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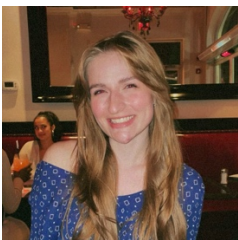
STAFF

Co-Editors



Emily Callahan

Emily Callahan is a senior Psychology major at Sacred Heart University with a minor in Writing. Her experience comes from working closely with children and animals, and volunteering with several non-profits. Emily has a strong entrepreneurial spirit and founded her own dog walking and care business, which she continues to run to this day. She served as a co-leader of the “Jump Start” program in Cranston, RI, an early-education after-school literacy program with AmeriCorps. Emily is passionate about public service and working with communities in the area. She lives in Fairfield with her dog, Lucy, and her cat, Gnocchi. In her free time, Emily enjoys hiking, long walks on the beach, cooking, and design.



Kelsey Donnelly

Kelsey Donnelly is a junior English major with minors in Writing and Marketing at Sacred Heart University. Kelsey rediscovered her passion for writing while taking courses at Sacred Heart. She was fortunate enough to have her work published in the first edition of HeartLines Literary Magazine in the Spring of 2023. Kelsey hopes to continue writing after college and aspires to work for a publishing house in the future. She grew up in Wading River, NY, where she spends time off with her family, her cats, and her two dogs. When she is not writing, Kelsey is baking, reading, or going to the beach.



Hannah Schultz

Hannah Schultz is a Senior English Major with minors in both Honors and Writing. She hopes to continue her education and get her masters in teaching to become a High School English Teacher. She has also worked as a one-on-one teaching assistant at an elementary school in her hometown. After taking a poetry class while studying abroad in Dingle, Ireland, Hannah has rekindled her love of poetry, finding that she now gravitates towards that genre the most. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, and spending time with friends and family. After working on Heartlines as the poetry editor last semester, Hannah is so excited to be returning as the Co-Editor!



Sam Kealey

Sam Kealey is a Senior English Major at Sacred Heart University with a Minor in Writing. He was born and raised in Fairfield County, CT and was the class speaker at his 2019 high school graduation. The most important things to him are his family and his community.



Gia Esposito

Meet Gia Esposito, a Senior Marketing student at Sacred Heart's Jack Welch College of Business School with a minor in Writing. Gia's passion for the arts and creative expression extends beyond the written word to singing, dancing, drawing, and more. Her ambition lies in becoming a brand strategist, melding her business acumen with her love for language and storytelling. Hailing from New Jersey, Gia grew up performing in theater and cheered for over a decade. These experiences continue to influence her collaborative spirit and creative vision as she contributes to our literary magazine.



Shea Sinclair

Shea Sinclair is a Junior Studio Art undergraduate student at Sacred Heart's Art and Design program. She is a mural artist that specializes in oil painting, printmaking, and illustration. Shea loves to make and publish zines under her studio Fueled by Monsters. Shea is also the Art director of Sacred Heart's GSA and has a passion for incorporating activism into her works.



Kacey Veiking

Kacey Veiking is a junior English major on the Secondary Education 4+1 track at Sacred Heart University. She hopes to become a high school English Teacher and further her education in the future. She also has minors in writing and honors. Kacey is the current Vice President 1: Coordinator of Committees for the Lambda Alpha chapter of Zeta Tau Alpha at Sacred Heart. She is a substitute teacher at an elementary school in her hometown, Mansfield Massachusetts. She also works at a camp over the summer as a camp counselor and lifeguard. In her free time, she enjoys reading thriller novels and creative writing. Kacey's favorite genre to write is creative nonfiction. She has a love for reading and writing, especially when given the opportunity to aid others in writing and editing their pieces!

FICTION

DEC 11th, 2023 / **FICTION**

“Surfside Visions”: A Short Story – By Erin Dunn



The old harbor docks creaked in the summer wind. A steadfast centerpiece of activity, ripe with people and boats, seagulls and silver fish. Hulls knocked against wooden planks and ropes slapped against decks. A vibrant hum of life sounded from amidst the waves. The symphony beckoned to passersby, a moonlit sonata on the waterfront.

The marina claimed many victims this way.

Sand Dollar –Melissa Tagliarini

Holes along the main dock ate at feet and the wooden support posts rotted away under unsuspecting hands. The harbor did her best work masked under a picturesque moon.

She spat her victims out proudly, washing them ashore on the neighboring beach. The police knew to avoid the boatyard after dark. Any calls from the docks went unanswered past nightfall, their hope fading with the setting sun.

Their bodies were found in the morning.

Yet the marina thrived in the daytime. Any gaps or crumbling boards seemed to repair themselves in the light of the sun. The workers skipped from yacht to yacht with ease, setting the people off with a bottle of a champagne and a warning to return before nightfall.

The townspeople hosted weddings in the boathouse, an offering of sorts to the kinder side of the marina. They offered her joy in exchange for their safety, to appease the nasty half of the docks.

A twisted Jekyll hidden beneath a pleasant Hyde.

It was deep into night, but Carlton Finch was five drinks past caring when he wandered onto the back deck of the Surfside bar, staggering into the doors with all the grace of a drunken twenty-two-year-old. He careened towards the railing, knocking into the shoulder of a returning man.

Muttering slurred apologies, Carlton began fumbling with his belt. By the time he managed to undo the notches the back door had slammed shut. He had to piss so bad his gut hurt, and he swore with vigor at his clumsy fingers.

He clutched a hand to his stomach, the pain intensifying.

A hot sharp spike, another one, another one.

Somewhere through the haze he noticed the red. The gushing of red down his front, spilling over his fingers and blending with the black leather of his belt.

A drop hit the deck.

Splattered.

It thickened. The leaking of his stomach turned the collection of spatters into an ever-widening pool.

Blood. It was bloody.

The sticky warmth gushing over his hand was flowing blood. It wouldn't stop no matter how hard he pressed.

There were other hands now. Pinching, pressing, squeezing.

They were hurting him. Digging into his insides, twisting them. The blood was pouring faster now.

It occurred to him to move. To fight. He stumbled back, blindly shoving against the weight around his middle. A knife clattered to the deck. A grunt came from his assailant.

His shoe planted in the center of the puddle, the pool of his own blood, and it slipped. As quickly as it registered, he fell, his skull cracking against the ground.

The pool enveloped him.

Officer Anthony Porto was on probation. His second year with the department and already a fuck-up. He wasn't bad at his job; it was punishment for his public denunciation of the politics that prevented him from doing his job properly.

Of all places politics should have no impact, should it not be policing?

Now a lieutenant or chief came to all his calls. They lurked in the background, observing. Porto could feel them eyeing the back of his vest, assessing him, forcing him to hand out court summons and write tickets when he normally would have given just a verbal warning.

So when Porto screeched to a halt at the docks, Chief Greenman's car was a close second. They shot out of their cars – neither acknowledging the chief had been tailing him – and sprinted towards the beach together.

A young dockworker made the 9-1-1 call, her hysterics clouding the details, but the body on the surf's edge was a clear target.

Throwing himself to his knees, Porto scrambled to turn the body over.

“Jesus,” the chief hissed.

Sometimes the docks spit out live victims. They crawled from the waves, clawing their way back to the living.

This guy was far from alive.

The skin around his mouth had dried and cracked, flesh splitting from the corners of his lips. His clothes were sliced. The ocean sucked off loose scraps of fabric with each wave.

The chief grabbed his phone, the investigative detective unit already on speed dial. “Surfside docks now, I’ve got a deceased male. Need backup for investigation and perimeter. Potential homicide.”

“Potential?” Porto muttered.

The waves crashed in agreement. The man’s stomach was torn to bits. Wounds peppered his chest like fatal freckles. The dried blood caked on so thick the sea couldn’t wash it away.

“That doesn’t happen by accident. This was no harbor death.”

Dr. Rogler smiled softly when Kelsey plopped on her couch. Kelsey was slightly convinced their standing appointment – 8 o’clock every Monday morning – actually worsened her depression. Who sets appointments at that time? But she kept coming.

Normally Kelsey could admit she was a less-than-ideal patient, talking with her was not un-like pulling teeth. But no one ends up in therapy because they’re a delightful person.

This Monday was different.

“Hello Kelsey, how are you today?” Classic introduction.

“The TV in the waiting room, is that news live?”

Rogler cocked her head. “I believe so. To be frank, I’m not sure what channel the television is turned to.”

Kelsey fiddled with the hem of her sweater.

“Did you see something on the news that upset you, Kelsey?”

“Carlton Finch is dead.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Did you know Carlton well?”

“No but-” Kelsey broke off.

The clock on the doctor’s desk was audible. God, audible clocks. With their incessant ticking.

The silence stretched.

Tick. Tock.

“I just knew of him. I mean, like, I went to school with him. But...I dunno just...they’re investigating it maybe not being an accident?”

Dr. Rogler glanced up sharply. “An investigation?”

Kelsey nodded.

“That is understandably upsetting, Kelsey. I didn’t know that and I’m very sorry for that poor boy.”

“I saw him die. I watched him get stabbed.”

Rogler was staring, her eyes narrowed. Kelsey picked at a loose thread on her sweater hem, staring at the floor, doing anything but looking at the doctor’s face.

Tick. Tock.

“What do you mean you ‘saw him die’?”

Shouldn’t she be crying? There was an ache in her head, a pounding behind her eyes, but Kelsey couldn’t feel any tears. It was a crying moment, wasn’t it?

“My dream. That dream I had...where that kid was murdered?”

Dr. Rogler leaned back, her pen stabbing an inkblot into her notepad. “Ah, yes. You dreamt of Carlton Finch’s death last week?”

Tick. Tock

Kelsey gave an affirmative jerk of her chin. The ink in Rogler's pen was red, a deep crimson mark on the paper. "Do you remember the details of this dream, Kelsey? I recall you saying, "someone got stabbed" in your dream, but not much else."

Had she said it so casually? It had meant nothing at the time, just a weird dream after a long day. But Carlton was dead.

"I remember him being stabbed. From behind...I think. Like literally stabbed in the back. And he wasn't expecting it. I remember feeling like he never saw it coming."

Dr. Rogler scribbled. "Were you a bystander in this dream, Kelsey? Or were you Carlton? You say you watched it happen, but you knew what he felt in the moment."

Kelsey frowned. She had watched it distantly, a fly on the wall. "I was me. I was removed but, like, I could still tell what was going on with him."

"I see."

Tick. Tock.

"Have you heard of confirmation bias, Kelsey?" Rogler asked. After a pause she continued, "It's when our brains interpret information in a certain way to make that information agree with our beliefs."

God. Kelsey made a face.

"Is it possible, Kelsey, that Carlton might not have been in your dream? That your brain may now believe it was him because he has since passed away?"

The session ended shortly after that.

Despite the body having been washed up on its shores that morning, the line at Surfside stretched to the parking lot by 9 o'clock. Morbid affairs made the townspeople want to drink.

Kelsey nursed a tequila sour, savoring the tartness that puckered her lips. Gossip ran amok from table to table; contending whispers that Carlton had jumped in willingly or had simply taken a wrong step and fell through the docks warred between groups.

The harbor's reputation was long deserved and so the townspeople were no stranger to death, but Kelsey could not erase the image of Carlton's agonized face. It twisted her stomach like a glass of spoiled milk.

She floated throughout the room, trying to avoid the clumps of tables chatting away until- ah! There he was.

Daniel Greenman returned his ID to his pocket as he stepped past the bouncer. The last conversation Kelsey had with Daniel Greenman was at a graduation afterparty five years ago – he had poured her a shot and sent her on her way. But Daniel's father was Chief Greenman. A case like this would go through him.

Kelsey needed a few answers to settle her stomach.

Daniel sat at a high top, two of his buddies emerged from the crowd to claim spots at his side. Thank God Daniel still ran with the same crowd. The tall one – Jack Haluch – had taken Kelsey to their senior prom. Easier to talk to him than a stranger. Kelsey took a steadying breath and sidled up to him; a light touch on his shoulder turned into a slow smile, and then she had a spot at the table.

Jack leaned down to her ear. "Did you hear the news?"

"About Carlton?" Kelsey asked.

Daniel cut in before Jack could respond. "It's way more gruesome than the news is reporting."

“Your dad told you?” asked AJ, the other friend.

“Obviously.” Daniel dropped his voice to a whisper. “It’s a homicide investigation because apparently Finch got stabbed seventeen times.” Kelsey blinked. Harbor deaths were usually drownings. But Carlton had been stabbed in her dream too. The news hadn’t released that detail.

“No way.”

“Seventeen? That’s nuts.”

“So someone murdered him?” Kelsey shuddered. Jack slid an arm around her back and softly rubbed her shoulders. She jumped slightly at the foreign touch.

“Yeah. My dad thinks they just used the harbor to dump the body. They’re usually never cut up like Finch was.”

Jack frowned. “But who would want to kill Finch?”

Moonlight glared down on boat bows and rigging ropes. Never did Kelsey expect to find herself drunk on the back of a yacht with Jack Haluch, finishing his bottle of Clase Azul, and getting suspiciously cozy on some rich family’s cushions. Jack tipped the last drops of tequila into Kelsey’s glass. God, when was the last time she had hung out with a...friend? With anyone? Anyone that wasn’t her mom or her therapist?

Jack placed the empty bottle on the bow. Kelsey curled far into the pillows, so Jack towered over her, his arm resting lightly on the side of the boat.

What was she supposed to do with her arms? She was too aware of their bulk. Did he think she looked stiff?

But Jack smiled down at her, leaning closer. He whispered something.

“What?” She giggled. Oh no. She was drunk.

Jack leaned farther down; his arm stretched above Kelsey’s head. She stayed frozen, letting him inch closer, that smile widening. Her fingers explored downwards, brushing against something hard. It poked into her.

Wrapping her fingers around it, Kelsey closed the distance, gently kissing him.

Her hands plunged into his hair, his back.

He coughed. A thick choked sound.

His face flushed purple.

Kelsey stabbed again. She opened her eyes as Jack fell into her chest. Her fingers lost their hold, the handle of the knife slipping away.

His mouth gushed warm blood onto Kelsey’s lap. She tried to pull the knife out, but his body spasmed. Once. Twice.

A flailing fist socked Kelsey in the jaw. Her head reeled backwards, colliding with the tequila bottle. It flew off the seat’s edge, shattering, splintering, fracturing. The shards sliced at Kelsey’s bare feet as she tried to shove him away.

She had no voice to scream. To call for help. Jack’s weight was crushing down on her. She couldn’t breathe, couldn’t move. His blood kept spilling, filling her mouth, soaking her hair. It didn’t stop, it never stopped.

Jack’s body toppled to the floor. A thick silver knife protruded from his back. The last effort of his spasming limbs dragged Kelsey down with him.

The sharp handle of her knife rose to meet her skull.

Kelsey's breath in tight gasps, forcing her awake. Her lungs had finally found a normal rhythm by the time she reached Dr. Rogler's office building. The wooden lip of the waiting room chair bit into the back of her thighs. She shifted from one leg to another, trying to avoid the sharp sensation.

Her mind raced in the silence. Her fingers still itched with phantom blood; the soles of her feet ached with the ghost of sharp shards. The expression on Jack's dead face had chased her awake that morning.

And Dr. Rogler was taking her sweet ass time.

She finally emerged from her office, motioning Kelsey inside with a distracted flick of her hand. "Why don't you tell me why you wanted to see me today, Kelsey," she replied.

Kelsey sat in her chair. "I had another dream last night."

"Is that so?" Dr. Rogler grabbed a cloth, started wiping down her letter opener.

"It was so...eerie. It started exactly like my one with Carlton, just normal and at Surfside, and then I was on a boat and Jack got stabbed. And then he died, and his body fell on me, and I was suffocating – I couldn't breathe."

Rogler frowned. "That must have been very troubling. Tell me, who is Jack? Do you know him well?"

"I guess? His name is Jack Haluch. He was my prom date." Dr. Rogler nodded along, dropping the letter opener in a drawer. She began collecting the papers scattered around her desk. "But that's what's creepy. I haven't spoken to him since senior year and then last night I talked to him at the bar and the next thing I know he's showing up dead in my dream!" Kelsey exhaled the words with a sharp breath.

Rogler held up a hand. "Describe your dream to me, from the beginning."

So, Kelsey started. She told the doctor about talking to Jack and Daniel at the bar, and how her dream started by breaking onto a yacht in the docks. Kelsey rushed through the intimate bits, skipping to Jack's falling body, and the intense crush of her lungs. Dr. Rogler continued tidying as she spoke, sliding the stack of papers into a folder.

"Hm. Do you know what dreams are?"

"Uh...no?"

Dr. Rogler nodded again. "We actually don't know what causes dreams, but a common theory is that dreams are our brains way of processing the events of the day. So, when you dreamt of Jack, it most likely was because y-"

"I had just seen Jack," Kelsey interrupted. But she had stabbed him. There was no way she had actually...?

"Precisely."

Kelsey bit her lip. "I mean...I know it's not possible it's just – okay well, it kind of felt like I predicted Carlton's death. And I dunno, I just really don't want that to happen to Jack."

Dr. Rogler huffed a laugh. "There's no need to worry Kelsey. You are certainly not predicting anyone's death. Such a thing does not exist."

Fuck what she said. Kelsey floored it across town, reaching speed limits that would have had her mother clutching the dashboard. No matter what Dr. Rogler said, she couldn't shake the image of Jack's dying face. The sight of blood oozing from his lips. It set her bones itching, flashing across her mind every time she closed her eyes. She would be fine once she knew he was okay.

She punched the call button on her phone. It rang. Once, twice, three times. Nothing. Voicemail again. That was the thirteenth time today. And it was only ten in the morning. It was Carlton all over again.

She took a turn so tight her brakes gave a protesting screech.

Kelsey squealed to a stop by the docks. Or tried to. A slice of yellow caution tape split the road. Half a dozen cop cars littered the parking lot; their blue and red lights flashing garishly in the weak morning sunlight.

An officer slammed the hood of her car and gestured back the way she came. But Kelsey watched, horrified, as EMTs in bleached white uniforms rolled a stretcher up the docks.

There wasn't even a sheet.

The body jostled over each bumpy plank.

A bloodied hand reached the edge of the gurney, then toppled over.

"Ma'am, get back in your car. This is an active crime scene," the officer said the moment Kelsey emerged from her car.

"He's dead, isn't he?" The officer stared at her. Blankly. Not a shred of emotion or sympathy in his gaze. "Jack. He's dead."

Just beyond the fence, cops carried bags of evidence up to the lot. One held swabs of blood samples. Another, the remains of a shattered tequila bottle. Kelsey gaped at the blue and white porcelain. The red stains were visible from the parking lot. Even the silver bell of the Clase Azul bottle had a pink tinge.

"The tequila bottle..." she whispered. Jack's demented face leered at her from behind the empty bottle. "Oh my god". They had drunk that tequila. She had been sipping it in her dream when Jack had been stabbed. When *she* had stabbed Jack.

And now it was here.

That shouldn't have been possible.

“Officer, was he stabbed?”

The officer grabbed Kelsey's arm. He turned her towards him. “Ma'am, I know this is very upsetting so let's get you out of here.”

“No!” She shrugged out of his grasp. “Please, you have to tell me how he died. Tell me it's not the same.” She was gasping for air. “Please, please, please.”

“I can't disclose any information. Ma'am, try to take a breath for me.”

“I saw it. I watched it. That bottle...no, no, no. It actually happened?”

“You *watched* it?” His brows furrowed. His head swung back and forth, eyeing her face and the boats, like he's watching a tennis match.

“We had just drank it. And he put it down. He fell and then – that bottle...it sliced my feet.” She grabbed her head, wrenching her eyes to stopper the tears forming. “He's dead, he's dead, he's dead.”

Her legs buckled, sobs wracking her chest. She dropped; the officer reached for her.

She had killed him.

Jack was dead and she had killed him.

Dead. Dead.

Dead.

“I've got a hysterical woman down by the docks, I'm bringing her in for psych eval.”

The clicking of high heels echoed down the barren hospital hallway. The girl was admitted into a closet-sized room in a side corridor of the main floor, removed from prying eyes and running mouths. More like shunned.

Chief Greenman escorted the high-heeled woman to where Porto stood outside the girl's door.

“Porto, this is Dr. Rogler.”

The woman shoved out a hand. “I’m the on-call psychiatrist. You said Kelsey seemed to be experiencing a breakdown?” She whipped out a pen and notebook, nodding along as he described the girl’s panicking. She tsked every so often, a stern teacher disapproving.

“And she’s not awake yet. Doctors said an hour or two more for the sedation to wear off,” Porto finished.

“Odd. Very odd. How does she...” The doctor trailed off. “Well, it seems I will be back in a few hours for a proper evaluation. Keep an eye on her, please. She could be dangerous.” Rogler smiled faintly at the thought.

Porto nodded politely though the doctor’s bright voice irked him. Her tone did not match her words. He wanted her gone, far, far away from him.

The girl grunted as she awoke, her arms straining against her handcuffs to no avail. Porto jumped at the noise. “Hello, ma’am. How are you feeling?” he asked.

Her eyes wandered, blearily taking in the hospital room, the blue-scrubbed people rushing about, the collections of tubes and bags of neon-colored liquids on every surface.

The girl – the doctor said her name was Kelsey – stared up at Porto. Her eyes traced the tubes stuck in her veins up into the IVs hanging on their sharp hooks. She focused on her handcuffs, clarity alighting on her face. “What happened?” she croaked.

“We’re at the hospital ma’am. I’m afraid we had to bring you in for your own safety. You were in real bad shape down at the docks. That crime scene wasn’t pretty,” Porto replied.

Kelsey seemed dazed; her mouth frowned with confusion. “How long?”

“You’ve just been here a few hours. Enough for a good nap.” He chuckled. Truthfully, with the number of tranquilizers pumped into her system, Porto was surprised the sedation hadn’t lasted a whole week.

“When can I go?”

Ah. That. He wasn’t a doctor, his minimal medical training not even close, but he had overheard enough to know a clear medical report wouldn’t get her released. The psychiatrist seemed to think she was a danger.

How her lean frame could have overpowered the two men was beyond him, but Porto refrained from commenting. “Once the psychologist checks you out, which I dunno when that’ll be, they said you’re free to leave once she gives the okay.” A half-truth. If the psychologist had her way, Kelsey would be here a long time.

The girl stared at the ceiling. Porto suggested sleep, but Kelsey gave no acknowledgement she heard.

He supposed that was a real conversation killer.

The lights awoke her before the cop did. The door slammed open a moment after Kelsey rolled over.

The officer, Porto, snapped to attention as a doctor stepped through the doorway.

“Hello Kelsey. I’m glad to see you’re awake. We’re just going to ask you a few questions, is that okay? Great...this is Dr. Rogler, she’s going to be speaking with you today.”

Kelsey's mouth popped open as Dr. Rogler strode into the room. "What are you doing here?"

Rogler smiled. "I also happen to be the on-call psychiatrist." Was this a joke?

Dr. Rogler bustled about the room, dragging a stiff-looking armchair to Kelsey's bedside, and dropping her purse besides it.

"Can I go please? You know I'm not crazy," Kelsey said. Maybe there was a silver lining here. Dr. Rogler knew she wasn't a psych ward nutcase. After a nice weekend relaxing, they could talk about this on Monday.

"Would you mind giving us some space? I'd like to chat in private," Dr. Rogler said to Porto. Her red lipped smile showed no teeth. Porto glanced at Kelsey, then back to Dr. Rogler, hesitating. He looked about to protest.

"I'll be right outside," he announced. From her angle, Kelsey just made out the tips of his black hair poking above the window frame.

"Now, why don't we start by you telling me what happened."

Kelsey sighed. The story took little time to tell; she had a dream, went to make sure that the docks were empty, and then found the crime scene. She remembered nothing about hospital-worthy hysterics.

"That officer informed me that you were screaming about Jack, and he felt it was best to bring you in before you injured yourself. Do you remember any of this?"

Kelsey shrugged. The tequila bottle was the last thing she remembered. The pinkish stain on the white porcelain, the dent on the bell like it had been smashed. Had she actually drunk that tequila? She had felt the warmth in her stomach and the spinning in her head, but then Jack had been stabbed – by *her*. How could that have happened and then she awaken in her own bed?

It didn't make any sense.

“Jack was my friend.” Were they holding her hostage just because she found a friend dying to be upsetting?

“I see. Well...I think we’ll check up on you tomorrow morning. Grief is one of our strongest emotions, it’s okay to feel, Kelsey.” Rogler patted Kelsey’s hand, her fingers graciously avoiding the handcuff. Neither of them mentioned it.

Officer Porto straightened when Dr. Rogler exited Kelsey’s room. Their entire conversation had seemed off. He had never met a psychologist so...pushy.

“Hey, doctor!” he called out, falling into step beside her. “How long are you planning on keeping that girl in there?”

“Kelsey may seem fine but there is quite a bit going on beneath the surface,” Rogler replied. “In fact, I’m headed to see Chief Greenman right now. Perhaps you’d like to accompany me to the station?”

Technically, his shift ended six minutes ago but Porto agreed. He needed her to talk. To explain the knot tangling his thoughts and keeping their interaction on repeat. A feeling he couldn’t name pressed him forward. Intuition? Apprehension?

Rogler made idle conversation as they drove, talk of sunrises and clouded skies. He couldn’t take the waiting much longer.

Finally – “Do you think Kelsey killed them?”

The question burst forth.

“She says things when we talk. Of knives and stabbings. She says she dreamed of murdering those men,” Rogler sighed. “Maybe she didn’t do it. But how else would she have known to go to the docks? She’s told me details of these deaths that even the newspapers don’t yet know. I’ve gotten the feeling there’s more to this than what appears.”

Porto had a feeling too.

The doctor was not quite what she seemed.

Yet Rogler thanked him profusely when they got to the station, the picture of professionalism. He drove away with the distinct feeling that she had seen his questions coming.

The doctor talked too easily.

Officer Porto listened to the harbor, letting his thoughts flow with the churn of water beneath his feet. Quieter today, satiated from a fresh feasting. He leaned against the farthest post, the one half eaten by waves and salt, watching the sun greet the sky and burn off the morning.

The harbor unsettled him. The way its moods changed each morning, sometimes angry and frothy, sometimes calm with gentle waves. He had always loved the sea, but something about the harbor...it snatched that joy from him.

He had lost track of the number of bodies the department had found on the beaches. Or tangled under the docks in a fisherman's net. Death had become a common occurrence. An average morning.

He heard rumblings from the dockyard. Boat hands untied knots and started engines. Chefs grabbed the day's fresh catch and retreated to their kitchens. The harbor came alive around Porto, the monstrous side died with the moonlight.

Porto winced, rubbing his hand. A splinter had sliced the flesh of his palm. It bled down his wrist. Coating his arm in red.

That was a lot of blood. Porto turned to leave, needing his squad car and the first aid kit within. But a shove from behind forced his body forward. His feet couldn't find purchase on the decaying planks.

His nose cracked against the deck. Pain lashed across his face.

Then his shoulders. His back. A knife sliced gaping gashes into his body. Multiplying, over and over.

He tried to breathe.

To push off the dock.

To regain his feet.

But his throat was thickening, his mouth sucked down air that couldn't make it to his lungs. Another stab. He felt it through his chest, the knife buried to the handle.

It tore through him as it was yanked away.

Porto managed was a slight raise of his head.

His eyes caught sight of the distant sunrise before the harbor snatched his life.

“Porto. Porto!”

Hands grabbed her wrists. Shoving her shoulders down into the bed.

“Porto!”

“Kelsey. Stop! Jesus, get the shrink.”

An officer pinned her to the bed. Not Porto. “Where is he? Where is he!”

“Officer Porto is off his shift.”

Kelsey twisted her torso, this way and that, attempting to shake the cop's death grip. “No, no, no. Find him. He's going to die. You need to find him!” More squirming resulted in zero progress.

“Officer Porto is fine, Kelsey,” a woman’s voice explained. Kelsey froze. Through the gap under the cop’s arm, Kelsey watched Dr. Rogler enter the room. Her heels clicked with each step towards Kelsey’s bedside. “Why don’t we continue our chat?”

Dr. Rogler rummaged through her bag; bits of white notebook paper and her shiny silver letter opener poked their heads out of its pocket.

“Dr. Rogler. You need to listen to me. Porto is going to die. I just saw it,” Kelsey pleaded.

The doctor only pursed her lips. She jotted something down with that red pen of hers. “You saw it? You mean you dreamt it.”

Dr. Rogler doesn’t believe her. The way her voice dropped, turning flat and fake with each question. “I know it sounds crazy but please. I saw Carlton die and then he did. I saw Jack die and then he did. I just saw Porto die, please. You have to save him!” Kelsey screamed.

Rogler watched as the officer shut the door, Kelsey’s screams cut off as the lock clicked into place. “I’ll come back to check on her in the evening. She seems to be in a state of psychosis, claiming she’s ‘seen’ these murders. I’m thinking it’s a case of retroactive reverse amnesia, but I’ll need to monitor her further...I’m worried she might have had a hand in them.”

“Okay, Doctor. We’ll page you if her status changes.”

Dr. Rogler exited the hospital, sifting through the contents of her bag. She pulled out of the parking garage, humming along to the radio. Her daughter would like this song. Maybe she would send it to her.

The road went east past the town border; the scenic route followed the coastline until it curled up into the mountains. Dr. Rogler took exit 5 and pulled into the harbor parking lot.

She parked next to a police car. The blue and red lights shone steadfast. At the docks edge, a single officer stared at the distant horizon.

Dr. Rogler kept humming. She grabbed the letter opener out of her bag. It was still slightly red. One final wipe then it glittered.

The dockyard began to awaken. Boat hands untied knots and started engines. Chefs grabbed the day's fresh catch and retreated to their kitchens. Dr. Rogler stopped humming as she strode down the rotting planks.

She wanted to listen. To hear. To feel. To embrace the harbor as she paid it her final offering.

FLASH-FICTION

DEC 11TH, 2023 / FLASH FICTION

The Dance of the Flame – Ayasha Cantey

Every evening I light a candle, the flame watches me slowly and intently. Its shadow dances around the room, while I sit encompassed in a book. It watches as my eyebrows scrunch in confusion and despair. It notices that faint glimmer in my eyes. It watches me lose myself in these binded pages. Finding pieces of myself in the characters. It notices the hint of sadness in my eyes, the ache of my heart that I share with a character. Even when I think no one is watching, no one notices, this flame sees me.

Tags:

[Ayasha Cantey](#)

DEC 11TH, 2023 / FLASH FICTION

How Did We Go Apart? – Erin Dunn



Twin pillars sitting on the carpet, backs pressed against beige walls, voices low and tears suppressed.

One begging the other to stay and to speak.

The boy tells the girl of that afternoon when their father took her away for a drive.

When alone, the boy and their mother sink their claws into one another. Brutal verbal slashes, nothing the girl should have to hear. The boy tells her anyway.

Glowing Tree – Amelia Gaibor

The boy was her hero. A beacon in the crashing sea of adolescence. Not a beacon of light, or even of hope, but of something. He meant something to the girl. He represented some shred of life. Of vivacity in the crushing chaos of teenage girlhood.

The boy made progress. He stood up for himself, he moved out of the house, he made his place in the world. The girl wanted that.

But now their places are swapped. The girl cannot remember what happened to that bond.

The girl does not see the boy's stubbornness, his brashness, his anger, as vitality. Not anymore.

The girl is ashamed of the boy.

She's ashamed of him. The way he talks. Of the way he speaks disparagingly to her people's faces. Of the way he treats himself. Of the way she no longer sees that bit of something in him.

He's not her hero.

They say blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb.

How did blood turn to water?

Tags:

[Erin Dunn](#)

DEC 11TH, 2023 / **CREATIVE NON-FICTION**

What Is My Superpower? – Sara Anastasi



I am a perfectionist. I set an example of responsibility, independence, and ambition. In short, being the big sister essentially means I'm a complete nutcase. I'm anxious, I'm scared to fail. I was the self-sufficient, unproblematic child. I needed to be. In a household where two-thirds of the children are intellectually disabled, that other one-third child must be the buffer; an invisible shield, a third parent.

Chess – Melissa Tagliarini

We often compared ourselves to one of our favorite Pixar movies, “The Incredibles.” Just like the family of five we watched on TV, we were a family full of superpowers. My brother Mikey’s “supersonic speed” was his highly functioning autistic brain. His spastic bursts of pure intelligence followed by a super inappropriate joke or curse word. My sister Jenna’s “unlimited power” was her Pitt-Hopkins Syndrome. The rare genetic disorder encoded in her DNA is her magical ability to shapeshift. My father is the image of “superhuman strength,” his strong-willed sense of self and his willingness to beat the odds make him indeed a super-dad. And my mother’s super “elasticity” was the glue holding us all together. She stretched over forwards and backward, twisting her schedules just to be there for us. My superpower is the ability to be invisible. I protect my family from danger with my super-strong force fields, shielding us all from any other societal weight and worry.

Together we fought crime, stopped villains, and crushed boundaries. We tackled bullies, weird stares from other children and their parents, doctors with misdiagnoses, questionable ethics of religious leaders, defeatists.

Our weapons were strollers, IEP meetings, physical therapy, speech therapy, one-on-one teacher aids, and the entire DVD gallery of Disney films.

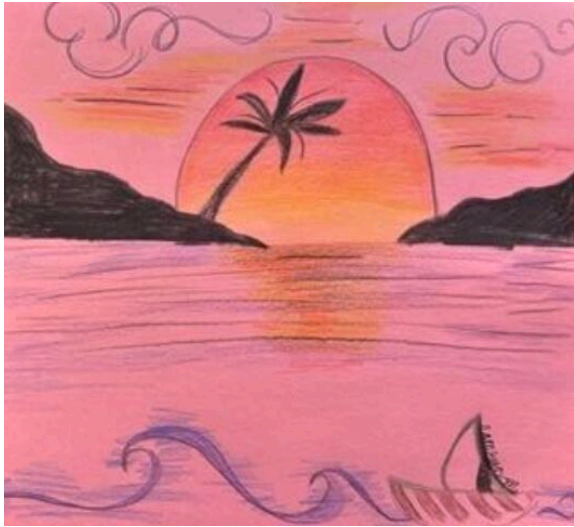
Every family has special gifts and talents. But what makes our family “super” is this: We didn’t hide our differences. We didn’t try to “fit in” and be like everybody else. We were authentic, unique individuals, happy to stand out in a crowd. We are happy with who we are. We can save the world with love.

Tags:

[Sara Anastasi](#)

DEC 11TH, 2023 / CREATIVE NON-FICTION

The Day Aina Changed – Jenna Barbato



I grew up living in Honolulu. I walked on those beaches as I took my first steps. My Tutu Wahine squeezed my hand as I stumbled to the shoreline. Seventeen years later, the beach still feels the same. Same sand, same people, and the same town. Everything in this little town has stayed consistent, except for the waves. As I grew older, the waves got bigger. I went from jumping over the little waves that crash at the shore to swimming out on my board to catch the big ones before a storm.

Sunset – Camryn Mills

I love this island, we were taught to always respect the Aina. Everyone knew everyone on the island and we considered everyone ohana. Ohana means family. Everything in Honolulu was family, we looked out for each other, and for our community.

Every Saturday night my mama makes the best poke on the island. I help her chop up the tuna and vegetables while my little sister sets the table. The whole family sits down to eat together after our day at the beach. We pray for each other and our land. I look out the window to see the sunset and the waves calming down. This was my favorite part of the night.

After dinner, I help my family clean up and head to my room to get ready. All my friends were meeting at the beach for a big bonfire. All the kids in the town get together on the beaches on the weekends to party. I did my makeup, brushed my hair, and put on my favorite top. Tonight was extra special because James was gonna be there. I grew up with James down the road, we have always been friends but recently something changed to be more than that. I know tonight is gonna be special, I have this feeling. My mom was just sitting on the porch outside. She loves that swinging chair.

“Goodnight mama, I’m heading down to the beach, love you.”

“Goodnight Leilani, be careful I love you.” My mom said as I headed down the porch. She means the best, my mom is my world.

I met up with my best friend Alana down the road. We headed down to the beach, the music getting louder as we headed down the path. As we got closer I could see the tiki torches lined up around the bonfire. As soon as our feet hit the sand Alana and I kicked off our sandals and ran over. All our girls were there and we started dancing. Across the bonfire, I can see James. His face was glowing from the flames.

“I’ll be right back, Alana, hold my bag.” I looked at her and she instantly knew. Alana grabbed my bag and fixed my hair.

As I am walking through the crowd I can barely see over anyone’s head. I felt a tap on my shoulder and turned my head.

“Leilani, hey, you made it.” It was James. He had the most beautiful piercing blue eyes just like the ocean. Alana says ” That’s why I like him so much. The night goes on for hours. I talked to James for most of the night. We took a walk down the beach after everyone started to head home.

James and I sat at the shoreline just watching the waves crash and listening. Talking for hours under the stars. I knew tonight was gonna be the night. It was the best night. I didn’t wanna leave. It was getting late and I didn’t want my mama to get too worried. James offered to walk me home and gave me his coat for the walk back.

Then it happened, the moment I had been waiting for. We got to my house and it was time to say goodbye. Not only to James but to my favorite night this year. And then James leaned in. He kissed me and it was magic. I lay in my bed reliving every little moment of the night playing it in my head. I couldn’t sleep, all I could think about was James. Eventually, my cheeks got tired of blushing and I fell asleep.

All of a sudden I'm woken up by a loud crash. My eyes are still blurry as I jump out of bed. The house was shaking. I went to the living room, and my first thought was an earthquake. I see Mama and Papa on the front porch. I walked out and saw a line of smoke from the sea to the sky. This was the darkest gray smoke I have ever seen. I can hear helicopters flying above us. In the distance, beyond the smoke, I knew this wasn't an earthquake anymore.

Papa ran inside to walk up to my little sister. He told us to pack a bag just in case. I didn't know why, nobody did, but I went to my room and packed. My body was exhausted from running off only a couple hours of sleep but I knew this was important. I packed my clothes, some photos, my favorite book, and James' jacket. It still smelt like the bonfire from last night.

Another crash. The house shakes again. My heart is racing. I knew this was something bad. This island is my home, we are peace and family, what was going on? Honolulu has always been my safe place, more specifically the beach. The water was my safe place and it was in flames. The smoke clouds got bigger.

Papa said this is from the war. I thought our little island was far away from the world, immune to war. Why is my home getting dragged into this violence? So many unanswered questions flew through my head. Then I thought about Alana and James, were they okay? Is anyone dead? I felt lost, and so did my family.

I have never seen Papa lost and confused. He has never had a look of panic in his eyes, except for today. We grabbed our bags and headed to the shelter. Our entire neighborhood was ready to go. As we headed out I saw a khaki-colored plane fly down almost reaching water, heading in the direction of the smoke. Everyone started running. It was pure chaos.

Tears were running down everyone's face and they fled towards the bunkers. I swung my backpack over my shoulder and followed Papa, squeezing my little sister's hand as she stumbled to keep up with the fast pace. More crashes and lines of smoke appeared by the minute getting worse and worse as we ran. I could feel the ground shaking underneath my sandals. It wasn't just the navy base that was attacked, our whole town was. The community was destroyed. Physically and mentally we were all destroyed. After sheltering for hours and walking for more I could

barely keep my eyes open. The tears made my eyelids heavy but I knew it wasn't over. I still didn't know if my friends were okay if my house was still intact. The entire day felt like a blur. Yet, it felt like the longest day of my life. I don't understand why this would happen to my home. Last night was everything I ever wanted and now it's gonna. For all I know James could be dead. I couldn't let my brain go down that path. I grabbed his jacket from my backpack. It didn't smell like the bonfire anymore. The entire town smelt like smoke. The air was filled with sorrow and silence. Silence except for the loud banging and crashing as we watched the navy ships go down in the water.

I saw Alana in the distance, we made eye contact and went running. I squeezed her so hard, I didn't want to let go. We cried standing there in the middle of the chaos hugging. I felt frozen. Alana has been my person for the past thirteen years of my life. I couldn't bear the thought that she wasn't okay. As grateful as I was that Alana was okay, there was one more person I needed to see. We were all in the dark about what was happening, we got some of our information from the radio. That's how Papa knew this was the war.

After hiding until the sun was about to set we headed back to the house. I braced myself just in case we came back to our home in ruins. Our home was intact but something was still wrong. I didn't know where James was. Our streets were destroyed. Nothing felt safe anymore. Nobody felt safe anymore.

The next day as death tolls were being added up and names of missing soldiers came out the community got together to clean up. Alana and I got to work on the debris on the beaches while the men tried to get the fallen trees out of the road. As we went further down the street to clean up we were a block away from James' house.

"Should I go check on him?" I looked at Alana, I needed her approval for everything, she was always better than me at the boy stuff.

"Who? James? Last I heard he went to the dock yesterday to help with everything." Alana told me that and my heart dropped.

I knew now I needed to find out if he was dead or alive. Alana walked me to his house and waited down the street for me. I took a deep breath and knocked on his door. Nobody answered. I tried two more times, but still no answer. After every attempt, my heart beat a little faster. After the third knock, I thought it was gonna fall out of my chest. I turned around to head back.

I saw a group of men carrying a tree to the side of the road. There he was, James, alive and breathing. I ran so fast. He was covered in dirt and sweat but I didn't care. Everything around us was destroyed, everything was gone. The scariest day of my life had just happened and I knew it wasn't over yet. I know the next couple of weeks are going to be hiding in bomb shelters and lots of prayers. I was better now though and I was ready to take on what came next. I knew I couldn't take on any more loss of life, we needed to end this war.

Tags:

[Jenna Barbato](#)

Please Respond – Miriam Da Ponte

A friend of mine once confessed to me, “I’m not saying I’m going to drive my car into a post myself, one of these days. But if I did get into a car accident and don’t make it? I’d be happy to go, that’s for sure.”

Sometimes I think of when I was ten years old, and my dad left the house in the middle of the night to catch the flight that would take him to see my grandfather for the last time. I soon found out he passed while my dad was still in the air, unreachable. That left me with a grudge. Other times I remember how my mother and brother once spent their flight layover in Istanbul together, the December I turned twelve, and took a picture by the German Fountain in Sultanahmet square. One week later, a bomb went off where they had stood, killing ten innocents. That left me with a question.



By: Kayce Lewandowski

Although it is usually not something I can help, I often recall the moment I looked over at my brother from the passenger seat of the car: eyes shut, head hanging over the wheel, dead weight of his right foot resting on the accelerator, while traffic before us came to a standstill. That left me without a car. It also left me with a second chance.

Yesterday, I did not know what to think after I reminded my youngest brother to say his daily prayer for the healing of a man in Ireland my mother knew, a father of five in need of an operation. He came back to my room a few moments later to tell me he had already died. That left me with a doubt.

That same friend recently cautioned me, I should say, that if things get really bad again, well maybe he will take matters into his own hands. Take his life into his own hands. Take his life—. He’s told me about the two times he’s tried, and I’m not calling him a liar in any way, but I don’t

believe him. I never have. I can't. I don't know how to believe him because I don't know how to believe that I would sit up from my bed, walk out to the kitchen in the middle of the night, and head for the knife in the drawer, to see my mortality pour out of my wrists and onto the cold floor tile at last. Death at the hands of chance, at the hands of fate, at the hands of circumstance, this I might begin to understand. But death at my own hands? I was once asked this question.

Tags:

[Miriam Da Ponte](#)

DEC 12TH, 2023 / CREATIVE NON-FICTION

A Puzzle Deprived of its Last Piece – Kacey Veiking

The future is a daunting unknown. We spend the early part of our lives collecting the pieces of our puzzle; this puzzle contains a combination of aspirations we have achieved and failures that may have occurred in doing so. What happens when a piece of that puzzle you have been holding so dearly disappears in an instant? How are you supposed to see the final picture knowing one crucial piece is gone for good?

My dad passed away two weeks and four days ago. Time has moved slowly since. Losing him was, and probably will be, the hardest thing I will ever have to go through. The pain is unimaginable, indescribable, and utterly heartbreaking. Continuing and finding my place in this seemingly dreadful future is hard to imagine. I do my best to walk on this earth with my head held high, but the weight being pushed back upon me is one of great heft. The daunting unknown is frightening. This feeling of fear has not changed in the weeks following his passing. This worry of the future is not a new fear of mine; however, it has been amplified. I find great joy in success, which I force myself to think of often. I wish that soon this fear evaporates, condenses into a new consciousness, and a new feeling of hope showers over me with the impending precipitation that follows. Until then, I wait. I wait with my unfinished puzzle. I wait and hope for a way to rid myself of this fear of the future and use what pieces I do have to complete the picture. I do not want to fill the void that exists within my puzzle, instead, I aspire to find beauty in the remaining, surrounding picture.

Tags:

[Kacey Veiking](#)

POETRY

DEC 11TH, 2023 / POETRY

“Open Your Eyes” – Nate McKenna

Do you want to hear a secret?

Listen closely before I lose it

Close your eyes and hear my voice

Your dreams are not dreams, they are a choice

A choice if you are willing to take

Pause for a moment and take a break

Think about what you dreamed of becoming

Are you working towards achieving that something

Do not let your dreams stay as a dream

It is time for you to start to redeem

Become the version you always wanted to be

Turn those dreams into reality

Most people die with regret

My message you shall never forget

Live as if it is your last day on earth

Then your life will have real worth

Opportunities come and go

Do not make excuses or set the bar low

It is not too late or impossible to start

If you work with purpose and heart

So, take a moment and think about your dreams

Realize it is not as impossible as it seems

Open your eyes and unlock a new door

So that when you pass, your only regret is you did not do more

Tags:

[Nate McKenna](#)

DEC 11TH, 2023 / POETRY
“The Good Ones” – Madison Conklin

Live for the good ones.

Whether that be a good day, a good location, a good person...

Live for the good ones.

Live for the days where it feels like it's you against the world,

For the times where you see the beauty in everything.

Live for that nice lady you see walking on the streets;

The one that smiles and waves at everyone she sees.

Live for the good ones.

Live for the mornings you wake up and hear the birds chirping,

And the sun shines in and blinds you.

Live for that person that makes your heart skip a beat;

The one that makes you feel nothing else matters, even if you haven't met them yet.

Live for the good ones.

Live for the fresh smell of pancakes in the morning,

With your mom greeting you, coffee in hand.

Live for the fresh air in the springtime,

When the temperature gets warmer and all you can smell are the lilacs' perfume.

Live for the good ones.

Live for the sunrises, the sunsets, time with family, time with friends.

The memories that last a lifetime,

The laughs that make your stomach hurt.

Live for the smell of rain before a storm,

and the rainbows that show off their beauty immediately after,

For the morning dew that makes the illusion of glitter on the grass,

Or the beauty of animals and birds singing their songs.

There's beauty in everything, there is a positive in everything;

There is good in everything.

Live for the good ones;

Because if you don't, you'll miss all of the beauty that the world offers.

Live for the good ones;

Because in a blink of an eye, things can come to an end.

Live for the good ones;

Because the next day isn't granted.

Live for the good ones;

Because life's too short to look at the bad...

Live for the good ones.

Tags:

[Madison Conklin](#)

DEC 11TH, 2023 / POETRY
“Symphony of Life” – Kelly Parker

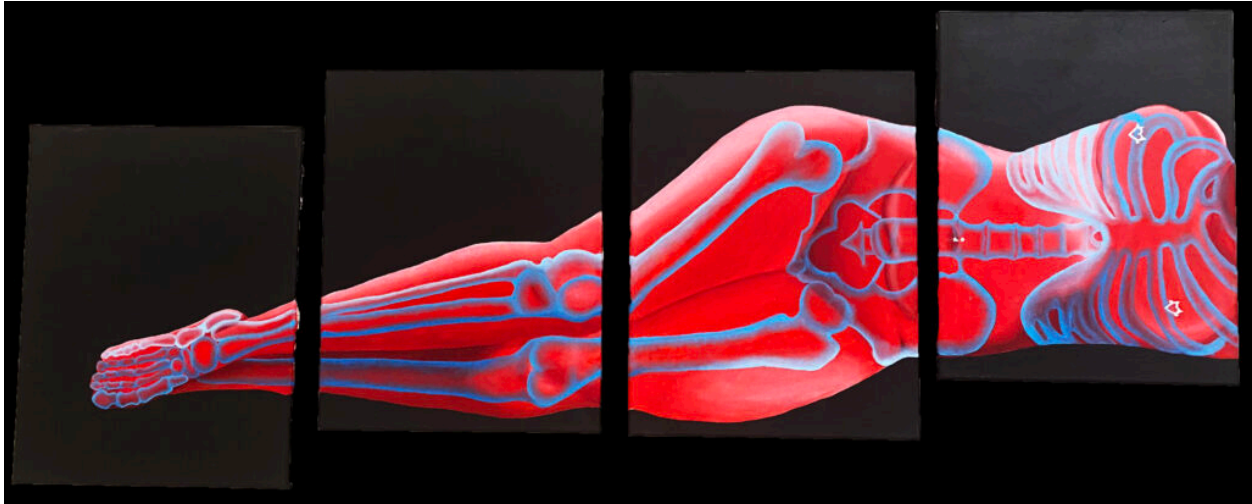
Who are you when the lights turn off and there is no longer an audience to watch the symphony that is your life? You are the conductor and the critic; it is up to you to choose the possibly perilous path. Do you take the harrowing high road, or do you choose the easy way and travel the low road? Are you satisfied with second best or are you always searching for that next test? Remember in all this to take time to rest. In your hunt for that runner's high and sense of ultimate satisfaction do you remember to breathe? Or do you stretch yourself so thin you pass the point of no return and snap? I know when I'm too far gone and I'm leading myself into an inescapable trap, searching for the impossible. Don't be afraid to let that dream destroy you- set new goals, become more ambitious, but don't forget to recap. Remember where you started and question: when the lights turn off and the day is over, is my flame of ambition still burning? When I think about those initial dreams of running and teaching, do I still feel a sense of yearning? If so, keep learning and keep that inner fire burning. Happiness is music to a conductor's ears.

Tags:

[kelly parker](#)

DEC 11TH, 2023 / POETRY

“To Be Known and To Be Understood” – Kelly Parker



Oil on Canvas – Taylor Lyons

People think they know you after they've seen you naked. But I don't think that's true. Sure, they know what you look like- bare as the day you were born- but they don't truly know you. They don't know that you stare into space and your eyes glaze over when the darkness inside you starts to overtake the light. They don't know that you fidget with your necklace when your heart constricts your lungs and it beats faster than a hummingbird's wings. And do they know that you make self-deprecating jokes to convince everyone you're okay (and it works except for those who really know you)? What about the fact that you nervous laugh and shut yourself off from everyone because you don't want them to worry? No, they don't know these things because you hide them deep below the surface, two miles down where there is no light. Only those who care to dive down will find them. You see, people don't really know you when they've seen your physical attributes- dark brown hair, ocean blue eyes, fair skin with a smattering of freckles across your face and arms. What everyone is searching for is to be understood, for someone to finish their sentences and memorize their "tells" that expose their inner thoughts. With the people who truly understand me, I could be wearing a snowsuit but the second someone sees through that facade I've put on- that costume with a permanent smile- I am naked, exposed. When you are naked and exposed people often think they know you, but if they don't understand you, see what makes you tick, well then they never really knew you at all, did they?

Tags:

[kelly parker](#)

DEC 11TH, 2023 / POETRY

“Tug Of War” – Jenna Siuta

It was love like no other

The kind that consumes you

All of you

But in the end,

It's the one that hurts the most

It's like a

Push

And

P u l l

Except that now I am

Pulling away

“I'm sorry I couldn't fix you

I tried everything in my power”

I loved you so much that it pained me

Just to see you walk away from me

I feel you pulling on my strings

Like a puppet master controlling my every move

I feel you pulling away from me

With every conversation that we have

I'm not pulling away

I'm being pushed

Like a boulder down a mountain

“You don't love me enough to fight for me

You gave up every time”

With each conversation

That you consider an argument

There's no effort

I am trying

Can you hear me screaming

You have me trapped

I am truly your puppet

Even Pinocchio had a better chance at escaping

I won't let myself be one

I am now pulling away from you

This is your fault

You're the world's best ventriloquist

Don't blame it on me

Tags:

[Jenna Siuta](#)

DEC 11TH, 2023 / POETRY

“Blades” – Jenna Siuta

Why are you doing this?

I shouldn't be used for harm

Though, I wouldn't say good either

I wasn't made for this

Or was I made for this

Take me away

Tell your friends

Tell your family

Tell anyone who will listen

They will listen to you

They will hear you

I don't want to hurt you

YOU shouldn't want to hurt you

Why are you doing this?

You are loved

You are enough

I shouldn't be used for harm

What is the point

The aftercare

The ice

The visible bandaids

It leads to more harm than good

All for what?

Why are you doing this?

Give me one good reason

I knew that you couldn't.

Tags:

[Jenna Siuta](#)

DEC 11TH, 2023 / POETRY
“Pomegranate” – Bursa Kahraman

Crimson liquid bleeds onto my skin,

As he hands me seeds of the pomegranate,

The danger does not elude my wit,

But I feed on one for it tastes like medicine.

The delightful taste descends my throat,

My love for him remains afloat,

Yet, the taste burns me to my core,

For I am adhered to him forevermore.

DEC 11TH, 2023 / POETRY

“Beauty” – Ayasha Cantey



Julia Fernandez

The blends of yellow, pink, and blue mixing in the sky

It's subtle

It's captivating

The way the light shimmers off the ocean floor

The liquid, It's cold but free

I feel the waves mocking me

They are absent and negligent

Saying hi and bye in a hurry
Rushing to get nowhere fast
Looking at the constant ripples,
It's now that I can finally see
See the importance of slowing down
The clutch of a necklace I once gifted you
It's cold against my warm skin
When I handed the box to your wrinkled hands
But the memory warms me from the inside out
Taking a moment
To breathe in the salty air
To stare at the meshy blended sky
The crashes are enchanting
I close my eyes and I see you
Her hazel eyes, her freckled skin,
adorned by a smile,
And a head full of lush black hair
The wind is welcoming
It dances around your body

It's light and airy

Just like you

The beauty of letting go

The beauty of pacing myself

The beauty of finding yourself in the ripples of the waves

The beauty of the grainy sand beneath your toes

It all becomes clear to me right now

Sitting here holding this necklace close to my heart

Whenever I need you; I know exactly where to find you

You are everywhere in nature

Tags:

[Ayasha Cantey](#)

DEC 11TH, 2023 / POETRY
“Internal Narrative” – Emily Callahan

I do not,

Gaze,

Into your eyes,

To see my own reflection.

Nor do I,

Measure,

My worth,

In your rejection.

I do not see your opinion,

As a beacon of truth,

Rather,

It is a reminder,

Of how low,

One can stoop.

Your beacon of truth,

Is a gaudy,

Mess,

Of sequin,
Showing the world,
Just how far,
You are,
From the deep-end.
But Looks don't lie,
Neither do actions.
Defensive,
When one is attacking.
Your voice,
So grand in sound,
a powerful reminder,
Of why,
I don't come around.
Yet the silence,
Of sorry unspoken,
No longer,
Leaves,
My broken heart,

Open.

For I have chosen,

To set your words free

Crafting,

An internal narrative,

That suits me.

Tags:

[Emily Callahan](#)

DEC 12TH, 2023 / POETRY

“Blown By The Breeze” – Emily Callahan



Hummingbird By Sam Cunniff

The sound of your name,

Dances across my tongue.

Wrapped in your blanket,

Along the fire,

I see your smile,

Only for it to disappear.

Our time,

While full, was fleeting,

Now you are just dandelion seeds,

Blown in the summer breeze,

Only to land in someone else's yard,

And make their wishes come true.

Tags:

[Emily Callahan](#)

DEC 12TH, 2023 / POETRY
“Restless” – Hannah Schultz

tossing

turning

repeat

repeat

repeat

anger

frustration

turmoil of the mind

TURN OFF!

no need

must i really plead?

count some sheep

say some prayers

relief isn't found

anywhere

tangled

twisted

too hot

too cold

turn left

turn right

does anyone hear this?

what time is it?

don't look.

if only it were that easy

how much longer?

i'm not even answering that

what was that noise?

said nobody else

maybe just close my eyes

in hopes

that the

that

insanity that the *insanity w i l l*

RING *RING*

Tags:

Hannah Schultz

DEC 12TH, 2023 / POETRY

“she” – Hannah Schultz

she is timid

she is shy

she lacks self-confidence

...on the inside

brave face

in the race

to be the best

she can be

she is organized

she is smart

she is humble

with a good heart

putting others first

while feeling her worst

nothing is enough

when she treats herself so rough

things they say

keep up

keep up

keep

up

be the person

they want her to be

take down the mask

something they'll never see

don't speak up

keep your voice in check

nobody cares

besides,

girls like you don't disrespect

get to know her

and you'll see

the real person she wants to be

the one who jokes

the one who sings

the one who doesn't worry

about too many things

she is strong

she is brave

she is intelligent

in the most perfect way

what she wants you to see

but she'll never show

unless someone proves it's important enough to know

Tags:

[Hannah Schultz](#)

