshman studying Chemical Engineering. He is from southern Michigan where everyone seems kind of stuck in the same place, so he got out. He enjoys creating digital character art and playing the Legend of Zelda games.

## Gerald Bourne & The Microangelos

The contributors to this project included the 2021 MME Senior Design group, The Microangelos comprised by Addison Wong, Carmen Sanchez, Grace Rome, Robert Crow IV, Walter Preston Cole with direction from Prof. Gerald Bourne.

## Alexandra Brunson

Alexandra Dakota Tomi Brunson is a Cree geophysicist who's happiest when she's outside. You can find her climbing mountain ridges or playing in the dirt. Alex has a dog named 'Eyeball'—he has one eye and he's amazing.

## Busra Bulbul

what was art a syntax of 5 words?

When you're overwhelmed by the world,

close your eyes and think about where you want to be.

the little winds that remind you of happiness when you are unhappy.

Imagine a world where you can color the colors as you want.

You can forget the time and live in a small chalet or in a bookstore where you can sip your coffee by the beach.

forget all you know, focus on emotions and colors, what my art tells you, how it makes you feel, and now we speak the same language.

## Erin Burniece

Erin is a sophomore majoring in Design Engineering with a focus in Architectural Engineering. In addition to being a hardworking Mines student, Erin is also an artist. After selling her first art piece in eighth grade, she worked hard to expand upon her skills and attention to detail. Throughout high school, Erin's work made it into various art shows and attributed much acclaim from friends, family, and peers. While most of her free time has been taken up by academics since coming to Mines, she still enjoys every opportunity she has to create and looks forward to opening her own business after graduation.

## Benjamin Cleary

Ben is a junior in Chemical Engineering. However, he doesn't like it very much. He tries to do other things to distract him from this fact.

## S.Y. Chen

S.Y. Chen is Ph.D. student in the renewable energy field. She has previously lived in Singapore and South Korea. As the daughter of a Taiwanese immigrant and a member of the LGBTQ community, she is passionate about positive representation and diverse perspectives. She loves world-building and the juncture between art and science. When not writing, she spends time in the garden or making sure experiments aren't going terribly array.

# Max D'Agnese

Max is from San Diego, California. He is a first-year student pursuing Design Engineering with a focus on Biomechanics. You'll find him in the band, playing the saxophone and if he's not there, check the study rooms, he's most likely doing homework. He adores music and loves the way a few random notes can tell a story. Writing is a new hobby of his, only finding it after his high school creative writing class. He said he's got a big list of things to do, write a book, compose an album, and break a world record to name a few. He tells me he wants to change the world and that this is just the beginning.

# Wenli Dickinson

Wenli Dickinson [noun] 1. Engineer. 3. Rock Climber. 3. Amateur Poet.

# Sebnem Düzgün

Sebnem Düzgün is a professor and Fred Banfield Distinguished Chair in the Department of Mining Engineering. She also has a joint affiliation with the Department of Computer Science. Sebnem is the mother of two sons, a drummer and an entrepreneur. She is passionate about ceramics and enjoys experimenting with patterns and forms representing the dynamic nature of Earth and Human Systems. Sebnem has been on the journey of this experimentation for more than 15 years. She has worked with various ceramic artists and was involved in ceramic exhibitions in Turkey and Germany. She believes that art is one of the essential stimuli of innovation in engineering.

# Carla Ellefsen

Carla Ellefsen is in her junior year at Mines studying Computer Science with a Data Science focus. When she isn't busy stressing over mountains of work, she is many things. An artist. An amateur photographer. A criminally good beachcomber, cat mom, and a lover of all things beautiful.

# Bennett Emmons

Bennett is a masters student in Geological Engineering and Data Science. As an amateur poet, he spends his day living, laughing, and loving.

# Adio Estridge

Adio aspires to be outlived by his future pet lobster.

# Garrett Farrell

For Garrett, the art of photography is about capturing life in a moment, not just a moment a life.

# Cliff Ghiglieri

Cliff was born in Flagstaff, AZ and began running rivers as a kid. This connection has motivated him to pursue an education in science to help preserve and restore rivers in the West. He has degrees in Chemistry and in Nanoscience, and is currently working on a degree in Nuclear Engineering.

# George Goldade

George is an adventurer both inside and out who spends lots of time exploring in the mountains and throughout the globe. George also loves to cook good food for other people and equally loves to enjoy good food himself. Wherever you find him, you can count on being greeted with a big smile.

# Isabelle Harris

Isabelle Harris is a first-year, Geology PhD student researching the recoverability of critical minerals in mine waste. She is from Newnan, Georgia and likes to draw and paint with charcoal and oil, respectively, when she has the time.

# Tobin Houchin

On the way from Upsilon, Andromeda, Tobin rolled a seven on a six-sided die. It all went generally uphill from there.

# Will Hu

He just takes photos, and writes some poetry from time to time I guess.



## Rita Kowalski

Rita Kowalski works on campus in the Office of Design and Construction. Last semester she enrolled in the Visual Arts class at Mines and renewed her long lost interest in painting. The class was held in the Ford music room, hence the creation of "Drum Set" featured in this edition.

## Annabel Lee

Annabel is a freshman majoring in Chemical and Biochemical Engineering and is a part of the Grandey Honors program. When she isn't completing her schoolwork, she enjoys hiking, swimming, and creating in all kinds of mediums, whether it be painting, drawing, sewing, designing, knitting, or crocheting. Art has always been a big part of her life and she is honored to be able to showcase some of her work in *High Grade* for the first time!

## Kayla Long

Kayla is a sophomore in Design Engineering, she is a ballroom dance captain, fundraising chair of Mines Without Borders, and the *High Grade* Poetry editor. Kayla is passionate about the outdoors and is an avid show jumper, and whitewater kayaker.

## Briar Martin

Briar hopes that if you know them and were expecting something insightful, this makes you a little bit mad :)

## Jade Njo

Here are two truths and one lie about Jade:

She was the sole Mines economics student in her graduating class.

She enjoys running every morning but would never run a marathon.

She currently works as a financial analyst for a civil engineering company.

## Kimberly O'Connor

Kimberly O'Connor is a North Carolina native who lives in Golden, Colorado. Her first book *White Lung* (Saturnalia Books 2021) was a finalist for the Colorado Book Award. Kim teaches NHV at Mines, as well as creative writing for Lighthouse Writers.

## Sing Piper

Sing Piper is a freshman, chef, writer, Star Trek fan, IT consultant, caffeine fiend, and aspiring biohacker that writes poetry on the side. Sing explores the intersection of the political, historical, technical and the meaning of everything in poetic snippets, believing that its important to ask questions of the world and to attempt to understand it in the most comprehensive way possible, whatever form that might take.

## Gemma Ponce

Gemma is simply at the beginning of her journey at Mines. While she isn't sure where this journey will lead (or quite honestly what she is doing most of the time), she's taking Mines one step at a time and doing the things she enjoys and finds interesting. Gemma is studying Materials and Metallurgical Engineering, she's part of the Mines climbing team, SWE, participates in undergraduate research, and now her art is in *High Grade*!

## Samantha Pool

Sammy Pool is a first year student studying Mechanical Engineering. She loves thrifting, concerts, baking, and art history. She is also a Vanguard Scholar, and an avid supporter of women in stem (#Girlbossing #WomeninSTEM). All of her pieces are inspired by the concept of femininity and the importance of women throughout history. She hopes that her art can create a feminine presence on campus because it often lacks one!

## Henry Rothert

Henry Rothert is a proud member of Mines class of 2026. A former wildland firefighter and avid backpacker, he calls up his own experiences in nature for his writing, and hopes to encourage others to reevaluate their own relationship with the natural world.

When not writing, he can be found attempting to get lost in the wilderness, searching for inspiration for his next story.

## Dhruva Sogal

Dhruva is increasing the Pacific Northwest landscape representation in *High Grade* one edition at a time. His services are appreciated—truly, this role could've fallen to no one else.

## Grace Strongman

Grace enjoys perfect squares of all varieties.

## Spencer Walter

Spencer is a junior studying Chemical and Biological Engineering with a passion for photography. He shoots in a mixed medium of film and digital. Mostly, his photography is documentary.

## Marin Ward

Marin is a first-year in Chemical & Biological Engineering. She enjoys mountain biking, skiing, hiking, and photography. As a Colorado native, Marin has a deep appreciation of nature and enjoys photographing it.

## Grant Weimer

Grant Weimer is a poet.

# SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The call for submissions is open to the entire Colorado School of Mines community. Only original works are accepted. Submissions are taken in the Fall semester and considered for acceptance. All literary submissions must be in a Microsoft Word document. Limit one submission per document. Art submissions should be in .jpg or .png format. Music submissions should be in .mp3 or .wav format. Please submit through our website, [highgrade.mines.edu](https://highgrade.mines.edu). Limit five submissions per contributor per genre.

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