

2023

ARTEMAS

2024



A STUDENT JOURNAL OF WRITING AND ART
AT YOUNG HARRIS COLLEGE

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Special thanks to Jo Bearse for her generous support and funding in honor of Danny Bearse, class of 1979.

Artemas, formerly *Corn Creek Review*, is created by and for the students of YHC and serves as a vehicle for their creative expression. *Artemas* accepts submissions of poetry, prose, musical composition, photography, painting, drawing and other art forms. Each year, the magazine is put together by a student group that gathers submissions, chooses the content for the magazine, and designs the layout. The magazine's renaming is in honor of Rev. Artemas Lester, who established YHC in 1886.

Contact Faculty Advisor Dr. Gale Thompson (gmthompson@yhc.edu) if you are interested in joining the staff, securing an issue, or submitting your work.

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Forward

Since our sophomore year, we have been part of the *Artemas* editorial staff. This is our last year serving as Editors-in-Chief, and we are so grateful to have had this experience. *Artemas* has been a space for Young Harris's talented writers and artists to show off their work, and we love being part of a community that celebrates each other's art and writing. This year we had so many wonderful submissions that make that have breathed life into *Artemas*. We want to take this time to thank all of our contributors, and we hope that you continue to create and follow your passions.

We would also like to thank all our editors who helped put this year's magazine together. We couldn't be prouder of all the hard work our staff has put in, and this magazine would not have been possible without their commitment.

Thank you for trusting us these past two years to serve as *Artemas* Editors-in-Chief. We hope you enjoy this year's magazine, and we cannot wait to see what else the students of Young Harris create.

Addisyn Clapp | Editor-in Chief

Hannah Elliott | Editor-in Chief



Corissa Pritchett, *About You*

KATIE D'AMBROSIO

Sorrow is Not My Name

—after Ross Gay, after Gwendolyn Brooks

No matter the chasm in your chest. No
matter the desolation, crowded heavens
await. There is a time for everything. Look,
just this afternoon a wasp buzzed
a greeting past my ear. I watched
the swirl of her wings, the snowdrop
sway of her goldenrod joints.
She hovered at my left shoulder,
and, after purring unintelligible secrets,
curled her saffron feelers and soared off.
Just like that. And, as a matter of fact,
there are, on Earth, something like seventeen
thousand identified species of butterflies,
insectile angels with names so regal as to soothe
the ache in my sternum: spicebush
swallowtail, duskwing, painted lady,
spring azure, the cabbage white that orbits
the rusted chain of my porch swing bench.
Think of that. The metal drone of answering
machines, the subaqueous effort of waking,
the fight with my mother. The eighty-year
old man in Waffle House, slicing his eggs
at a table set for four, etc., etc.
But look; my husband is threading beads
of honeysuckle in our backyard, barefoot
in the Georgia clay. My uncle's Irish Setter
is dozing by the screen door. On my block,
every July afternoon, my neighbor's toddler
scribbles chalk mosaics on the cracked sidewalk.
I remember. My arms are anthers. I'm blooming.

HANNAH ELLIOTT

*My Brain is an Encyclopedia but
None of the Info is Useful*

I don't know how to change a tire,
but I could recite the words of *Twilight*
to you when I make you watch it with me.
I couldn't make it across the state line
to your house without a GPS, but I know
that I can play a round of Mario Kart
in the time it takes for you to get to my dorm.
I'll be crossing the finish line on Rainbow Road
as you send me a message that you're waiting
for me downstairs. The quadratic formula
is a jumble of alphabet soup in my noggin
and fuck if I know what it's used for,
but I can fold construction paper into a tulip,
or a rose, or a lavender sprig. The hours of being
confused by YouTube tutorials and all the hot glue
burns on my fingertips were worth it when I saw
the way your face lit up when I gave them to your mom
for her birthday last April. You'll have to explain
the rules of football, baseball, and hockey to me
a million times in our lifetimes, but ask me
how to start a fire using only sticks, lint, and a lighter
and I'll get it done. I can't always tell what you're thinking
about, but when you pull me closer to you in your sleep,
I can only hope that it's me in your dream,
and that seems like enough.

GENEVIEVE ROY

Red Cardinal Sighting

—after Wallace Stevens

1.

Among the sun-speckled leaves
the red cardinal sways.

2.

The red cardinal flutters through the whining grass,
it sleeps in the bowing trees,
it soars through the chemtrail-streaked sky.

3.

The horse whips around the pasture—
my hands coarse from the calluses littering their palms,
barely hanging onto the reins.
The red cardinal just watches from the fence.

4.

I can't wake up.
My hair grease soaks into my pillow—
my teeth are grainy and my gums ooze blood.
Where is the red cardinal?

5.

The red cardinal's carving stares at me from the grave.
My great-grandfather's eyes are frozen in the stone sockets.
Who was he?

6.

The priest blurs into a shapeless blob.
My knees ache from going through the motions—
stand, sit, kneel, repeat.
The red cardinal pecks on the stained glass window.
I want to knock back.

7.

I dream gunshots snap the air next to my ears.
I am strangling Kyle's hand—
almost dragging him across the smeared tile floor.
It's just me and Kyle;
no one else. Not anymore.
He tells me to pray to the red cardinal;
I don't.

8.

The red cardinal could be any ghost story,
it could be the wisp of my great grandfather's spirit;
it's probably just a bird.
The red cardinal isn't God.

9.

The red cardinal's tombstone is drowning in snow.
My finger burns red when I trace the engravings.
Can your mark fade with the erosion?

10.

The red cardinal's feathers run through my fingers
as smooth as creek water.
It drips back to its original source—
avoiding me and my heretic beliefs.

11.

The rust slides down the red cardinal's wing.
It mixes with the crystalline surface of the creek.
I want to hold the swirls twisting around my arms—
the spirals turn.

12.

The red cardinal sits on my shoulder—
slowly their head nuzzles my cheek.
I let it for the first time.

ABBIGAYLE SUTTON

My Dog Explains the Big Things

Death

Captain is slinking up to the foot of my bed, stopping every few paces to look up at me with begging eyes. He is a 6-month-old lab puppy with Hershey-colored fur and agate eyes; they work well to persuade. He wears only a red collar and a frown. “What, buddy? What do you want?”

Captain says nothing of course, but his eyes want to. The slinking continues around the bed until his head reaches the edge where I’m sitting. Something wet and soggy attacks my innocent hand, and he drags a ragged morsal of fabric over it before I can pull back. The mangled brown mess is the last remnant of his favorite toy. Poor Bear had seen violent teathy play for months and put up with it all, but he could not survive Captain’s antics forever and was now too chewed up to play anymore.

Captain releases the scraps previously known as Bear and plops his head down, whining on the bed. He whines and whines and cries and tries to nudge the sludge back to life. When he tries and tries again, and fails, he looks up at me hopefully, but it’s clear his doggy brain knows I cannot bring Bear back.

Consent

“My homework will not do itself,” I try to explain to a 2-year-old Morgan. He is a yellow lab who would benefit from a doggy lobotomy which I have explained to my mother is unethical. He will not leave me alone and his big bulging eyes make it clear he would like pets. I however cannot give pets because I am hammering away the calculus I have been saddled with this weekend. I explain to him in simple language and a babbling baby accent, “I’ll pet you in a minute.” He doth protest this answer with a head-on-lap countermeasure

he knows I always fall for. Somehow, I stay strong and tell him, “No!” after which he creeps away in disappointment.

As soon as he lays down on his doggy bed across the room, sibling terrors, Marlee and Patrick, barrel into the living room. The bare walls of the square shaped room echo their childish bickering and yelling which they insist is “playing.” They are 10 and 8, respectively, and they see Morgan as a toy to enhance their play time. They stalk him like prey and pounce on the bed with him in it. Their grimy hands attempt to pet him, far too aggressively. He yelps and barks in aversion to the groping, scrambling to make it across the room and back to me. He dodges the furniture in its cramped layout and hides beside my chair. I reach down to pet him, and he melts into my hand. Slowly the children begin their move towards us. Morgan barks once as a warning, “How come he lets you pet him?” My sister asks me, with a frown.

“Because I don’t do it unless he wants me to.”

Friendship

My mother and I are dragged by Captain’s anti-pull leash on a walk, which clearly works wonders. He is on a mission to somewhere wonderful and magical, where all his doggy dreams will come true, or he wouldn’t be pulling with such ferocity down the street. My face burns and I have to squint every few seconds to keep my eyes from drying up. My mother wears her giant sunglasses because she is clearly smarter than I am on this walk. Sniffing and snooping, Captain explores the neighborhood like he explores on most walks. Then, without warning, he stops in the middle of the sidewalk, and bolts to a large stinky tree in the yard we are passing. He sniffs the roots of this tree like someone buried a steak underneath. His head finally rises from the sniff-fest, and he jumps around in excitement, shaking his butt and shimmying aggressively. My mother jerks him back to her side and we begin our walk back to the house. “He’s so weird. We walk this way every day and he’s never done that before,” My mother remarks, like it’s some great mystery.

“I dunno.” I shrug it off because what do I know about dogs and their

behavioral patterns.

Captain finishes his walk as per usual without any other random bursts of excitement requiring him to break out a celebratory boogie. Walking inside the house is a relief for my eyes and my skin, and I finally start to cool off. Walking inside is also a relief for Captain, who runs up to his brother Morgan and does the same happy dance as before, with all the same butt shaking, but double. Morgan, equally as excited to see his brother, whom he'd seen 20 minutes before, joined in on the doggy dancing.

"Awww!" My mom scrunches down to his level.

"What?" I ask. I recognize their greeting is cute but not any cuter than usual and not enough to make my mom comment on it.

"The tree," she says, like that's some great insight, "Morgan peed there on his walk yesterday."

Self-Respect

Miller is fat. If she had language skills, she would tell you the same thing. Her little sister is not fat or lazy; she is a bright ball of curly fur and pure energy. So, while Morgan plays, Miller sleeps. She is a few years older and as a lab, her energy levels do not compare to those of the young playful golden doodle. Morgan is only a month over a year old, whereas Miller is six.

My father, who has two replaced knees, has no business running or walking anywhere particularly fast. Miller, who has fat rolls on her fat rolls, has no business going on walks for more than five to ten minutes, maybe if she is feeling well rested. Kevin, who is in good shape for his age, minus the raggedy knees, ignores his limitations and walks every morning, and when I am home, I go too. Morgan, without fail, runs him dead, and he limps himself back to bed every morning.

This day, my father uses his superb genius and decides to walk Miller instead, hoping he won't end the walk in crippling pain. I put her collar on by the door, and it is clear she is not prepared for

whatever awaits her outside. I've got to jog a little to warm myself up in the chilly weather, but Miller is happy her feet are not hot on the pavement. As I predicted, ten minutes into their exploit my dad walks strong, while Miller limps behind. While he continues moving forward, I see her stop and plop onto the ground. He circles back and tries his hardest to get her up and walking again, but much to his dismay, she will not budge. She has decided the walk is over and she doesn't want to do it anymore, and my dad is forced to admit he cannot make her.



Chayil Aponte, *Conscious Drift*

KAMAR HOOKER

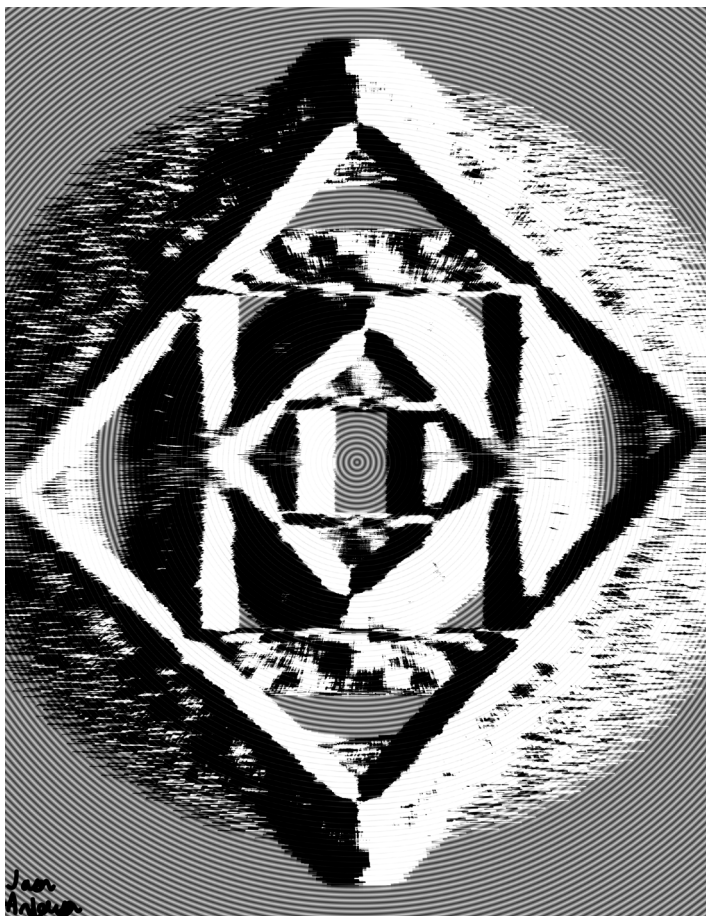
March (I try to remain calm)

I try to remain calm but
March brings the madness out of
the most God loving people.
The ref tries to conduct balance
but these fade away and granny shots
swish and splash that wet spot we all crave.
This game of wet buckets, broken
ankles and block cities does not have
rules or order. These fake calls of travels
and free throw shots are the biggest sin to mankind.

I try to remain calm but March
makes the most muted person in
the room screech a piercing howl.
The point guard is in the corner
making it rain Stephen Curry.
One-on-one, man-to-man
take him down town and dropping
dimes. Nothing but air balls and buzzer
beaters. Outrages turnovers and
the craziest flops. The king himself
number twenty three in the game.
Ohh yeah baby game time!
Game time!! Game time!!

I try to remain calm but March
just does something to me,
dribble, dribble, dribble between the legs,
break his ankles, where is he going?!
Step back, Coby! And one and one! Dribble,
dribble, dribble, pass, pass, pass,
take him to the hoop! Get dunked on!

He's a baby, he's a baby, put him to sleep.
Bank shot! Alley oop! The three! the three!
Swoosh! splash! swish! wet!
That's too easy. That's too easy.
Five seconds left.
Shoot, shoot, shoot, Shoot, shoot!



Jason Anderson, *Dreams of Debris*

HALEY KELLEY

Home

I forgot the way it was,
the black and white kitchen signs,

question marks illuminated
on my tongue.

Or how the modern single-pane windows
kept my uncle within the walls,

but the three-inch-long spiders
helped keep me in.

This place was their place, my uncle could
never stay in one place at a time.

This place is our place. Christmas tree ruminants,
and glass-like plastic stars.

Old photos in a glass enclosure,
with mahogany circling around.

The old, ragged mantle,
which I looked at often,

was packed full of dvds,
an ornament dedicated to

my grandpa, who is no longer here,
old trinkets of frogs, and ceramic tiles.

No one talks about the strain
of being the only woman in a pool of men

offspring genetically mutated to be
a man.

Mother, why are we leaving?
Why is this taking so long?

The light is at the door,
the darkness is in the hallway.

Is it the monster in my closet,
or all the violent rains of 2012?

If we go too fast,
we'll forget all of our past.

What a joy, to share the space
that we all shared.

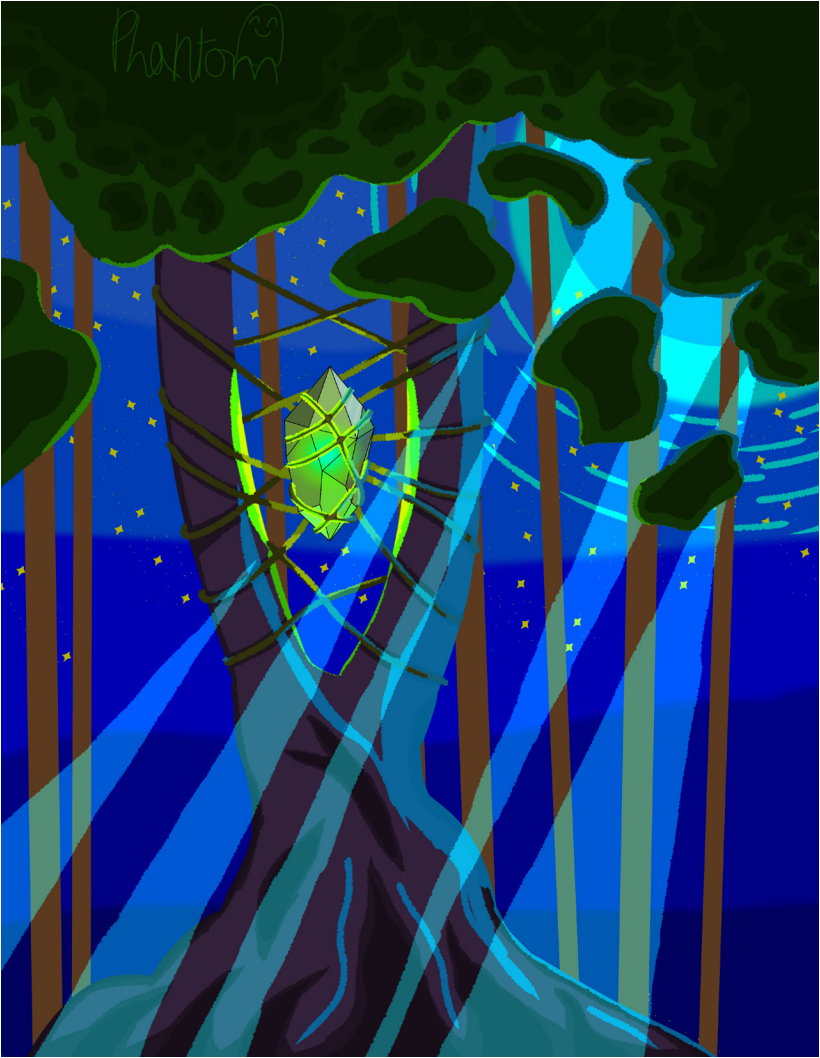
As my back hits the door,
I stop searching for what was there.

I stop wasting my time,
Looking for what's been dead since '03.

I look back at the green-paned windows,
and long for my childhood, but I keep walking.



Katelyn "Ghost" Born, *A Late Night Date*



Katelyn "Ghost" Born, *Contained and Free*

ANSLEY GASTON

A Beautiful Melody

You unlock the door to your new home, a private cabin deep in the forested oasis that you had been dreaming about owning for years. Your face lights up with pure joy as you step inside, the long hallway an invitation to a new life. No more late nights listening to the blaring horns and bustling streets of New York City; no more panicked breaths and puffy eyes from sobbing into the darkness. You were free now, and this house was just the beginning.

You take notice of the grandfather clock pushed away in the corner of the living room, blowing off the mountain of dust that had collected on top. The soft clicking of the hands resonates throughout the home, and yet it seems to unnerve you. Your facial features shift from that of a happy, newborn babe into a scowl much like that of the devil. You hit the top of the clock hard, trying to get the hands to stop clicking. When that does not work, you force open the door to the clock, ripping out the hands and letting out a guttural scream. You throw them behind you, sighing deeply as the clicking sound finally silences.

You make your way into the kitchen, still shrouded in darkness from the closed curtains. You don't bother to open them. The darkness invites you further in, a familiar enemy that tricks you into thinking it is a friend. You set your bag down on the counter, running a hand through your long, shiny black hair. You had never liked it short and swore to never cut it past your shoulders ever again.

That night, you lay in your bed, basking in the silence of your new home. Your eyes start to flutter shut, your breath starts to even out, and the clock's hands strike midnight. A deep, baritone melody pierces through the silence like a strike of lightning on a tree. You shoot upright in bed, hair wild and face unnerved. You hurry downstairs, your shoulder brushing against the hanging string that leads to the attic above. You rush to the clock that is still screaming into the night. The hands you ripped out earlier were back in place, clicking along like nothing had ever happened.

You eventually opened the attic, curiosity finally getting the better of you. A month passed, and your house began to smell like rotten flesh. Two months passed, and they finally showed up, your corpse decaying in the attic, flies creating a halo around your head. They cleaned up your body, my grandfather clock chiming a beautiful melody.

I did not want you to end like this. I thought you were different; I thought you were special. You reminded me of an innocent caterpillar, finally morphing into a sparkling butterfly as you stepped foot in my home. You forced my hand when you opened that attic. Now, you have forced me to find another like you. I know she is waiting for me, just as you were when I found you. Waiting, and willing.

JASON ANDERSON

Bend the Knee

I savor the blood of my fallen foes
swept in the vibrating stream of my galick gun.
My hair is an active volcano that erupts
golden chunks of keratin,
hot on the back of my neck.
The fortress in which I lay my head,
bleeds with fresh green grass and crystal-cut water.
I spent my time within chambers of scarlet
ambience,
g r a v i t y, a
hydraulic press on my internal organs.
My will is a great ape swallowing the moon whole.
My pride is a diamond.
I am a warrior
King
shrouded in the ki of nobility.
The sensitive droplets of rain are my tears
shed in pursuit of a legend only realized every thousand years.
My race a blue moon,
and my potential the greedy star-ridden
corners of the universe.
Why then, do I erupt in golden speckles of compassion?
For the blue topaz headed beauty that bore my child?
Or my amethyst-headed son that carries royal blood in his hybrid
veins?

Hell awaits the arrival of its prince,
clad in white with my cape soaked in blood.
You will be the fertilizer that brings forth new oaks and birch.
This biome a desert, starving for your cells saturated with
flame-infused ki.
Prepare yourself Majin Buu!
I fade into crème colored concrete,
evaporating the horizon in my ascension.
Final Explosion!



LACI THOMPSON

Eye Drops Wanted

When an eyelash is loose and falls,
my mom says you're supposed
to make a wish. Just don't recall

your ex, like I did. How stonewalled
was I to build you up. My hurt, self-imposed.
When an eyelash is loose and falls,

I hope it goes in his eye and he crawls
back to me. And then I can act composed
like his presence won't make me recall

his touch. I will prance about being enthralled
by you. Like a baby who is snot-nosed
when an eyelash is loose and falls

from her mother's face. The lash is small but
seems enormous to the child as she dozes
off. I thought you were that big. I recall

I traded in the opinions of all
my close ones, just for you to make me decompose,
each time an eyelash is loose and falls. If I want
to live, you must, from my mind, be recalled.

ADDISYN CLAPP

Did God Name You?

An older man walks into the coffee shop.
He wears a brown hat with *warrior* embroidered
in white. His cherry pit eyes watch me work
behind the bar. *Do you know the meaning
of your name?* Yes, Addisyn means Adam's son.
I remember how my cheeks bloomed
in Sunday school when my teacher told me
the meaning of my name.
She spelled it wrong, "Addison" looped
in cursive on the paper.
It's a boy's name. No. It's my name,
even though I am not my father's son.
The old man, Timothy,
tells me my name means *authority*.
A not son with no authority.
Middle name? Jeannine.
It's a family name. I hand Timothy his latte.
It's French. Oh, I'm not French.
Jeannine means God is gracious.
He explains my name to me, *with authority*
God is gracious. I don't believe in God,
but I decide not to tell Timothy.
Behind him the post-it note prayers loom
on the wall: cotton candy kaleidoscope of pinks
and blues track me. The million-eyed Father's
paper eyes praise my daughterly obedience.
Do you have authority? Timothy sips the latte
I made. I smile with no teeth. Those paper eyes
see past my coffee-stained tongue into my

forked silver serpent's tongue. My father
gives the authority to my younger brother. *Only you
know if you have authority.* I am not safe under
a million-eyed Father. My brother with a real son's
name. I am not a real son. I am Addisyn, and I am mine.



Heather Parker, *Fly Away*

HANNAH ELLIOTT

Another Perfect Wonder

I could probably
do cocaine
and be fine.
I mean,
I can shove
a flonase
up each nostril
and spray
the liquid
medicine without
any kind of reaction,
so why would
nose candy
be any different?
I think
a person's
favorite song
says a lot
about who they are,
or at least
who they become.
"Snow" by
Red Hot Chili Peppers
is about the most
expensive kinds of
cocaine and heroin
and it was my
first favorite song.

My dad played
Stadium Arcadium
when he was
home with me
during the day.
I didn't realize
until later
how many
RHCP songs
reference drugs.
It's funny
to think of a
4-year-old singing
along in the backseat
of her dad's burgundy
extended cab Ford F-150
to a song about blow.
Two truths and a lie:
I've had sex,
I've powdered
the inside of my nose,
and I shoot shots
of cheap vodka.
My mother
doesn't think
I'm a good girl.
She told me
I looked

like a hooker
when I wore
a mini skirt.
I need a double
shot of her
homemade apple pie
moonshine to stomach
a conversation.
I think she likes
the idea
of having kids
more than
actually having kids.
Sometimes I wonder
if she regrets
marrying my father
and having two kids
with him.
I don't think
she'd be
surprised if
I started
doing coke.
She'd scoff
and say,
*I knew
sending you
to school
so far away
would corrupt
you.* She'd
blame my
dad somehow,

probably with
his music choices
that she always hated
because it wasn't
a country song
about beer and trucks.
She would be the
reason I started
doing cocaine if I
were to do it.
It would be easy –
I could just ask
the national frat boys
where they get theirs,
or bat my eyes at
them since my mother
already thinks
I'm some kind
of harlot. I'd be
another victim
of the 27 club,
singing old rock
and roll with
Kurt and Amy,
and doing
another line
in a bathroom
in hell.

HALEY KELLEY

Ghazal for the Unknown

Sometimes I sit back and wonder what would've happened if

I never met you.

Would sit back and reach out towards you?

What if I decided to play with Jessie with honeycomb-color hair,
instead of Lily? What would've happened to you?

I know there are worse things, but I wonder, if she is still alive,
somewhere inside me. What happened to you?

It's easy to compress your emotions into the depths of my soul,
but i think that sometimes this is unfair to you.

As the tune whistles in my ear down the interstate,
I feel a bump and realize that I hit you.

My consciousness starts to realize that you aren't here anymore,
I see your ghostly phantom circulate around you.

I sit back and stare into the unknown until I can't recognize my
own hand. I look into
the mirror and see something unknown, and then i realize. It's
Hannah. It's you.

ANSLEY GASTON

The Crow

The Crow

is a large, black bird
with feathers the color of midnight,
glistening with fallen stars.

Its voice, like an arrow
piercing the heart,
too tired to keep going,
still continues to hold onto
life a bit longer.

A bringer of misfortune
and death, and yet
you watch for them silently,
an infinite string of deep
sentiment attaching two souls for eternity.

Power

Why is it that a bird can hold so much power over a man? Why can an animal, weightless and free, forever lay in his heart, digging its claws into the soft, beating flesh? I know he is delicate. I know he yearns to be free from anguish, free from sorrow. But that is not power. Look at the crow—it is flying beside him. As the crow's wings glide through the soft winds, the man too walks into life untamed. A beautiful scene, a beautiful night, a beautiful connection they both share. As one crow lands to perish, another takes its first flight, an

endless cycle of rebirth and love anew. Look at that child, standing beside his father. Deemed the protector, made to provide. They are holding hands; does he see that? They are walking through life together. A man and his crow; a son and his father. *Why is it that a bird can hold so much power over a man?*

October 10, 2023.

You do not think you will sleep tonight. Your crow has flown away, disappearing into the night without you by his side. The regrets flood your mind.

I should have been there.

We should have never yelled.

It should have been me.

No.

Your crow would never want you to think like this. Your crow would be laughing about the tears in your eyes and how they should never fall for him. Your crow, the epitome of long nights, long fights, and long love. Your crow, the bird who flew to his greatest heights with you by his side, falling back to watch you reach new ones. As his feathers glide down one by one, as the light brings him closer home, your crow will never stop watching you soar.

So,

sleep peacefully

and rise the next morning,

a black feather tucked safely under your pillow.



Hannah Elliott, *Transformation*



Laurel Sanford, *To Love is to Lose*

KATIE D'AMBROSIO

Ten Ways of Looking at a Bumblebee

—after Wallace Stevens

I.

Not even my grandmother's cashmere
sweater, or the knitted wool cap
that she crafted for my newborn head,
is as soft as the bumblebee's pollen-specked fuzz.

II.

I don't remember much of my childhood, except
for the cool condensation of summer lemonade,
the chlorine scent of my striped pool towel,
the crunch of Wise potato chips,
and the bumblebees dancing through the honeysuckle
of the diamond wire fence.

III.

The bumblebee can beat its tiny wings
over 200 times per second. Our hearts
can only beat half that per minute.
What power in those crystalline wings,
delicate as tissue paper, that we can never have!

IV.

Last autumn, I hiked Brasstown Bald
and glanced over the rail at the calico mountains.
I wanted to cry—not because the trees
were dancing or the sky was clear as marble;

but because a thousand bumblebees
had taken their last breath.

V.

I still cannot step into a Catholic Church without crying.
The stained-glass mosaics are as strange
as my mother's indigo eyes.
I can't complain, though; the bumblebee's buzz
will always be familiar.

VI.

Sitting on the front porch of 23 Smith Ave.,
mug of coffee and cranberry scone in hand,
I watch a bumblebee hover at the white petunia
nestled above my grandma's ear.

VII.

In the morning, when snowflakes kiss the earth,
the queen bumblebee hides in hard-packed soil.
She has folded her wings and fallen
asleep, waiting for the others to resurrect.
I watch the soft falling specks
as they stick to the windowpane
and burrow deep in my pink comforter.

VIII.

The first time I tried honeycomb,
I tasted truth. As I pulled the wax
across my teeth and golden nectar glossed
my lips, I was never more certain
that God is real

and bumblebees are His blessing.

IX.

There are four things that are extremely rare:
glimpses of green aurora borealis,
the buzzing of souls after their hundredth kiss,
a bumblebee's sting,
and the chance to whisper last words
in your grandmother's ear.

X.

Bumblebees are guardians of the wildflowers
and the fat tomatoes.
Bumblebees are sunbeams bouncing
across the flower boxes.
Bumblebees are soft thuds against the car window
as I drive away from home, my mother's graphene grip.
Bumblebees are my final prayer for peace.
Bumblebees are hope, their sparkles
of pollen are the secret to eternal life.

HEATHER PARKER

Microfictions

The Awakening

The blade gleams as it reflects your image back to you. A silhouette standing frozen as the droplets of red hots drip from your bruised prickled skin. Your breath is labored as you try to inhale then exhale. Looking around you see the body sprawled out onto the cool flooring. The gray wood is being engulfed by a lagoon of ruby fluid that is seeping out of a cavernous hole. A person you once highly valued is now stiff and unresponsive.

The Purest Love

An arc of ivory near a spherical jet colored wetness. The allegiance you have always needed and knew you deserved. Your hand glides over the silky surface of the one who bears your badge of loyalty. Their presence is fastened to you even through times of grief or rage. A tender reminder that even you deserve total devotion. They deserve your unwavering allegiance, but your allegiance will never be as vast as theirs.

ALLY WILSON

Matilda in the Closet

The principal is a criminal,
the teacher said, she told a story
where a student, in a closet,
nails inches away from her frail,
little body was found:

shoved into this horrid
closet. Musty, metallic nails, broken glass
sticking out from the walls.
Shut in there, standing, wondering
what had I done to deserve this?

Screamed out but nobody heard a sound.
So, I stood there hoping, praying
I wouldn't be forgotten.
Someone would find me. They had to.
Trying not to move or breathe,

the glass felt so close, the nails right in my face.
I was paralyzed, fear had power.
It felt like a lifetime had passed.
Clicking, the lock was moving.
Silent. The door creaking opened.

A dark tall figure appeared
out of the crack.
Miss Honey. She truly did care.
Frozen, I stood there staring into Miss Honey's

eyes. Running into her arms.

From that moment, I knew

she was my person.

Every day since she has made me feel

loved, happy like a vivid rainbow.

Skating, skipping, dancing

around the living room.

Picnics next to blossoming

trees. Smelling flowers, running through

fields of tall grass.

The kind of love every child deserves.



Heather Parker, *One Love*

ABBY THOMPSON

In•vis•ible

In•vis•ible \- \ n. 1. Not being seen without intent. Like the wind on a chilly winter evening. The breath that escapes your lungs as you breathe in and out. 2. The choice or lack thereof of being seen; of hiding in your own skin and pretending to be someone else so the real you is unknown to the naked eye. The choice you didn't mean to make where those around you choose to place you in the box they wish and force you down. The feeling of knowing yourself but that person is so unseen by others you aren't sure if they are even real anymore. How do you decide what pieces of you the world does see and what do you do if you don't get the choice. 3. The act of trying with every piece of you to know your existence means something to someone, anyone. Then every time seeing that wall shut in front of your face again like your efforts were all for not. 4. Seeing your friends experience their youth the way is considered normal and wondering why you haven't hit those milestones. Why are you waiting in the wings for things they didn't have to put any effort towards? Is it because that's it, that no one sees you? Are you truly invisible?

JASON ANDERSON

*You Can Look but Do Not
Touch*

The impact of lightning tastes like a Sprite
Vibrations across the rosy ridges of tongue leave scars
White-hot plasma bent wings spread for flight.

Rain-soaked trees wail at the malicious termite
Clouds, a cotton swab stretched across the sky
The impact of lightning tastes like a Sprite.

Ripples kiss the tangy smooth lake drowning in sunlight
A satin moth French kisses the surface, startled by a kiss back
White-hot plasma bent wings spread for flight.

Thunder coats the star showered sky at midnight
Arcs of pale purple smell like sharpie ink
The impact of lightning tastes like a Sprite.

Green blades of grass are quick to excite
A cabbage butterfly drunk on nectar sways in delight
White-hot plasma bent wings spread for flight.

You don't belong in a world so beautiful and bright
Selfish humans bathed in your own arrogance; don't you know?
The impact of lightning tastes like a Sprite
White-hot plasma bent wings spread for flight.



Corissa Pritchett, *Midnight*



Chayil Aponte, *Crooked Creature #4*

RILEY BOWEN

Home

I carry a yearning
for the dew to drown my blue Converse,

and for the sun to rise.
To be racing through those

unpaved roads,
so heavily loved and disguised.

They guide me through the
Georgia heat, into The Creek –

heavily loved but quite discreet.
Tumbled quartz and river rock,

itching to be stacked.
Fresh graffiti pollutes the bridge –

tags in hopes of not being tracked.
Above the deafening bayou,

I'm seventeen and aching –
for proof of existence.

So, I let the gritty asphalt
grip my black and blue feet.

Before the murky water
captivates me from 38 feet.

Stolen motel towels pull the water
from my coffee-colored curls

and apparent split ends.
I stand surrounded by small-town friends

with cheeky smiles and sun-stained skin.
Friends from broken homes,

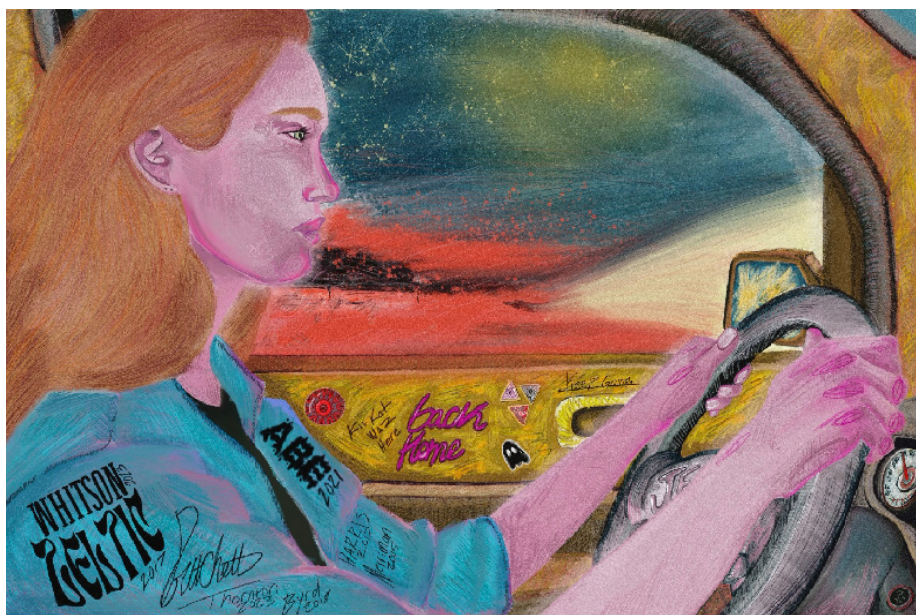
grimy floors, and absent parents.
From close-knit families, white picket fences,

and rather devoted parents.
We watch the sunset through the lens of our phones.

Sharing the common yearning
for a place to call home.



Laurel Sanford, *Vulnerable*



Corissa Pritchett, *Clashing*

LACI THOMPSON

Eliza at the Grange

I remember the day the Reynolds Pamphlet
hit my hand. My stomach was a tangled jump rope,
left in a barrel after years
of neglect. And I remember the year—
1797 when my heaven
on earth, shifted. And they eventually moved on and talked
about the Anderson's spotted cow who died "suspiciously,"
instead of us. And how we moved to this miserable
mansion, where we were forced to make a home.

You know, when we got there, I looked up at the
towering columns and I thought you thought,
that this could make up for *that*. You knew what
that was, and I wasn't going to say it
out loud. A loose grin at me, as you twisted the key
and said to the kids KIDs isn't it nice? wasn't
enough. At least not at the time.

The Grange was a cage then. Manhattan felt like it had gotten
too big, since I was a girl. But it also felt zoomed in on
us, *our* kids, *our* family, if you could
call us that. We were entering a box, a quiet place to
scream. Something we were never allowed to do before.
Even my sister, the Angel(ica) that she is, didn't sail across
the sun-bitten seas to see me.
Heck, even knowing through association with me,
you could maybe get to her, didn't stop you.
Didn't make you say no, when that snake invited you
to her cotton fluffed comforter.

But good thing forgiveness is rain droplets pelting
down, wind blown and thrown, and leaning into the
soil. For the flowers to flourish gently. And not unlucky for you,
I said It's Okay, We're Okay, before you said Goodbye.
And left me
in deadly solitude. They say love covers a multitude
of sins. Something like that. I don't know that I agree or
disagree. All I know is that because of me,
many parks and memorials and transforming trees and charities
allude to your memory. So maybe it's action,
busyness, that prompts the covering of sins.

I'm actually rocking here, on the front porch,
of our post-affair-home and I'm not mad
at you. But there's soot covered coals,
I'd like to throw at James Monroe, because he's the one
who unwrapped the foil and spoiled your good
name, and now I have to rebuild and
replace each letter.

It's sharply chilly with you not here. Can you hear
the kids saying, *burrrrrr*. As a thousand knitted butterfly
blankets wrap their lanky arms around them, where yours
should be. As they shiver, I have to hear *his*
name and become hyper aware of how
gone you are, all the more.



Makennah Cobb, *Grandmother's Recipe*, detail



Makennah Cobb, *Grandmother's Recipe*, detail

GENEVIEVE ROY

Glowing Lights

When I was little I saw glowing lights. My mom couldn't. Every night she recited from her book of lies, *The Tales of Pixie Hollow*. She formed fairies in my mind, and as long as she hugged me I could see them—scattering between the gaps in my fingers. One day she left me in her minivan next to the chowder restaurant; it was a craving of hers. I was locked in the trapped cold, staring out of the opaque window. That's when I spotted them. Little sparkles flickered on a nearby tree—dancing among the melting snow. I squished my nose against the frosted window. There they were, my mom's promise—her promise of rose gold rain. She clicked the car door open, clam chowder steaming from the cup between her mittens. *Mom, look, there's fairies in the tree!* She looked at me and giggled, *no sweetie, those are just Christmas lights*. Why do my mom's stories seem so cruel now? She watched as I built houses of sticks and moss, left little trails of bleeding hearts, filled thimbles with sugar water. She helped plant the glowing lights I see—then pulled them out of my eyes. Fairies don't come back to life if you clap three times. Your mom snuffs their starlight out of existence.

MYA HALVERSON

Backscatter

Bubbles on my body make blood moons,
My inner thighs traced in veiled handprints.

My inner thighs traced in veiled handprints;
My fetish is to leave a hidden mar for you.

My fetish is to leave hidden a mar for you:
My hatred of your flames left me burnt.

.

I can't learn. Again, flames left me burnt
Should I forget my place and submit.

I will forget my place and submit
Until I become a replacement.

Until you become a replacement,
A turgent of cut-out tongues sing high.

.

A turgent of cut-out tongues sing high as the
bubbles on my body make blood moons.

REAGAN SLATON

A Poet's Voice

I never could speak like a poet,
my voice too rough, inflections on the wrong syllables.

Their voices always come out like a hushed whisper,
softly speaking, a spiritual song dancing in my ears,
their words woven into a tapestry that wraps around my shoulders,
becoming a security blanket.

Their words effortlessly beg for my full attention, holding
onto every syllable.

Their soul pierces mine, complete understanding
and acceptance between us.

We enter a waltz, the cadence of their voice becomes
the music, the syllables whispered become the melody.

Their voice is something I yearn for,
Wondering if they practice their tone?
Wondering if this makes me a fraud, as I'll never
have a poet's voice.

JASON ANDERSON

I'm Sorry, Little One

“Am I doing the right thing this time?”

Normally I can clearly tell whether my action is right or wrong but right now I am just finishing the journey I started a year ago. In the beginning, I felt as if I deserved blood for my loss and any action I took would be justified. My husband did not deserve the torture he received for protecting my identity. I glance up at the sun through scarlet strands, warm-wet on my skin. There is no rain or grey clouds looming overhead. It is not cold or damp. There is no excuse for me to be so unhappy with how the universe is right now but... I can't give up now... This last year has been so perfect for my retaliation. Each body correctly disposed of without a trace. Each person labeled “Missing” with no leads on their whereabouts. And yet... something tells me that this last person on the list will spell my demise. I shift in my seat as the bus arrives five minutes late. “Pass?” I reach for my bus pass and scan it, securing the last leg of my journey.

As I walk to my seat I realize if I just turn around and get off the bus, all of this can be over. No more risks or chances of being discovered. No more violence. And that's what puts my butt in the seat. The world owes me violence. It owes me a debt and I won't let it keep a single soul that is rightfully mine. The bus rumbles off and I admire children playing basketball. So innocent and pure, devoid of sin so vile that death is the only road to forgiveness. I reach into my purse and feel the cold cheap metal that lines the rim of a picture frame. In it is a past full of excitement and wonder of what life has in store for me. A memory frozen in time, taken in front of the gate at Disney World. My husband grabbing my ass thinking no one would notice, but I did. I noticed that familiar, playful touch of a mate I loved with all of my heart. And I find myself missing his touch even if I told him to stop his shenanigans then. He knew I loved him, right? That even when I gave him the silent treatment for leaving the toilet seat up, I still loved him. That when I yelled at him for tracking mud in the house, I still loved him. That even when I hated his dumb viewpoints

and questioned why I was with such an idiot man... I still loved him. My eyes fill up with magma and my throat fills with rocks as a single tear kisses the picture frame. Is he ashamed of me for what I do now? In his name? I wipe my eyes and allow my posture to melt into the seat. An old lady smiles at me and offers a tissue. "Thank you."

"We've all been there, child. Just know that whatever you are going through, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Push on even when it feels like you shouldn't because eventually, you'll come out the other side. And you'll feel the relief start at your head and settle in your toes."

I return her warm-laced smile and gather my purse as my stop comes up. "Have a wonderful day."

"You too, sweetheart."

I step off the bus with a newfound resolve for the end of my journey. It feels as if my husband has his hand on my back, pushing me ever so slightly forward, into the last mark on my list. I scout a nice vantage point and start towards my final stop. Once there I take the scattered components out of my purse and begin to assemble the tool of my relief. Cold to the touch but then used it provides a warmth in my soul that almost feels illegal. The last component is my favorite as I like to count how many times my fingers screw it onto the rest of the rifle. And with that, I'm ready. I line up the target's head in my scope, her brunette strands flowing innocently in the wind. And as my finger caresses the trigger, I can feel my husband's breath on my neck. His fingers caressing my thigh and groping my breasts. "Take the shot, mi amor." And I feel relief start at my head and settle in my toes...

"In the case of 10-year-old Gaby that was shot and killed while playing with her toys in the comfort of her own yard, how does the defendant plead?" "Guilty your honor..."

I smile at the judge, suddenly seeing her black robe painted in red? And I feel... warm water sliding down my nose into my mouth. "Order in the court!" I feel lightheaded and turn around to face what the judge is addressing and... I see my husband saddened by my descent into hell.

HALEY KELLEY

Abecedarian for my Wandering Thoughts

All I do is sit and think about my
Boring existence and wonder what I
Can do to further my
Dwellings on this expansive green, green
Earth. And for some reason I can't come to a conclusion about my
Future. Will I sit here wondering for an eternity?
Gosh! I hope not. I think about all the things I want to accomplish
Here, and I am somehow still searching for
It in the labyrinth of my mind. I
Just want clarity. They said, "take this pill, and it'll all clear up,"
but I still wonder.

Kate was just like me and now she has it all figured out.
Laying in a hot tub with her doctor-of-a-husband.
Moreover, I want to actually do something with my
Nonsense. Why do I have all of these thoughts if I can't use them.
Only if I could actually put some sense into by actions, maybe I could
write a sensible
Poem or play. Maybe I could jokingly join a
Quartet to "search for the everlasting," but that seems like a
Reach. I used to dream of building a treehouse with my best friend, but
that all
Seems so silly now. Mom used to say that me and
Taylor had wild imaginations, but I think everyone is
Used to it by now. Sometimes I feel like I'm the only person who is lost,
but that seems

Very silly. When I was younger, she used to say I could do anything. I
could go to
Wonderland if I wanted to. I could hang out with
Xavier at the zoo for hours if I wanted, but now
You look at me with a serious sly smile that says otherwise. Maybe I
should go read my
Zodiac reading for the day. Maybe that could tell me what to do.



Chayil Aponte, *Aubade*

HANNAH ELLIOTT

EIGHTY AECH DEE _TEST

// this screening is not a definitive tool for diagnosis

// are you easily distracted by external stimuli?

no / well, maybe / only when / a car drives by / a dog barks / something / is on the ground / I pick it up / like a magpie / sometimes / it's a rock / but once / I found / a pink scrunchie / I washed it / before I wore it / like a sweater / I got from / a thrift store / itchy fabric / on my skin / caused a / rash / or am I / turning / into a zombie / pull my flesh / off / like a / Band-Aid / too scratchy / makes me feel / like I'm suffocating / turtleneck noose / around my throat / get it / off / before I / curl up / in a ball / and die.

// how often do you fidget?

if I am not moving / I will / die / tap tap tap / my #2 pencil / on the desk / keep the wheels / turning / hamster / in my head / pinch my cheek / between my teeth / tastes like / the third grade / blood gusher / strawberry / or / cherry / comfort in copper / pick / the skin / of my fingers / pull it / down / to my / knuckles / watch the blood / trickle down / onto my / favorite jeans / from JCPenny / with the rips / in the knees / roly poly / across the pavement / hit my head / again / perched in a chair / in the back / of the classroom / no one look at me / shiver and shake / burst / of / ardor / at midnight / how long / until I crash?

// do you tend to avoid or delay getting started on a new important task?

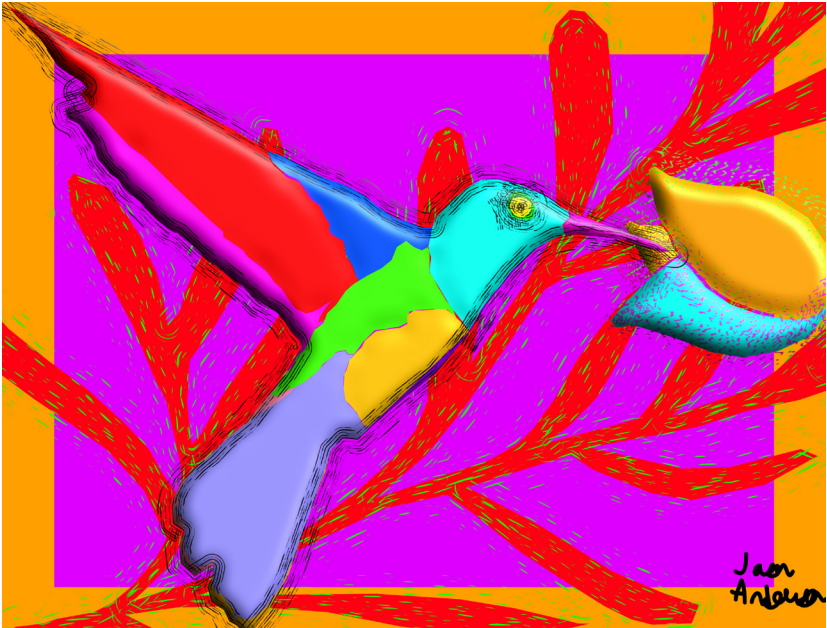
I would rather / rot / into nothing / than get up / and read / another word / 30 pages / feels like 300 / simlish / seems more feasible / to understand / than Shakespeare / does duolingo / teach simlish / I have over / 4000 hours / in the sims 4 / playing god / while being /

played by god / the metaverse / is now / there / is / no / escape / from
/ this / hell / oh / never mind / I realized / I forgot / to eat / shovel /
chicken nuggets / in my mouth / until / I'm no longer / hangry.

*// how often do you lose, misplace, or damage something that's necessary
in order to get things done?*

I lost / the charger / to my computer / and it –

// error, test disrupted. results may be lost



Jason Anderson, *Nectar*

LACI THOMPSON

Ode to My Nana's Little Blue House

A little blue house right across the road
Filled with love that's not so little
Painted blue like a canvas of the open sky
Wide like your arms when we arrive

A little blue house, the play place of summer days
Zooming down the hill on Pawpaw's old golf cart—
 our own roller coaster
In the backyard

A little blue house that has sat in the midst of joy
And also in grieving
I can picture us gathered in your small kitchen, holding hands
 and sending prayers
I can envision you, pointing to photos on walls, and the
 memories you call
Yours

A little blue house with a doorbell that doesn't get used
We bypass it and just come right to you
On the normal days and on the fondest of holidays
 and on the horrible days
You're there,
Waiting

A little blue house with an annual Christmas Eve soiree

Lights on the tree that are twinkling with pleasure
Red and green wrapping paper hiding our new treasures
Which we would later ball up and plummet at each other
Your laughter echos, your smile radiates as each of us decide
 who our next target will be

A little blue house that watches winter fade to spring
The adults go out and hide the eggs that would fill our baskets
We searched with diligence, hoping for the one with the \$20 bill
the hard-boiled ones, later to be smashed with a baseball bat

A little blue house, the smell of paint at the back door
Your newest masterpiece
Drying on the floor

A little blue house with a clacking sewing machine
Working on a new addition, for a new addition
To a fourth-generation family
That you have created

A little blue house with a clinking glass candy dish in the den
Adults and children alike run to the Hershey's chocolates
 and Double Bubble Gum
Of course, after a hug from you

A little blue house where we can escape the cold winter breeze
Standing in front of the old heater, you ask how we've been
When our skin is almost melted off, we sit with you,
 on the burgundy couch

A little blue house, the scent of your German Chocolate cake
 swirling in the air

You always offer us the yellow box of Nilla wafers and have
endless wisdom to share
Like just the other day you told me,
“Learn all you can, while you can, and you’ll be alright.”

A little blue house that is really something more
A safe place when the storms of life come
The very foundation of the house, right inside

A little blue house, where just beyond the door
You’ll find someone who shows her love in every way
You’ll find a woman that we all love, more than we can say
You’ll find my Nana. You’ll find someone who built

A little blue *home*.

KATIE D'AMBROSIO

Rosary

My grandmother has a rosary.
The beads are seafoam
spheres of marble, heavy
with the crucifix crowning
the edge.

Her rosary is curled, a ring of ant queens,
in the satin lip of her pillowcase,
a steel sword of sacred mysteries.

The beads were a gift from her father,
a Fenian taxi driver. Her prayers
are a final artifact of Irish roots.
She saves his letters like a Roman
Missal. She keeps his paper license in a hat
box with her mother's old teaspoons.

My grandmother slides her rosary beads
across the kitchen tablecloth,
and moves her lips in prayer.
Though she is silent, you can still see
the "f" her mouth molds to, the "full of grace"
and "forgive our sins."

My grandmother's rosary snapped
at the chain by the bronze crucifix.
She asked me for a spare and I gave
her my glass beads from Lourdes,
dipped in Holy Mother's healing bath.

Now, she keeps my rosary

in her pillowcase at the hospital,
waiting for her biopsy charts.
She clutches the beads and prays
for a miracle.

My grandmother's hand
is an oyster shell that spits
out glass beads
through her calloused fingertips.
From close up, her prayers are raindrops
on a windshield, each water-pearl a Glory Be.



Hannah Elliott, *Individuality*

LACI THOMPSON

1st Choice

She saw him from across the ebb and flow of the mother creek, running between their houses. He was cute. One day came around and he was at her doorstep. He asked her mom if he could take her out. When her mom agreed, she picked out a floofy dress that came down just past her knees and paired it with some little flats. The picture is in black and white, and I've never asked the color of the dress, but the summer of 1958 is what the picture says, it's written on the back.

They drove in a beat-up pick-up truck to the only fast food spot within 50 miles of their houses, The Drive In. Not to be confused with the movies. They got hamburgers and drove to a hill. What was he wearing, you asked? The army suit he had just received in the mail. He was leaving for training the next morning, several states away from her. They said goodbye. The Vietnam War began on April 30th, 1975.



Heather Parker, *Phlebia Radiata*

CHRIS SAY

I Go Back to "Home"

All the homes in the camp are either bamboo or dried wood of some sort—fresh green, antique brown, golden brown—and if you run while it rains you hear the neighbors through the cracks of each hand-built hut buzzing under the mushy sound of the knee-deep mud between your untrimmed toes, you will see mothers chasing sons with sticks and bamboo pieces left over from father's building hand-woven baskets, disciplining out the devil's influences and the heavy mindedness of the sons who preferred playing over learning, you will see mothers sitting near the entrance with their baby attached to their breasts as though each breath is shared both inside and outside her tummy, you will see siblings sharing the one bread father was able to bring home that week or a lizard father found on the way home from the garden grilling on top of the fire, you will see mothers bathing brown bodies who refused to sit still, and you will see boys sneaking to houses homed to forbidden girls, you will see boys in the garden helping their fathers, girls balancing jugs of water with a stick back to the village, boys climbing trees, girls climbing trees, fathers climbing trees, you will see huts burning because that family that was waiting for a green card finally got it and left, you will see families smiling across the road to the hut across because they escaped buried bombs, loose bullets, forced penetration, and murder together, now safe in huts across a river from where their persecutors wait, you will see faces of families your grandma called cousins blur because all that remains are the burned flesh beneath the once-happy village, you will see the mountains you called home blur between the harsh rain thundering down into the forests, you will see my mother and father's boned faces look deadly into the camera for our green card pictures, their smiles not bright in fear of making a home somewhere they won't prosper but perhaps their

children will, and you will see the sad but joyous village I was born in but you will see me somewhere else, you will find me somewhere safe from murder by those who look like me but not safe from murder by those who hate me, you will see me miles and miles from the woman who loves me, the man who saves me, the boy and girls who raised me, you will find me worrying about love not water, and you will find me sitting safely in America thinking about how strange it is that: *I am home but I'm so far from home.*



ADDISYN CLAPP

I Dropped Jesus

At ten years old I was Mother Mary
in my church's nativity play. A Cabbage
Patch doll was shoved up and under my beige robes.
Young Joseph was beside me, and I cradled
the lumpy cabbage protruding from my child belly.
Jesus clung to my womb. He was tangled
in the umbilical threads of my robes. I yanked.
I pulled. I shoved all ten fingers inside me. The tips
of my fingers slipped against his unscarred body.
When Jesus popped free of my blanketed womb,
he slipped from my fingers.
The first thing he touched was not me,
but the church carpet. Joseph's cheeks reddened
like the holly berries strung above
the construction paper manger.
I felt the amniotic fluid slither down my thighs,
pool around my ankles. There was Cabbage Patch Jesus—
face pressed against the blue carpet, a nimbus
of stray strands of hair and dust
collected around his head.
Ten seconds into divine motherhood,
and I was a failure. No midwife next to me,
no mother to hold my hand. Worse than a failure,
I was alone. I left him there, starfished
and naked under the fluorescents.



Makennah Cobb, *Remember Where You Came From*



Young
Harris
COLLEGE



EST. 1886