

THE SHEAF: LITERARY & ART MAGAZINE

FALL 2022



**THIS MAGAZINE CONTAINS ALL ORIGINAL WORKS OF UNION
COLLEGE STUDENTS. THE BEST WORKS OF ALL THE
STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED WERE CHOSEN.**

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HALLOWEEN

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HALLOWEEN

1901 BY MARIA LOO

Add a little bit As she entered the cave, a gust of cold wind hit her face with an overwhelming smell of rotting flesh. Out of the shadows, a pale, tall, and scarred figure appears, the pale moonlight from above pouring in, illuminating the man's disfigured face. There was a limp to his step as he padded towards her. She stepped back as a look of shock and horror overtook her face. Towering over her, his arms outstretched as he placed both hands on either side of her shoulders.

A single tear slipped from his left eye down his sharp, protruding cheek as he whispered into her ear, "finally, I am no longer plagued with suffering in solitude. I have found my companion. You are to lie here with me."

She stood there speechless, unsure of what to make of the situation and the implications of his statement. She could see a glint of melancholy in his eyes, yet his smile seemed sinister as ever.

"How long have you been in this cave by yourself? Are you well? May I be of any assistance to you, sir?"

"I was birthed in this darkness, and here I shall remain."

"I'm not sure if I quite understand you, sir. I'm sure great tragedy has befallen you; however, the moon has taken the sun's place, and we must make haste if we are to seek any help."

"Oh, but you are mistaken, for you are the wanderer that was birthed and meant for me. You are to stay here with me forever."

She gasped as his hand clasped around her mouth and body, tightening his grip at her attempts to flee.

"Unhand me! Unhand me at once. I command it. This will not be my fate. It is not true!"

Her shouts and screams were to no avail. It seemed her fate was cursed, and she was to remain in this darkness with him forever.

**THE OCEAN
OF MY DEEP
BREATHES
DROWN MY
EARS**

BY EDGAR ORTIZ

Two slits cause my vision to
become **obscure**
It brings me a comfort to
what others can not **see.**
I become foreign to those
around me
But yet the covering feel's
inviting
Some see what I have on as
a **facade**
But I hide who I am without
the mask on
And reveal my truest self
with it on top
My truest facade isn't the
one I wear on **Halloween**
But the one everyone has
seen.

THE CLEANER: Journal Entry 1

BY ISIAH DEWAR
EDITED BY MARIA LOO

Today was my first therapy session, and I've been tasked with keeping a weekly journal. It's fine and all, but unnecessary because I keep my anxiety under control. My boss demanded I go to therapy after I lost it on one of his clients, so now I'm forced to go unless I want to live on unemployment checks. Sure I have panic attacks once or twice a week, but who doesn't, right? I have been prescribed a medication called alprazolam to help with my anxiety. The psychiatrist advised me to take it on days when I should anticipate high-stress situations. It's helped somewhat, especially when I go on cleaning jobs.

Just in case I didn't tell you before, I work as a cleaner for a private company so I could renew my lease on the apartment I've been staying in for the last few years. The job entails clear-cut janitorial work, cleaning up whatever mess is left behind. It pays well and keeps a roof over my head, so I don't trouble myself with moral or ethical quandaries on the matter. Turns out you can put a price on my dignity. I was recently noticed by my twat of a manager and was asked by him to become his new personal cleaner.

It took the offer because I could use the extra cash.

Today he wanted me to clean up a mess and trash in the next district over that's known for its abandoned buildings containing homeless people and degenerates. I'm about three years into this, so it should be an ordinary job. I was assigned a new partner, but I never got her name. She started two months ago and filed paperwork at the company office, so this is her first cleaning job. I've only had a few interactions with her; she seems friendly but timid. I feel like she could be my perfect partner, even though she got on my nerves. I approached the front of the building. She stood there waiting for me holding the bag of tools that every cleaner needs as detailed in the manual: a mop, broom, axe, hammer, heavy-duty trash bags, all-purpose surface cleaner, vacuum, gun, and a metal baseball bat. I noticed in her hand that she was holding a pack of knock-off brand trash bags. "Why didn't you buy heavy-duty trash bags that were listed in the cleaner manual?" I said with my brows furrowed.



BY MELODY DUNNING

“They weren’t on sale, and these are cheaper. I’m trying to stick to a budget,” she said with her chin up.

“If there’s one thing you need to know about this gig is that you always stick to the manual, got it?” This job was already off to a bad start.

We went into the building and smelled rotten corpses. I realized this wasn’t just any regular job. It was a job at the abandoned Morgan hill building. I immediately began to feel my chest tighten, and I shakily popped five pills of the medication my psychiatrist prescribed and took a swig of whiskey from my flask.

“Ugh, it reeks!” my partner exclaimed, “what is that?”

“I guess it’s coming from down the hall,” I replied, “let’s keep going. We still have a job to do. This is what you signed up for, right?”

“Yeah, I guess. That’s if I don’t throw up first,” my partner choked out.

As we reached the room where the smell was coming from, we realized what our boss meant by “take care of the trash.” A pack of wild, ravenous wolves pillaging and consuming the rotten garbage and huddled around a trash can set on fire. I immediately attacked one of them to end this madness; only they disputed with each other about how my boss knew their location.

The wolves, I mean, not anyone in particular. One of the wolves tried to swing at me with a hammer, but I grabbed its paw and threw it over my shoulder. My partner stood there shocked and speechless, a look of utter puzzlement and bewilderment across her face. I had no choice but to snap her out of it and prompt her to contribute as any personal cleaner would.

“Toss me a tool, will you!” I shout in desperation.

“Which one? I’m not sure which one you want! How are we going to get out of here?” her voice shrieks in terror.

“Just trust me! Throw something right now if you wanna walk out of here alive!”

She threw over the metal baseball bat and grabbed the broom for herself just as the wolves began to surround us. I managed to swing the bat right into the side of the alpha’s head, but not before it socked me in the stomach. From the corner of my eye, I saw my partner fighting two wolves at once, which was better than I could have imagined. This minor distraction cost me the rest of the fight because I was hit in the head with my hammer the next thing I knew. I woke up to a few of the pack’s wolves chuckling above me and my tool bag being inspected by two of the wolves. I took the opportunity to gain the upper hand, as I immediately got up and smashed my bat into the wolf’s skull, while the wolves around it immediately ceased

their snickering. In a feeble attempt to kill me, one of the wolves lunged at me with the axe from my tool bag until my partner's bullet made its way through its skull, its body falling pathetically to the floor. She approached me, and we stood back to back, deciding it was better to stay close. The wolves attacked us from every angle, and she looked frightened, but I reminded her that this was what we signed up for. The only thing that kept me sane as the night went on was the screech of each wolf that died by my hands. After we removed all the wolves, we finally started cleaning the first floor and making each room "look nice," as my boss put it. The job took nearly twelve hours to complete due to the heaps of blood and organs scattered across the floor, but nonetheless, we managed to finish in time. Unfortunately, while we were taking out all the trash, the bags ripped and covered my car in blood and pieces of wolf carcass. My partner finally got why I wanted the heavy-duty trash bags. She took me out for ice cream after, though, so I'm not too upset about that. I may have taken a liking to her.

I forgot to mention that she wasn't getting paid enough to take out the less fortunate, but I never understood what she meant by that or bothered to ask.

So that was my work, and I hope this was as insightful as you said it would be. Also...

DON'T TURN ON THE NEWS

The end...?

DANCING WITH THE DEVIL'S HEART

BY KETTNY FRANCE

He believe your love was pure and so he
walked through the line of your fire
When you pull the trigger and let the bullet
go through his heart
Left him wounded
I guess Love truly kills cause it seems as if he
is dead
Everyone knew you were the devil in human
form But yet he tend to go past that
and try to change you
He did not know that you have already sold
your soul to the devil himself
Leaving you numb
He wanted to love you but you couldn't listen
to the words he was expressing
because the devil was whispering in your ear
and his demons were blocking you
from opening up your eyes and now you're
murderer, you're the murder of the
heart and the murder of love
He had soon realized that he was dancing
with the devil's heart



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Poems by Bharvi Patel

2:00 A.M.

2 am but I am still wide awake.

It's 2 am but the time is running at its pace.

What should I do?

What should I not?

The world is ceased, and so is my mind

What should I think?

Where should I go?

If there's a place, among the clouds I wish I could fly to it.

If there's a place, in the ocean I wish I could drown to it.

If there was heart with a dream in me,

I wish I could live for it.

It's not easy to come around, it's not easy to go

somewhere else.

I feel I am in the midair strangled and trapped.

I can't run behind but don't want to walk forward.

It's 2 am the owls blink their wide eyes just like me.

***They'll sleep when the sun will shine but I will deal with
the world.***

The clock is ticking but why can't it go fast?

So, things get over soon and I can breathe again.

The clock is ticking but why can't it go slow?

So, I can catch on things and work on it to get my best.

***It's 2 am but nothing changes, tomorrow I'll be here
again,***

At 2 am with no sleep in my eyes just anxiety by my side.

***It will be 2 am and the time would be still running at its
pace.***



H There are so many
words going around
U like a hurricane
in my head,
R but I can't put any of them
together
R to explain exactly how I
feel.
I Growing restless,
C I'm struggling to
hold my form
A My heart feels like
it's on the floor,
N but my mind
is in the sky.
E I'm going back and forth,
can't contain myself.
I'm closing my eyes,
There's still
darkness around
I'm waiting patiently for silence
But the chaos only
grows louder
And louder till there's no
end.





By Melody Dunning

Wolves

***When the sky is colored black,
the moon glows in the lake along with the
stars bearing the reflection of the vast sky.***

***The forest is fast asleep, but high above, on a
cliff far away.***

The wolves haul.

Awakening the fear in the dreams.

***Slowly with the wind, the darkness grows
deep as the clouds cover the moon.***

***The wolves haul as the walk down in a pack,
Ready to turn the dream into a living
nightmare.***



Evanesce



*There's a blue sky above me and a **deep blue** ocean beneath me.*

The air that surrounds me is dense.

*The wild waves are forming and are **arching** closer.*

*I want to take a step back, but **I am lost in the** beauty.*

*The clear water with the foam swirling creating a **strong pattern.***

*I was hypnotized as my eyes reflected them.
And when they hit me, my feet lost the ground.
It was as if they were embracing me, but the cold currents **made me shiver.***

I felt like I was almost flying, the power of the sea was stronger on me.

*Clasping on to the invisible string, I was haggard standing alone in the **wrath of the** nature.*

*I had forgotten the spiel of my voice in my mind.
It was as if my life was **burning away,** evanescing.*

***My grasp on the string was now withering.
I tried to turn back again with my insensate feet that
were no longer touching the ground.
But the waves were pulling me closer to the depths,
holding me like a treasure.
I could hear the bubbles and the splashes loud.
The waves were roaring while surrounding me.
My heart was hammering in my chest.***

***There was a flash of golden light as a tear rolled
down to clear the vision of my left eye.
The sky above me was disappearing steadily,
I gasped as my mind awoke, terminating the
hypnosis.
I was floating between the choice of breathing life or
drowning in the invitation of death.***

***The golden light flashed again as the water filled my
lungs;
I held the string and it rose above taking me back to
the clouds.
I coughed out the salt and breathed under the sun.***



WINTER



Rollercoaster

By Angel Gonzalez

Hey, my name is Angel
Nice to meet you
Hey, are there any things you enjoy?
I love music
I love watching movies
And although you wouldn't expect it
I like playing and watching sports
One of my favorite hobbies is playing basketball
Oh wow, ok well where are you from Angel?
I'm Dominican and I'm from New York
Ohh... well nice to meet you
Enjoy the rest of your day
These are how most of my conversations go
I meet someone new, and this is how I present myself

I bet you have no idea what's wrong with this
To any normal person there's nothing wrong with this
interaction
Well to me there's a lot
Like for example why did you say wow when I said what I
liked
Did you not expect it?
Are you surprised?
Did I say something wrong?
Do you already have a stereotype about me because of my
interests?
Do you have my whole personality figured out in your head?
Because you're wrong
But what if you're right
Maybe you know exactly who I am
Maybe you just read my mind
Why did you say wow?

You kept the conversation going so I'm probably just
overreacting
You asked me where I was from, and I told you
You responded with oh

You looked at me with different eyes then you did
when the conversation started
You weren't looking at me with the eyes of a stranger
But with the eyes of someone who doesn't like me
The eyes of someone who wants nothing to do with me

But we are just strangers
What could I have possibly done to make your eyes
change so dramatically?
Oh god here we go again
Another person who has their own ideas of who I am
and what I'm like
Another person who has their own picture of me in
their head
Another person who is done talking to me and will
probably never speak to me again
Another person just being nice to me
Another stranger

This is all random, but this is what it's like in my brain
Every single day
Simple interactions and tasks aren't so simple for me
I'm not bad at communication
I just overthink and I have anxiety
You want to hear what an anxious brain sounds like?

Time to wake up
What time is it?
Ayo it's mad early
I'd rather just go to sleep
But I have to get up
Ugh wakey wakey Angel

**What am I going to do today?
I should go to the gym
Wait let me do my push ups
Okay I have to go upstairs now
"Hey mom"
Oh, here my dad goes again yelling
Why is he always yelling?
He's always angry did something happen to him
Does he hate me?
Doesn't he understand how I feel
He'll never get it
I give up
I'm tired of him
But I love him
I wish he would just leave me alone
I wish he would just spend time with me
Let me just get some fresh air
Silence
Silence**

**Breeze
Water
And more silence**

**Okay I can go back inside now
What's good my boy
Why is he acting weird?
He shook my hand, but he looked at me weird
Of course, he's not actually cool with me
He's not really my friend
By why not?
Am I annoying?
Whatever, I don't need him
Damn, can you just be my friend
Or at least want to be my friend**

**Hey baby.
Read 2 hours ago
How are you.
Delivered 5 hours
Notifications are silenced**

**Um okay she's probably busy
She's tired of me
She's probably busy
She finds me annoying
She doesn't want to talk to me
She hates me
She wants to leave
All she ever does is leave
It's my fault
She's probably busy
It's not my fault
This won't last
Oh well
Damn this hurts
I'm fine
She's probably busy
Time to play ball
Do I have homework?
How's my mom doing?
Is my car still making that noise?
Shoot the ball
Damn I missed
I'm so bad I'm sorry
I'm a good player the next one will go in
Yo I'm hot give me the ball
1 shot
3 shots
Foul!
Damn why am I always being hit?**

**Why am I always being attacked?
Why do people keep leaving me?**

**What do I do?
I can't breathe
I'm shaking
I need to relax
I deserve this
She's probably busy
I'm fine**

**This rollercoaster is me everyday
It isn't exciting
I'm the strongest man alive yet I'm
the weakest one in the room**

**My thoughts go up and down and I must stay for the
ride
If only I was too short to get on the ride
But I'm not
I'm tall and I must get on because I paid for the ticket
It'll all be over soon, and I know I'm strong enough to
withstand it**

**Hey I'm Angel
Nice to meet you.**





Break

By Angel Gonzalez

You ever been to a junkyard?

It's a place full of broken things

Broken cars, broken glass

Broken tools, broken people

But people can't be broken right?

Maybe someone is missing a leg or
something

But that's not broken that's disabled

How can we be broken?

Disappearing doesn't sound like such a bad
idea

You should just pull a magic act

And just be gone

from all the people

from all the negative energy

from everything, even yourself
especially yourself

Maybe running away is your best move

Away from the movies in your head

From all the words overflowing like a damn

Some people go to junkyards to break things

They go and throw some of their own
possessions

Find ways to let go of all their aggression

They find things to destroy

Because they're sick tired of being the most
broken

thing in the room

They bring a bat just to break
break old memorabilia

Break their phone

Break old habits

Break away from their selves

To break the chain

The chain keeping them here

The chain that's keeping them the same

The chain that's keeping them who they are

Who they don't want to be

Breaking the chain and just disappearing

**From the comic book that is your life
You're being attacked and retreating is your last option
Run away, disappear, and come back for revenge
Your mind and body alike need a vacation
Everyone just needs a break from themselves
Just take a break**

**The demons are strong but you're stronger
Heal off the rest of your wounds and
come back for vengeance
I know you think you'll lose
But you won't lose**

**That fight will not be lost, and you'll no longer have
to break things
You'll no longer feel the need for destruction
Now you'll go to the junkyard not for shattered
glass
But for spare parts**

Untitled

By Anthony Jackson

I am not beautiful, too many blemishes and imperfections lie within me.

I don't believe it was naivety that made me think you were beautiful

I never thought that you were perfect, it was just that the blemishes and imperfections that you had enchanted me.

We were always fundamentally different

I thought that made us closer

Trying to understand each other was always our fun little game

Until it wasn't

The constant disagreements, the misunderstandings, the lost trust, and the wounded hearts.

All of it.

How did we get here?

Did my lack of attendance wound you in a way that can't be repaired?

Have we gone on and fundamentally altered again?

Why are you always so far from me or crawling under my skin with no middle ground to be found?

I've spent years fighting every universal force to make sure you were still in my sight.

To make sure we can still witness each other's existence and at least be grateful for that.

I do not wish to do that anymore.

My hands are tired from trying to stop the space between us from growing.

We are galaxies apart and I know now that I am no superman, just human.

We will exist in our own corners of the universe, I will no longer see your light from planets away and you will no longer see mine.

We different beings will have to accept that we won't see each other again.

That our encounter was simply two stars crossing into different planes.

Unable to hold onto each other; I hope you let me go so I can do the same to you.

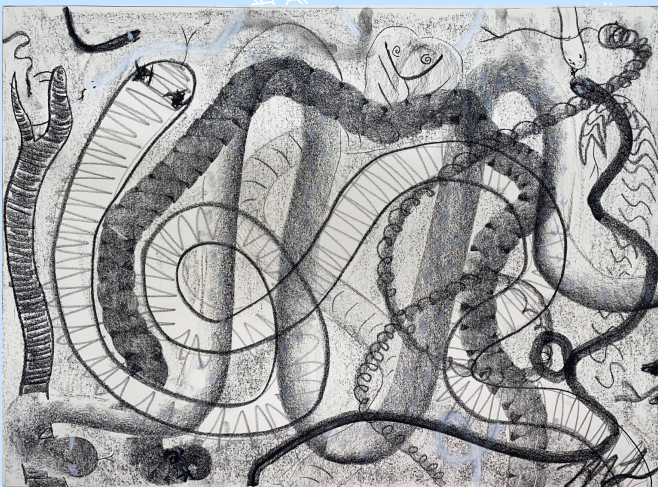
Seasons changing, moving forward

By Maria Loo

Coffee, winter, and boots
there is beauty in the
simplicity of a picturesque
small town.

the snow brings a
wonderland by appearance,
but there's always a
calm before a storm.
it's unforgiving wind
gusts through and
leaves everything
open for grabs.

in a small world, the grapevine is
all knowing, everyone being
an oracle. one's downfall
is quick, with no time
to gasp for air,
no silence.



everything grows louder,
everything is unveiled,
secrets kept are unkept,
where there was no
madness is now madness.

smoothies, summer, and heels
there is beauty in the
chaos of a concrete jungle, a big city.

lights overhead, curiosity looming
at what's unknown, the urge

to discover,
to create,
to experience,
to witness.

overtime, what if all was done but nothing
was learned?

what if it's not what the city offers, but
what it takes from you?

what if you give so much of yourself,
thinking you're filling that gap, but it's
actually swallowing you whole?

what then?

By Michael Colin Logue

Spring



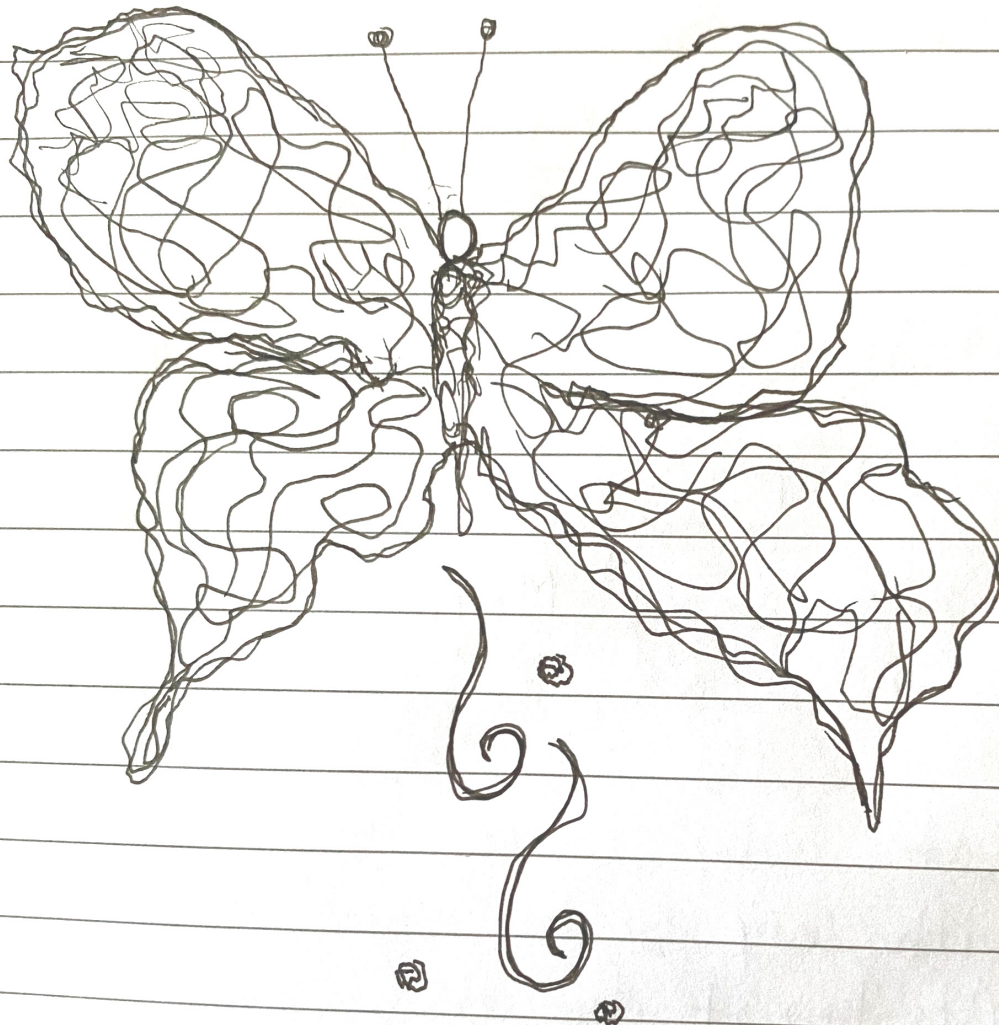
Short Story

By Anthony Jackson

I hope it all works out one day. Y'know, people like us have a hard time taking our own advice. These lessons- these flowers that you gave me, i hope you get your own. "You don't deserve to wither." That's something you tried your best to beat into my head and it's a little too early for the teacher to be taught by the student. I always wondered who decides that someone deserves pain or love and if they're ever right but I believe that those that truly understand us are good enough judges and their verdict is one of love. I just wish you could see that and I know right now you're having a hard time seeing that and it's ok, I've been there too. When your friends tell you how you're important and they love you... when flowers are always being given to you but all you see is a severed 'thing' waiting to wither. A compliment that will eventually be retracted, it's more than frustrating to be the only one that can't see your own greatness. But that's only for right now it won't be forever. The same way you hoped for love to reach down and touch me since I couldn't view it, I want to extend that same grace to you. If you can't see why you matter, you can feel that you matter and if that doesn't work we'll try scent next. Whatever it takes because that's what you deserve.



Louwana Mejia



Breathe.
Keep trying.
Don't look back.
Hold your heart.
And smile.



By Laura Schubert

*She wasn't religious but she wanted a funeral
Something about tradition
Something about the performance of it
From beyond the grave forcing souls to watch a man of God
Act out his own holy interpretation of one*

*She wasn't vain but she wanted to look pretty
Something about being presentable
Something about being desired
The rouge on her cheeks does her no justice
She looks like a faded clown, but nothing is funny about that*

*She wasn't lonely but she wanted people to attend
Something about letting them mourn
Something about not being forgotten
But they will forget or there won't be anyone left to remember
Whichever comes first*

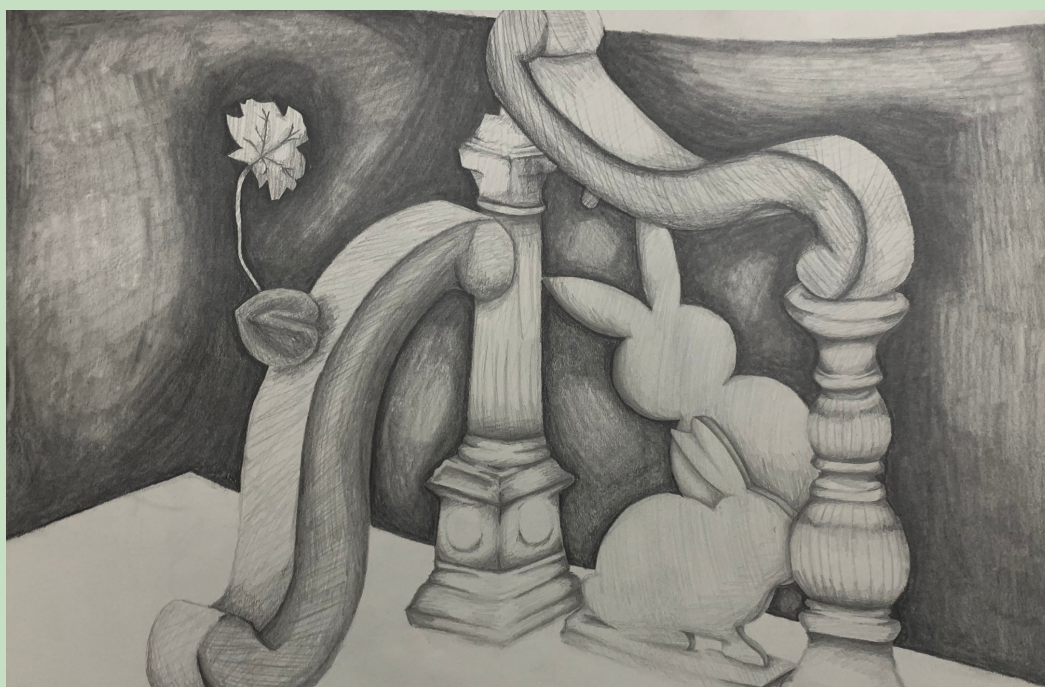
*She wasn't bad but she wasn't good
She was just her
And now she is nothing.*





*Pam L.
Merola*

*Franchesca
Selenia
Martinez*



Onion Smelling Flowers

By Tammy

Flowers, pieces of nature left to grow into various forms. I like to think of flowers as a metaphor for human beings. We range in colors, sizes, lengths, smells, and much more. I once crossed paths with an onion-smelling flower that **forever changed my life.**

When I was five years old, I came to America with my mother and two younger brothers. On television, I watched America, or at least **what I thought America was.** I saw sunny skies, sandy beaches, fair and tan-skinned girls turning into mermaids, and flower-lined suburban homes. While these things sounded nice in theory, I questioned if I would fit in. If I could make myself an 'American girl' and live the fulfilling life I saw on the tiny Hannah Montana-lined television set in my bedroom. We arrived in mid-November. I remember because the sharp, brisk wind immediately disproved my point that America was sunny 24/7. To my now five-year-old surprise, New Jersey was not the entirety of America.

In the past year of isolation, I have been left alone to encounter life's unexplainable turns. Months ago, I forced myself out of bed to take a walk because my dark room and addicting phone screen no longer sufficed. I walked past many stores while entering some at random. There was a small floral boutique that I couldn't seem to ignore. I entered with \$4 in my bag with no plan, just **a reminder of the curiosity** that I felt in my five-year-old mind. The owner, a wonderful woman named Peggy, allowed me to ramble on about my sudden interest in plants. For a moment, I felt like I understood life. Like I had been called to this store by some divine being to live in this moment of warmth, understanding, and childhood euphoria.



Artist Spotlight:

Camila Taddeo









Hosted by:
The Sheaf Art & Literary Magazine & the College Novel

Invitation for students, faculty & staff to participate in Union College's first ever:

POETRY SLAM

ATTRACTIONS:

**Open mic,
prizes (amazon gift
cards for best 3),
certificates,
and so much more!**



Where: The Student Commons

November 16

12:30- 2 pm



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POETRY SLAM





Hosted By Prof. Fatimah Braxton-Robinson
and Dr. Sophia Mitra

U N T I T L E D

BY AUTUMN MARIE HEAVISIDE



I read you,
like a series of books that never end
you keep me interested and in awe
with every chapter my love for you extends
you've been hurt and so have I
but you nurtured all my soils
and turned a land of nothing but grass
into a beautiful valley of flowers at-last
but I believe that your soil was made for these seeds
all the soils planted here before me were just weeds
And you give me hope that I've never felt
the way you acknowledge me
the way you listen to me, it makes my heart melt
and
I never knew I'd find love out of this
but
the way you kiss the parts of me I hate most
or the way you were willing to take the risk
i say this and I quote
you've been hurt and so have I
but
all the hurt I once knew
is changing to a whole new view
and all I can think about is you
and how true
how true you
how true you care with no despair
how true you love me with no fear
and as I breathe in this fresh new air
how true you make me is all I hear.
while all the voices in my head
that tell me I'm too scarred to feel
you reassure me that I've just been misled
and all the words you say to me are real
you've been hurt and so have I
but somehow, in the blink of an eye
you turned every doubt I had inside
into nothing less than a small thought in my mind and
now
you've been healed and so have I
you healed me in ways I didn't even know
and all the hurtful words you heard before me are now burnt
as we look into our past
how the tables have turnt
you've been healed and so have I
and this is not just a high
this is forever
and through every endeavor
we'll be here, together
cause you've been healed and so have I

M A S K O N M Y F A C E

BY ISAIAH DEWAR

Told me at a young age that I was ugly
That my differences made me ugly
I was forging a mask to wear
To keep me in line and make things fair
When I wear the mask, I can be anyone
I can be blue I can be strong
I can be smart, I can write and sing songs
This mask helps me make friends
And made me beautiful
But it was not my face
Years go by as feelings of isolation start to eat me alive
I wanted to be seen but everyone just saw
The mask that was on my face
All I can do is be the model example of
what I want from me
Whenever I rebel or try to change
The answer I always received was
This isn't me
But what is me
Who am I without this mask
Am I an artist
Or
Am I a fool
Am I man
Or
A boy born to be tool
Who am I?
Stand across the stage
Stand proud and turning page
Diploma in right hand
Courage in my left
I sang my song across the world
To know that I am beautiful
That I'm truth and not mistake
However when I look in the mirror
All I saw was the mask on my face
I can't take it anymore
I want to know who is behind that mask



Who am I
But why would you want to know
Why would you want to know the answer when it's staring right at you
It's because your ugly
You think I give a damn when you remove me
Everyone is going to leave when they see the real you
Shut up
It happens when you ask that girl out
Shut up
It happens when you tried to wave and say hi
Shut up
You know it's true and you're nothing without me on
Because you're ugly
Eyes up
I look back from where I start
Came far from sitting in my room and tarts
I learned how to draw
Got a job from being myself
Learned how to drive than got a license for that
What I will be someday is a man who stands on his feet
And creates to lead others to success
But to me that seems so far away
But I have hope and no mask can hide that fact
Which is why I'm on this stage
Expressing my emotions while I turn a page
hope this poem can help reveal my true face
Not the mask that's hiding it
But can't you see
When you sing and talk about your heart
You're back from where you start
And as far they can see
you are still wearing me

THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT IS SUPER-DUPER HONEST
AND HAS DEFINITELY NEVER LIED TO THE AMERICAN
PEOPLE

BY JACK TOLEDO

Corrupt government-can't be the us
We're number 1, I. Freedom
We don't negotiate with terrorist

America we're a bald Eagle shooting at shotgun the range
We're shooting at posters that say communism
And mugshots of Saddam Hussein

America we're not perfect but we're damn near close
You wanna fix what's wrong with this country? all
You have to do is vote

Your vote definitely makes a difference that's why everyone votes
Right?

Don't you believe in our political system
Democracy is not a joke

We're home of the Yankees, the Cowboys, and Marlboro cigarette
smoke

And I know it's rude to bring up politics
So that's why I decided to come up here and do it on stage

These politicians,
as rich as
double chocolate cake
oh, no I forgot
And half of them were found on Jeffery Epstein's estates

Our leaders the ones who are supposed to take care of the country
but make sure to take care of themselves first

I asked a politician what God looks like
She pulled out a 100-dollar bill from her purse

Welcome to America where money comes first
Welcome to America the greatest country on Earth

IN MY MIND'S EYE

BY JUAN TORRES

You see, I have a terrible
curse.

One that I've tried to
fight,
But can never seem to slay.
No matter how long I try,
I see it in my mind's eye.

It's quite simple to
explain.
I'll be going about my day,
Tending to the chores,
Finishing my work,
Or even just unwinding.

There's no knowing when,
But out of the blue, it will
come.
A horrible vision of the
future,
One I can never ask for.
I see it in my mind's eye.

I've had it for years, it's
true.
One time in eighth grade,
I saw a gas truck crash
Right into the gym,
And me, running scared.

That was absurd, yes, but
In this day and age,
I sense tangible emotions.
The bellow of a foghorn,
And several broken bones.

I sense intense burning
and
Fire surrounding my home.
I sense the tingle of a
knife
Shoved down my throat.
I see it in my mind's eye.

I sense myself tumbling
Off the rail of a bridge.
I sense myself limping
Down the road of a town.
I see it in my mind's eye.

I sense the yelling
downstairs
And the thump of a head.
I sense the fear of a future
That I can't control
I see it in my mind's eye.

It's a future I can't
predict
If I implied I could,
Then I apologize.
I am but a mere man,
Or so I think.

Yet, I still consider it a
curse.

I am many things
That can get me killed.
I'm in the middle of
things
That cannot end well.

I see futures that aren't
real
Over and over, every day.
But I can't help but think
That one of them may
come true.
That'll be the day!

If I'm right - and I hope
I'm not,
That'll be the day! Me,
Within or witness to a
fate
No one should suffer!
I see it! In my mind's eye!



PAPER FLOWER

BY YEICOB MARTINEZ

A plain piece of paper that we take
Try to Make it perfectly squared
A fold here and a fold there we make
Don't let it rip but don't be scared

A fine bend from corner to center
Just the right measure for the pedals to fly
One more fold and another fold for the paper to
enter
Just don't let it rip or let it die

Sometimes we forget that being folded is fine
The changes that make it from day to night
Some small fine touches, for its beauty to shine
The folds that we take will make everything right

From fold to fold an awe a paper flower brings
Life changes like desolate winter to beautiful paper
spring

TO MY PARENTAL SIBLING

BY MARIA LOO

Lost time, stolen dreams,
It all went down the drain
It hurt us, we felt the pain.
The chokehold of circumstance,
Starting from the bottom,
Relishing in a hedonistic dance

I had the time of my life
Because I was dead inside
Turned the off the strife
Of the ties that bind

Some kids are destined for this
Amounting to nothing but mediocrity
Junkies turn to criminals
lost in the abyss
We were once lost but found our way in the city

The world seems so small now.
We experienced too much, we were drowning,
Now we're in a different place with a different crowd.
Tell me how the air is clearer.

Let me know if your plans are fixed,
You're on the side where the air is brisk,
Where I hope your dreams come true.
I know you're fighting as much as I'm fighting too,
Let's meet again so I might catch up to you.



IN MY BLOOD

BY MA'KHI AL-SALAAM SMITH

Growing up all you heard was gun shots

10 or 20 rounds

That's how we coped, it felt weird when it wasn't around

I need somebody to pick my head up when I'm looking down

Brothers dying ova colors come on bro is you a clown

I need a female who understand that I came from evil

Hung around niggas that did

shit that was illegal

Realizing that we'll never be

accepted by the American eagle

All I want is right for my people

R.I.P. to all the dead homies wish

that I could see you

Shot up his white tee let the blood

seek through

They killed my cousin 12 shots

that shit was more than lethal

He was raising a one-year-old

who he can no longer speak to

I can never understand how n*ggas

wanna be hood so bad

N*gga do you see how much good you have?

I wish my momma still ain't live in

newark apartments

I wish somebody would try to harm her

I might kill him and become another

black villain

But I can't help it

Cause it's in my blood

If I could trade places with you I would

All the violence gang banging sirens

Young kids dying in every

neighborhood

But I can't help it

Cause it's in my blood

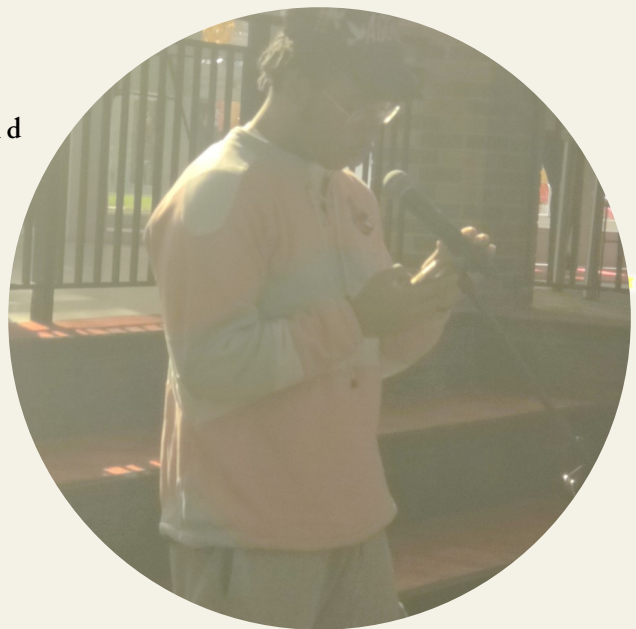
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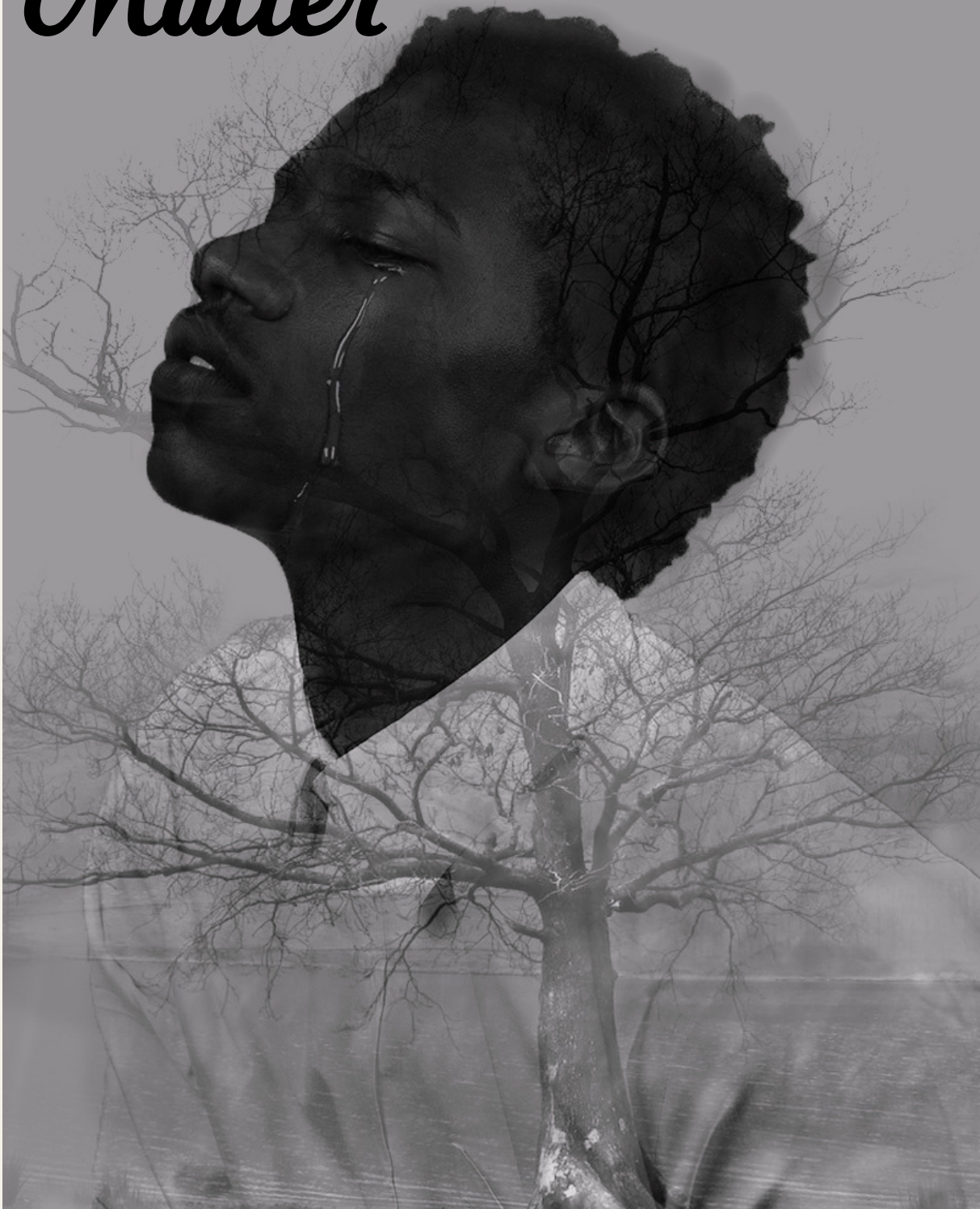
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Black Lives Matter



BY MADELINE ZAMARIPPA

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