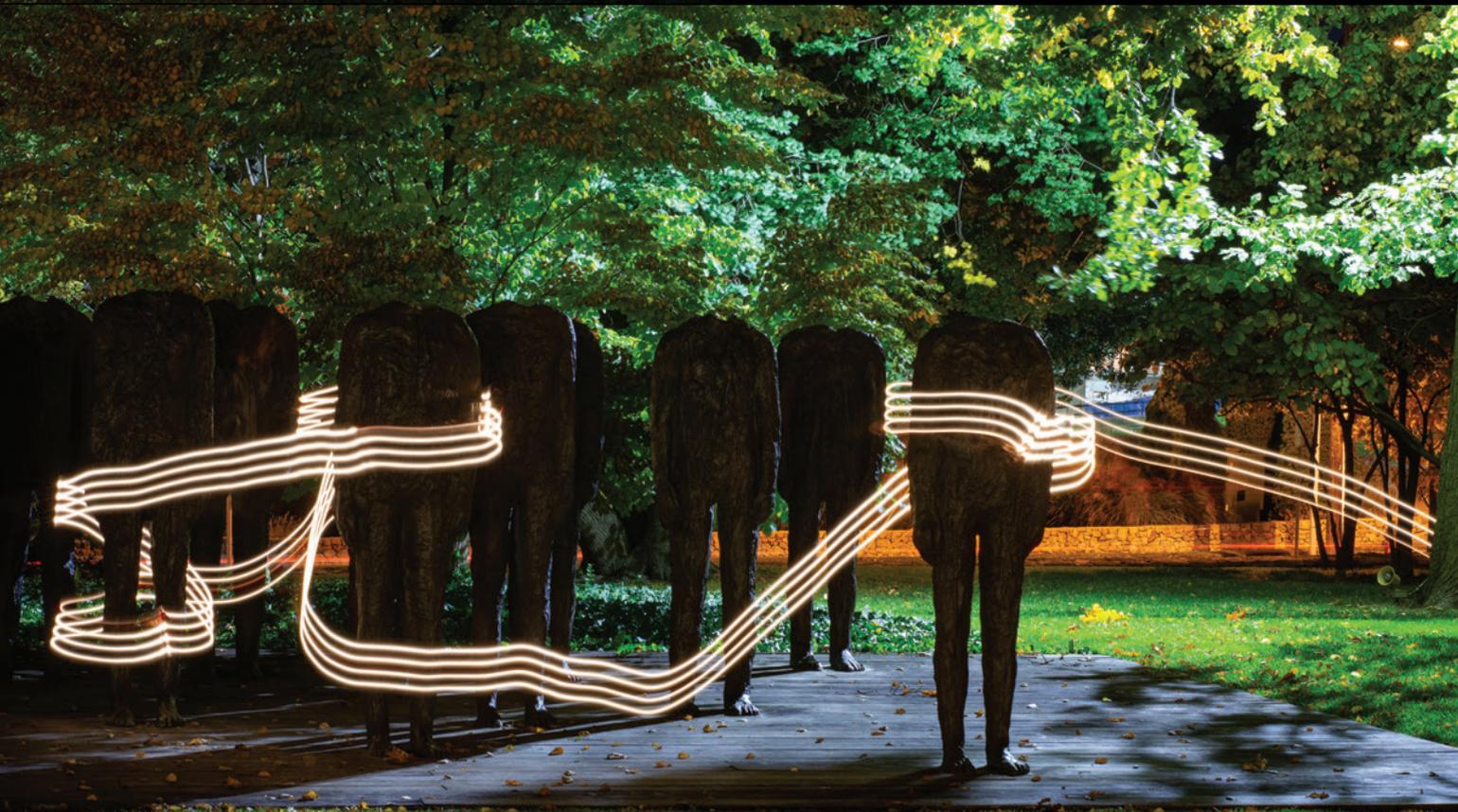


Spring 2020



Shorelines

A Journal of Student Creativity



METROPOLITAN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
LONGVIEW



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Cover Image: **"Threads of Light"** by Adam Johnson, photography

Me * You * Us

By Debbie Atwood

3rd Place Poetry

It's me who walks into class early to scope out a good seat.

It's me who has a backpack loaded with everything I could possibly need.

It's me who is eager to learn and to soak up information.

It's me who has more years behind me than in front.

It's me who wonders why I'm here.

I'm missing something...

You

It's you who bounces into class, maybe a little late.

It's you who leans over and asks to borrow a pen...and paper.

It's you who is eager to get through this and onto the next thing.

It's you who hides your phone (but we still hear it beep)!

It's you who wonders why you're here.

You're missing something...

Me

And now it's time to break into pairs.

It's me who turns to

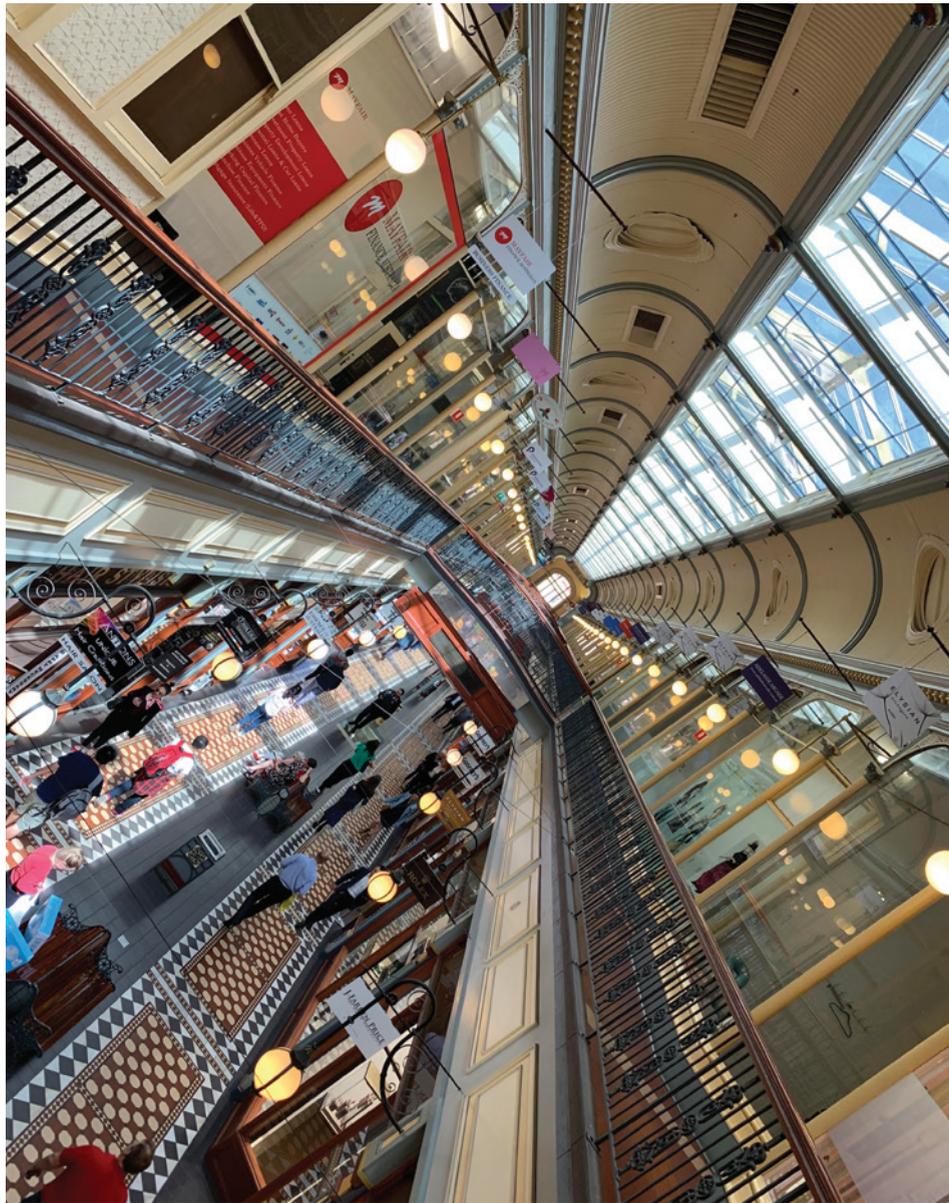
You

And the realization becomes clear that we are in this together.

Understanding and **s**upporting

Us





“An Indoor Shopping Area in Adelaide, South Australia”
by Danielle Tucker, photography

The Oddity Shop

By Jael Burton

3rd Place Prose

In a dim corner of New York City, on an even dimmer backstreet, there was a quiet little shop. It was an oddity shop, but not one as portrayed through many children’s television programs. There were no pickled bat wings or shrunken heads and there were no cursed dolls in any of its corners. No, it was much duller than all that, in a commercial sense. Just simple, strange little items sat on the crowded shelves. On one shelf was a rose-gold typewriter dated to three years before its model ever graced the market. The shop also had a large bird, a snowy owl to be precise. The odd thing about this bird was not that she was an owl, of course, but rather that none of the shop visitors knew if she was a real owl or a complex animatronic. She twitched and looked and stretched exactly as a live owl, but she never left her perch by the back counter to eat or to drink or to just flap about. Other oddities included small pieces of sea glass customers occasionally found about the shop, that always fit together just right. Whenever someone did find a piece, they glued it onto a back wall where the pieces began to form into a mural, looking suspiciously like the Sistine Chapel and the customer got 35% off their purchase. And somehow the shop was quite haunted and an apparition or two could often be seen perusing the shelves, but one must keep in mind that ghosts are not what the public assumes them to be. They are not translucent and do not hover. They look much as a live person would, they look much as they did when they died,

a healthier version of that state perhaps, and a little more brightly lit. Thus, no one batted an eye.

The two shop owners were a nice, elderly pair best friends, Miss Angelika Harper and Mister Arnold Harm. Miss Angelika was a round lady with soft eyes, a dark complexion and was always wrapped in some kind of hand knitted shawl or scarf. Mister Harm, on the other hand, was tall and pale. Even still, he was no less round and his eyes were no less kind.

On any given day, either of the two would volunteer the information to whomever they were speaking to at the time, that they were eighty-five years old and the other eighty-seven. In truth, they were both eighty-six and had no reason to lie about it. No matter their age however, neither of them had ever been married or had children, nor did they have any young relatives. As a result of this they were in need of finding their successor.

One of the shop’s customers was a woman named Peregrine Simmer. She was twenty-four years old and quite lonely. She frequented the oddity shop and often stayed, chatted and had a cup of whatever herbal beverage Mister Harm was making at the time. She hardly ever purchased anything when she came in, opting to instead spend most of her time conversing with the elderly owners. The last thing Peregrine did buy was two months ago; a clock that ticked backwards and was somehow

always able to predict how many minutes away from sleep its owner was. At present, it read 13 minutes from midnight, which meant in reality, it was 2:43 A.M. and Peregrine would finally fall asleep at 2:56 A.M.

The next morning was Saturday, so as usual, Peregrine took up her map and found her way down to the oddity shop. A cheerful call of “Good morning, dear!” from Miss Angelika, and a “I’ve just started a new pot of chai!” from an unseen Mister Harm greeted her. “Hello, Miss Angelika, you’re looking radiant as always, and that sounds lovely Mister Harm!” Peregrine enthusiastically responded in turn, and hung her coat on a rack by the owl and got about recounting her week to Miss Angelika. Mister Arnold joined them at Tuesday when she was recounting finishing an art project she’d been working on for a month. On Wednesday, when she had gone to a job interview, the shop owners were sharing glances. By Friday, they had made up their minds. Handing her a small cup of tea, Mister Arnold asked Peregrine,

“Have they contacted you yet? The interviewers I mean.”

“No, they haven’t.”

“Well if they don’t, and if you’d like, we thought you could work here?” the offer took Peregrine by surprise. For so long she’d been trying for employment with no success, yet somehow, she’d never thought to apply to the oddity shop. It took her no time to give her reply,

“Oh, yes, please! If you’re hiring, absolutely!”

Thus, Peregrine began her employment at the oddity shop. The interviewers never called her back, which was well and good for the oddity shop, as Peregrine made for an excellent employee. She cleaned up the store and in her first month there, managed to boost sales quite a bit. She accomplished this by selling copies of her map. The thing about the maps Peregrine sold, was that the oddity shop was never listed on any New York map, thus making it very hard to find. With the maps that Peregrine sold, more customers were able to find it.

Peregrine’s clock ticked backwards toward sleep and struck twelve. Mornings came and went, and soon Peregrine was spending all her time at the oddity shop. Even on her days off she would come into the shop and talk with Miss Angelika and Mister Harm. Her apartment was small and didn’t allow for pets, it was much more pleasant at the shop. Whether Peregrine was working or not, she began to notice things. Small things, always small things, but the kind that felt as if they should add onto each other into something greater. They didn’t typically, but it certainly felt that way to Peregrine. Uncluttering dusty corners of the shop made her realize that the architecture of the outside didn’t seem to quite line up with the floor plan inside. She had failed geometry in high school though, so she wrote that one off. She began to wonder where Mister Harm got his tea from too as the shop had no kitchen. That one was harder to justify. The thing she felt most of all, however, was the dead. Peregrine had never paid much attention to the apparitions, nor had she realized that they were dead at all. But now, she was spending more time around them

and as that so often happens, she began to see their faint glow. It was a natural kind of glow, more golden than blue. They had the kind of skin that makes a person wonder what kind of products they use, for the intent of giving them a go for themselves. The more time she worked with the apparitions around, the more Peregrine saw them on the streets. People, softly lit around their edges, walking around New York or in downtown cafes. The occasional squirrel too.

Peregrine’s clock read 376 minutes till midnight when she went into work the next day. That was when she first saw that same glow on Miss Angelika’s face. “Hello, dear!” she called, as if nothing was amiss at all. Peregrine turned her head to the man at a front window. He was dressed in a dapper vest and pants that looked to be styled from the 1800s. Around him, and in his deep smile lines, that tell-tale look of an apparition. When Peregrine turned back to Miss Angelika, her own smile faltered ever so slightly.

Peregrine’s clock read 376 minutes till midnight when she first saw that same glow on Miss Angelika’s face.

“You look positively radiant today, Miss Angelika,” said Peregrine, and looked to Mister Harm, resetting a shelf of figurines. Her stomach dropped. “As do you, Mister Harm.” She said softly. She said nothing more for the time being but didn’t miss the glance that passed between the two. At lunch, Mister Harm asked, “How have you been lately?” It wasn’t as though he didn’t know; he just asked every day. “Feeling more alive than ever, thank you!” she said

and continued with her salad. Miss Angelika sighed, “Is there something you’d like to ask, dear?” There was, obviously, but then it struck Peregrine that if she were to ask two perfectly well people if they were deceased, it would be a mortifying experience. On the other hand, if they were, she figured it was something she ought know.

“Forgive me if you’re not, but are you-” Peregrine paused to look up at them, stumbling over her words. “-are you dead? Ghosts I mean, apparitions, I-”

“Yes.”

“Oh.”

The answer was so abrupt, it almost shocked her. Mister Harm smiled jovially and said, “Well! You’ve figured it out just in time, Angelika and I had something we wanted to say.”

“Arnold!” cried Miss Angelika, as she hadn’t expected him to approach the topic so readily.

“It’s got to happen sometime! And you know you’re exhausted Angelika, we’ve talked about this at length.” Miss Angelika’s face slackened with acceptance. “Fine! Peregrine, dear, just hear us out, will you?”

With a nod of consent from Peregrine, they began. Miss Angelika and Mister Harm were indeed, dead, and as such, they had been running the shop for much longer than anyone would’ve guessed. Perhaps their tiredness wasn’t a physical one. After all, a mental exhaustion can be just as bad. It was high

time they retired, and they obviously meant for it to go to Miss Peregrine Simmer. They told her as much in no uncertain terms, but then took pause in their offer. Miss Angelika continued, "The thing about the shop, Darling, is that it doesn't quite follow the living rules. The kitchen, for example, is through that wall there, see?" She pointed to it. Peregrine didn't see, but she supposed that might be the point. "The thing about that wall is not that you have to walk through it to get to a room behind it, but that there is no room behind it. Not in the living world anyway. The shop is just as much a ghost shop as a real one. Maybe more."

"So what are you proposing?" asked Peregrine, though she understood exactly what it was. Mister Harm took over for Miss Angelika. "We know you love the shop. Peregrine you spend every waking moment here, so you can have it. But you'll have to die. So that's your dilemma then. What's the shop worth to you?" Peregrine had to step away to process what was being told her. With her back to them, Peregrine looked around at the shop and suddenly the reality of it all staggered her and she had to grab a shelf to steady herself. They waited patiently for her to come to a decision. Miss Angelika opened her mouth to suggest that she go home and think about

it for a day. But, before she could, Peregrine summing up all her courage knew, not what she must do but, what she wanted to do, turned back around to them and replied,

"Oh, Miss Angelika, the shop was never worth anything to me at all. It was you, and Mister Harm. Nothing is ever worth dying for, but to be with people who love you, that is. Now how are we going to do this?"

Mister Harm produced a small glass vile from his pocket, full of a thick, colorless liquid.

"This," is all he said as he guided her to a couch to sit on. Peregrine uncapped the vile, thought briefly that it smelled like nectarine, then, in less than a moment, the fluid inside was gone. She looked up to the two kind faces of her elderly friends from her seat on the plush blue sofa.

"When I wake up... will things be different, or do they feel the same?" Her vision began to blur as Angelika replied,

"Oh darling, you never wake up." Peregrine's body slumped backwards, deeper into the sofa cushions and her clock struck midnight.



Vegan

By Kylee Faulk

Ribs
Right in front of me
Gates barbeque sauce
dripping meat a perfectly light pink

10 years
I've spent eating side salad,
but today I wonder
"Is it worth it?"

My friends sit around-
digging straight in
with no hesitation
teeth tearing meat
drunk on grease
and sauce

That was me
10 years ago
no remorse
bacon in the morning
steak at night

I had my reasons
10 years ago-
now with rationale forgotten,
my lips twitch
my taste buds rise.
"Why?"

"Why not?"
this pig is already gone
"What's the harm?"

10 years
do I still remember the taste?
breathe deep, the smell
fresh, warm, juicy

Hands to my sides, I look down
my salad- boring, plain,
predictable

I reach and the taste is there
before I feel it on my tongue
tender, exciting, spicy
one, then two, then three

Do I stop? No
I have 10 years of ribs to replace



The State of the Union Address

By Ian Van Horn

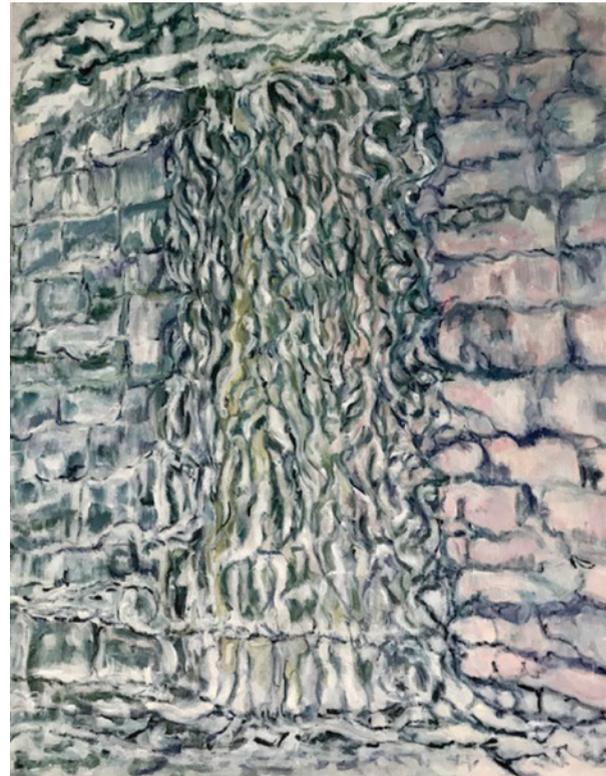
Once every winter I am delivered
to a crowd of people, some angry,
some proud. But this year I can't
help but feel conflicted for
I do not know what's real and what's
fake.

I feel his hands hold me, they're
cold and small. It makes me feel
dirty, like a tarnished plaque of
silver. I watch him smile smugly to
the sea of the G.O.P., unphased by his
lies.

Roaring and thundering is all
that I hear. It's chaos in
place of compromise,
both sides are to blame.
The flag and the seal both
desecrated by
fear.

"Four more years" some chant
to drown out the cries of others
yelling "lock him up" but
checks and balances have not
survived. Murdered by a trial that had
no witnesses.

The real State of the Union is
broken, in shambles, and failing
its people. The only time I felt
right or justified is when
Nancy Pelosi tore me
in half.



"Melting Memories"
by Brenda Phillips, painting



"Suspicious Bunny"
by Aubrie Heck, painting



“Time Stood Still”
by Adam Johnson, photography

A Cat, the National Cemetery, and the Remarkable Story of a Secret Mission

by Debbie Atwood

As usual, the General arrived to work early, but this time he diverted from his regular routine and headed straight back to the administrative office to look for the two young Marines who worked alongside me. He had a mission for them, but he did not divulge the nature of it. He turned on his heels and headed back to his office with orders for me to send Corporal Musser and PFC Jones to his office upon their arrival to work.

My imagination kicked into overdrive wondering what the General wanted. We worked in the Research, Development, and Studies (RD&S) division and were often used as couriers to deliver information to the Pentagon. I hated those missions and could remember the time they sent me to deliver a prototype of a ballistic missile. I was wearing a skirt. The prototype weighed about 60 pounds and was almost as tall as I was. I got some strange looks when I boarded the shuttle to the Pentagon, and when I made some comment about it being the latest in personal security and I never leave home without it, folks laughed. I got on the shuttle and made my delivery. Mission accomplished.

Musser and Jones arrived within minutes of the General's departure. They both seemed eager to see what the General needed of them. They left the office in haste. It was business as usual at RD&S, however, after a few hours had elapsed, Musser and Jones had not returned. I thought it strange and again wondered what they were up to. Right before lunch, they returned, both sweaty and disheveled. They had apparently been doing physical labor, and for once I was grateful to be wearing a skirt. I could not wait to hear their story.

As so much time has passed, I will now share the story with you and can verify that it is 100% true. First, a few details about the setting. Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (HQMC) is housed in the Arlington Naval Annex. Across the street is Henderson Hall, which is a barracks for enlisted Marines. Next door to Henderson Hall is a section of Arlington National Cemetery. The only thing that separates Henderson Hall from the cemetery is a black, wrought iron fence. Marines staggering back from the Enlisted Club late at night would avoid walking along that fenceline. Even a Marine can get a little creeped out about living next to a cemetery where so many have found their final resting place.

Greenspace in the Washington, D.C. area is few and far between and the General lived on a several acre ranch in the country. He drove his own personal vehicle into work every morning, arriving at the

office by 0630. That fateful morning, as he was backing down his driveway, he accidentally ran over his daughter's cat, killing it. It was a typical farm cat, one that lived more outside than in, but his daughter had named and cared for it, so it was considered hers. His daughter, a 2nd Lieutenant who was stationed at Quantico, Virginia, would be leaving a bit later and he didn't want her day to start off badly. Thinking quickly, he went into the house and retrieved a black garbage bag. He scooped up the cat, gently placed it in the bag, put the bag in the trunk of his car, and headed to work.

Musser and Jones' mission was to retrieve the bag from the trunk of the General's car and bury the cat. Like obedient Marines, they followed the General's orders. Their dilemma was where to bury a cat amidst so much concrete? There was only one solution, and that was the most famous burial place in our country: Arlington National Cemetery. So, on a very hot July day, they scaled the wrought iron fence and used a government-issued e-tool (shovel) to dig a cat-sized hole and buried the deceased cat.

While reflecting on the mission, Musser just had one thing to say, "I'm just glad he didn't run over his horse."



"Time Whisperer"
by Brenda Phillips, painting

My Brother

By Allison Merrill

Weak and small, not exceptionally tall,

Doesn't know how to be quiet at all.

Running around,

Yelling loud,

Does this make you proud?

With my eyes constantly rolling

Because it was annoying

You still kept on going.

Even as my face grew more red

You wouldn't care if I dropped dead!

Year after year,

You still in my ear,

Now a blessing to hear .

Now you are strong and very tall,

With a new voice that changed after all.

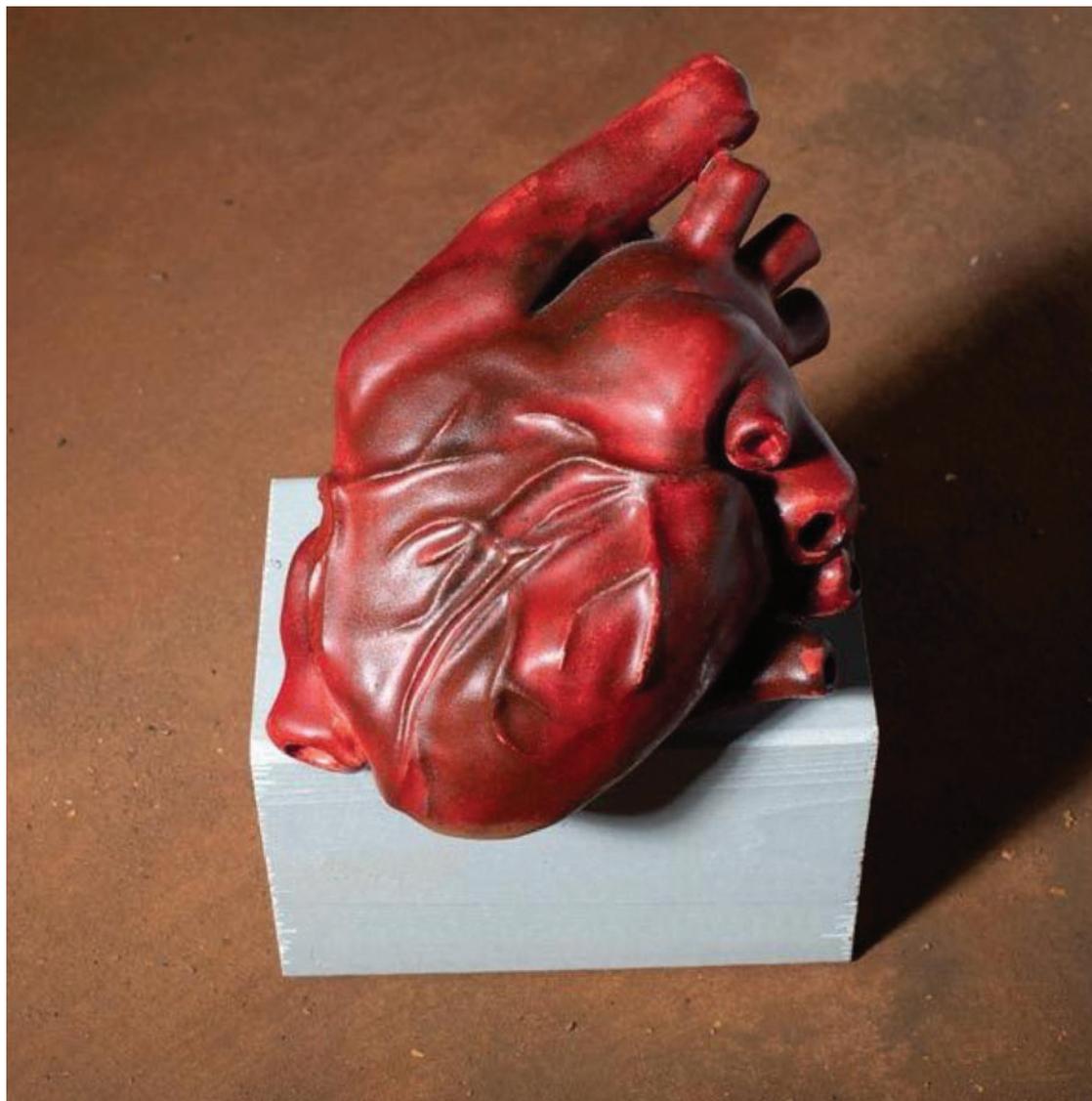
The man you are today, of him you should be proud,

Maybe even celebrate a little loud.

Now apart I call just to hear,

Your laugh, which has become so dear.





“Ceramic Anatomical Heart”
by Zoe Balistreri, sculpture

Not Quite Whole

By Madison Clark

1st Place Prose

I open my eyes and realize I have no idea where I am or who I am. I am not even sure that I am indeed awake. I view the world around me full of color and joy. The town's parade is the biggest event of the year and everything is beautiful. Elementary girls smile and wave as they stride by, some missing teeth. The older kids march in a band, playing with all their might, some with trombones, some with flutes. The mayor rides in his vintage car with his wife at his side, while the firemen decked out in their uniforms, wave to their wives. All have smiles on their faces. Everything is so perfect. The only thing that is imperfect is me, Jerry Black, the guy everyone pats on the back for his good deeds in the war before realizing that I can barely stand up right. Yup, I can barely stand upright because only one leg belongs to me anymore, the other belongs to the war and lies buried across the sea. That was something I never thought I'd have to do, bury my own leg.

Now I see this parade and think about how the only ugly thing about this entire town is me, it's me. I don't even know who I am anymore or where I belong, for even my hometown doesn't belong to me anymore. Instead all that belongs to me is a picture of bombs in my head and dead

men, lying in trenches in heaps. All I can see is Mac Clay's limp where the shrapnel stabs him or Clint Ross' ear lying fallen in the dirt.

Someone crazy thought it would be a good idea to have the town's hero on a float during the parade so they stuck a one legged man on a float bearing the American flag. A small girl smiles up at me with confusion as she sees but one leg. One leg! What good is a man with one leg!?

A horse starts and gives a disturbed whinny, followed by a deep tuba out of tune, the grocer's holler, and the first firecracker sounds forth as it drags me back to the war.

John Blonde is running for his life as the ground shatters with shrapnel. I load my rifle, but what good is it against an enemy you can't see?

“John!” I holler, trying to rush through the thick smoke. He gives me a curt nod as we stumble on. Our task is given: to give a message many trenches south. We both halt at the sight of a skull blown in half, a hand being eaten by ants. What's left of the man is utterly unrecognizable. A chill goes down my spine. John turns to the left and heaves his guts into the barren ground next

to us. No man should see that. No man should endure that.

“You’re the man, Jerry Black!” A voice pulls me back to the present, and I notice my neighbor shouting at me from below. I smile weakly, feeling somewhat dizzy and nauseated.

A clash of cymbals,
A distant laugh,
A child’s squeal for candy

I rush through the dense forest, trying desperately to get through, branches slapping my face.

“John!! Michael!?”

I saw John Blonde laying on the ground, his face pale as he stretches out his arm slowly toward me. I noticed blood seeping out of the abdomen of his ragged uniform. Blast it all, this man has a wife and kids!!

“Jerry, Jerry-” He strained.

“What is it, John?” I managed, as I tried to stuff my handkerchief into the wound, only to have it inundated in blood.

“Tell-Tell, my wife-tell her that I love her and-and tell my kids too.” John’s eyes slid shut, “And Jerry? Don’t let the ants eat me...” And he was just gone.

I felt coolness shocking me back into reality. Where was I? Oh, City Hall. The mayor hands me a medal and smiles broadly. Who ever thought that a medal could take the place of my leg or Michael or John?

“I don’t want that. “

The drop of a journalist’s pen,
The silence of the town,
The cough in the back of the room

Men ran for cover, shouting obscenities as they went. This was no place for boys, this was no place for men. This was only where good stood starkly next to evil, but each side viewed themselves in the right. I ran quickly over the battlefield, having been hardened by each grave dug, as if it added more stone into my heart rather than a beating heart. A bomb! KaBOOM! The earth vibrated into chaos. Pain shot down my right leg, and I cried out as my hands reached out grasping only to hit the ground below. Even though the world stood in chaos around me, I just sat there for a moment and stared at the empty space beside my left leg. I spotted the missing limb a couple yards away. I was in deep pain, but I barely felt it. Men were still running for their lives, and I sat bleeding. As I waited for either death or help I didn’t know, I clawed at the earth, dragging dirt over the leg, attempting to bury my own leg.

“Excuse me?” The mayor stutters, not at all expecting this response.

“I don’t want it. Have it engraved to John Blond or Michael Sternback. They deserve it. I don’t.”

I leaned on my crutches in the captain’s office and he looked at me in dismay.

“Honorable discharge?” Try, you’re broken and

are of no use to us anymore. Somehow that hurt more than the actual physical pain. I was being told I was nothing more than a shell of a man. A shell of a man.

The mayor continues to extend the shimmering trinket of appreciation to me. I had given it all to the war, and the war gave me $\frac{3}{4}$ of a body and a piece of metal? This is a nightmare.

The flash of a camera

The wind moving slowly
The sound of my mind crumbling
A bomb! A bomb!

It’s all in my head, but my leg is still gone. A nightmare goes away with daybreak, but it seems that this is a dream from which I will never wake.



A Cage of Memories

By Madison Clark

I have been to hell and back,

My brain reminds me
As my past assaults my mind

With memories that cause me sorrow
And lies that truly bind.

They say I’m broken beyond repair
That I can never rise again.

They raise their pitchforks in protest
Of my efforts to build a life anew.

The memories, they haunt me
And I know I have built a cage.

One designed as haven,
But isolating as a cave.

So I long for my freedom
From my fear, but still I fear the worst.

I am scared to know the change
That I really know is a must.

So my soul feels the cracks
Of bursting from its shell,

And my heart cries out in agony
While my God frees me from my cell.

So the pain seeps in like a poison
But hope rises as a resolute knight,

And the lies they spread their plague
But hope brings about their demise.

So tell my heart it’s okay,
It’s really in good hands,

And tell my past it’s okay
That I can learn to live again.



Dysphoria

By Blue Silker

1st Place Poetry

A miniscule clump of cells growing
in a dark pool of warmth
Set to be ejected into cold blinding
confusion. My existence, a fate which I
did not control, terrified me.

I blamed the skin I was born into. Forced
into existence outfitted in layers of blood
and tissue that never quite fit right. The hair
crawled down across my collarbones,
like a thousand tiny black widow spiders.
I lived never knowing why I couldn't like,
or even tolerate,
the face that stared back at me in the mirror.

Suddenly one day, I knew what I needed to do.
With every new week I had become more of
myself than I had ever been. From the buzzing
razor gliding across my scalp, to the thick medicine
I pushed into my muscle every Tuesday. My soul began
bleeding into my bruised ribs and my aching vertebrae.

I watched as a dead flower transformed into a mighty oak tree.
And the soft pale flesh that once bordered my face was now
tailored around my jaw, accompanied by soft patches of hair.
I rejoiced in the euphoria of my own calloused hands. I saw
the beauty of this existence that I was so fortunate to experience.
I finally understood how to love myself.



"The All Seerer"

by Antonio Waltermate, digital image

Ragnarok

A Short Story of Glorious Failure

By Antonio Waltermate

The gods had forsaken them. That much was clear to David for they put out no hand to stop the wave of demons that marched over the hills to crush what remained of the congregation. The proud people of the Holy Order had finally met the end times, Ragnarok of all they knew. David sharpened his sword and quickly shined his gauntlets, loading his rifle and storing away his grenades. These were the end times and he would not go silently. With his weapons at the ready and his armour gleaming in the light of the end of days David exited his room and walked calmly into the immense halls of the cathedral where he always readied himself before battle. *“One should always present themselves to the lord before they step forward to fight by his side”* That was the mantra he had been taught since he was but a boy. It had yet to fail him.

In the bright incandescent light of the cathedral, men rushed to and fro with no visible goal or destination. Most had found themselves so trapped within the chaos that they could do little more than join it into damnation. David would not fall to the primal instinct of defeat. He instead reached for a deeper instinct, survival. As he made his way down the long stairway into the massive courtyard below David steeled himself for war, double-checking every inch of his armour until he was confident all was as it should be.

David continued out of the towering doorway and breathed in the morning air as the breeze blew gently against his face. It was a beautiful day, both for battle and even for victory if it could be found against the oncoming hordes. The little dash of hope was nothing more than a fool’s dream but David had fought for years for that dream. He couldn’t bring himself to give it up now.

“They stand at the gates!” someone yelled ahead, out of sight as crowds began to rush away from the front gates, fearing what would emerge from the other side. David understood their panic. He had known it once and he didn’t miss it for the world. David drew his longsword, confidence exploding from the very sight of the weapon as the crowd fell silent. Wordlessly, David made his way past the people he had sworn to protect. There was no need for words, only time for deliverance.

The gate laid on the horizon. The loud banging that emitted from beyond sight even at the distance should’ve been shocking, but the sound of heavy footsteps just behind David eased him. The footsteps belonged to his men, Templars of the Holy Order. It was the reminder of their brotherhood that cooled his nerves. They would make hell drown in the blood of the condemned and when they were taken in battle they would fight forevermore side by side as they had since

childhood. If the gods had truly forsaken them, perhaps they may fall into hell, left to endless battle. Truly a warrior’s glee. They offered each other no words as they calmly marched forward, the gate swaying beneath the weight of the enemy unseen. Dozens were retreating past them in fear as the eternal walls threatened to buckle in, just as the unholy street prophets had foreseen for all the years past. If not corrected by fate, then by the inevitability of anarchy itself.

David reached the gate first, pulling his sword and holding it out to his side while he glanced over at his brothers in arms doing the same. Some pulled their rifles, others readied grenades. All knew what was coming. They’d seen it before, the eye of a forever looming storm.

The gate before them began to break, chunks of wood splintering from its battered frame while more and more Templars joined the ranks of those who had followed David to the fight. They were easily more than one hundred men donned fully in their armour. Each one gleamed in the setting sun, giving off its final winks of light while the sky turned into the dark red of Armageddon. David tensed as the pounding on the gate intensified, the hunger of the oncoming hordes bringing them an unknown strength great for tearing flesh from bone.

Just as the pounding seemed to be unstoppable and the gate seemed ready to crash to the ground broken, everything fell silent save for a light gust of wind that sent chills down the spines of those

unprepared for it. The wind was gentle. It was comforting to the touch but unsettling given how close the end stood, waving them all over the edge of extinction with the lull of an easy spring gust. The silence was deafening, no single man dared break it nor did any one take their eyes from the gates that promised their inevitable doom.

The quiet gave the men time for contemplation. David tried to ignore the call to think of the path that had brought him to where he stood, but all the same he couldn’t resist. He remembered the hardships he had endured, the loneliness he had committed to as a boy after his father left for the crusades through the stars, never to return alive. He couldn’t stand to think of the pain he had felt but he found no refuge from the tales he had heard from the guardsmen who had brought the news of his father’s demise. They told the tale of a hero, but heroes didn’t make good fathers. It was then that his pain had turned to anger, a hatred that carried him to the very place his father once stood. David stood where his father had faltered and failed, the Captain of the Templars. An icon of the Holy Order that now buckled to invaders from the dark void of space. He however spared himself the one error his father had made, when offered a lifetime of companionship and comfort he turned away; a decision he had regretted in the wordless evenings where he drank his fill and fell into quiet peace of sleep.

David snapped from his self reflection at the sound of low growls from beyond the ragged gates that had thus far spared the final hold of the Order

from slaughter. He quickly refocused himself and tightened the grip on his blade, pulling his rifle from his back and readying with his other. All around him his men did the same, as they had trained to do in preparation for this day. Their efforts for readiness had grown more sure with each colony that fell silent to the sounds of chaos and destruction followed by the bitterness of defeat.

A crunch sounded, a long sharpened red tendril stabbing through the gate trying to pierce David's chest but falling inches short. David responded quickly, ducking beneath the tendril and slicing it in two with a flick of his blade then pivoting in position to unload a long burst from his rifle; the thundering shots of his weapon reawakening the pounding on the gate. Within seconds a mass of indecipherable figures spilled through a new hole opened just to the right of the next. David leapt back while arcs of gunfire spilled into the beasts from his comrades behind, barely audible now over the shrill warcry as the ravenous beasts howled with all their might.

David scrambled to his feet, tossing aside his now empty rifle and swinging his sword around to slow the advance of the creatures that continued to encroach on him. He finally caught a good glance at the demons he had trained to repel all his life. They were grotesque to look upon, covered in the dried blood of their conquests through the outer colonies. Their faces were short, as was their build, many fattened by their victories. But the long tendrils that stretched from their backs along with

the razor sharp claws and teeth they possessed kept them more than able to finish the Templars who stood in their path.

David stood ready while gunfire sent limbs sailing through the air and bloodied mounds of flesh slumping to the ground. Within seconds the gunfire ceased as the Templars ammo depleted with no time to reload. The beasts came forth drawn by the promise of blood and bone. Their yaps became a warcry that seemed to make the ground rumble. All the same, the Templars stood the ground with blades at the ready.

Over the chaos that charged towards them David yelled to his men, raising a fist and clenching every muscle in his carefully crafted body, "FOR GLORY AND HOME!"

David's men repeated his cry and followed him as he charged towards the invaders. If they were to fall this day, David would not have them fall cowards. As both sides approached David fought the urge to turn around, to wince at the anticipated clash that would follow. He managed to keep the urges away for the time.

All in one moment the melee began, with bodies enveloping the air around David on all sides. He took a deep breath and moved to action, swiping his sword at the figures ahead of him while trying to ignore the shrieks of his men as one by one they found their end. Blood flowed steadily beneath David's feet, staining his armour with the remains of both friend and foe indiscriminately.

David slashed down yet another of the demons with a guttural cry, slicing open its stomach and pushing it down into the blood pool below. Without thought he leapt further into the fight, his boot crushing the beast's neck as he advanced. He didn't make it far before a tendril slammed him to the ground, cutting through the flesh of his shoulder with brutal efficiency. David rolled to his feet as he had trained to a hundred times, advancing steadily on the beast before probing at its defenses. This one was different, smarter than the others. It didn't rush as its brethren did nor did it relish in the bloodlust. The creature's eyes held a cunning glare unlike the others and its stance delivered a stunning defense against David's strikes.

David stabbed out at the monster, all too aware that his energy was being sapped away by the bone shattering pain that exploded from his wound. But David didn't falter. He had found in absence of his calm, disciplined strength a new power: anger. Rage filled him more and more as the battle continued, boiling over in his every fiber at the sight of his men dying and broken. David surged forward, his weapon held firmly over his head, slamming it down on the beast's club which now kept the cold steel blade from splitting it right down the center. Before the creature could counter, David rocketed a fist into the demon's throat, sending it to its knees where he easily finished its cruel advance.

David stood erect for a moment, catching his breath after the intimate duel, allowing a brief

moment of contemplation. The scene around him was just as he had dreamed it would be, just as he had warned the high priests it would be to no avail. He had become his father, a soldier fighting a hopeless war with only the promise of death. How he despised the inevitability that came with defeat. The thought made him angrier, bringing him to a level of strength he had not felt in forever, not since the very night he had lost his father.

David looked up for a target, for anything to feed the inferno he had contained within for so long, but instead he found his enemy retreating. He looked to his men who stood in a daze watching the demons run for the hills amid the mounds of dead they stood over. The scene enraged David, the thought of letting the creatures escape was less than unimaginable to him and so he yelled, "ON YOUR FEET, WE BRING THEM TO THE DEPTHS OF HELL FOR THIS CRUSADE!"

They all looked to him wordlessly, hesitating only momentarily before heeding his words. David had trained them well. Had their roles been switched, he could almost understand their hesitation. They had been training to defend the city, but in the end there would be no other allowable path than that of extermination for the demons that had brought on the end times. It wasn't the path the gods presented, but David was more than willing to lose himself to win his people another day, anything to do what his father couldn't.

With no need for further words the men rushed forward, offering only a weak war cry as they

came upon the remaining beasts. The fighting did not last long, it was over almost as soon as it had begun. Within moments the Templars stood amidst the dead and dying. Of the one hundred Templars only a dozen or so remained standing, their gleaming armour degraded to little more than a remnant of blood whose immaculate curves had been converted to a trail of dents, scrapes, and bloodied wounds. They had won, but at such a cost. David couldn't help but wonder what his father would have done, if more could have been saved. The anger that had driven him for so long had faded, leaving him empty and tired, now fully aware of the red hot pain that ebbed with every beat of his heart. David tried to breathe but could only wince as his chest joined the chorus of suffering. He had surely busted a rib or two in his melee with the strangely cunning demon.

It was at that moment he caught the glances of his men, looking back at their homes. David followed their glare and found a sight that sent his heart sinking. Thick plumes of smoke emerged over the walls that hid their homes from view, demons flowing through the streets with murderous intent. David's heart stopped, his veins turned icy as the remnants of anger turned to nothing. He couldn't describe what now held him in its power, it was neither grief nor pain, although their scents could be picked from the toxic concoction that struck his mind. David found himself on his knees, his blade dug into the ground, casting a long sad shadow onto the ground below.

"Sir, what do we do?" someone muttered behind him, the voice distant and faltering under the weight of what they bore witness to.

David gave no answer, he didn't have one to give. He was absorbed in his own mind trying to find blame, trying to push away the bitter taste in his mouth and the tightness in his chest. He didn't dare breathe nor did he make a single move, unwilling to risk the wrath of whatever god looked upon him, gifting him this hell for his ignorance. Only one answer returned on his voyage to find innocence, and the very thought of it made his synapses burn in shame. In his anger David had forgotten his duty, he had relinquished his honour for nothing more than revenge. The beast he had fought, the cunning in its eyes, it was undeniable; it had seen his anger, noticed his fury and played him like a doll.

Now the hills burned, the sky darkened as the cycle began to reach its close, the curtains drawing on the grotesque spectacle. As the world ended, the towers of his beloved home were collapsing before him in a vision of the ultimate Armageddon, Ragnarok. David found the name of the power that held him prisoner in his mind: Defeat.

The sky flashed and an arc of lightning flashed before them, blinding the beaten Templars, sparing them of what was to come next by vaporising them to ash on the cinder they had brought on themselves. To some it was mercy, to others it was the final moment of grief everlasting.



"A Home in the Art District, Jerusalem, Israel"
by Danielle Tucker, photography

Inanimate

By Jackson Peace

When you said you'd die for me,
I said I'd die for you.
I didn't think you'd take that offer.

When we first started that summer,
an atom split inside of me.
Endless energy radiated from my brain
to the rest of my body,
followed by boundless euphoria.

Walking through the park,
with you by my side,
on a cloudless fall day,
the trees boasted their bright amber hue.
Children played on the playground.
I made you laugh.

I shined brightly,
but you were scared that being around fire
would burn you.
Clouds emerged.
A waterfall crashed down on me.
Drowning,
I reached my hand out,
but you left with him,

saying someone else would find my light useful.
But how could anyone even find me,
when I had become so dim?

Walking through the park,
alone,
grim, grey clouds began to encapsulate me.
An icy breeze began to blanket me.
I saw my reflection,
looking at the trees,
as they displayed their ghostly skeletons.

We'd meet one final time that spring.
You left me with one final gift,
a sparkling scarlet rose,
saying you felt bad,
but I am now
the trees,
the grass,
the Earth.
Inanimate,
with only the beautiful, blossoming flowers
left to give you, in return,
but with time, they, too, will be gone,
like me.



Endless

By Abigail Amor

and this I swear
my mind knows no boundary.
gone are the days
of your square and selfish ways
alive is the fire
the spark
that last glimmer of the diamond
that is my heart
the only thing you cannot crush
the pain recedes
the tears take their place
among the helpless
among the unwilling
among those fallen from grace
I feel a disconnect.
like my conscience hangs
from my heart strings
my every move
knocks me off balance
where is the sense
if down leads to up
why does the middle
feel like a trap
for suckers like me
who think that adequacy is functional
I will no longer succumb to living a mediocre life.
I will be



W.H.Y (We Hired You)

By Brendon Jones

Y'all run by shoot'n we high falutin
Look me in the eye, do I wanna die?
Aim high shoot'n our fist high salute'n
Tears shed, blood's bled, new bed. Break in instead?
We Hired You to protect from violence
Street cred, deals met, she's dead. Justice ahead?
We Hired You to keep peace and silence
W.H.Y. men for our community, help us
W.H.Y. men for our safety and help, don't trust
Screens can entrap scenes, never to get out,
I guess this is history on repeat,
Screams can't escape dreams, barely now I doubt
Hands up as I look down at my defeat.



For Black Girls

By Devin Elise Wise

This one is for all the black girls
whose smiles don't quite meet their eyes
whose wants get pushed aside
who don't receive compliments without qualifiers
who don't see themselves as beautiful
who have ever been used, abused, and bruised
in the name of some type of twisted love

For all the black girls
whose world is people waiting for them to fail
that have been told that they're not enough
Smart enough, good enough, pretty enough,
skinny enough for people to stay
For all the black girls just finding their way
who promise they're doing just fine
who've been objectified way before their time
whose job it was to be a mother to kids
that weren't their own
girls whose dreams were deferred
who walk around with memories of things they
were never supposed to see

For all the black girls struggling
with self-hatred and a false sense of identity
who ever felt like they were somebody's possession

who lacked even basic stability and protection
who could never find their faces on screens
whose hair grows up instead of down
whose beauty rituals hurt and left marks
who walk around in a constant state of fear
who would do anything just to get someone to care

For all the black girls
whose stories have never been told
who give and give and give just to be left all alone
who weren't anyone's first choice
who have heard you don't act
like the rest of your race

For all the black girls
who like quote on quote boy things
whose charmed lives and bright eyes
disguise a burden too much to bear
who don't know how to be happy
who have been called crazy
labeled ghetto just for self-expression
or economic circumstance
catcalled and then called out of their name
whose bodies have been put on display

For all the black girls
who don't ever let themselves get mad
who were the only friends they had
who can't function all that well
working harder than everyone else
full of wonderful ideas
who don't feel comfortable in their own skin
who think they have to play a role
who grew up in toxic homes
who don't know what real love looks like
whose only therapy is saying their prayers at night
whose faith is their only lifeline

For all the black girls who feel broken
who take medication, so their minds are stable
that are differently abled
who have a side hustle or two
who've lost themselves and have no idea what to do
who cope with chronic pain
who have made little and big mistakes

For all the black girls that just need to hear
that everything's going to be okay
who are alone but not lonely
who have been given up on time and time again

that just need a second chance
who have pasts they're not proud of
who can make a cardboard box feel like a mansion
For all the black girls,
The little black girls, big black girls, loud black
girls, laid back black girls, joyous black girls with
infectious laughs, strong black girls, bent out of
shape but not broken black girls, working black
girls, anointed black girls, independent black girls,
brilliant black girls, strange black girls, and magical
black girls.

God loves us, black girls.
God made us, black girls.
God sees us, black girls.
And all us black girls, we matter to Him.



Road Map to Anywhere

By Ethan Hill

On a rack, sandwiched between
rubber galoshes and cowboy boots sits a snapshot
of the so called best years of my life,
once blue running shoes, now stained
with green and brown, a snapshot
of six years well spent.

Ravaged by time and use,
they recall small moments and
momentous events, a hole
present in both near the top, an irritating reminder
of the form I never quite perfected.
Burs hooked in the nylon calling me
back to a run where the path took
a detour on the wild side, thankfully
the ticks have not remained.

The dollop of white paint,
from the practice where we marked the course
for our upcoming meet, an audition
to my friends and family that I could succeed
in something worth committing to,
I barely finished. The punishing heat
killing any chance of impressing those
I cared most about.

The soles, worn of all traction,
mark the countless miles
jogged with my closest friends,
hills and forests, corn fields and neighborhoods
you name it we ran it, never the fastest team.
It never was about competition or times.

Now they sit, unused
as the dust begins
to build and the color fades, a marker
of the time I last felt alive,
the motivation to run
evaporated with the sweat of that final race
and the last goodbyes of my teammates.



The First Bead

By Steven Francis Murphy

1st Place Prose

Sunscreen. At this facility, they make you put
on sunscreen, whether you need it or not. Then
they make you sign a form saying you put on
sunscreen. So I pull my can out, and spray the
sticky gunk all over my legs, and my arms.

Then, while the kids grin and snicker, I spray the
top of my head.

Grandpa.

Old man.

How can he even see with those glasses?

My Lead, who smells of double fudge chocolate
muffins and last night's concoction of whatever
was put into the cooler, signs me in, then waves
me out to the slides away from the Surf City Wave
Pool. Blonde, bleary eyed behind the sunglasses,
she does this to me every day at noon when I
come in. Puts me as far away from the wave pool
as she can.

I go and relieve the half asleep guard at the
bottom of Predator's Plunge, someone from
Eastern Europe, or maybe Russia. He doesn't
speak much English, and I don't speak his
language. He stumbles getting down off the
chair, then waddles over to relieve his friend at the
neighboring slide, who is snoring.

They say the Wave Pool is stressful, and slides
are a break. I can tell from the near misses at the
bottom of the human bowling alley that the guard
at the top of the slide, and the one at the bottom,
were definitely taking a break. A guest runs down
the slide run out, not what they are supposed to
do, while another three hundred pounder comes
blasting down. With whistles and hand gestures,
I get the excited, bouncing boy to finally hop out,
right at the end. Oblivious to the near miss that
could have sent him to the hospital.

"You don't have to be such a jerk, old man," the
mom, a two toned, short haired woman says,
ushering her kid away.

The phone rings. It's the guard at the top, who is
also whistling and waving at me. I ignore him, and
hit the green lights to signal that he actually can
send the next one down.

The sun climbs high with the Beach Boys singing
over at Wave. Long whistles blare, and bodies drop
off the guard towers. Kids are plucked out, then
try to run away from the guards. Our resident
hangover queen waddles over, and if she gets
there on time, the save report form is drawn from
her most prized possession, a battered clipboard
with a half inch of paperwork attached to it.

Wash.

Rinse.

Repeat.

A tall, curly haired asshole who is too cool for himself comes over to relieve me.

I go to the next slide.

Then later, I go on break, eating frozen strawberries and deli ham. Everyone else, rubbing their foreheads and drinking Powerade, chokes down chicken tenders and fries. Some purposely order hamburgers, knowing it will take longer than their thirty minute breaks for those to finish up. Breaks take longer to run because of these jerks, who care only for themselves and the next party.

When I come back from break, I am again sent to a slide.

I relieve the same hungover guard.

I have yet another encounter with an angry parent.

I ignore the guy at the top on the phone, waving his arms at me, as I punch the green lights at the right time.

Finally, at about six in the evening, I get to Chair Six on the actual wave pool. My Lead does this because she has zero faith in my ability to guard, even though I've been a lifeguard for four years, have dozens of saves of my own, and served as a lifeguard instructor at other facilities.

Chair Six looks out over the middle of the million gallon pool, which still has a fair number of people in the mushy middle. So many kids punching waves along the walls, parents dragging tubes with their babies past the blue line, and teens pushing for the deep. Doing my Ellis required ten second scan, which the hangover queen says is really too slow and I need to go faster, I see kids hanging on the wall beneath me.

I've been here a week, maybe two, and I haven't had a save of my own yet. Part of that is because I'm parked at the slides a lot. Most of it is that I simply haven't seen anything in my zone that merits an entry.

The waves rise up.

There is laughter.

The water smells fresh; good pool water never smells even though people swear they smell chlorine. Much as a soldier moves his entire body to watch his field of fire, I rotate my upper body at the waist, ninety degrees to the right, then across to ninety degrees on the left, sweeping back and forth across my zone of protection. Ten seconds later, I look straight down on my final sweep for a profound bottom scan.

Then I repeat.

One one thousand.

Two one thousand.

Three one thousand.

Ten one thousand.

Bottom scan, repeat.

This is the Church of Ellis.

My red rescue tube is at the ready, hiked up over my belly. Comments aside, I know my business.

Comments aside, I am starting to wonder.

Am I too old for this?

Scanning right, I catch a flicker of something.

A girl with hair over her face, head back, beneath a wave. She is vertical, and pushing.

The switch flips in my head.

I don't think.

I do.

I blow, then I jump.

Straight.

Forward.

From the corner of my eye on the descent, I can tell she is going to be pushed right into me. All I have to do is just turn and . . .

WHAM!!!

I bottom out in the water, which is maybe six inches deep.

Then the wave slams against me as I am in mid turn.

Rising with it, the weight coming off of my feet, I put her onto the tube.

"I'm a lifeguard, I'm here to help," I said. "You okay?"

Eyes wide as saucers, she stays on the tube and says nothing.

At Chair Five, I can see one of the guards give me a thumbs up, and a nod. The Hangover Queen waddles over, and tries to talk the kid out of the save report. Then she tries it with the Mom, who fills out the report, then looks at me.

"Thank you."

A week later, at the end of the very long after work meeting, the Hangover Queen pulls forth a stack of small sheets of paper.

"Murphy." She tosses one to me.

On it is exactly one blue bead, a plastic sphere with a hole in the center.

"What is this for?" I ask.

Annoyed, she looks at me, "They give those out for saves. You wear them on your whistle lanyard."

I look down at my right ankle, which was throbbing, then at the bead.

That blue bead, over the next four years, was the first bead of many.





“Still Boats”
by Michelle Wills, painting

One + None = Midnight Sun

By Juliano Roper

I am one who is loved by none
I try to bathe in the sun, alone
And pretend I am not cold to the bone

An outward cry seems to disturb
If you sold me loving verbs to curb my blues that'd be superb

But alas you're not as simple as a wish
I have served my heart on a dish before but he wanted none
So I'll let my cheeks shine in the midnight sun.



Grandma's Cookbook

By Bailey Cox

2nd Place Poetry

Tucked away from the sink to avoid sprays and kept away from the counter to avoid spills
In between a binder clip, a recipe for scones and Grandpa's favorites, there's a paperbound legacy.
Amongst the Scotch tape on my binding and the cabernet stain on page 34, there is a consistent.
Not the constant flow of laughter that comes with a Christmas breakfast, burnt ziti, and lemon pound cake.

But the preservation of pleasant memories laced between the lines of aged recipes.

Because despite a bad day or a good cry, nothing can beat Grandma's apple pie.





“Una Mariposa de Costa Rica”
by Debbie A. Atwood, photography

The *Shorelines* faculty adviser and editors would like to thank the following for their expertise in judging the award-winning entries:

Stephen Furlong is a poet who currently serves as an adjunct at MCC-Longview. He is the author of the chapbook *What Loss Taught Me*. His poems have appeared or will be forthcoming in *Louisiana Literature*, *Pine Hills Review*, and *Flypaper Lit*.

Robert Klausing is currently an adjunct art instructor at MCC-Longview. He is a retired high school and middle school art teacher who taught in Lee’s Summit high schools and middle schools with 27 years of service and 34 years of art instruction overall. Currently, Robert teaches drawing, ceramics, and art survey at Longview. He is a signature member of the National Oil and Acrylic Painters Society. His recent artwork has won awards in national and regional shows in Missouri, Kansas and Arkansas and has been included in collections throughout the Midwest. Currently, Robert has artwork on display in Barcelona, Spain.

Diane Martin is the head librarian at MCC-Longview Library. She has a Master’s degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Missouri-Columbia and a Master’s degree in Sociology from Iowa State University. She is an avid reader and is ranked as one of the Top 100 reviewers on Goodreads.

Student Editors

Halle Hartman has loved reading and writing all her life. Fittingly, she hopes to pursue a career in editing to put more creative work into the world. She is currently working towards an Associate of Arts degree.

Stacey Schell is an English-Creative Writing Major transferring to UMKC, Fall 2020. She recently received her Associate of Arts Degree from Metropolitan Community College and is a Writing Studio Tutor for the Longview campus. Her long-term goal is to be an editor for a publishing house and write her own historical fantasy novels. Her current work-in-progress is a mythological retelling of *The Fall of Rome*.

Faculty Adviser

Aisha Sharif is an English instructor whose book of poetry *To Keep from Undressing* was published in 2019. She enjoys reading poetry and Agatha Christie mystery novels.



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