



**ART &
LITERARY
MAGAZINE**

Angelo State University

OASIS

2022

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POETRY



Sonnet Through Time and Literature

By Jose Bautista

...vincit omnia

Justice is achieved through
Adoration. Behind the blue veils
Nests my hope of you,
Evening comes and desire rebels.
Long time wanting to enter,
Long since I have desired...
Years that I can remember
Standing before gates I've admired.
Come and heed my thoughts,
Hearken! my deep hidden desires
Although they're against great odds,
Veracity's the strongest of admirers,
Each line will prove that
Zero desires shall be uncast.

Un homme peut braver l'opinion; une femme
Doit s'y soumettre

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
Che la diritta via era smarrita
I've spoken many times about entering those gates,
They're close... yet so far. But lets talk about that
Down the lines.
I have always dreamt of being a conquistador
Or a simple explorer, but am I though?
I've already seen what I intend to do,
And where I want to go,
I'm way better off though

Since I don't have to worry about the unexpected.
Seen it multiple times, haven't explored it though.
So that's what I intend to do,
Planning in my mind, I will know what to do...
There might be something unexpected,
There's no doubt I might go blank.
But that's only to be expected.
Unlike Madam Sosostriis my wish
Has been thought over for one minute...
Time, enough I'd say, for you and I.
A minute full of decisions and revisions...
Who needs more than that?
Chauntecleer was sure and so am I.
So let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky...

I have seen them multiple times,
How many? I lost count.
They shine brighter than stars in the night sky,
Marvelous and more sublime
Than the Northern Star or Halley up high.
Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire.
The beginning of the end has already happened,
Eons come and gone, and that brightness
Binds me still. The future and the past
Together all at once. There's no need to
Have my memory erased, for each time
I look upon them I fall again. For neither
Angels in heaven above, nor the demons
Down under the sea, could ever dis sever
Their memories from me.

What have you heard of a flea?
Let me tell you about that beast.
Beast? What do you mean?
Corvino... great example too.
Difference is he didn't give another soul
Like the flea that sucked thee, mingled
Two, and made three.
Swevenes engendren of replexious!
I haven't yet eaten but my mind is full,
Imagination..!
Though you might think of me a flea,
I assure you that's not me.
I'll keep it intact,
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand for the rest.
I hear time's winged chariot hurrying near,
Go away, Ozymandias!
Don't you know the future is in the past?
Cronus already took care of you,
And it will of me,
But memories will live on.

Volpone knew that life,
And many other things,
Required to be taken by force,
Lies, manipulation, betrayal and deceit...
"For I can al by rote that I telle.
My theme is always oon, and evere was:
Radix maloruj est cupiditas!"
That doesn't apply to me,
To this mortal who, just like Prufrock,
Use to think like that...
I am not the same cause of you.
I've known of Gerontion,

Of the Hollow Man...
But now I'm free.
All that I have, all that I am, I give to you.
Consider this April 10th, 1912.
Time doesn't exist remember?
I can remain free of it,
Though we know how it will end
I know that's the beginning of something great.
A circle ends where it begins,
I'll start mine there then...
I'll start it there even if it's the end.

Fijate en los pajaritos,
Como son de enamorados,
Siempre juntan sus piquitos
Aunque vuelen separados...
But I know there's no need,
You already have an angel
And it's selfish to even ask.
Your duties come first and my wishes come last.
Si alguna duda tienes
De mi pasión
Abre con un cuchillo
Mi corazón...

But lets talk about the gates below that.
Never had I wanted to enter
Something so badly before.
Though I may earn Hell
By entering Heaven I'll do it.
Why? It's theory of the absurd!
Unlike Sisyphus I know what to expect,
Unlike him I'm more prepared,
Unlike him I know how to overcome it.
Prometheus knew as well that
It would lead to unsavory fate.
I wont be saving humanity...

I don't really care...
People write their own fate and I can't control it.
But I take charge of mine,
And I know where I'm heading,
Acceptance on my side.

Those gates I've mentioned,
The ones I've admired,
My wish is to earn my hell
At the gates of heaven on earth.
Am I afraid?
Not entirely, or at all.
Muchos saben querer,
Pero pocos saben amar...
At the feet of those gates
Is where my future resides.
There is where I shall set my garden,
There my vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow.
Seeing a stalagmite
Go full cycle from beginning to end,
Meeting and rejoicing
Finally finding its lover in a stalactite,
Begins and ends faster than we ever might.
My journey, though not as
Troublesome as Odysseus',
Or dark as Dante's,
It fills me and empties me...
That's my journey,
Top to bottom.

I've waited and shall continue to wait.
Though Halley might
Cease to come before
My dreams become reality,
It is better to hope than
To wither away.

From the torrent or the fountain,
From the great creek of the mountain...
From all that is big and small,
Hope shall follow me along.
In a minute there is time...
Should I digress?
Do I dream too high?
Maybe I do, but like always I could try
Because as you've taught me:
Hope is the last thing that dies
And all I can say is:
Amore...

No Need

By Jose Bautista

Lucrezia, it seems you'll fail the test of time;
Once upon that wall guarded... not anymore.
Vicious time has taken your beauty, ego, and pride.
Everyone has forgotten; now your memory is gone.
Youth has faded, and what's left refuses to stay...
Oh, dear Pandolf! Such a miserable fate!
Understand beauty and youth won't stay,
Can't you see? As il miglior said: nothing is contained.
All we can do is accept where we're at,
Bother not with a path that's been decided.
Remember, we can't fight that;
Once you accept it Godot will be delighted.
No time for tears! No feeling of loss!
A person doesn't need beauty, we just need us.

She launched a thousand ships,
She caused the death of a thousand more...Why?
All the fight, all the war that beauty caused.
It became a thing of honor and glory at the end,
Remembered for thousands of years
With an image painted with blood.
Ah yes, poor Andromache!
Astyanax too!

See what happens with that which you seek?
Into the abyss went Astyanax who was free of sin.
Great future, great destiny which we never knew.
Don't you see that it can intervene with greatness?
Who are we to deny that to the world,
What could have been...? We'll never know.

Tempting enough even for the gods,
 Desire is no joke.
 Beautiful maiden with golden hair,
 See where you are now?
Your fate was sealed from the moment of birth.
 I believe that there are things we can escape,
 Yet, you're upset that you don't have their fate.
 Poseidon fell for it,
 Athena was angered by it.
Her temple, through that act, was deconsecrated.
 Her anger and rage... destiny was fulfilled.
 Oh, son of Jupiter! You ended it!
 And even after death the curse stayed.
 Petronius could have told you about desire,
 “Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis
 Meis vidi in ampulla pendere,
 Et cum illi pueri dicerent: Σιβυλλα τι Θέλεις ;
 Respondebat illa: **άπο Θανεϊν Θέλω.**”
But as Eliot pointed out with Sosostris, even wisdom fails.

 Etruscan man!
 How could you?
 Now she's a symbol, but at what cost?
It brought her dishonor and nothing else.
 Like Astyanax, her life was also ended,
 It makes life more difficult.

 Power is attracted to it.
 Bathory is the prime example of that.
 How many do you think were sacrificed?
 So much damage she did,
 So much pain caused
 All because she wasn't one of the
 Faces which could launch a thousand ships.
 Paris wouldn't have fought for her.
 Athena wouldn't have cursed her
 For Poseidon would have never
 Had desire.

But she had power,
Dangerous in the hands of coveters.

Who else?

Oh yes!

Porphyria can attest to it as well.
She was loved and cared for,
But it was still her undoing.
You know why?
With it comes fear,
Isn't it a great motivator?
He loved her,
After all he described her closed eyes "as
a shut bud who holds a bee."
He didn't want her to lose it.
In my eyes, you have it.
In yours, you don't.
But I cherish the fact that it'll fade.
Why do I like something that slips away?

Wallace tells us why.
You have it... I know it will fade.
Time takes it all and it can't be reversed.
There's nothing that can be done,
So I must cherish it all the more.
Why would I not?
The Grecian Urn is frozen in time.
Those two lovers haven't embraced and never will.
Yet they shall never change.
So close yet so far..
Isn't it enraging that we know they'll never kiss?
It is better to have it for a while
Then to keep it for eternity still.
Each moment counts,
Each second a treasure,
Each minute that passes by,

Every hour that shall not come back...
Gets sweeter and sweeter with time.

So why does it matter if it fades?
As the young lover said
“Neither angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea
Can ever dissever my soul from thee.”
You may not see roses on your cheeks,
Music may have a more pleasant sound,
Your feet may touch the ground,
But you’re for me.
El tiempo que va corriendo,
Al irse me va diciendo
Que debo volverte a ver.

It isn’t necessary to be happy,
Nor do I care for it.
The Romantics had it wrong,
We can’t all feel the same.
The Portuguese had it right,
If I were to count the ways,
Robert would really be disgraced.

Whether it is the future or the past,
As long as you’re next to me,
I don’t care if it lasts.

Free Fall

By Apryl Dickerson

How do I expect to fly
When I keep clipping my wings
Tearing a part of myself away
In hopes of being less than I am

Why do I keep jumping from heights
To experience the vertigo of falling
Destroying myself for a ghost
Reflecting all that I want

When do I stop
For the love I haven't had
Crying out in the forever pain
Of loss and loneliness

What do I decide
To let go of all the past
Throwing away the troubles
A weight I can lift.

Who do I turn to
The person I see in the mirror
Breaking at my constant disdain
With everything I cannot control

Where do I go
Home is nowhere now
Circling my heart with a hunger
Of a thousand versions of possibility

Holes

By Apryl Dickerson

I'm not broken
this is not my story
I kept shoving too many
metaphors into the hole
that's never been full
I think that everyone
has holes and somehow
different things fill them
Some days snow and dead trees
bring me shallow comfort
something about those
metaphors again
Sometimes I don't say
anything and all I can
do is write my metaphors
of caged fire and choking ash
Words can fill the hole on
those days
What my story is stopped
mattering when I took my
first breath
Nothing is written in stone
Now, I'll paint a tree and
root myself here for the time
being.

I was Once a Seed Planted

By Danielle Headrick

Darkness, blind almost,
Colorless pressure;
Waiting for what?
For whom?
Patience.

Then I was a tiny, olive green sprout
Dainty
Towered by beautiful blooms
radiating with colors so so vivid.
Periwinkle
Magenta,
Mauve, sangria
Oh how I adored them!
I wanted to bloom so badly, just like them.
I'd ask, "what color will I be?"
daydreaming about my silky smooth petals.
Patience.

Then I grew a stalk
Still awaiting bloom
I gawked at a nearby field
Engulfed with the most brilliant and mesmerizing of hues
Hues so new to my newborn soul
All I could do was admire.
"What color will I be?" I asked myself.
Patience.

See, I wanted to be apart of the other field so so badly that I didn't even
realize
I had bloomed!

I looked around,
as tall as the other flowers now,
if not taller;

“Oh!” I gasped,
“Could it be?”

Periwinkle hues
Magenta,
mauve, sangria

“Could it be?”

I had longed to be apart of the other field so badly
That I didn't realize
I had been there all along;
Blooming like the others,
with no patience.
“What color will I be now?”
Patience.

Sun Kissed

By Danielle Headrick

I wonder how I get freckles where the sun doesn't touch
But then I realize that's where you touch me
So maybe you are the sun.

Hence the Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations

By Apryl Dickerson

Disappointment should be normal, right?
I should feel this empty hollowness, right?
Every time she says sorry, it should feel lackluster, right?

I'll never understand.
There are so many things.
Things have so many rules.
Rules have so many exceptions.

Am I supposed to learn how this works?
She keeps telling me that practice makes perfect, but I'm failing.
How do I work at something I don't know?

I never thought she'd be so lovely.
She's soft like a blanket.
The way she walks reminds me of God.
She doesn't believe in Him.

What are you supposed to do with your hands?
She tells me I'm hopeless sometimes.
I laugh. She's not wrong.
Where do my hands go?

I miss her warmth at night.
In my dreams, I search for her.
She's not real.
Just a metaphor for me to keep going.

One Day

By Danielle Headrick

You're a blanket of sand drinking velvet skies
Reading Kurt Vonnegut to the whispering tides,
Sun kissed on your constellations;
But the next
You're a lighthouse
With waves plunging so high against your abrading foundations
You wonder if they'd swallow you whole if you let them.

Warmth

By Sanlyn Bolin

I like my coffee scalding hot.

The warmth passes through the cup
The sleeve it's nuzzled in then my palms.
Electric feeling.

I remove the lid letting steam dance in the air
Mesmerized by the swirls and curls.

The first sip always burns my tongue leaving
Its warmth lingering a little too long.
The surface, left coarse.

Liquid rushes past my lips
Through my body in urgent movements
Finding the cold spots. Warming them rapidly.

I debate blowing on it first but what's the fun in that?

I bought you a coffee.
You didn't appreciate the warmth
The journey electric feeling hit skin.
Too hot.
You blew away the dancing men of steam
All they wanted was to put on a show for you.

You waited for it to cool down
To take a sip
Didn't want to burn your tongue you said.

You like your coffee lukewarm.
Blow on it first, you warned.

What's the fun in that?

The Lily Garden

By Mara Ruthenbeck

I wandered around the garden for fifteen minutes
Along those wet, cement step-stones
Before my mom found him.
She was always so much better at searching,
As I was always much more focused on finding.

He was round, green and loud, basking
In the fresh air that comes from spring, and
Resting on a lily pad much too spacious
For his rotund, yet somehow still small,
And ever-expanding underbelly.

He looked at us with glassy eyes, a heavy chore
In the reflected sun from that murky water,
And only wanted— or cared— to know:
What do you want?
In that loud undertone of another croak.

You're not that interesting,
I recall was my response,
Distracted from the plethora of screaming flora,
And you're kind of funny.
And he plinked into the water as if to say,
Likewise.

Corners and Craniums
(The Places we Keep Things like Thoughts)
By Mara Ruthenbeck

We now know those things that we kept in the dark,
Afraid of them, saying, "Keep the light on,
Monsters are crawling around those corners."
But the corners lost that certain cave-like curve.
Dim shadows are traded for dimmer thoughts which keep
A certain glow amongst the yellow wallpaper.
Even when the clock hands tick two or three times
As many times as they had the night before
Contours creep over cracks in the walls
And remind me of rain drops drowning down
Window panes.
The glistening of my own thought
Whispers to the trail, as if my own monsters
Could be put back there.
Back in that cave
Where they said they belonged; back in that place
Where we keep things like thoughts.
Back in that corner
Where no light's kept on.

Soulmates

By Danielle Headrick

Golden hues of you and me
Paint the everlasting sea
With shades of amber, so bright.
Our souls intertwined
like honey and wine,
Washed up to the shore with the tide
Devoured by the sand
and this vast wonderland,
The grasp of your hand lost mine
Now my dear friend
Ill count each grain by hand
Till' our paths cross agin, in time.

A Revolution

By Saegan Cheyenne Jost

And they were broken
They were exhausted and lost
They were confused and hurt
They were fearful and anxious
And they were broken

Their minds raced from one screen to the next
Chasing the cheap thrills of someone else's story
Someone else's highlight reel
Someone else's life
While their own was wasting away
And they were broken

They created new ways to drown out the cries of desperation deep within
their souls daring them to live
From relationship to relationship they drank from the well of selfishness
From heartbreak to heartbreak they bought into the lie that they were
unlovable
And they were broken

Concentrated on division and destruction
Fascinated with power and politics
Captivated by evil and negativity
Enslaved to pride and deception
And they were broken

No amount of acceptance was ever enough
No amount of likes ever made them feel like-able
No amount of followers made them feel seen
No amount of experiences made them feel alive
And they were broken

But one day
The brokenness was embraced and they used the cracks within themselves
to relate to one another
They put the screens down long enough to see
their own life and dared to live it
They laughed until they cried, they waited for one person to give their love
to, they healed, they grew, they
found freedom, they thought about themselves less

Wrecked by grace
Drowned in truth
Chosen by love
Reconciled to Christ
Liberated

And for the first time ever
They lived.
For the first time ever
They loved.
For the first time ever
They could see.
Broken and all.

And the world was never the same.

Time Creates

By Khyleigh Coffey

Time creates masterpieces
Using memories and pieces
Of past creations.
She creates us, newly formed.

Using memories and pieces,
We are built in her womb.
She creates us, newly formed,
Broken pieces often are her favorites.

We are built in her womb
To put back those she lost because,
Broken pieces often are her favorites
She gives life back to them.

To put back those she lost because
Time creates masterpieces,
She gives life back to them,
She creates us, newly formed.

Gray

By Khyleigh Coffey

“And that in Hell there is a gray tulip that grows without any sun.
It reminds me of everything I failed at,” -*Hell* by Sarah Manguso

Gray, a fitting color for failure.
So bleak and bland, so hard to blend in,
Which is why it reminds me of failure.
Gray clouds rolling in to begin the storm,

Gray eyes stare into mine as you tell me,
“I am disappointed in you”.
Gray streaks of my pencil litter the page,
Where my eraser could not complete her job.

That tulip, is that of my depression,
My anxiety and fears of failure,
Yet Gray is the matter of the mind,
Because everyone failed at some point.

And though I dream of a better tomorrow,
All I can dream about is the tulip shaded with gray.

In the Wind

By Casie McCarley

I close my eyes to remember
The red embers of heat disappearing in the wind
I open my ears to remember
The echoing sounds of wildlife in the wind
I move my fingers to remember
The touch of the snow falling in the wind
I open my nostrils to remember
The smell of smores and pine in the wind

I remember the beautiful sight
Orange and red flames creating warmth
I remember the ambient sound
The animals roaming free in the forest
I remember the freeing touch
Snow falling like angel kisses on my skin
I remember the heavenly smell
The sweet scents releasing fragrant memories
All of these sensoria's carry me
In the wind

I Don't Understand

Sanlyn Bolin

I will never understand what happened.
I don't understand what happened.

What happened?
Why did you do that?

Why did you do that

I let you come inside
Make yourself at home
Take your shoes off
Stay for a long while

What happened?
Why did you do that?

Why did you do that

Please, stay a little while why don't you
Why must you go now?
Please, please
Don't go
What about your shoes?
You can't leave without your shoes
My darling

What happened?
Why did you do that?

Why did you do that

Here, a cup a coffee
Just how you like it
Yes of course I remembered how you like it
Lots of milk
Lots of sugar
Lots of-

Where are you going?
Why can't you stay?
I made you coffee
Please stay
A little longer?
Why don't you

Oh
You don't want to stay.
My darling I-
What about your coffee?
What about your shoes?
I don't under-

I understand

I understand

I understand.

Swallowing Rocks

By Lily Auker

Loving you is like
Swallowing rocks.
Like dying of thirst
Like drowning.
Loving you is like
Watching the sun come up
Over the arctic.
For every moment of brilliance
There is an equal and opposite
Moment of despair.
Loving you is like
Falling in love with a phrase.
I say it over and over again
Until it loses all meaning.
Loving you is like
Swallowing rocks.
Loving you is like
Chewing gravel.
Loving you is like
Having a boulder in my throat.

Love and Planets

By Kayla Pluff

Let me tell you of
Love and Planets,
Sweet boy, for
Creation blessed you with
Earth in your eyes.
In shade they breathe cool,
Like the bark of a rosewood;
But Heaven, in the sun
They are honey-
Pools of sap and warmth
I wish to bathe in.
My own, blue. Oceans,
Pupils each circled by
Their own corona of gold;
The Sun's rings and oh,
How I'd kiss you with them,
Wrap your honey in the
Very color they harbor
And kiss your earth with
My waters. Sweet boy,
We are love; we are earth;
We are creation.

An Ode to Pain

By Rianne Manning

I long for your teeth to tattoo my neck,
for your fingers to flower inside of me.
Everywhere I go I say my name is Charlie.
To you,
I am just another aimless speck.

Age within, age without.
The Passion has long since poured an encore,
and now The Love rakes her nails on my door.
For you I am meant in another life, without a doubt.

I am no stranger to self-neglect.
I have been broken, judged, and misshapen.
Yet to you, I am just another Homosapien.
You have gifted me with pure, unadulterated, loving respect.

The seal always goes for the jugular vein.
Selfish and imbecile in the sea.
However he is beautiful in nature and feels the best pain.
You never made me want to flee.

*I found the origins of squash to be mundane.
This is the question which has been lost: To be, or not to be?*

Home Grown

By Hailey Wells

My sister and I were playing in the little hallway
That connected us to the rest of the house.
I can't see her, but we're twins so
There's nowhere else she would have been but by my side.
The doors to the other rooms were closed
And there was a baby gate keeping us contained.
The t.v. was within my line of sight and flashed
Bright red and yellow warnings of a tornado.

I knew even back then
The long blaring tones of the siren meant danger.
My father stood facing the t.v., his back to me,
Legs spread in a wide stance with arms crossed.
I now know this stance to be one he used
When he was lost in thought, uneasy, with no solution.
Behind him the windows shake within their wall frames
Like the bars of an animal's cage, they rattle.

In north Tennessee, this was so common an occurrence
I think that I learned destruction from it.
The howling winds and pelting rain were a familiar lullaby,
Or maybe a recurring nightmare.
I remember that specific tornado was just across
The creek back in the woods behind our house.
Such uncontrolled violence barely missed us
And uprooted our lives as we knew it.

We lived in the boondocks with the nearest town
Forty-five minutes away, just a family of six.
So far out of the way from civilization with our
Nearest neighbor a mile down the road.
The seclusion convinced my parents we were safe,
But that disillusion could only last so long.

Far away from the violence of the city,
But just as far from help when destruction came.

I think this memory serves as a glimpse
At what was to come for my sister and me.
The baby gate was replaced by financial support
And emotional manipulation to hold us in place.
Somewhere along the journey of time,
The cautionary sirens started to sound more like melodies.
The red and yellow warning signs of life
Just became vibrant backdrops we lived in front of.

We always did have a knack for entertaining
Ourselves in the middle of cyclones and chaos.
I used to think we were picked up by that storm,
And like Dorothy, we were trying to go home.
Now I am more inclined to think the chaos
Became our comfort and the storm
Became our home.

A Father's Final Lesson

By Hailey Wells

You used to take me fishing because we were poor and worms were cheap.
You taught me to cast a line before you taught me to ride a bike,
Watching me diligently practice in the backyard as the sun dipped over the
fiery horizon.
You taught me to bait my own hook so I wouldn't be afraid to put in the
work
Or get my hands dirty, and would never have to rely on anyone else.
You wanted me to be brave enough to take my own fish off my hook, but I
never could
So, we'd sit for hours on a concrete dam or wooden dock in silence.

With lines bobbing in the water praying for something to bite.
Those weeks' worth of hours of silence span over seven years
From the middle of the night when I caught my first fish all on my own
To the hottest part of the day where we played catch and release until we
ran out of worms.
You got frustrated when our lines would
cross or we would play in the water,
Still, we'd stay there sitting cross legged
in worn jeans waiting for a fish that would never come.
We'd walk home as the sun set with red faces, an empty cooler,
Completely exhausted, but at peace with the world.

Now you're at peace and no longer a part of this world,
And when I lost you, I lost all of these things too,
And now the thought of worn jeans and the sun on my face makes me feel
hollow,
And now all of the lessons you taught me leave me with the pressure of
never measuring up,
And now I don't go fishing anymore because instead of peace I would only
feel your absence,
And now your absence leaves a deafening silence like when we sat by that
stupid river,
And now I sit in my room music filling the silence
So your absence is only felt by the empty dock.

Though the dock might be empty and part of my past that you haunt,
Maybe one day I'll find my way back to those worn planks
To find the same peace you once found there,
And the piece of myself I left behind sitting at that water's edge on the
empty dock.

What I was Taught

By Hailey Wells

When I was a kid, I was taught to be afraid.
My dad told me that the world was full of scary people with bad intentions.
He told me of the kid he once was
And the man he never wished to be.
He gave me lessons on all that could kill me
And all of my worst-case scenarios.

As I got older the warnings lessened and my fear grew.
When he died and I realized I was in this fight alone
My fear found a friend called hopelessness.
Where Fear got me agitated and kept my heart rate up,
Hopelessness wrapped its apathetic arms around me
And told me to get cozy because this was our grim reality.

Fear and Hopelessness were friends of each other, but never my friends,
And yet they have stuck by my side almost as long as my oldest friend.
I still react to Fear, though she has had to intensify her tactics.
When she comes, she brings with her my bad memories and worst-case
scenarios,
My insecurities and my recurring nightmare.
She boxes these around me until I am crying for escape only to look up
And see that I'm standing alone in my room crying on Hopelessness's
shoulder.

He looks down upon me with a look of pity in his eye
and tells me that it won't be okay, but at least there's nothing I could do,
So at least I won't be a failure too.
Through my encounters with Fear and Hopelessness I've found that they
suck,
But more importantly, they're liars.

I'm learning how to look Fear in the face now.
I can't quite laugh in her face yet
Because she still makes me shake like a leaf when I least expect it,
But at least now I can look her in the eye.
I'm learning how to push Hopelessness away
And how to not let him lock his arms around me.
I'm not quite to the point where he doesn't speak condescendingly into my
life,
But at least now he's an arm's length away and it's easier for me to escape
his grasp.

My father taught me to be afraid because he wanted me to stay alive,
But he forgot to tell me that my fears were meant to be conquered, not just
known.
I might have been taught to fear, but my father taught me to fight as well,
I just never put two and two together to know
That I was supposed to be fighting my fear.

The Only Real Proof

By Hailey Wells

There came a day when who you were never came back.
The person that was left in your shell was unfamiliar.
I went to see you laid up in that bed unresponsive.
I vowed never to let myself feel hurt so deeply again.
I ran away, leaving the state and our relationship behind.

We met again a year after, your scars deep red
And your voice still broken by what had given you breath.
There was no real spark of recognition in your eyes.
You knew you knew me, but it wasn't like before,
You knew my face, but no longer my soul.

There's something you never knew though.
I wrote to you, dozens of times and
Somewhere there is a notebook where
I wrote what I never told you.
In careful cursive on tearstained pages
"I love you".

You were told I walked away without looking back
But there was a time when the road between us
Was littered with pieces of my shattered heart.
I never told you of the faith shaking grief because
It would mean admitting I have another regret.

In the first letter I begged you to come back
"I love you"
In the second letter I told you I would still wait
"I love you"
In the third I told you my chest was empty without those scattered pieces
"I love you"
In the fourth I told you how my life went on without you
"I love you"

At the end of the summer I
Left the notebook closed in a box
Hiding away the only true proof
That I ever actually loved you.

She was a Volcano

Danielle Headrick

Past due a few thousand years for eruption
But she longed for a way to let her lava flow
Without mass death and destruction
And the loss that comes with an outburst
But my dear dormant girl
Destruction paves the way for a new beginning
And ignites the inferno you've kept beneath your surface for ages,
Desperate for that bittersweet release.

SHORT STORIES



Skin

By Lily Auker

To skin, everything is simple. Touch elicits a response. The scrape of nails over skin produces goosebumps. Skin will bleed if broken. Skin will give you away: flush when embarrassed, go pale with fear. She pressed her spine against a chinaberry tree, chest heaving, bark digging into the skin underneath the thin shirt. Everything looked unreal, ethereal.

The full Texas moon shone down bright as the sun, glazing the land with a flat, white light. The stretch of open grass glittered in the light. It was impossible to discern the distance to safety the low trees to the East as the bright, treacherous moon turned everything two-dimensional. Adrenaline slithered through her veins, and she shivered as her skin contracted around her bones in the night air.

The days weren't cold yet, but the nights were harsh and chilled. The tree, still radiating the warmth of the autumn day, was rough against her bare legs as she craned her neck to see the caliche road snaking into the distance, flanked by low-growing trees painted white by moonlight. The skin of her bare feet, bruised and torn from running over the rough ground, betrayed her, scraping loudly over fallen, decaying leaves and she gasped, the small noises louder than gunshots to her ears. Something moved in the darkness. Something drew a gloved hand down a steel barrel and his barely parted lips dragged in a slow breath.

Two hearts beat under a steady moonbeam glow. Two sets of lungs expanded and contracted. Blood pumped through two networks of veins. Gooseflesh raced up the soft skin of one as the small hairs on the back of her neck stood up. One set of cheeks flushed in anticipation. One pair of eyes flickered and scanned the sky, petitioning the empty dome desperately, silently, for a cloud.

One pair of eyes, embers in the shadows, stared patiently into the clearing. An assault of activity shattered the stillness. Sleeping deer registered the soft noises made by the intruders in the darkness and instinct drove them to burst forth, leaping and crashing across the wide stretch of grass toward the cover of low trees beside the road. Almost as if she had been waiting

for this, the girl, mud-streaked and wild-haired, rushed from the protection of the chinaberry tree and plunged after them, long legs traced with moonlight as she tried to blend in with the surging furred bodies around her.

A flash and a shot split the darkness.

A pair of limpid brown eyes flickered and went blank as the blood flowing from the bullet wound turned soft brown hair black in the moonlight.

To skin, everything is simple. It will part from the viscera of the flesh and organs underneath with surprising ease, as if it was designed to peel away. It does not cling to life or aim to maintain its previous form, does not gasp and moan as the blood drains away from it. The girl crouched in the brush in the ditch next to the caliche road that wound East toward salvation, her heart hammering painfully in her chest.

Her captor turned hunter stood frozen in the middle of the flat stretch of grass, scanning the landscape for the place where she had disappeared. The earth around his feet churned and broken, her fleshy tracks invisible in the mass of hooved prints. The moonlight seemed to curve around him and he remained shadowed, only his eyes glowing with an eerie light as he stooped and grasped the hoof of the deer that had succumbed to the bullet. His real prey would be long gone by morning.

2020

By Kayla Pluff

The walls are talking. Tongues flicker along their milky surfaces in gray and black, jutting out starkly from the lit candle atop the nightstand sitting to my right. A tongue cast in the shape of my cat saunters knowingly across the wall to my left, leveled almost perfectly with the top of the bookshelf above my head. Her form tickles the chatty teeth resembling the varying shapes of my furniture- a set of bookshelves side by side, the dream catcher hanging from one of the strings of the ceiling fan, the laundry basket next to my dresser and it's perfectly repeating holes- all black and all speaking a language I have become far too familiar with in spite of my want for fluency. I watch them every night and they watch me. Whispering, laughing, sneering. I've come to recognize their mannerisms, and yet I cannot for the life of me understand their mocking dancing of tongues: the language of shadows. However, sometimes the shadows flicker almost desperately towards the window sitting just in the center of the wall, a pining to know what lies beyond; those words I understand perfectly. But if I were to draw back the curtains, open the window and allow a little daylight and fresh air, my wall's tongues, like me, would vanish.

Just outside the confines of my bedroom, through my kitchen that has been organized and reorganized one too many times, and across the steamed and vacuumed floors of my spotless living room sits a lock, one of those chain ones, you know? I dream about sliding that chain aside, snatching up the doorknob and flinging the door open with as much passion as one of those scenes in the movies where some iconic guy in a top hat flings open a couple of polished mahogany doors. My walls laugh at this, though I am not sure what is so funny. They, too, are stuck in here with me.

If that door were to open, I know what I would find. It looks the same from what I can see through the peephole. The houses watch the neighborhood from their usual perch, the cars sit where they usually do

and the basketball hoops remain hanging right where they were before. But something isn't quite right, something isn't the same. There are no neighbors chatting on each other's porches, sipping beer or coffee. The normally manicured lawns aren't as neat as usual, aren't as green as usual. The cars are there, but for how long now? No kids laugh in the street and basketballs sit patiently in closed garages. Abandoned trash and plastic shopping bags litter the asphalt as usual, but relatively new pieces rest among them. A couple of blue hospital masks, the bands snapped, empty bottles of hand sanitizer and occasionally a newspaper. The headline reads "2020: A Year Doubled In Both Number and Chaos". Rolled copies of the same paper sit untouched on those unmanicured lawns. Back in my room, casted black tongues lick over my walls, tasting ever so softly the tally marks carved neatly into them line-by-line. How many days has it been? My walls laugh at that, too.

June 26th, 2015
(Obergefell v. Hodges)
By Kayla Pluff

My dreams as a child were like any other little girl's. I'd dream of color schemes: red and white? Too cliché. Brown was too country, black too depressing, and it would be a crime to put my skin anywhere near too much yellow. Maybe that pretty orangish-pink- the one I've always admired about Texas sunsets. I'd dream of flower arrangements and softly lit lanterns hanging from the branches of an intimate orchard. I would even dance around to that smooth husk of an Elvis voice singing "Can't Help Falling in Love" with a white pillowcase pulled over my hair, the traditional veil for any seven-year-old wedding. I dreamt like any other little girl. But the thing is, I was never a little girl.

I remember practicing my waltz one of those distant days of my childhood, pillowcase pulled over my head as I spun around in the sanctity of my room, arms held out around the form of my imaginary husband. Halfway through a well-practiced twirl, my father's figure filling the doorway stopped me dead in my tracks, the veil on my head turning back into a regular old pillowcase and whipping around my head once more with the momentum of my sudden stop. I could almost feel the heat radiating off him, each wave as piercing as his eyes. It took him a matter of seconds to cross the room in two long strides, rip the pillowcase off of my head and half-drag me by my upper arm into the living room.

He was already yelling before I hit the floor at my startled mother's feet. "This wasn't how a boy should behave." I was spending too much time with my mother. Alex, my best friend, wasn't allowed to come over anymore. The boom of his voice must have been loud enough to smother my cries to my mother for help, and the lighting in the room must not have been bright enough for her to see the belt come down over and over. For she, newly deaf and blind, did not hesitate to rush from the room.

My dreams as an adult were like any other: holding hands on midnight strolls by the river, glasses of wine and bouquets at dinner, bantering over

who pays the dinner bill, falling in love. And I found that, with my childhood best friend, Alex. Or we found parts of it, anyway. I think we had known since our first stolen kisses in middle school, in the boy's locker room after the football game my father forced me into because he thought it would make me more manly or something. Another boy walked in on us that day, and my father was quick to have me transfer schools upon learning of the event. I didn't see Alex again until high school.

The first time we held hands in public, we walked away covered in the cold, wet remnants of a smoothie someone had thrown from their car window. The first time we kissed in public, we walked away covered in the red and purple leftovers of the rocks a group of younger boys chucked from passing bikes. And the first time I brought Alex home (again) to formally meet my parents, they told me never to come back.

The days of my youth were bitter, hateful, and filled with the inner knowledge that the world did not love my love. Alex and I could not show affection in public without being slewn with some derogatory term. But those days are not today. Today, I am dreaming of that pretty orangish-pink of Texas sunsets and lanterns hanging from the branches of an intimate orchard. Today, I am dancing around the apartment Alex and I share with a pillowcase pulled over my head as Elvis streams through the speaker.

Today, I am arranging the petals of roses along our apartment's wooden floors with a small black velvet box tucked into the right pocket of my jeans in preparation for Alex's arrival. And I am doing all of this, because today, June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court made my dreams come true. Today, I am legally allowed to marry my childhood best friend and the love of my life.

The Woman

By Sanlyn Bolin

The Woman wakes at four in the morning every day before the sun rises, not by choice, but because the man she's been with for twenty years wakes up at that time. He shows her no courtesy as he stomps loudly, flings lights on, and slams the doors open and shut. She lays there, saying not a word, and feels the bed grow warmer despite her being alone. Once she hears the slam of the front door, her day begins. She starts in the kitchen and the smell of bacon consumes the air around her. The one egg she cooks for herself sizzles in the pan and the oil pops and cracks. The man's breakfast mess from his morning remains in the kitchen. She leaves it untouched. She likes her toast lightly golden, never burnt, and bathed in globs of whipped butter. She sits at the table and enjoys her meal as the smell of bacon disappears from the air and silence takes its place.

Being closer to retirement than she would hope, she soaks up every shift she can get. Front desk at a hotel, not the most luxurious job. She knows that. Not what her eighteen year old self dreamed of doing either, but she loves the people she meets. Her work day begins in the late afternoon today. She was supposed to have the day off, but took the shift of a young girl who needed today free. "Why would a woman your age want to work so late at night? Your whole afternoon wasted here. Don't you want to be home?"

Asked the young girl.

"Well, not really." Replied the woman then added a smile. "I mean, I don't mind helping."

The woman likes her coffee pale brown and filled with hazelnut creamer, extra hot. She sits on the couch and lets the news play as background noise while she enjoys her cup of coffee. She scrolls through Facebook and smiles at a colorful quote decked out in large fonts and background images. She reposts the quote with a comment letting her friends know on there that this one made her smile. It was something about love and happiness. Now it's time to clean since she won't possibly have time to after work. After all, she will be too tired to do so. Her grandchildren came to visit the night before, hence the mess, but these are the highlights of her days:

When the grandchildren are over and her two sons can stand to be in the same room as each other. Whenever the two families come to visit and she has time to properly prepare, she cooks a big meal for everyone. The woman rarely cooks anymore which is funny because it's the thing she loves most. Now she sees no point in doing so unless they have company. The woman cooks dishes that taste like heaven, with the flavors married to each other in loving harmony: A chicken in the oven, seasoned to such perfection that the aroma curls into your nose to make camp; Chocolate chip cookies oozing in the oven, the first bite making you smile without thinking.

The intoxicating smell of onions caramelizing, seasonings melting together, butter browning, veggies roasting and sizzling, perfectly charred: Smells her family know all too well. Smells that growing up had them pop out of their rooms one by one to get a look of what what making their stomachs growl with hunger. The type of food that makes one close their eyes, savor the moment, and say out loud "This is damn good". She cooks with love. The woman used to make such big meals when the man was more of a husband and her kids still lived in the house. Now the husband is just a man and her kids have their own houses.

She likes her kitchen spotless before she goes to bed. If it's dirty she won't fall asleep, and if she does sleep with a dirty kitchen, they should worry. She does a sweep of the floor, organizes the kitchen some more, but leaves the man's breakfast mess untouched. She cleaned the man's mess the other day but promised herself not again. The butter knife with crumbs, and spots of jelly remained on the paper towel, along with the jelly jar wide open next to an empty glass that was once filled with orange juice. It is now 1:00 p.m. and it is time for the woman to get ready for work. Every day she gets ready exactly two hours before she is supposed to clock in. She begins by putting on music to play out loud, always something rock from the '80s or '90s, the exciting years of her life. Tom Petty, Motörhead, The Police, Alanis Morissette, and more. She starts with a shower, but always in the guest bath. Not the one placed in her bedroom. Just something that she started recently once she began to feel like her room, their room, actually felt nothing like their room at all.

After her shower, she wraps her hair in one towel to dry, and another one round her body. The woman has such beautiful long black hair that she takes such pride in. No grays visible to the eye, makes her outsides match her insides. Young.

The process carries on as the time ticks away. The woman has lots to do. First, she irons her stiff button up that she finds so ugly, then work pants after. She applies her creams to her face. She thinks they will make her wrinkles and heavy eye bags disappear, though she looks young for her age. She sits in front of the window for the natural light and applies her makeup. Every day she does the same look: lots of concealer under her eyes, always brown eyeliner, mascara, heavy peach blush, and her new favorite, sparkles on the tips of her cheek bones, something her daughter taught her. She packs her lunch which is left-overs from the night before and packs extra to share with her coworkers. If she cooks, everyone must have some.

The work day always starts off busy with phones to answer and people to help. The woman's coworkers adore her, any job she's had they adore her and she's had many. The woman stands behind the lobby desk answering phone calls, checking in guests, and doing it with a smile the entire time. Her coworker, an older man that tends to the maintenance of the hotel, arrives for a on-call emergency that night. He is always kind to the woman. Giving her kind compliments about her when they cross paths. "You look nice today." Says the maintenance man innocently (he never comes off too strong). The woman smiles and thanks him always, but feels guilty every time. She questions the reasoning behind the guilt for innocent talk, but what would the man at home think of this? The woman keeps herself busy at work, despite business slowing down as the minutes tick away.

She organizes the front desk, now everything has a place. She dusts the lobby tables, fake plants, and window panes. The woman walks into the back to check on things before her shift ends, but notices the housekeepers left a giant pile of towels unfolded on the table. Something that was supposed to be done hours ago before they left.

She finds that slacking on the job you're expected to do only makes it harder on the morning crew the next day. The woman picks up the towels in her arms and walks back to the front desk, holding the giant ball. Despite her not being a housekeeper, she folds all the towels before her shift ends. Finishing just in time, she collects her things and heads out the door at 11:45 p.m., reaching her driveway at 12 p.m.

She comes home to a silent house with no lights on, just darkness. She tiptoes into her room oh so quietly, making sure to not wake the man sleeping on the bed. She grabs a change of clothes then tip toes out. She takes off her makeup, washes her face, and strips out of her work uniform to replace it with pajamas. She goes to pour herself a quick glass of wine, a night cap she would say. As the woman stands in silence, she takes her finishing sips of the wine and stares across the kitchen.

She lets the silence consume her and glows with the singular light above the sink. She leaves this light on every night, so that the house isn't too dark. She rinses her glass then tiptoes back to her bedroom where the man is sleeping in the cold bed once more. She lays facing him, watching his chest rise up and down and listening to the snores and sleepless grunts escape his mouth. She turns to face her beside table, her back watching him now. She wonders what he dreams about before closing her eyes to drift into her own dreams. In the kitchen, across from where the woman drank her wine, there is a butter knife with crumbs and dried spots of jelly laying on a paper towel, a left open jelly jar that's warm now, and a glass with dried spots of orange juice. They sit untouched, glowing in the light that sits above the kitchen sink.

Catchfly

By L. Williams

In the thick of the Enoki Woods, the treetops grew into each other, curling over the brush into a feathered olive cape that shrouded all below in perpetual night. The leaves undulated in the wind, as if inhaling the pure sky overhead and in turn exhaling a thick mist into the forest below. The landscape repeated itself without fail, each patch of trees a spitting image of the one before it. Without the aid of a path or a compass, there was no direction and no escape, only aimless wandering. Anyone who lost their way would fall prey to the beasts of the night living within. The beasts thrived in a haven where the sun never rose, crushed beneath the heavy palm of the night.

Kiva paid little mind to these warnings. They were tall tales, she assumed, blown out of proportion more and more with each person who retold them. The half-elves in her village were afraid of things different and unknown. It was only natural that their fears would spawn cautionary tales to keep their children far away from the Enoki Woods, a great unknown too dense and far-reaching to explore.

Kiva didn't see things quite the same way. The half-elves were a kind folk, having taken her in without question after she was orphaned, but they were far too caught up in structure and safety. They needed to stay close together, in houses all huddled up next to each other along the cobbled path of their village, huddled up just the same with their families within. Kiva remembered little of her life in the fairy village, but the attitude of her people remained embedded in her mind: the forest was no place to fear, but a place to cherish—even the Enoki Woods, the sight of which sent the entire half-elf village into shivers.

The fairy folk had passed that belief down through so many generations that even Kiva, lost from her village years ago, could not forget it. Undoubtedly that was what led her to make her home in the center of the Enoki Woods in the first spring of her adulthood. The plants in her garden grew tall by the summer, and Kiva ate well, her body filling out into soft curves.

Her blond waves grew past her waist now, and a warm pink glow colored her cheeks. Some mornings she fluttered out to the woods to a clearing and picked out herbs and flowers to press between the pages of her journal. Some mornings, she did not. Some afternoons, she sat in the grass and wove cloaks and sweaters for the winter. Some afternoons, she did nothing at all. Every night though, without fail, she stared out her bedroom window into the Enoki woods. She watched the fog swirl around the glowing mushrooms, humming a song that was so familiar, although she could never remember its name, its lyrics, or where she had heard it before.

On a clear summer morning after tending to her garden, Kiva stretched her wings and hovered into the woods with her basket in hand. She stayed near the edge, never far enough to lose sight of her cottage through the trees. With a delicate hand, she picked mushrooms and leaves to fill her basket, humming her nameless song. Bushes rustled in a shadowy crevice of the forest. She turned and looked into the darkness, but found nothing. She squinted, struggling to make out any silhouette hidden between the trees. No, nothing.

Kiva lay the plants gently in her basket and her tune echoed through the forest. She wandered deeper, always keeping an eye on the light of her clearing pouring between the trees. The leaves rustled again. She looked—nothing there. An animal, she assumed, scurrying through the brush. She was wrong. She worried about her basket, first, as it splintered between her chest and the ground. She thought about herself only after that.

Clawed hands fought to pin her down. Fingertips pressed against the veins in her wrists where hot blood rushed through. Heavy as the assailant was, his grip was weak. Kiva pushed the hands away and rolled onto her back, meeting two manic red eyes. A mouth with a pair of pointed teeth drooled over her face. The sound of rustling leaves and ripping wings marked their struggle.

She shoved the face away with frantic movements, hitting and pushing until the form over her fell to the grass at her side. She stood and still the attacker in the dirt thrashed, long arms reaching out to grab her. A hand wrapped around her ankle. Pale skin, almost translucent as it flashed through the light, with adorned long fingers with sharp nails lodged in sickly purple beds.

She kicked hard, feeling the toe of her shoe colliding with flesh, forcing away the hands grappling to regain their grip on her. She kicked harder, kept kicking and stomping until the struggle weakened and finally stopped, then began running away towards the light of the clearing.

Kiva pushed her way through the branches in a hurry. The closer she came to home, the more the ringing in her ears dampened. When she stood at the threshold between the darkness and the sunlight, she heard her attacker's cries from within the forest behind her. She listened, catching her breath, finally registering the pain in her torn wings.

She was scratched and bruised, but his cries sounded much more pitiful than she felt. She heard him trying to scrape his way through the woods. He was weak, as she had thought, and even weaker now from the force of her defense. With a mind to lock herself inside until the sun rose the next morning, Kiva started back towards her home. The cries from the forest grew more miserable by the second, the sound of snapping twigs drawing up an image of a broken body writhing in the shadows.

She stared at her home, at the sunlight catching the petals of the catchflies blooming in her garden, and felt the weight of the forest behind her back. She clenched her fists, nails digging into the scrapes tarnishing her once soft palms, and sighed. When Kiva inevitably returned to the struggling body in the woods, she kept her distance. The form sat in the dirt with his back against the bark of a tree, just past the edge of the shadows. The red glow of his gaze wavered with his shaky breaths. Kiva watched and as seconds passed, the glow darkened and finally faded away.

The form against the tree slumped, and for a moment, she wondered if he had died. She watched and found his chest rising and falling with shallow breaths. It wasn't until the next morning that the attacker woke up.

Kiva sat at his bedside—beside her sofa, rather—watching him with a wooden stake in hand. She had taken more time than she would have liked to carve it out during the night. He groaned, clearly disoriented.

“Are you a vampire?” Kiva asked.

He moaned again. “Where am I?”

She tightened her grip on the stake. “Don’t dodge the question.”

The vampire—Kiva assumed “vampire” was the correct term—tried to sit up, trembled, then fell back onto the couch again. He looked around the best he could while lying flat on his back. “Is this your house?” Kiva didn’t answer. He snickered. “You must be stupid”.

She turned red and held the stake up defensively. “What’re you gonna do, kill me? With that twig?”

Kiva huffed and stood, wandering over to the kitchen to pour herself a cup of tea. She kept her eyes pinned on him all the while, hands and feet moving naturally while her gaze remained vigilant. She wrapped her fingers around the handle of her teapot, careful not to disturb the scratches left in her skin by the struggles of the preceding night. “I could have,” she said, “while you slept”. The vampire snickered at the notion.

The tea swirled in her porcelain cup as she poured, its sound a comfort in all the strangeness of the morning. The vampire’s pointed ears shifted toward the faint noise, and he lifted his head from where it rested on the cushion.

“What’s that?” He nodded towards the cup.

“Tea.” Kiva set her pot back on the stove, still watching him.

“Why, are you thirsty?”

He paused. “Yes.”

She returned the pause. “Do you want some, then?”

“Some tea?” He chuckled dryly. “No, no thank you.”

Kiva nearly shuddered, but stifled it to maintain her dignity, and took a sip from her cup, her eyes never leaving him. The vampire stared down at his ankles where Kiva had bandaged them while he slept. She had perhaps kicked them a little too hard.

He was tall, deathly pale with dark hair that pointed in all directions. Even from afar, his lips seemed dry and cracked, and the skin beneath his eyes was sunken and blue. His voice had been scratchy through all his snobby remarks. Though Kiva wouldn't let her guard down, she was almost certain he had no power to do anything to her in his current state.

“How'd you get me here?”

“Dragged you through the forest.” Kiva sipped her tea.

“You were heavy.”

He smiled at that. “What's your name?”

“Kiva.”

“Kiva,” he repeated quietly. “Kiva, do you know that fairy's blood is a delicacy where I come from?”

She gulped down some tea, quicker this time, then refilled her cup.

“What's yours?”

“My what?”

“Your name.”

His head fell down flat onto the couch. He took a breath, and she watched him blink up at the ceiling. “Doesn't matter,” he said. “I don't need to introduce myself to prey.”

Kiva locked her bedroom door and barricaded it with her dresser each night that the vampire stayed in her home. Days passed, and his ankles never healed. He denied each meal that Kiva offered him, and his skin tightened closer and closer to his bones every day. He drank tea every once in a while, but Kiva wasn't sure if it actually did anything for him or if it just felt right.

She changed his bandages often. At first, he always talked to her, mostly through sly remarks, but his voice grew strained and his breathing grew labored over time, and eventually he stopped. Kiva still locked her door at night, but at some point decided to forego pushing her dresser in front of it before bed.

Days became weeks, and she watched him deteriorate, wilting like an unwatered flower in the cracked desert ground. It was the same sort of transformation, at least—the color went first, then his body wrinkled and curled in on itself, turning so dry and brittle that she feared she would snap his bones as she cared for his bruised ankles. Her torn wings healed, but he never seemed to get better.

The fragile form on the couch became a part of Kiva's everyday life. She watched him from the kitchen each time she cooked herself a meal, hummed her untitled tune as she changed his bandages in the evenings. Sometimes, at night, she would throw open the curtains and let the moonlight shine in, and sit next to him and drink her tea, indulging in one-sided conversations with his frail body.

Some mornings she expected him to be dead when she came to check on him. Of course, he never was. She wasn't sure that the undead could die. At the very least, he was near death, clearly conscious judging by his eyes that locked on her each time she entered the room, but unable to do so much as lift the clawed hand lying at his side. She stopped locking her bedroom door at night.

One evening, after a long day in the garden, Kiva sat beside him where he lay on the couch and heard the almost imperceptible sound of his strained voice escaping his throat. She listened closer, trying to pick up the noise, until she recognized it. He was humming her song.

She sat still, listening carefully so she wouldn't lose the faint tune in the white noise of her home. She stared down at him, at his dimming red eyes fixed half-lidded on the ceiling, at the blue veins visible beneath his white skin, reaching out from his eyelids across his face in a mimicry of the branches of the forest outside. She stayed silent until the very last note.

The ending of the song was familiar, like it always was, whispering of old memories just out of the grasp of her mind. Sickness had softened the vampire, she thought, staring down at his feeble body. He was no longer the monster she had met. His gaze met hers, and, compelled by the intimacy of the moment or perhaps the loneliness of the woods, Kiva told him her story. She told him how the orcs had raided her village and she had ended up orphaned, how a half-elf couple had taken her in and raised her.

She talked about her parents—the half-elves, of course, because she had only the faintest memory of her biological parents—and talked about the village where she grew up, how it was always safe and cozy, but how she liked it better here in the woods. The absence of her birth parents was palpable, despite how little of them she remembered, but she felt closer to them after moving into the untouched nature.

He didn't say anything, and Kiva knew it was because he couldn't, but she still imagined that he was a good listener. Before bed, when she made them each a cup of tea, she sliced her palm open with a kitchen knife and squeezed her blood into his brew. When Kiva awoke, she found her head lying not on her pillow, but atop something colder and firmer—a lap—no, his lap. She felt long fingers carding through her hair, felt her body strewn across her couch rather than the bed in which she had fallen asleep the night before. She made the effort to sit up, but her body was numb, and she could hardly lift a finger. Her sight was hazy, but even so, she could still make out the sight of her broken wings sitting in the corner of the room in a puddle of blood.

Both her ankles were swollen and wrapped in bandages, but when she looked at his, they were unscathed, as if he was never hurt at all. He hummed her song, his voice renewed into a smooth, almost sweet sound, and she stared out the window into the night. The Enoki Woods stared back, towering high, mist reaching out from the forest like tendrils wrapping around the trees. In her gut, she felt the night creatures lurking just past the threshold of shadow, their cavernous maws spitting hot breaths that split the mist.

The pain in her ankles and her back was dull. Her phantom wings itched, but she couldn't lift an arm to scratch the place where they had once been. Her neck stung, then her eyes stung, and she was angry with herself. She was stupid, just like he had said she was. Faintly, she remembered her half-elf parents' voices. Their gentle hands taking hold of her tiny fingers and pulling her towards home as she, so young and naïve, wandered through the village to the distant image of the Enoki Woods. The rhymes they used to sing of those who ventured to the forest and right into the jaws of its merciless beasts.

A drop of blood rolled down her neck and onto his lap while he hummed, still running his hands through her hair, pointed nails dragging gently along her scalp towards the punctured flesh of her neck. Two teacups sat on the coffee table in front of her, left over from the night before. She stared at them, their closeness to each other, each dirtied near the imprint their lips had made on the rims where tea had pooled, one slightly ruddier in color than the other. The pain deepened.

Everything hurt, but despite her anguish, Kiva couldn't help but find comfort in the tune the vampire hummed in loop.

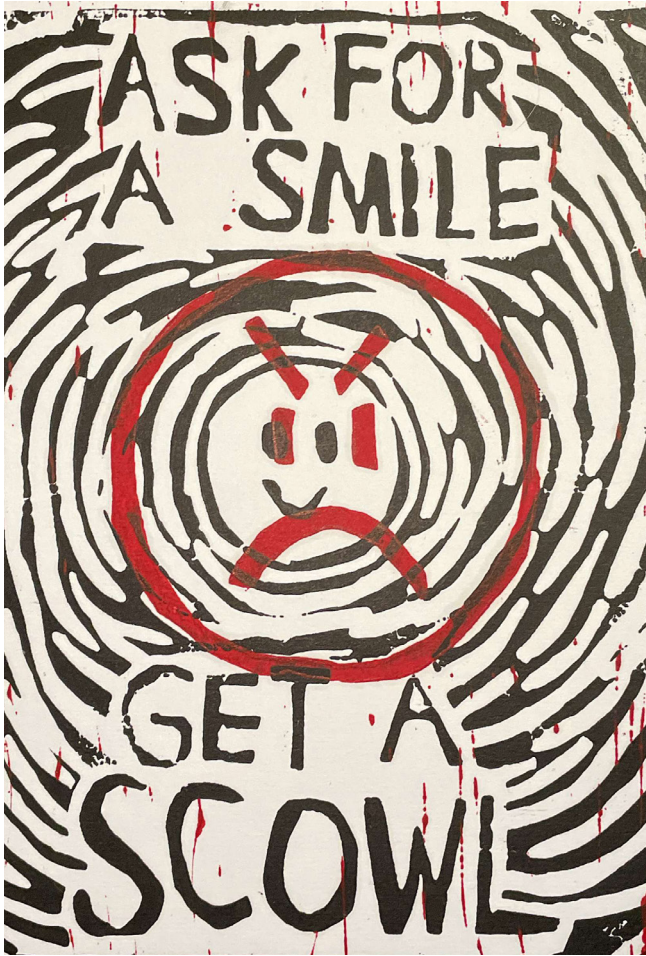
“Do you know the words to this song?” His speaking voice was softer than Kiva had ever heard it. “My mother used to sing it to me. Did yours sing it to you, too?” The tears were hot on Kiva's face. She couldn't answer.

His hands, cold and dangerous as they were, were gentle in her hair. As he hummed, his voice was quiet, almost melancholy. In the Enoki Woods, the spiders spun their webs between the branches of the trees. Mantises devoured their mates; mother beasts pulled the meat from the corpses of their young that had not survived. Bones deteriorated into dust, and the glowing mushrooms grew from their unmarked graves. In the refuge of her home, Kiva trembled, unable to move, and listened as the vampire began to sing the long-forgotten words to that familiar melody:

“White catchfly,
will you hold onto the ground?
Petals crushed inside the snare,
can the tether come unbound?
Leaves caught up between the rope
Struggle to come free again, still do you hold onto hope?
Your satin petals drift down into the grass.”

ART





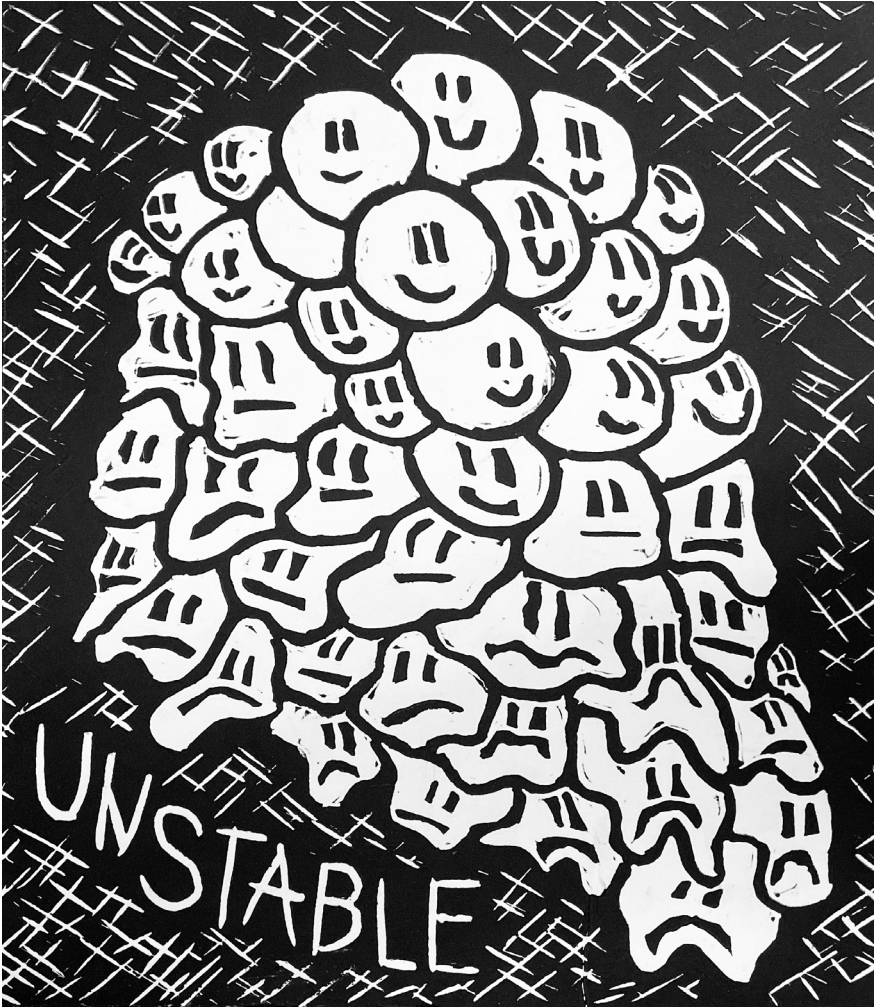
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Title: **Ever so Tiring**
Medium: Print



Artist: L. Williams
Title: **Soul Collectors**
Medium: Digital



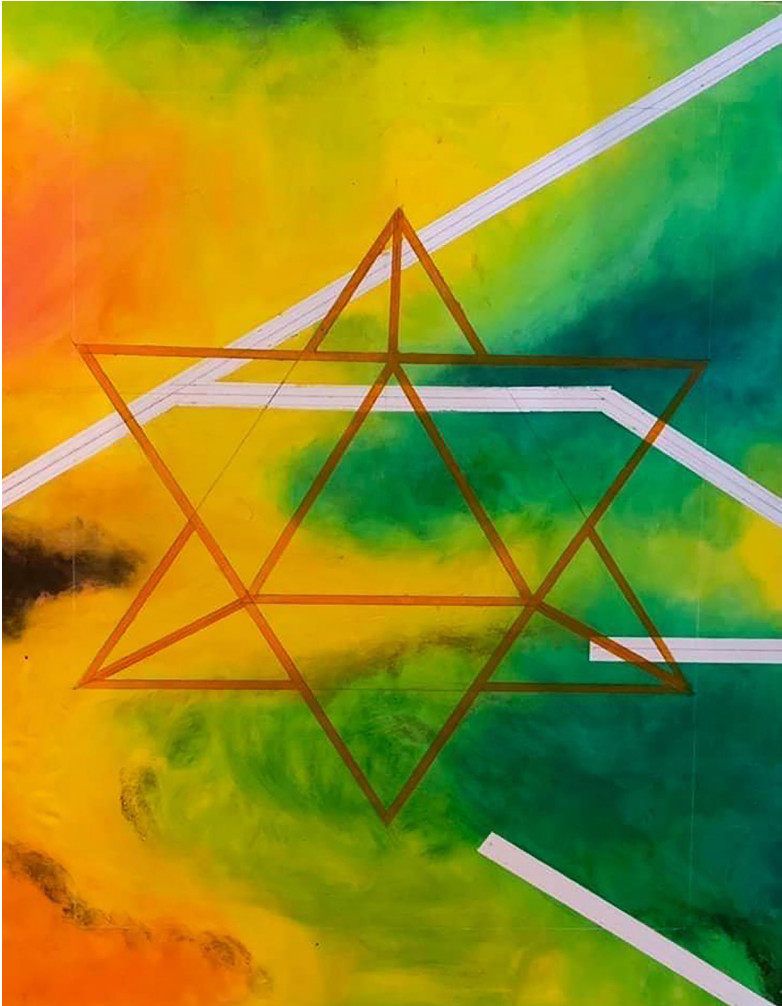
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Title: **Happy Pills**
Medium: Print



Artist: Liz Garza

Title: **Unstable**

Medium: Print



Artist: Jose Bautista

Title: **Merkaba**

Medium: Oil Painting



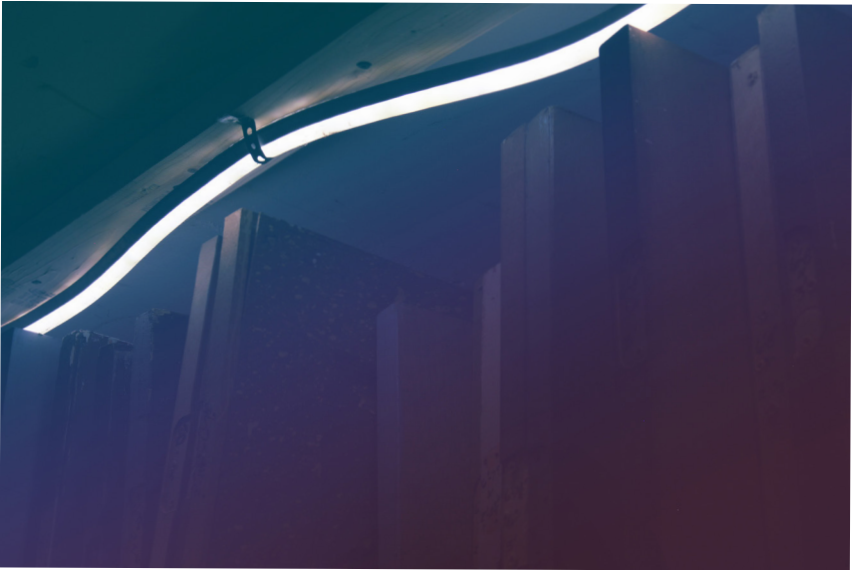
Artist: L. Williams
Title: **Rainforest Deity**
Medium: Digital



Artist: Kabel Faltisek

Title: **Cords**

Medium: Photography



Artist: Kabel Faltisek

Title: **Door**

Medium: Photography



Artist: Liz Garza

Title: **Insight**

Medium: Print



Artist: Jacob Rollen

Title: **Untitled**

Medium: Photography



Artist: Kabel Faltisek
Title: **Achromatic Dew**
Medium: Photography



Artist: Liz Graza

Title: **Feminine Curse**

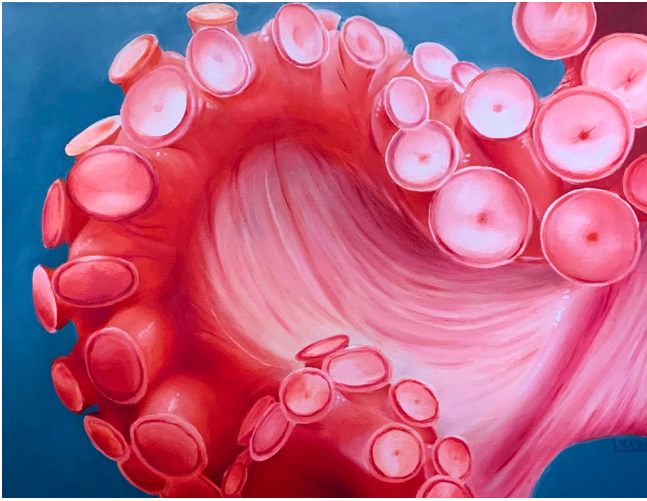
Medium: Print



Artist: Kyle Kahl

Title: **Left Eye Wrinkle**

Medium: Oil Painting



Artist: L. Williams

Title: **How to Make an Octopus Laugh**

Medium: Oil painting



Artist: Kyle Kahl

Title: **Ocean Song**

Medium: Oil Painting



Artist: Rianne Manning

Title: **Divorce**

Medium: Oil painting



Artist: Kyle Kahl

Title: **From the Mist**

Medium: Watercolor & Color Pencil



Artist: Kyle Kahl
Title: **Eraserdead**
Medium: Pencil



Artist: Kyle Kahl

Title: **Dual**

Medium: Water Color & Colored Pencil



Artist: Rianne Manning

Title: **Couldn't**

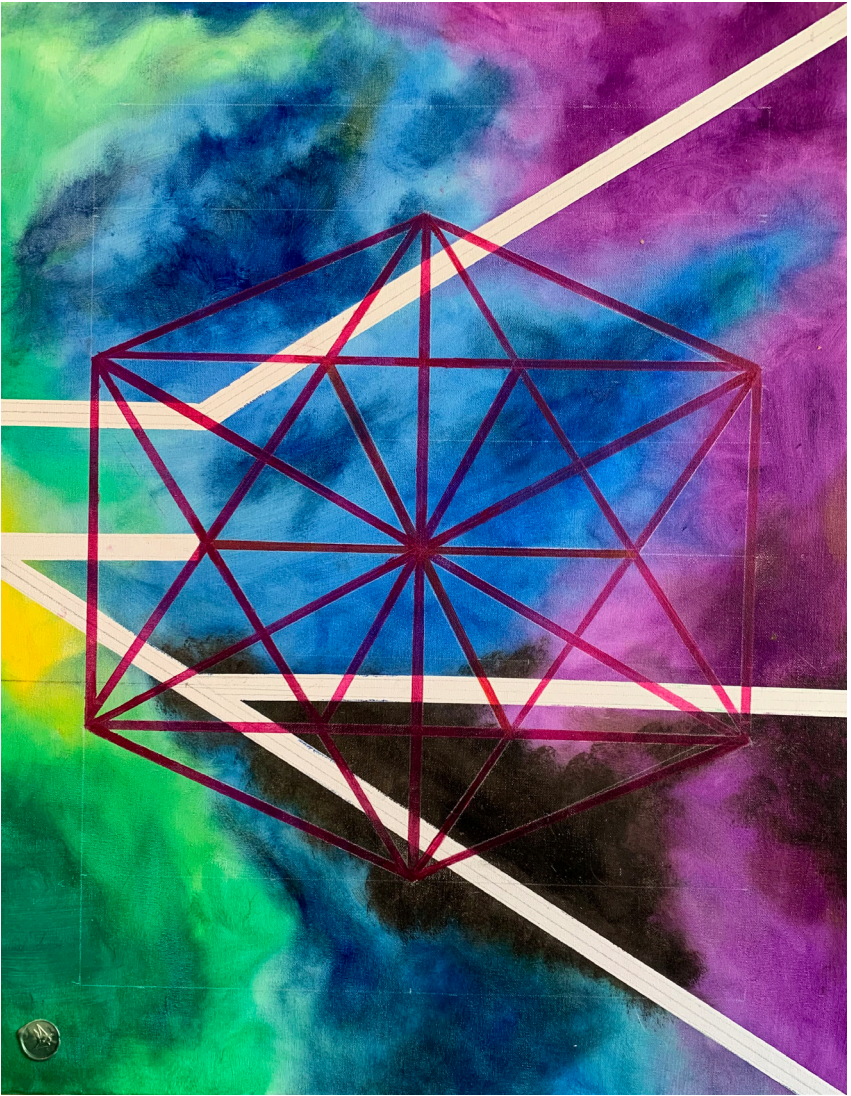
Medium: Oil Painting



Artist: Liz Garza
Title: **Unscripted**
Medium: Ink Print



Artist: Rianne Manning
Title: **Exile Street**
Medium: Oil Painting



Artist: Jose Bautista
Title: **Vector Equilibrium**
Medium: Oil Painting

Contributors

Auker, Lily

Lily Auker is from San Angelo, Texas. She is currently pursuing a Masters in Literature while teaching high school English at Central High School. Her interests include gardening, cooking, spending time outdoors, travel, and spending time with friends and family.

Bautista, Jose

Jose Bautista was born in Mexico and has been in Texas for most of my life. They're currently working on a MA in English after getting BFA in Studio Art. Their interests include exploring symbols, collecting old books, and improving artistic and writing skills.

Bolin, Sanlyn

Sanlyn Bolin is from Marble Falls, Texas. She is currently working on her undergraduate degree in English. Her interests include concerts, cooking, coffee, and lying in bed for hours on end.

Coffey, Khyleigh

Khyleigh Coffey is from San Angelo, Texas. They are in ASU's graduate class to achieve an English MA! They enjoy writing, reading, and learning about different languages and cultures.

Dickerson, Apryl

Apryl Dickerson is an English Major. In spare time, she tries to write, knit and crochet. She hopes to be a full-time writer one day.

Faltisek, Kabel

Kabel Faltisek grew up in Gonzales Texas. He is actively pursuing an undergraduate degree in graphic design. In his free time, he enjoys playing video games, visiting with friends, and sleeping.

Faught, Camille

Camille Faught has lived in San Angelo, Texas for 13 years. They are an English Major with a focus on Technical Writing, and a music minor. Hobbies include writing, playing violin, talking to friends, making soap, and playing DND.

Garza, Liz

Liz Garza is from Abilene, Texas. She is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts with a concentration in painting and drawing. She enjoys reading, listening to music, and true crime podcasts.

Headrick, Danielle

Danielle Headrick or Dani is a psychology major with an art minor. She is from San Angelo, Texas. Her favorite pastimes include writing and other creative ventures, and spending quality time with loved ones. She hopes to be an art therapist one day and to publish a poetry book.

Jost, Saegan Cheyenne

Saegan Jost has grown up in San Angelo, Texas. She graduated from ASU in Fall 2021 with an interdisciplinary degree with a minor in English. She got accepted into the Institute, a seminary/residency program in the Watermark Church in Dallas. She is starting her own business called Imitate and is in the process of starting her own book.

Kahl, Kyle

Kyle Kahl is a student at Angelo State University. He is working on a BFA in Studio Art with a concentration in painting and drawing. He hails from Abilene, Texas, which is known as the storybook capital of Texas. As a child, reading different storybooks imparted unto him a vivid imagination that is a key aspect of his artistic practice today. As an artist, he observes the interaction between the imagination and subconscious thought in my work. He will often start a piece with no conscious thought in mind, letting his imagination be the driving force for both the direction and content of the work.

Manning, Rianne

Rianne Manning is a self-identified cat connoisseur. She is from San Angelo Texas and is working on her undergraduate degree in English.

McCarley, Casie

Casie McCarley is currently majoring in English with a double minor in German and Professional Education. She was born in San Angelo and has lived in several states in her life. In her downtime, she enjoys reading, baking, and hanging out with my husband, son, and dogs.

Pluff, Kayla

Kayla Pluff is from San Angelo, Texas. She is set to graduate May of 2022 with a degree in English. Kayla enjoys writing poetry and short fiction as well as being a mother to her almost year-old son.

Rodriguez, Amber

Amber Rodriguez is currently persuing a BA in art and graphic design from Angelo State University. In her spare time, she enjoys making art, reading stories, learning new information, and being in nature.

Rollen, Jacob

Jacob Rollen, or Jake, is from a small town around the Dallas/Fort Worth called Cleburne. He is currently working on an undergraduate degree in graphic design. His interests include movies, video games, and cooking.

Ruthenbeck, Mara

Mara Ruthenbeck is from San Angelo, Texas. She is a double major in English Creative Writing and Mass Media. Her interests include fiction and poetry writing as well as reading, art, and film.

Wells, Hailey

Hailey Wells is from Ingram, Texas. She is currently working on her undergraduate degree in English. Her interests include reading and writing, music, and hanging out with her family.

Williams, L.

L. Williams became a fine arts student at ASU in Fall 2020 after growing up with a fascination for character design and storytelling. Now, three semesters later, her connection with drawing and writing is greater than ever before. As she shares more and more of her work with the world, she hopes that her love of visual and literary arts can spark creative passion in many others like herself.

Acknowledgements

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Secondly I would like to thank Ms. Yarian for her expertise and advice on this project. I don't believe this project would have made it without her. On the same note, I would like to thank all my Art teachers who inspired me and gave me the tools to be a better artist.

Lastly I would like to thank all the students who submitted their beautiful work. Without it, we would not have any content.

Amber Rodriguez

Art Editor and Layout Design Editor

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Somehow, writing this acknowledgement was the hardest part of Oasis for me. It's easy to edit because you're just looking at other people's words. But writing down exactly how grateful you are for people in your life? Terrifying.

I'd like to thank Angelo State University first. It's a fantastic university that has given me many opportunities, this one included, and I've met so many wonderful people in my short time here.

I want to extend gratitude to all the students that submitted their work in hopes of publication. This magazine would literally not exist without your contributions.

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Lastly, I want to thank my friends, especially Marko and Dilan, for keeping me sane. And I want to extend the greatest thanks to Amber Rodriguez. She was the designer for this year's issue and she put in so much work to make this project look amazing. I truly could not have done this without her.

Thank you and I hope you enjoyed the 2022 Spring issue of Oasis.

Camille Faught
General Editor Literary Editor

Camille Faught *General Editor &
Literary Editor*

Amber Rodriguez *Art Editor
& Layout Design
Editor*

Leila Yarian *Faculty Support
in Art Direction*

Laurence Musgrove *Faculty Sponsor*

