

ephemeral

we
see now
but through
a mirror
dimly.

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Cover Art

Design by Zoë Doudt and Saraya Goodman

Created by Lydia Basham (<https://creativemangostudios.etsy.com>)

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THE LAMP POST STAFF

DR. ZACHARY RHONE



Dr. Rhone specializes in fantasy, science fiction, and the work of authors JRR Tolkien, CS Lewis, GK Chesterton, and George MacDonald. Recently, he has been actively teaching and researching worldbuilding and interactive narratives, including video games. He writes poetry, short stories, children's stories, and novels. His most recent creative publication is *Firenze: The First Adventure of a Kitty and Her Family*, illustrated by his wife, Maria Rhone. Dr. Rhone is a sub-creator who especially enjoys building worlds, designing and playing tabletop games, cooking and preparing all kinds of foods and beverages, growing things, singing, and songwriting.

ZOË DOUDT



Zoë Doudt is a freshman pursuing a degree in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. She loves reading and writing in her (now quite limited) spare time, and has greatly enjoyed her time working on *The Lamp Post* this semester, especially reading the poems of other writers.

SARAYA GOODMAN



Saraya is a junior English major at Montreat College. She has concentrations in Creative Writing and Literature as well as a minor in Communications. In her second year on the editorial staff, Saraya has enjoyed the challenge of taking on the General Editor role. Her favorite aspect of the role is the ability to facilitate creative unity on the team. She hopes to continue cultivating Montreat's creative culture in years to come.

KEGAN HAMPTON



Kegan Hampton is a junior English major, working with *The Lamp Post* for the first time! He has a concentration in Literature and hopes to publish his own fiction and poetry professionally. He has thoroughly enjoyed helping edit works by the creative community at Montreat College this semester, and dreams of participating again next year.

SOPHIA JORDAN



Sophia Jordan is an Educational Studies major with a calling, desire, and dream to teach, write books, and own a literary magazine of her own. She has enjoyed the opportunity to be a part of *The Lamp Post* editorial staff. Her favorite part about *The Lamp Post* experience has been reviewing the work of others and being able to express how much she loves their works.

Sonnet 19

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws,
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood:
Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,
And burn the long-liv'd Phoenix in her blood:
Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleets,
And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,
Go the wide world and all her fading sweets:
But I forbid thee one more heinous crime:
O, carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen!
Him in thy course untainted do allow
For beauty's pattern to succeeding men.
Yet do thy worst, old Time! Despite thy wrong
My love shall in my verse ever live young.

~William Shakespeare

ABSENCE | PRESENCE



(Abramov, Nick. "Atlanta II")

I WENT TO THE PAST

A.R. Buckner

I went to visit the past, but found no one there,
Cobwebs now blanket all the old tables and
chairs.
My childhood room is still lavender and green,
But the walls now shine with a lackluster sheen.
My dad's old tools rust in the shed,
My old clothes are full of fraying thread.
Our old fireplace still sits with old ashes,
The lamppost outside still communicates
through flashes.
In my old purple bike, spiders have made a
home,
The woods by my beloved house I can no longer
roam.
The snowy nights outside my frozen panes have
all melted away,
I have lost part of myself in the confusing fray.
The old autumn leaves from the old oak trees, I
no longer see,
Everything I once loved wisps away in a small
breeze.
I try to hold on, but my fingers slide and slip,
I cry and scream in agony as my heart begins to
drip.
Who I am drains away and I'm left as a shell,

I am no longer a child, there's just too much to
quell.
The flowers on my favorite hill are just a faint
memory,
Something I reach out but it's all just inky
emery.
I still feel I sit there, on my bed in that room,
In those days, life was never all that full of
gloom.
The summer nights have all packed up and gone,
I sit, all grown up, I am all alone.
The funny thing about the past is everyone has
left,
If you ever want to visit, you do it alone.

SKIING

Jeremiah Swader

"You want to go down Far-Out? Jair?" Daniel's
inquiring voice interrupted my musing. I had
been gazing down from the mountain, letting my
eyes wander over the snow-covered Wisconsin
Basin, my mind serene, lost in thought. I looked
up at Daniel. At 6 feet 5 inches tall he loomed
above me, especially in his ski boots. He was
lanky, with short-cut brown hair and electric blue

eyes that sparkled like the sun shining off of the icicles that hung from the sugar maples when he smiled, which he did frequently.

“Sure ... Yes,” I said softly. We were at the top of the mountain. At least, it was a mountain to us. As Midwesterners, we took what we could get. Yet, even the most daring mountaineer would have to admit that the place offered the illusion of height, plateauing over mile after mile of flat Wisconsin woods and marshland. We felt that our heads were in the veritable heavens, perched atop our stronghold in the clouds down from which no fate or foe could fling us.

We veered to the right, headed towards the far east of the mountain, well beyond the domain of most nominal skiers. These slopes were the more difficult black diamonds. That wasn't why we sought them out, though. They were quiet, even for Cascade. True, you had to complete a fair amount of cross country to get to them but that was part of the experience. And when you were there, you could imagine you were the only person in existence. We were shuffling our skis uphill now, pushing off, first on one side, then the other, propelling ourselves forward. The sun was preparing to set. Daniel and I were both quiet. We were tired from a long day of exertion. Mostly, I think we liked to savor the moments of winter afternoon stillness before the sun drops below the gray horizon and paints the snow violet. There are many sorts of calm, but this is of a breed I have only ever experienced in the northern midwestern United States. The days were short and the sun sets at around 4:30 in the afternoon, so we learned to love the dark, yet another type of stillness.

Having reached our desired slope, Daniel and I lingered at the top. We always peered over the edge slightly nervous—you can never grow accustomed to looking over the brink. It wasn't really a proper edge, but it gave you that impression. As I let my skis inch closer to the border between the seen and the unseen, I knew, in the back of my mind, that there would come a point, at some unpredictable location, when my skis would give in to gravity. I would fall—be swept away. But I flirted with that line heroically. It was like the beginning of a romance. First you look up from your tea to meet autumn eyes across the room. Eye contact is preserved slightly too long. You look down. You find yourself back at

the cafe twice a week, three times a week, every day. You know full well (you've seen it before) that, if you fall, you will have a time picking yourself up, so you linger on the outskirts, like a stray dog afraid to come into the light. But you are slipping as surely as any human has ever slipped, being drawn in like shrapnel making its make to the heart. Then you find yourself giving up the plastic resistance you've been feigning. You dive and for a split second you're left to wonder how you got here and the passion you knew so short a time ago loses all credibility in the doubt of the instant.

Whenever I found myself on the slope edge again, I would have to ask myself whether it was more important to remain safe on flat ground or to take the risk. I have never yet regretted taking the jump. I lean forward and accelerate quickly. I can slow myself slightly by zigzagging across the face of the slope, gracefully, shifting my weight from one ski to the next. The wind rushes in our faces, makes them chapped, and puts color in our cheeks—a rosé glow to contrast the gray world around. Our eyes are watering. I adjust course again, leaning into my turn and my skis overturn the fresh powder and send it flying upward, outward like pure white smoke. I was moving very quickly now. I knew that if I were to lose control, I would likely find myself injured when I turned up, ski-less, in a heap at the bottom of the mountain. That was if I was lucky. There was always the alternative of hitting a tree. There was never really a guarantee of safety. I turned one last time and made a beeline for the bottom of the mountain. At this speed it becomes difficult to keep your skis from crossing, but I fly on, bending my knees, tucking in my arms, head into the wind. The falling snow pelts my face. In the short time I spend careening down the hill, my body locks into position and my mind races with exhilaration and fear. Yet I find myself repeatedly looking down into the basin from the top of the hill with the human urge to fling myself over the edge into the rush of danger.

As I approached the bottom, I jerked my skis sharply to the left to stop myself. I sent snow flying onto Daniel. We were grinning from the thrill as we made our way back to the ski lift to take us to the top of the mountain. And so, the loop that we had begun—the perpetual tug-of-war between risk and resolution—continued, as

it does, forever, for as long as human beings make choices, and desire, and dare to step again and again over the edge of the safe and ordinary.

EPHEMERAL DAZE

Kegan Hampton

Let us raise a glass,
To those days in the sun,
When through fields of delight,
Our young souls did run.

Let us look back,
To those days from the past,
Before clean joys turned black,
And our childhoods passed.

What is it that keeps us in reverie here,
As we conjure up long ago, far ago, years?
Maybe the crux is some old love we lost,
That we will remember no matter the cost.

Or maybe a moment,
A twinkling,
A change.
That keeps us up dreaming;
Ephemeral days.

MIST

Zoë Doudt

The winter rain is sweet,
the dew softening the blows of the world,
tugging on my heart, but not breaking it,
letting me know it's okay to feel—

it's okay to feel, even if it hurts,
even if it takes calluses and gritted teeth
to embrace all the joy there can be in the
universe,
joy in the dawn, joy in the backyard,
in the soft beds of green moss at my feet,
the smell of petrichor, of a silent snow.



I drew a picture of a road, once,
empty and charcoal and despondent,

and that's where I wanted to be:
I didn't want to feel anymore, so
every morning I tried to squeeze out all the
sadness of my heart,
not understanding that when it went, so did
joy, and love, and longing.

IT HURTS TO LOVE.

It hurts to hand out pieces of yourself,
not knowing if they'll be cherished, or crushed,
not knowing when the inevitable loss of you or
them will
come careening off the rails



I keep trying to hold onto permanence,
but I am only a mist.



(there is still beauty in the mist of unknowns,
because what you do have becomes golden,
precious and more sacred)



I watched the leaves change this year.

I watched the flowers go away.

I watched myself change, and grow up,
grow down.



Sometimes I'm frantic when the time goes so
fast.

Sometimes I look back at yesterday
and hate that I didn't do more, be more,

then I look at today, the
day of new mercies He has given me,
and I breathe in,
I breathe out,
and He tells me, *it is okay.*

He tells me,
try again.

MEDIEVAL PEASANT

Annabelle Hollingsworth

If I was a
Medieval peasant,
It might not be perfectly pleasant
And I would be lucky
To get any pheasant
Let alone meat at all.
Unless at a ball...
As I worked as a maid
And hardly got paid.
But at least I could eat,
Honestly what a feat!
To a medieval maiden
Who only gets bread
And doesn't get ahead,
Unless of lettuce homegrown
And maybe yummy potatoes
And cheese!
Yes please!
Maybe I would not be a maid
And people would bade
Me to be an apothecary.
Or I could pretend as a fairy
To heal everyone
So they could be merry,
And eat dairy,
And have the strength to be contrary.
I truly wonder how I would be
As a medieval peasant.
But I thank the Lord daily
That I am a dainty lady
Of the time He set me in.
And He still lets me have an old soul
As I stroll
Gratefully through the life He gave me.

THE MILE HIGH CONFESSIONAL BOOTH

Ezra Whitaker

I tried to disappear within the blue folds of my airplane seat, anxiously wringing my hands. I took a breath and took in my surroundings. The air inside the cabin was crisp and sterile. I quickly scanned the area, and my eyes were immediately drawn to a book held by my fellow passenger. It was a book about Saint Francis, though I could not make out the title. The owner of the book



(Abramov, Nick. "Foggy Steak II")

was the man seated on my left. He was no more than thirty, I later learned. He sported a well-worn gray-blue sweater with simple khakis. His wide, curious brown eyes glistened. His clothes, when paired with his short, patchy black beard and hastily combed hair, altogether made him reminiscent of a fresh, idealistic professor. Despite his appearance though, he also seemed strangely serene. So, I decided to strike up a conversation. There is something so strangely supernatural about airports. It's like there is some magic that lies in the state of transience. It puts everyone within a sort of frenzied processional. Within the bustling roach-like herds in Dallas Fort-Worth or the hurried fray in Atlanta lies the single-minded worship of movement, of progress. Even if one has a ten-hour layover, somehow, they're still in a hurry.

Airplanes, however, are a much different experience. After being poked and prodded by TSA, searching for your gate as if it were the Holy Grail, waiting for what feels like forever for the boarding pass checker to turn green so you can finally board the plane, the moment your bottom melts into the thinly padded comfort of your basic economy seat is absolute bliss. It is only while sitting in your airplane seat that you truly surrender all control. None of your striving can make the plane fly higher or faster. You send off what could be your final texts to the loved ones you are leaving or flying to. The only existence that you can be certain of is this flying bus in the sky that you're currently in. The only family you now have are the strangers sitting next to you. It is quite a surreal experience. With this realization in mind, my shaggy-haired professor friend and I quickly moved through the polite part of conversation. Our point of departure began from a seemingly innocuous question.

"So, if you're from Kansas, what brings you to North Carolina?" I asked.

A silence fell. The first silence within our twenty-minute-long discussion on various books. My new friend wrung his hands and shifted in his seat. "Recovery," he somewhat ashamedly responded.

"Oh," I whispered. I could tell in his suddenly tensed posture that he was bracing for my inevitable rejection. In that moment, I wondered how many conversations this man had that went

just like this. How many relationships began and died because this very same admission? The sterile smell of biscotti and cheap coffee wafting by on the flight attendants' cart now served as the incense in the censure preparing my heart for the liturgy in which I was about to partake. I braced myself for the plunge. "How long have you been clean?" I asked.

A smile wiped across his face as his shoulders dropped in relief. "Five and a half years," he boasted. He went on to tell me the beautiful story of his recovery. I learned about how he grew up Catholic. When he turned eighteen, though, he fell prone to the lust for knowledge and took up atheism. He started getting into psychedelics and alcohol because he thought it would help clear his mind in his pursuit of further knowledge.

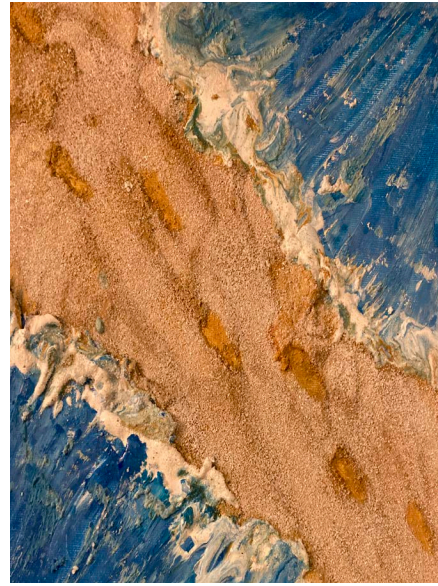
After he finished his story, my chest felt heavy. It was as if my very heart was tugging at me, begging me to be honest. "I...uh... I don't know much about addiction, but I can definitely relate to pride destroying everything around me." I laid bare my story. I told him of my own fall from grace and how my messianic complex nearly drowned me in a lake. I could not tell you why I said it. Maybe I just didn't want him to be alone. Maybe it was simply because he was not the only person who needed to confess. Somehow, in this stranger I felt so deeply known.

For much of the remainder of the flight, we continued to trade places of priest and parishioner. We vulnerably delved into our vices and what they had cost us. Before long, a warm ding and a disembodied omniscient voice heralded our quickly approaching descent into Atlanta, Georgia. For the first time, my new friend and I exchanged our names. We shook hands just before we deplaned, and as soon as we left the terminal, we each disappeared back into the mindless airport Mass, never to see each other again.

NOTE WELL THE PATH

Dr. Scott Foran

note well the path
that marks your soul
between sentinels
of time
and out
of time
it slides
to edges hard and marked
where run the
trails of the lost



(Choi, Wonhui. "His Footprints")

OF PURITY & WIT

Sophia Jordan

I wish to say that I have ever known love like this
But then it would have been you that I would
miss
I would have had to endure all my life without
you
But I thank God that He allowed you to find me
too

Without you, there would have always been an
empty space
But now, I can see that you were always meant to
fill that place
There is nothing more that I could want
Than for you to see beyond my gaunt

I feel that my life has been made anew
Because with you, I can be true
There is nothing for me to hide
Now that you are here at my side

You have softened my heart
And helped me discover a new work of art
This witty mouth that was quick to dismiss
Has now found itself thirsty for your kiss

If there was anything I could say
I could not get it all out in a day
You cause me to trip over my words
And my song to be stolen by the birds
What is in the phrase I love you?
My love is so much more than those words a few
Too much than I can verbally admit
I will show you through purity and wit

When I first laid eyes on you
In that first moment I knew
It was truly meant to be
I promise it will always be you and me

You might be my first, but I am certain you will
be my last
There was never a spell that you needed to cast
I promise I will cherish you forever
This bond, this connection, this love is
something no one will ever sever

I wish I had not been so blind at first
Maybe sooner I would have allowed you to
quench my thirst
But you hold me close now and always
You and I together, we will spend the rest of our
days

I wish you would not speak so much, my love
Can you not see I am your lovely dove?
Let us just enjoy each other with the time we
hold
Let us esteem this love as merchants do gold

If there was anything I could say
I could not get it all out in a day
You cause me to trip over my words
And my song to be stolen by the birds
What is in the phrase I love you?
My love is so much more than those words a few
Too much than I can verbally admit
I will show you through purity and wit

THE NIGHT THE WORLD ENDED

A.R. Buckner

On the night the world ended, I was sitting on
my porch,
The wind sat quiet, and the birds had just
perched,
The old summer sun had ceased its burning
scorch,
Then suddenly the night sky violently lurched,
Stars fell like lightning from the heavens arching
achingly from the sky,
The earth lost its orbit and sulked with a great
sigh,
The blood in my heart could do nothing but
deaden,
On the night when the sky was abruptly ripped
open.

On the night the world ended,
Animals stirred, chirped, and chittered,
The ends of my teeth stood at attention,
Then the fire hit and up the trees it slithered,
The loud crack and bang of a million celestial
beings kept my heart in suspension,
The earth tilted like a Shakespearean stage,
Throwing off my balance as I clutched for the
burning char on my porch,
As the vertigo kicked in, I was no better than
caged,

My house continued burning, a gasoline-soaked
torch,
The flames licked and cracked as my world

turned to opal and crimson,
My skin seemed to melt from the heat of my old
chair,
I noticed how fast the flames had risen,
As my brain screamed in protest of my vision,
I could only stare,
The night the world was caught ablaze.

On the night the world ended,
Earth crumbled and shook under my feet,
The wood from my house splintered and
sputtered from the leviathan underneath,
As I looked out at my yard, cars drove madly in
the street,
What could I do? I had no sword or sheath.
The world angrily fought, I felt it in my bones,
My teeth now chattering from the rumbling
magma and shaking tectonic plates,
Loud noises escaped the forming cracks in
echoes and groans,
I was nothing now, it was all too late,
The night the world broke apart.

On the night the world ended,
I saw Saturn and Uranus collide,
The sky burst into a violent rage of fearful
beauty,



(Doudt, Zoë. "Moonlight")

Blues and greens of heavenly gas burst into
dazzling dances of horror and awe in a
cacophony that never seemed to subside,
The chunks of planets burst asunder from their
unearthly force and hurtled in a million
different directions while I stood frozen
coolly,
“Move, you fool,” I said aloud,
But where would I go? What could I do now?
On the night the planets collided.

And finally, I stood, with what I knew were only
seconds left.
I looked at the flaming woods and headed for
their depths.
The moonstone path glowed red underfoot,
The ghost I knew I was headed for the woods
bereft,
My soft feet touched each stone as if it were
the last thing I could ever feel as I made my
careful steps,
Then my senses came alive, and I knew how
little I had to go,
My nose poured over the burnt wood and sour
earth,
My hands felt the heated wind over every print
of my finger as I went thro’
My mouth crumpled with ash and dark taste,
remembering everything I had ever baked,
The woods drowned my ears with fiery cracks
and animalistic fear,
Warnings that end was now more near,
And finally, my eyes drew to the object of my
journey,
My own little glade,
I found a cool patch of what little remained,
The grass was still sweet, and the dew was
almost gone, I did not have any more fear,
My eyes stared at the inky black falling heavens
showering down.
My body would finally rest here, I made no more
sound,
And as I took my final few breaths, the heavens
and earth collided in a kiss.
First hot, then cold. It was almost done.
A single blood-soaked tear fell.
I’m back in my moonlit room. All is well. I’m still
only a child.
These are my dying thoughts on the night the
worlds collided.

THE SIMPLE TRUTH OF A MOMENT

Dr. Scott Foran

we often think the big
events will be the ones
that stick with us, when, in

fact, it is the small thing
that invariably
catches us off-guard and

fills the air with the sud-
den hush of memory.
it is the sound of birds

at the window just now
that brings to mind the way
you liked to sit and watch

them play in the quiet
of a morning, a cup
of tea still in your hand,

the busy day postponed
while you took in the sim-
ple truth of a moment.

TIME

Ali Zakariasen

It’s all we have,
Yet we seem to never have enough
Years, months, days go by quicker than a wink
And quicker than we think

Time is always going, and it won’t ever come
back
So, even though you may think you don’t have
enough “time”
Remember, time is all we really have,
And we should make the most of every single
second

Time is a test
Write as much of your story
To give God all the glory
Before your clock stops.

WAKING

Jeremiah Swader

I am beginning to wake again.
Sunlight slides across the quilt,
Its rose petal fingers lift my eyelids,
And what should I see!
Sitting brighter than any star
In the corner with the houseplants,
Your smile sent to greet me
Back from somnambulant sleep.

EVERYTHING, NOW, FOR WHAT IT IS

Zoë Doudt

I can't find a single star
excepting the superficial,
the ones that make up for their ineligibility
with flamboyance and flash,
distracting, enforcing,
reminding me of what was—

and what was *was beautiful*,
but it took heartbreak to see that,
to see how whole and golden the heart was to
begin with.

It was what it was, and I never thought twice,
until it was gone.

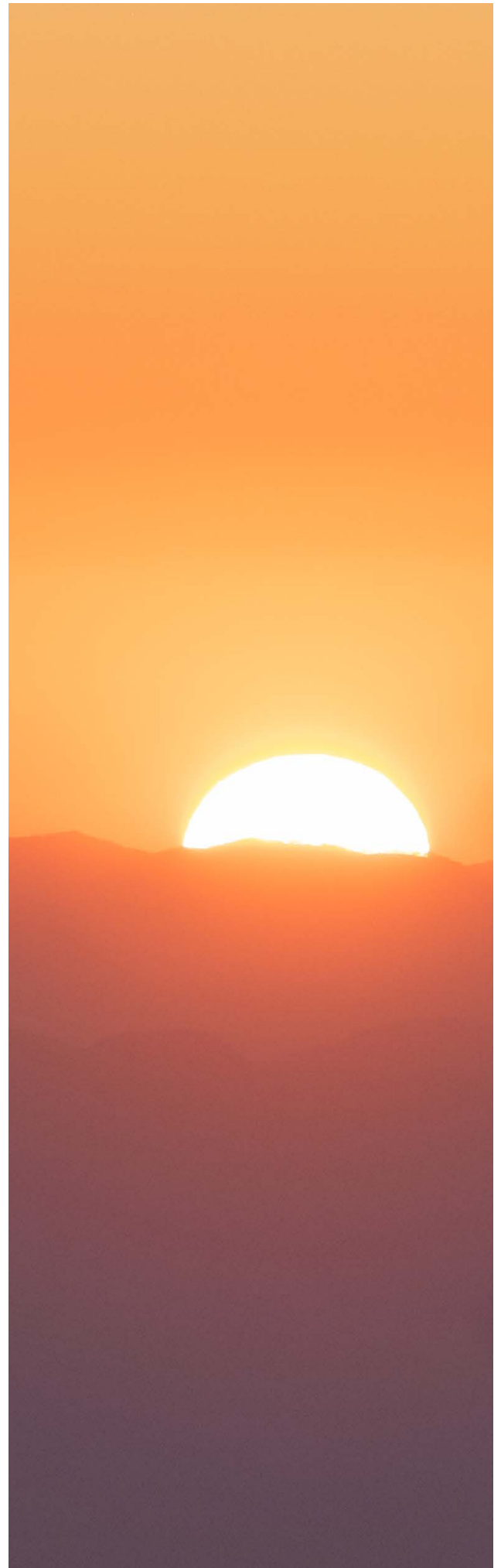
Until I was stretching across continents,
snapping my bones,
ruining milestones,
falling into the same traps over and over,
falling for something that used to have a
belly full of the mundane,
that then became glossed over, sticky with
sheen,
hooded in hyperbole.



But maybe erase some of the redundant
and you have the point:

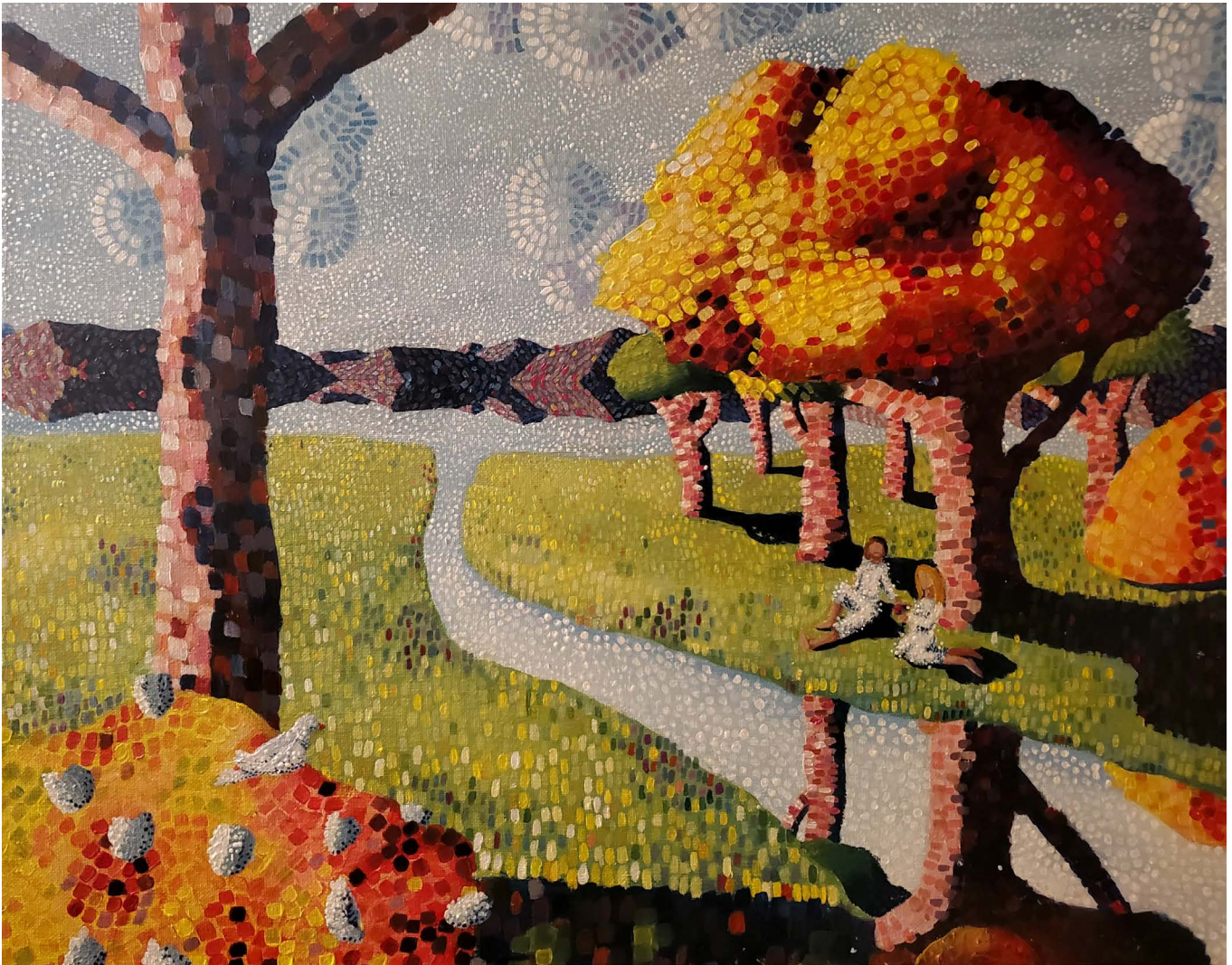
We love what we leave.

So love what will one day be gone,
and love it *now*.



(Abramov, Nick. "Blue Ridge II")

NATURE | NURTURE



(Baugh, Anna. "The Fountain of Joy")

WOODLAND QUIET

Jeremiah Swader

I love the way the woods are quiet. Not quiet, surely, in the purest sense of the word, but as a vibrant, living stillness which calms one's mind and fills one's heart at the same time. Not quiet as the sterile quiet of a padded room, nor the awkward, halting, uneasy quiet which is heard in the vast intervals between dying conversation. The quiet of the woods is not the artificial construct created by humans which allows for no sound. It is a permissive quiet, allowing for the subtle sounds of life to disrupt it and become a part of it. A tree will fall in the forest with no one to hear and its crash both disrupts and mends the great flowing woodland silence. The quiet of the woods, with its infinitude of disturbances and corrections folding into the general tapestry of stillness is like gazing into the face of a lover

and finding yourself enraptured and tranquil. You hang seemingly in limbo, both feeling and numb. The forest silence has the capacity both to astonish and to pacify. It is organic. And it is surprising.

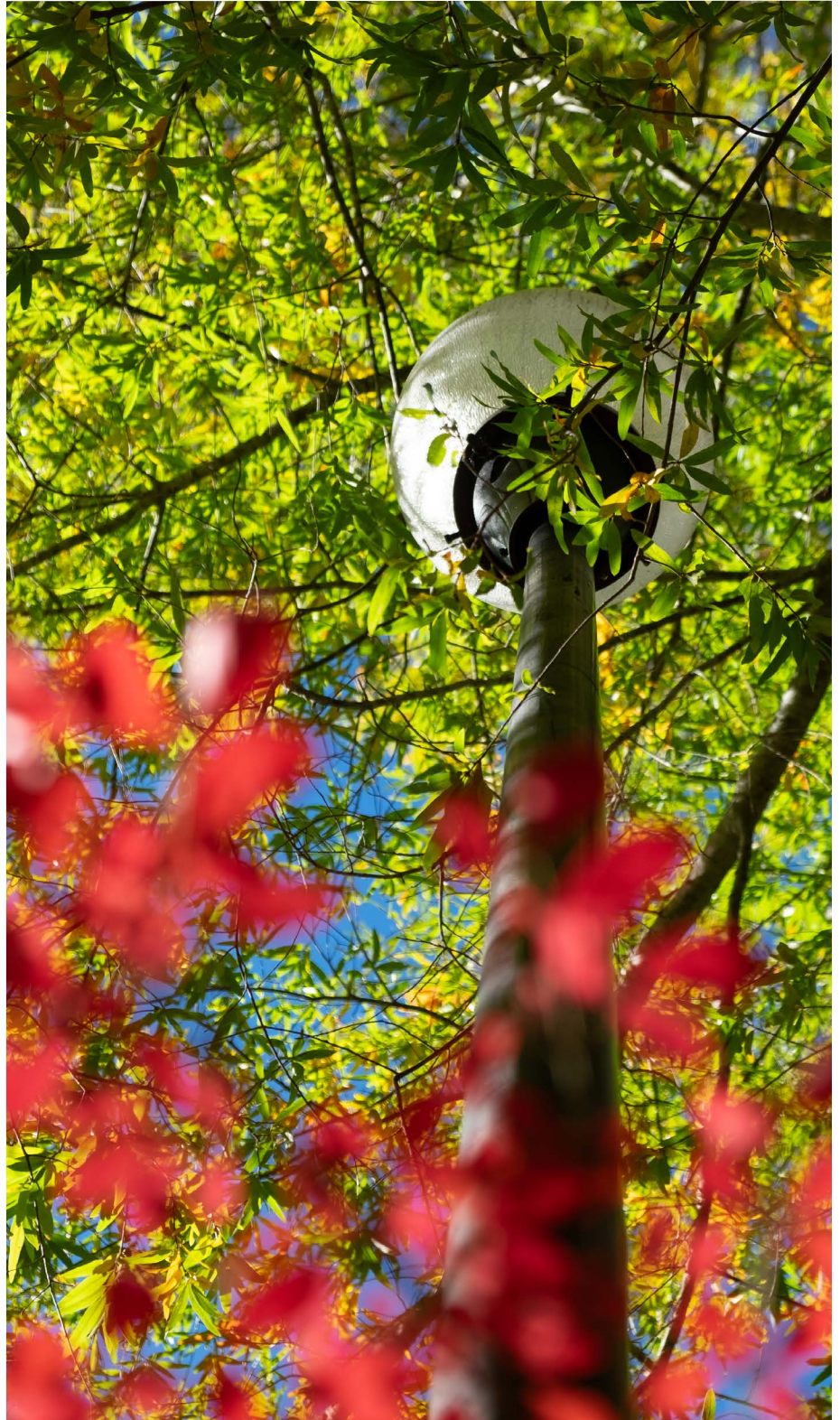
One afternoon in early October, I was walking in one of my favorite pieces of woods near where I lived in Illinois. In the years when I lived there it had become a weekly habit to escape to the fields and woods of the rural Midwest. I loved the freshness of nature; every day was different on the broad earthy stage of life. The bloodroots would make their entrance, hum their soft faerie chant for a brief interval and be gone before the week was out. The massive century oaks had a more lasting part, but with no less subtlety. One must be an interested theater goer to notice the changing hues of the leaves as the summer lengthens before they turn to brown in the fall.

On this particular day I walked down a slope into the fog and the fog rose to greet me. It seemed to crawl on long fingers to fill the woods around me. The sky was dark and heavy with the threat of a drizzling autumnal rain. The hickories loomed overhead, already almost bare of their leaves which lay scattered, moist at my feet for, while it did not rain, the world about me seemed to drip. Moisture filled the air thickly and seemed to hover, gray, like a shadowed bridal veil in the breeze. As I descended the slope, the underbrush thickened and became scraggly. The woods became very quiet. I was about to encounter a silence which I have only encountered a handful of times since.

An eerie, lethargic, hush fell on the forest. I began to feel uneasy. I was not afraid. I was at home in the woods and was familiar with the stillness but at the very back of my conscious mind there lurked a growing disquiet. I began to look over my shoulder, first one direction, then the other. As expected, there was no one there. I subconsciously picked up my normally slow pace to a fast walk. To my left, as I strode briskly forward, I caught a glimpse of movement. Nearly thirty feet away a coyote ran alongside me. I was startled and felt adrenaline pumping in my veins. The coyote stopped and looked at me, the two of us transfixed in each other's eyes, before he ran off in the other direction. After several minutes, I continued my walk. The silence persisted. The leaves rustled. The fog thinned slightly. Shortly, I came upon an abandoned farmhouse in a clearing. The farmer had died some years before and his son had sold the property, including the house, to the forest preserve district for Winnebago County. The house was in shambles

and hardly standing. The roof had long since collapsed under the influence of tree limbs and the walls bowed outward. In the yard an old bicycle lay covered in Virginia creepers, the rubber tires disintegrating. China dishes lay half buried in decomposing leaves. Daylilies grew in the yard, though now they had lost their flowers and only hollow brown stalks remained.

As I walked about the yard, lost in thought, imagining the family that had lived here once, I



(Abramov, Nick. "The Fall")

nearly tripped over the leg of a deer. Some predator must have recently torn it from its

rightful body for it was still bloody. The tawny pelt was torn, and the single hoof caked with mud. I was struck by the morbid strangeness of the incident and my heart again was racing. I stood still for several long moments, unsure what to do. I was startled by the nonchalance with which the limb simply lay there as if it were perfectly natural. I, who thought I knew the woods so well, was beginning to wonder if I had known a fraud. Was this the sort of thing that actually happened in the woods? Had I been blinded by nature's beauty to the degree that I forgot that she was untame?

At length, I walked back to my car, somewhat quickly, feeling strangely out of place, as if I had intruded upon a foreign world in which I was unwelcome and in which I had no part. I felt a stranger, experiencing the sort of quiet which has become foreign to humans in the bustle—or else forced silence—of modern life. Nature was waiting to embrace with open arms and show me her beauty. It is only when one looks closer does her severity, indeed her savage beauty, become visible. The quiet of the forest is a realistic quiet. It is calming at times. But, as I experienced, it can, like all truly real things, be deeply disturbing when seen in the proper light. When looking for real things—things with substance—beware. Prepare yourself to be affected. Prepare yourself to be startled, as I was, by woodland silence.

SUMMITING

Anonymous

Sunlight
streams through
curling moss-covered
trees dewy grass soaks through
the back of my shirt
My nails sink into the
raw, earthy dirt



(Choi, Wonhui. "The Moon")

Heaving
Scrambling
Begging for the mountain
to end

Tears waterfall down.
Weak things come in threes
My legs give out. One after the other
my mind shuts off. Completely Gone
My heart breaks down.
Oh God!
r e s t

Oh! Calvary
must have felt daunting
No relief waiting at the mountaintop
Only broken legs. Only a tortured mind.
Only Gods flaming heart. Stopped.
Oh God!
r e s t

Heaving
Scrambling
Begging for the mountain
to end

The weight of a well earned pinnacle
pales in comparison to those
piercing nails
Oh God!
r e s t

CHRISTMAS PAST

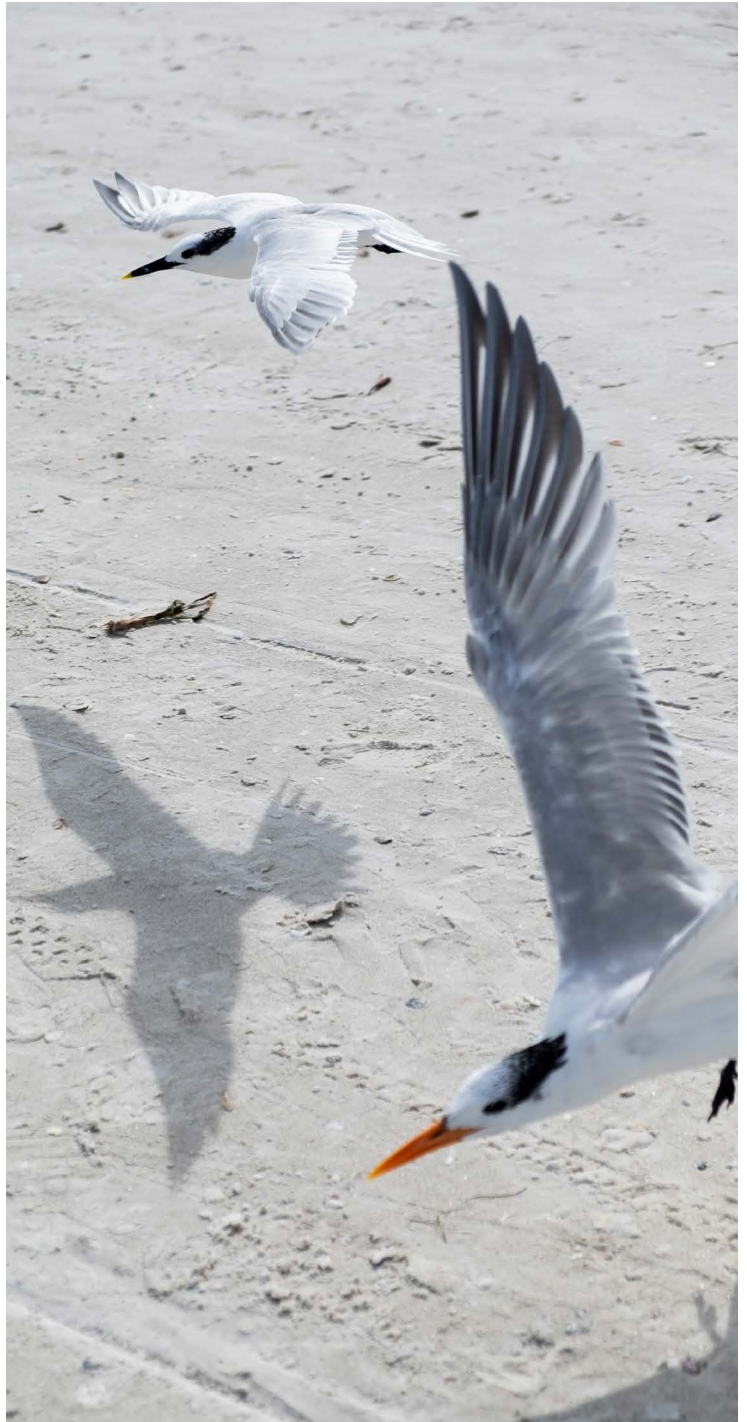
Eden Whitby

An imitation mirror
Reflects in my eye
A vision of not too long ago
Lying, staring up at nothing in particular
The fragrant needles
And sparkles illuminating
Tokens of life and experience
Branches and trunk
Sap, dripping and drying like live candles
A confused stray bug and tiny diligent spider
Carefully organizing a home
That blends in with snowflakes
And a little hedgehog and teacup
Gentle, nostalgic light lulling to sleep

IN THE GARDEN

Anonymous

I can't imagine a more lovely
Bed of irises
Content to flourish in a
Field of life
Spoken into existence by Love Himself
Deep, dark pits
Leading to nothing and everything
It's okay to fall in
Simply gazing just won't do
Gentle hills and dips form
As Love watches, walks, and speaks
Revealing Himself in each speckle
The Light of the world
Twinkling in yours



(Abramov, Nick. "Siesta")



(Shaver, Elie. "Bufo Americanus")



(Swader, Jeremiah. "Big Sur")



(Abramov, Nick. "Sandcastle")

WARMER DAYS

A.G. Bittner

Piney smell of tomato vines
Bruised by reaching hands
Warm dark earth erupting

Golden light
And green
And blue

Hazy mumbles
Of bumbling bees
Bumping and tumbling
About the green leaves

Bright scent of peas
Snapped and crunched
Strawberry air
And lazy hen clucks

Cool of the shade
Blue and emerald
Tinkling bells of a stream in the knell
Snuffles and chirps
Of little pink feet
Grass in the green
And spongy soft peat

How I long for warmer days
That have slipped and gone away
The days of youth
The days of light
The days when all the air was bright

THE BLISSFUL SWITZERLAND ZONE

Ali Zakariasen

I sit alone
In the blissful Switzerland Zone

Engulfed in Endless clusters of crimson
poppies and pink, white daisies
If you tried to count, your mind would turn
crazy
They blanket the mountains in a dazzling array,
It seems to remind me of a certain love holiday.

Here, high in the Alps, everything is as calm as
can be
The echoes of nature linger close to me:
A lapping brook gently flows down mountain
seas
Wispy sage firs gently toss in the light breeze
As the song of the yellow finch lands on my ear
God's presence feels ever so near.

I sit alone
In the blissful Switzerland Zone

Day draws to its awestruck finale
And the dying sun does its work of magic on the
mountains towering the valley.
Their snow frosted peaks fade into a glow of
pink, orange, and gold
Oh what a sight to behold!

Alas, I am here, where I always dreamed I would
someday come
Far from the bustling cities of New York and
some
Across the world I have traveled,
Just to sit alone in the Blissful Switzerland Zone.

ANOTHER WORLD A MILE HIGH

Ali Zakariasen

The city lights ablaze
Reflect the sky's cloudy haze
As I gaze at the city in the valley aglow
I'm glad to be far away from the bustle of life
From the chaos and noise below

Atop the mountain I stand
With my kin close at hand
We laugh and wonder at the world down under
Wishing we could live like this forever
So soft the sound of the wind
So calm the sound of the green needles swaying
in the breeze
We hear nothing but this and the echoes of our
voices
And no meaningless noises

I will always remember this night
As our fun little flight

HOPE | FEAR

FALLING IN LOVE

Annabelle Hollingsworth

Am I crazy?
Maybe!
Soaring and flying in feelings
Will I ever hit the ceiling?
Staring in his eyes
Isn't being wise.
But how can I help it?
Maybe, bit by bit,
I will be sane,
He won't be the bane
Of all my thoughts
And imagination.
Straight exhilaration
Will calm down
As I touch down
On the great ground.
I wonder how long
This love will hit me
Like a resounding gong...
Will it be sweet and pure,
Devotion galore?
Do I want more
Or do I want to settle
On the great ground
After this has tested my mettle?
Time goes on and I will soon find

Whatever God has in mind
For my romantic heart to explore
Not as a chore
But as a gift from Him.
As I swim
Through a sea of feelings and falling
Till I catch a landing someday

THIS IS WHAT FALLING FEELS LIKE

Anonymous

Is this what it feels like
Watching my heart overwhelm itself
As my eyes sneak glances
At him while he sits across the room
Biting my finger and lip
To keep from squealing in delight
My feet kicking up excitedly
At the simple thought of his smile
When his beautiful eyes meet mine
And we get to hold a conversation
His voice so calm and lovely
His ambitions so wonderfully him
Oh, how my heart longs to hold him
And my hands desire to greet him
My mind aches to know him
My ears yearn to understand him



(Abramov, Nick. "Sunset II")

Is this what falling feels like
Hoping for just one more meeting
Wishing to talk to him just a little longer
Holding onto the maybes
Maybe this is it
Maybe he is the one
Maybe I'm fooling myself
Maybe I fall in love too easily
This is what falling feels like
Trusting God with the feelings that arise
Surrendering myself and knowing His plans are
 best
Believing that His will shall come to pass
This is what trusting does
Allowing myself to tell Him how I feel
Knowing that He causes all things to work
 together for my good
Remembering that He knows what's good for me
Understanding that it could be
And accepting that it might not be
Telling Him that I am falling for him
And just asking His will to be done
This is what falling feels like
And it feels like a dream

LIBRARY LOVE

Sophia Jordan

The way the books array the shelves so beautifully amazes me. It's almost like someone purposely organized them this way: by color, by shade, by hue. I laugh to myself. Hide and seek, he said. Meet me in your favorite place, rearranged by your favorite thing to marvel at. I feel the excitement and butterflies in my stomach clash and form an amazing feeling. A feeling of awe, of wonder, of curiosity. My heart bumps against my chest as I turn and look down the next aisle. There he is with his face buried in a book. But I can see a few of his lovely features: his hair, his hands, the buttons on his jean jacket that match his worn-out pair of jeans. I smile and walk a little closer to him. He still doesn't seem to notice me, so I take another step closer to him. He lets out a little chuckle, and I can see his little smile peek out from under the book he's holding. I take a deep breath and reach my hand out to touch his hand. Once contact is made, a little invisible spark flickers in the air. He lowers the book from his face and smiles brightly.

"Hello. I see you've found me," he says with his smile growing.

I scoff playfully. "It wasn't too hard. It was easy to find you."

"I know," he replies, watching my eyes. "I didn't want to make it hard for you to find me. I just wanted to see you marvel at something you love to look at. And you did."

He takes a breath and closes the book he's holding. "You're so beautiful. But when you get that twinkle in your eyes as you behold something that is so special to you, your bright face shines brighter than all the suns in the universe."

I feel my smile grow and my face heat up and turn red. "You-you don't even know how bright that is."

He chuckles and lowers himself to the ground. "I don't. But I know that they would all fail to compare to your face when you fall in love with the sight of someone or something amazing."

My smile gets brighter, and I meet him on the floor. "You're very flattering," is all I can get out before I start giggling.

He laughs a bit as well. "May I ask why you're giggling?"

I look at him in his beautiful eyes. "You're just so lovely. So sweet, so kind, so beautiful. And I...like you a lot. You add to my happiness. And I absolutely love how poetic you are."

He lets out a little laugh, and his smile turns into one of the blushing kinds.

"You want to hear some more? I could speak poetically about you all day and all night. You're just so beautiful and amazing. ...And I like you too."

I let out a breathless laugh and reach out to hold his hand, which he quickly accepts. Our fingers intertwine, and he squeezes my hand gently.

"I'd love to hear you speak poetically about me more," I say gently, as my thumb gently rubs his thumb.

He smiles. "Alright. Roses are red. Violets are blue. I'm so glad you came. And I hope to start a relationship with you."

I chuckle a bit. "That was good! Any others?"

He laughs and inches himself closer to me.

“Of course! I’d like to be yours. Cuddling every late night. Feeling safe with you.”

My smile grows and I scoff playfully. “I love that one. Another one, please?”

His smile grows as well. “Absolutely. Your lips are like a red camellia. Soft, beautiful, precious. I’d like to...”

His voice trails off as he looks at me. His eyes lock on my eyes as all other background noise becomes muted and only the drumbeats of our hearts fill our ears. He breaks the glance and looks down at his hands. When he sees that our hands are still intertwined, he smiles and looks back up at me.

“May I kiss you?”

I can’t focus on anything else but this moment. Those four words slip out of his mouth and straight into my ears. My heart throws itself against my chest, and I move my face a little closer to his.

“Yes.” My voice is a soft whisper. “Yes, you may kiss me.”

He smiles, takes a breath, and in an instant, his lips crash gently into my own. I allow my lips to press against his as we kiss. My free hand caresses his cheek softly as his free hand gently runs through my hair. The kiss goes on for a few minutes, and then we both pull away to catch our breath. Our hands are still connected, and I chuckle a little. He looks at me, still catching his breath, and I position myself so that I’m sitting right next to him. After a few silently beautiful moments, I gently lay my head on his shoulder.

“This moment...is amazing. And I’m so grateful and blessed to share it with you. I...I love you.”

I close my eyes, feeling my smile grow wide. Soon, I feel his head meet mine, and he gives my hand a little squeeze.

“Amen. I love you too.”

ROMANCE IN POMPEII

Ali Zakariasen

Characters

Vesta: a young maiden madly in love

Romero: a young lad madly in love

Alathia: Vesta’s mother

Marcus: Vesta’s father

Guards: in charge of prisoners

Act I

(Enter Alathia, Marcus, Vesta, Romero, and guards.

Vesta and Alathia sit side by side in the back row of the courthouse. Marcus sits in the high judge seat, towering over Romero. Romero sits below the judge seat in chains with two guards flanking him. The spotlight rotates on the individual who is speaking or displaying action.)

Marcus: As judge over this case, I pronounce Romero Felix Octavion guilty of high treason against his majesty, Caesar Augustus. As a result of blaspheming our perfect Lord’s name, you shall die at the games tomorrow at noon. This case is closed!

Vesta: *(Vesta stands immediately)* No! I beg of you, father, don’t do this terrible deed! He’s a loyal Plebian!

Marcus: Hush, Vesta, my dear! Despite your unapproved engagement to this low life, there will be no favoritism or mercy on my part. Anyone who blasphemes the name of his majesty the king is worthy of punishment by death. Guards, take him away!

Vesta: *(Weeping, she falls into her mother’s arms.)* Oh mother! I hate him! I’ll avenge my lover! I will!

Romero: Vesta, my love, come near to me. Let me hear the sound of your sweet, gentle voice once more before I’m carried to the dark halls of Hades.

Vesta: *Longingly runs into her lover’s arms for one last embrace.*

Romero: Beyond death, my love, even into eternity, I will forever hold you in my heart. Death, no, not even death, will ever take away the perpetual love I have for you. Farewell, my beautiful one!

(Guards drag Romero off stage.)



(Doudt, Zoë. "Shadows")

Vesta: Goodbye, Romero. May we meet once again
in the Elysian Fields!

(Exit Alathia, Vesta, and Marcus.)

Act 2

(Enter Vesta, Alathia, and Marcus. The scene changes
from a Roman courthouse to a Roman town house.
They return to their extravagant town house a few
blocks down from the courthouse. Upon entering,
Vesta, wildly sobbing, glides away to her quarters
and slams the door shut.)

Alathia: Oh Marcus! What are we to do with our
high-spirited girl? Now that you've sentenced
her lover to death, how will we ever find her a
suitable man to marry?

Marcus: No need to worry, my dear. I have
everything perfectly arranged. She will
marry Mensala Hadrianus; he's from a highly
respectable and very well-off family. Dear
Alathia, don't you see, her marriage will place
us higher in Roman society. If Vesta had married
that Plebian boy, our public status would've
been ruined!

Alathia: Oh, Marcus, my love, you're quite
a genius. Now we'll be able to attend the
emperor's grand balls and extravagant dinner
parties. I'll arrange the wedding plans first
thing tomorrow! (Alathia releases a blood curling

scream as a lavish chandelier plummets, crushing
Marcus.)

Alathia: Ahhhh!!!! Great Athena, have mercy!
Marcus, your head is pouring blood! I can't
stop it! Look at me, dear! Look at me! Noooo!!!
He's dead! My husband is dead! Nooo! This
can't be! (Alathia throws herself over Marcus's
mangled body and lets out a mournful howl that
echoes throughout the halls. Vesta sprints down the
staircase, returning from her room.)

Vesta: Mother! Mother! Mount Vesuvius has
exploded! All of Pompeii is in a frightful uproa...
(She stops short when she sees Marcus' lifeless body
sprawled beneath the chandelier.)

Vesta: Father! I pity you for the agony you
experienced when you died, however, you were
a dreadful person in this life. You deserved
death! Farewell, my father, may Hades have
mercy on your black soul.

Alathia: How dare you say such a thing! You are
a wicked girl and an appalling disgrace to the
Cicero name! Not any word in this world could
describe the shock I feel at you now. We need
to flee the city before volcanic ashes engulf us!
Gather your things! Hurry!

Vesta: M-mother, I trust you can escape the city
with the servants' aid. I'm going to the prison
to free Romero! Goodbye. May the gods grant
our reunion!

Alathia: You will do nothing of the sort, young lady! Come back here this instant! Vesta! Vesta!

(Vesta, ignoring her mother's desperate pleas, frantically runs toward the town prison where Romero is held captive.)

Act 3

(Alathia exits. Enter Romero and Vesta. The scene changes from the town house to a Pompeii prison. The scene begins with Vesta just arriving at the prison after running through the panicked city. Ash, smoke, and poisonous gases from the volcano swirl around Vesta, as she enters the prison gates...)

Vesta: Romero! Romero! Where are you, my dear Romero! Oh! *(She stumbles over a pile of ash and realizes it is Romero!)*

Vesta: Oh, great Zeus, have mercy! Let me get this ash off you, my love. Here, sit up!

Romero: *(Weakly mumbles)* Vesta, y-you must leav-

Vesta: There's no way these blasted chains will come off!

Romero: Vesta, I-leave me here! G-go now while y-you can still escape!

Vesta: *(throwing herself on Romero)* No, my love! I will never leave your side! Death itself will have

to part us! My love for you is stronger than my fear of death!

Romero: Then cling to me, my love! We will face death together! *(Vesta and Romero cling to each other while hot lava pours inside the prison gates. They die together, locked forever in an eternal embrace. Cast enters the stage and bows.)*

The End

MEMORIES

Ali Zakariasen

Special little pockets of time in the mind
Tucked away treasures of mine
Oh, how I wish to re-live those precious times,
But time just keeps a movin' by and by

"Come back!" I say
Yet they have already left
And won't be back another day
But I still keep them in my heart
Nurture them and try not to part
For they are my special memories
And will stay with me forever

SPROUT GARDEN

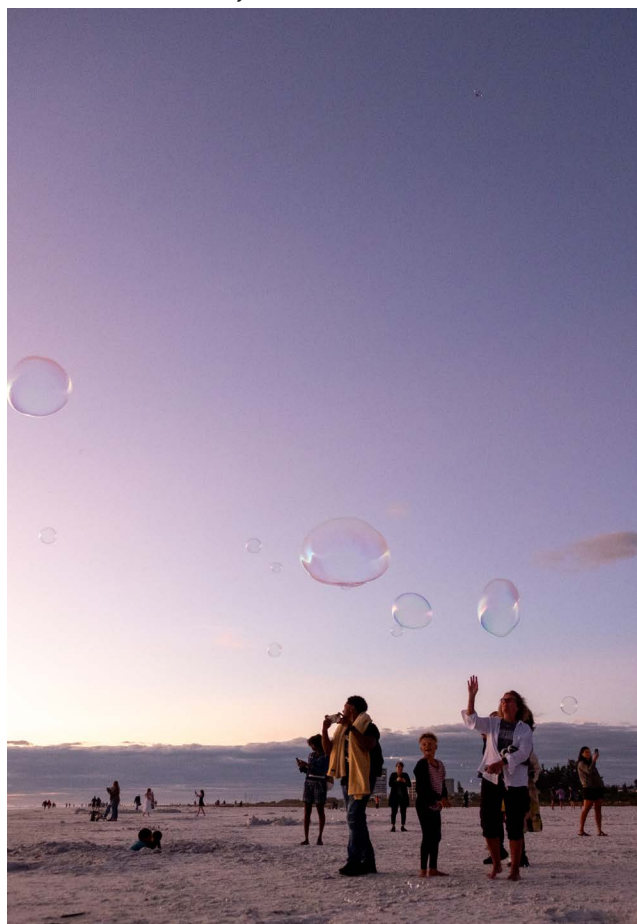
Kegan Hampton

My heart is a sprout garden,
of half-nurtured dreams,
I sow there like dying,
But ere will I reap?

I had a little herb there.
I fed it every day.
So sure that it would rule my life,
Before it fell away.

I'll always want a fruit tree,
Upon my little green,
But everyone around me,
Has the prettiest I've seen.

I guess I'll go on sowing,
Even if I never glean,
For no one ever grows a tree,
Upon a lifeless green.



(Abramov, Nick. "Sunset 1")



(Abramov, Nick. "Hello III")

PSALM EIGHTY-SIX

Saraya Goodman

a veil
shrouding reality
rain rolls in formation
i'd give everything to hear God.
just once?

I will fill your hand with something real.
Open up.
Feel the weight of my hand.
My hand, too, has creases and scars.
But warmth, also.
Breathe out.
Now open your eyes.
See how blue is the sky?
We must look up, you and I,
And watch the clouds pass us by.

LEARNED INDIFFERENCE

Jeremiah Swader

Close your eyes and
Open your hands.
Does it hurt to release the grasp
You hold so tight?
Grimace as you swallow this
Bitter drought.
Tell me, little one, of all the things
You've sought,
Which never came, though you waited
Patiently.
As the weeks stiffened your
Clenched fist, still clutching
Frayed wishes
Like unsent letters in the hands of
A dead man.
Practice with me, child:
Breathe in, slowly.



(Castellanos, Yessenia. "Roses")



(Baugh, Anna. "There is a Magic Deeper Still")

EBB AND TIDE

Eden Whitby

still enough to listen
full enough to overflow

overtake all that I am
the bad, the good
the try, the disappointment
the horrible, the half-decent
the hopeful thought, the numbness
the desire for each cell to die
the glimmer of longing to dance
Lord

blaze through every nerve
each neuron, I Am
all of every speck
set me ablaze by Your
most undeserved glance of like

IN DEFENSE OF HEROES

Lydia Basham

I have been told before that old heroes lack
The certain qualities most modern readers
adore.
They bring hope and joy, fight darkness black,
And choose to reflect light from Heaven's shore.

"Heroes?" You turn your glare at me, near baited,
And laugh at my 'ridiculous', 'childish' wonder.
"Leave it to you to believe in things outdated
And that which glorifies a foolish man's
blunders.

"Me?" You say, grin turned up with arrogant airs.
"I want the real stories, where hearts are heavy
as lead,
Where life is filled with familiar, weighty cares,
And the dusty old heroes are long gone and
dead."

Ah, this is a song I have heard many times,
From those who believe this world is the end,
Whom hail villains as best, ignoring their crimes
As long as they follow your agenda's trend.

Give us the bad guys, they'll scream and cry;
We want the stories which reflect our broken

world!

Kiss the gentle, joy-filled, chivalrous heroes
goodbye,
And release the honest tales, dark tidings
unfurled.

Give us the reality, the grit, the death
Give us the stories with hopeless souls
Give us the books that halt your breath
Only the tales where the Devil's bell tolls!

The poems built from broken hearts,
And narratives of poisoned dreams
With words like sharp-edged shattered parts,
And tones that unravel like weary seams.

The villains corrupt each stage en mass,
Their evil turned to charming sorrow,
Wicked grins gleam sick in mirrored glass,
And sin they offer for you to borrow.

Disguised in the veil of "misunderstood"
They parade as "real" and "honest" and "true",
They portray themselves as something good,
And the salvation they bring bears a shadowed
hue.

"We are the real heroes," they cry in shameless
glee,
Quite aware of the darkness they blithely
empower.
"We are the righteous ones who will set you
free!"
With promises which sweeten sickly and sour.

They hollow out virtue and priceless grace
Until they seem like children's toys,
They destroy, remove, besmirch, erase
All that reeks of Heaven's bright joys.

Ah, but this is what we really want!
Here is sin painted all with gold!
Give the Tempter a kinder face
And Satan has every easy foothold.
Villains? No, just rotted young!
Their parents died or beat them blue.
Their innocence stolen, their spirits wrung,
What other thing was left for them to do

but to become a conduit of sin's disguise?
They spew forth the ill promise of an easy

escape,
They spread religions of lust, corruption, and
demise,
And allow evil to take a more palatable shape.

Justify the stains of sin, my dear,
The world has taught you very well.
Embrace 'victim' as your name and cheer,
You have chosen a cold, dark, decrepit cell.

Give in to the broken men of shadows,
Believe the women of twisted lies,
Sell your soul to Hell's full bellows
And watch as its smoke stifles all your cries.

No, no, you'll say with scoffing tone,
Dismiss any man who wields a sword,
Or bears a shield against darkness grown,
Or kneels before his righteous Lord.

You look at me with scorn in your gaze,
"I'll have no talk of heroes here.
I want no reflection of Heaven's rays
In human form, bring no goodness near.

Get rid of any man of otherworldly worth,
That travels across the pages of books,
Or fills a screen with courageous mirth,
To sink his filthy and treacherous hooks

Into the boys and girls who watch
With bright, wide eyes and open hearts,
Who do not know the wretched splotch
That will leave them all in shattered parts."

You sneer with bitter cruelty found,
"There is no such thing as your precious 'hero'.
They don't belong in real literature bound.
They are made for fairytales of infantile woe."

I stare for a moment, with more than shock.
No heroes? No warriors? No saviors at all?
No goodness in mankind in all your talk?
No glorious celebration in hallowed halls?
No swords lifted high in victorious cheer,
No arms clasped in fellowship and bravery?
No sacrifices the world will never hear,
Or a death that ends all evil's slavery?

I stare for a moment longer, unsure.
Do you mean these words you speak?

You stand on the back of heroes who bore
The weight of those who were weak.

I open my mouth and words fall,
Though I know not from whence they come.
They sound almost like a battle call,
Cut through your rank and lying slum:

"Put aside your sword, hero
It has no place here.
Dare not raise your shield, hero
Hide your silver spear.

The world wants none of your courage, hero,
It cares not for your war-torn glory.
They want to hide you away, hero.
And villainize your story."

"You would not like my favorite story,
If you hate heroes so much," I say.
"The Savior of this one gets all the glory,
And destroys the serpent he came to slay.

He is kind and good and filled with meekness,
He has no sin under which you can hide.
He came to redeem all my fleshly weakness
And to make me part of his pure-white bride.

He bears a sword, not pulled from stone,
Yet calls himself the Crowned King,
And he did not have bow to Satan's throne
To have the loud voices of triumph sing.

Though it seems it has gone out of style,
I will stay within the bounds of grace.
I will keep my warriors who go through trial,
The ones who travel each godless place

To save their world, their safety unheeded,
Amidst a story filled to the brim with fear,
In a narrative where salvation is needed,
They leave their comfortable and familiar
sphere

For a quest that promises no return,
They endure death and loss and ancient foes.
They speak of hope we all must learn,
And these are the childish, unwanted heroes?

The folk who pull legendary swords from
stones?

The ones who vanquish each winged fiery fiend?
The warriors who turn Cain's descendants to
bones?
Or the ones who in fierce fellowship's aid
believed?

No hobbit holes, or epic quests,
No Mount Dooms or Grey Haven sailings.
No Narnia safe, or deserved rest.
No redemption for a villain's failings.

No brave kings of gold or holy grails.
You don't want famous Arthur's story.
Ye have no time for epic tales.
No grand narratives of shining glory.

Fairytales and children's stuff? Perhaps.
Suppose they demand a childlike faith
Which is not deterred by worldly traps
Or the sweet nothings of Hell's chief wraith.

Perhaps heroes are for those of sterner steel,
Those who did not fall to earthly confusion,
Or those who truly want to heal,
Instead of staying in victimized delusion.

Hope is not some children's toy.
She is not made of whispers and cobwebs.
She is not some airy and ridiculous ploy,
A scent forgotten at the turn of a head.

Hope has the dust of war on her face.
She has blood on her knuckles, dirt in her hair.
She bears scars that reflect her dangerous race,
And she laughs in the face of ruinous despair.

Not because she is fearless - oh no, don't you get
it?
The point is she goes on despite the terror!
She chooses to believe, and persevere with grit
When Darkness himself endeavors to snare her.

Here is the current under each grand fable,
Here is the reason we wield hope against loss:
It starts with a bloody babe in a run-down
stable,
And ends with a hero slaughtered on a villain's
cross.

"Why heroes?" I ask, with tears in my crinkling
eyes.

"Don't you see? Haven't you heard?
It's all been a part of His millennia-old
franchise!
Which began with a light-creating, earth-
shattering Word.

From thence we have gotten every hero around,
Every hobbit and Jedi, each half-blood and king.
They all bear the same reflection and similar
sound.
Can't you hear the trumpets of Heaven ring?

You may have your stories of darkness and woe,
The books you call "real" and "worthwhile".
Keep your villains whose redemption is just for
show
And the exalted damnation hidden behind a
handsome smile.

Take your "reality", your grit, your vice,
Take your stories with villainous evil.
Take your tales where sin has no price,
And give no chance for redemption's retrieval.

So long, goodbye, and fare thee well,
Take your lust filled pages away!
Take your books which celebrate the depravity
of Hell
As if it were not the place where the Devil stays.

I don't want them, I have better guides,
Better adventures worth reading.
I know where real literary worth resides,
And it has no place in your faulty heeding.

Fairytales are more than true,"
I add, voice soft and gentle now.
I want to leave you with a precious clue;
I desperately want to show you how

These heroes still matter so much to many,
Why they have lasted so very long.
They carry hope and courage to plenty
And prove that even the weakest can be strong.
"Not because fairytales show dragons exist,
Or to condemn all with a devilish warning.
But to show that frightful endings often twist
To reveal a golden, shining, hopeful morning.

Because at the close, the dragons are beaten.
The monster's reign comes to an end.

The tale once sour will someday sweeten,
And the wounds which bleed will someday
mend.

But heroes are needed to wield the light
Which sends the darkness running.
They are the ones that vanquish each blight,
And invite Heaven's grace, radiantly stunning.

Hence the swords in stones and golden crowns.
Hence the godly quests, the magical wardrobe
coats.
Hence the forces of evil finally brought down.
Hence the deserved "all was well", and West
sailing silver boats.

And the happy finales," I finish at last.
"The bittersweet and tearful ends.
The gentle epilogues of joy, most vast,
And stories which have become good friends."
It is your turn to confusedly stare
While I reply like you've not heard before.
I've contradicted you with sassy flair
As I defend these old heroes of treasured yore.

You take your hopelessness out the door,
Grumbling about my blind, infantile belief.

You flee from the chance at something better in
store,
Your pride against salvation the thief.

So keep sharpening your silver swords,
All ye who would call yourselves bold.
Take His shield of faith, the best of wards,
And step into your glorious destiny foretold.

Keep hope alive, keep temptation in flight,
Become a hero of righteous surprising.
And remember that though black can veil your
sight,
The night is darkest just before the sun's rising.



(Shaver, Elie. "Bruce Canyon NP & Chiricahuas NM")

RENEWAL | DECAY



(Doudt, Zoë. "Cemetery")

MORTALITY

Dr. Scott Foran

thrice
thy raven form hath passed o'er
in shadow flight
graced my thoughts
with softened light of death
that i might recall the numbered days
before me
and bend my step with renewed favor
toward the lighted city

STILL

Anonymous

a leaf falls gently
still floats down some rippling stream
watch as life goes on.

FAMILY TIES

Anonymous

I wish I could let you kiss my forehead;
Sand down the hardened edges of my youth.

Our genetic tapestry unthreads as
Your dead body decays next to the Truth

I can't fake another apology
In the hopes that it will get you to stay
I won't sacrifice the quality of
Things I believe just to give you your way

I can't see your sweet eyes narrow with hate
So pull that thread. Pull, and I will forgive
There's no truth that carries this kind of weight:
I'll watch you die, but you will watch me live

You're my skeleton. My backroom. My doubt.
We both blame ourselves for how you turned out

I Miss You

Ali Zakariasen

I miss the sound of you coming home
I miss your hugs goodnight
I miss knowing that you'll always be here
Most of all I miss you

You're grown up now-away from home-the
destiny of every big sis
Why can't we always be together?
I miss snuggling up with your cold feet on mine
I miss talking and laughing late into the night
I even miss our fights
I miss you big sis

You're my hero, my best friend
And nothing and nobody could ever replace
your sweet, comforting presence
Sometimes I think I hear your voice echo down
the hall
A smile starts to cross my lips, but then my
spirits take a plummeting fall
When I realize it's not you at all
It's not enough to just call
I want and need you here
Can't you just come back and stay forever?

THE ONES WE LEAVE BEHIND

Ezra Whitaker

She pulled me into a warm embrace that burned through my soul. In that moment, I realized that we had been here before. Well, not exactly here, here, but in the same situation. She hated that I was leaving, and I hated to leave her. Within our reluctance to part was the shared gratitude for my awaiting freedom.

My sister and I have always been closer than most. Much of our early years together were spent like many other siblings, starting petty fights, stealing clothes, and generally getting on each other's nerves. At some point between our birth father dying and mother remarrying, our relationship had melted into some sort of amalgamation of mother-daughter, brothers-in-arms, and prisoners of war.

A mere twelve hours before that final embrace, we sat together on the brown, tufted leather couch in our grandmother's den. Both weary of family and worn down by the holiday, we attempted to make the most of the few hours we had left before I went back to college. As we played through the game, *We Are Not Really Strangers*, she pulled a question that I did not want to answer. "How are you, really?" she asked.

Ambivalence is a hard word to express. In that moment, two intense feelings rattled through my body: the deep longing to go home, and the sincere love for the moment I was in. And I remembered that we had been here before.

It was about three years prior, when I moved into my dorm room. My mentor (whom I call Ddad), sister, mother, and I had just gotten back from Target to get some last minutelast-minute things before they got on the road to drive eight hours back home.

"Well, baby girl, this is it," my mom said, twinged with pain.

I, on the other hand, was so ready for her to leave. She had been driving us all up the wall on the way up here and had spent thirty minutes hounding the financial services office, giving those poor workers a phenomenal impression of what kind of student I would be.

Even with those feelings, I looked at my dad, then to and then at my sister, and these feelings washed over me. Ambivalence. For the first time,

I would be facing some difficult things, and my dad and sister would not be physically by my side. The joys and sorrows I shared with them would now be expressed through emojis rather than hugs. I was about to taste the sweetest freedom from my mother with the most bitter loss.

When my sister asked how I was really doing, I felt torn. I still do. Every day that I live in North Carolina is a day that I feel the freest. The times when I feel the deepest joys are also when I am reminded of those who I left behind.

BENDITH TAID

Lydia Basham

The early autumn breeze had had just finished blowing the stench of blood from the castle walls when the wizard ascended through the trap door.

His old limbs nearly rattled as he tossed his staff through the opening first, clambering up after it. He grumbled, taking the branch back up again and straightening. High above, the stars were beginning to blink in the indigo blanket which the sun was casting over the world as it set. They sparkled dimly, still battling with the dying light of their solar sovereign, and they would win that fight only to pick up celestial arms against the moon mere seconds later.

Silence had yet to fall on the castle. Far below, within the keep, golden halls were filled with laughter and singing. The war was over. Each young lad was dancing with what seemed like every eligible maiden he could find, old warriors were regaling the young knights with stories of previous campaigns, and the dogs were being fed properly for the first time in months from all of the scraps drunk feastgoers were dropping on the floor in their sloshed merriment. In the streets themselves, golden light spilled onto cobblestones as homes threw open their doors and windows, spreading cheer like a plague to all their neighbors. Laughter filled each alleyway and corner with mirth, and the castle that for years had been a wasteland of death and evil was alive once more.

The new king surely sat amidst the cacophonous cheer, smile unwavering. The

wizard had already witnessed tens of weeping mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters thank him for his bravery and sacrifice in bringing their beloved men home. He had addressed each thanks with humble redirection, and perhaps a small, overwhelmed glance at his old teacher, then took every flower with gratitude of his own and redirected them to the sources of their tears. He wore his father's crown well, though the new weight atop his head discomfited him.

"Good," the wizard smiled wryly. "It does well for a young monarch to feel uneasy the night of his coronation. The weight of a kingdom now rests on his shoulders."

He walked closer to the edge of the parapet. Already efforts had begun to clear the fortress from the destruction of battle, but they had ceased on the king's orders so that all may enjoy the festivities. Rubble remained on the keep steps, half of the drawbridge had crumbled into the moat, and smoke still rose from quenched fires in the lower town. Tomorrow, the men would be building, the women would be mending, and the children would be scurrying to-and-fro, looking to help in any way they could.

But for now, for these precious hours between twilight and sunrise, they would celebrate.

"You know, I have several ladies down there asking me where the wizard who summoned the fire-breathing lizards happened to run off to. I think they want to pay you their personal thanks."

The wizard turned. The young king climbed up from the trap door, golden curls and crown first. He had left his sword behind, either in the small room just below the ladder or in the Great Hall, and the red cloak had been discarded as well. He had stripped off his blood-stained armor several hours before, silently trying to pretend the tears in his eyes were from all the dust.

In just a wool shirt, breeches, and boots, he looked the same he had months ago, just before the war began. If not for the crown atop his head, he would have been the same boy the wizard had raised since infancy.

"I knew you'd be up here," the boy murmured.

"A wizard must have his tower," he agreed, absentmindedly pulling at a leaf growing out of his staff. "It is not I who vanquished our foes. They praise you, my boy."



(Doudt, Zoë. "Woods")

The monarch snorted. "I am fairly certain it was a joint effort. Without my men, the support from all of the... all of my people, I would never have been able to take back my parents' kingdom."

A small pause.

"Certainly not without you."

His beard ticked his cheeks as he smiled. "You flatter an old man."

Blue eyes narrowed, and he stuck an accusing finger into the wizard's cerulean robes. "I speak truth to an old man. An old man whom I fear is losing his sanity every day."

"I lost that centuries ago."

Eyes narrowed impossibly further. "I still

don't know whether or not you jest when you say things like that."

"And you will never know the answer."

"Cruel old man," the king shook his head. "I'll have you thrown in the stocks."

"The stocks were destroyed by Mordwyn's catapults."

"... as soon as the stocks are rebuilt, then."

"I can command dragons, and you believe that stocks are going to hold me?"

"Magic suppressing stocks. I don't know where on earth I'm going to find some, but I will."

The magician laughed heartily, shoulders

shaking as he gripped his staff for balance. "Threatening the most powerful sorcerer in all creation is a dangerous choice for a king who has only had his crown for six hours."

The budding monarch's tender grin had returned, and they fell into a sweet silence. He took the gleaming circlet from his head and held it out for the wizard, who took it, levitated it in the air between them for a moment, and then returned it to its rightful owner.

"It is smaller than I remember," he mused, turning the crown over in his hands. "I always thought Father's crown so large and grand sitting there on his head. Granted, I hardly remember anything about him. I only saw him the once."

"It is not smaller," the magician chuckled. "You have just gotten bigger."

"I will be sixteen next month."

He hummed. "You will. A far cry from the baby I held all those years ago."

He paused, then reached up to squeeze the little fat left in his cheeks. "Though, not everything has changed, I suppose."

"Ambrosius!" the boy dragged out the last syllable of his name the way he had always done when he was particularly annoyed. He batted the gnarled hand away, but he could not stop the laughter that bubbled up from within him. The wizard joined him, deep chuckles harmonizing with his high peels of joy. The sounds mixed like familial birdsong, drifting up to give the stars their evening's greetings.

The boy sighed, grin softening to something gentler, something that looked more like his mother. "The battle was the hardest I have ever fought."

"Yes," his mentor answered.

"I am afraid," the king swallowed, but did not lose his expression of tender glee. That was his mother too. She had always fought fear with laughter. No demon ever entered the castle whilst the Grey Queen sat upon her throne; they feared her joy far too much to traverse her halls. "I am afraid that this will make all the battle's bloodshed and devastation seem small in comparison."

He held up the golden crown. The jewels within it glinted in the fading light. Admittedly, it was a crown for a much older king, who had seen

decades of peace and war, plenty and few. For a man whose father had tenderly bestowed the crown on his son's brow, and not for a child who was forced to dig the circlet out of his mother's desecrated tomb with bloody fingers.

"It is a burden," the wizard said quietly. "But the crown rests upon your head now, child."

"It is heavy," the young king whispered.

The elder smiled softly, perhaps even a little sadly. The wizard had seen ages of wars, the rise and fall of kingdoms. The rise and fall of kings. "Then become stronger."

Golden hair swayed in the wind. The freckles the warlock had known since his birth were beginning to fade from the boy's cheeks. The crown atop his head somehow achieved both perfection and out-of-placeness on his rambunctious curls. He was not yet old enough to grow a beard.

Blue eyes, clear as the sky above them, sparkled with a mix of determination and mischievousness only young Welsh boys, particularly those who have just been crowned king, possess.

"I will, Ambrosius."

The old man nodded, eyes crinkling. "You will do well, Wart."

The boy – though, he was not a boy anymore, not really. It had been nearly sixteen winters since he had been born, and yet the wizard could only see the tiny babe, squealing for his mother as he was taken from the castle grounds in the throes of midnight – laughed. It was a bright sound and filled with cheer. "I am no longer a child, Ambrosius. You don't have to call me Wart anymore."

Age-weathered knuckles ran across the king's grinning cheek. "Hmm."

Wart's grin was made of something akin to fondness, and then tempered even gentler to understanding. He leaned into the touch; few gentle things were part of the boy's life anymore. Old books with worn leather had been exchanged for maps of battle, charcoal sticks meant for education were replaced with blood-stained weapons. The open fields of the cottage they once called home were far away, and the cold stone castle now surrounded them.

Ambrosius would give him this, this tenderness in a world that would try to make him sterner than steel. Unbreakable. Stories would be told of his adventures, his kingdom, his legacy. He was made of legends, this one.

But for now, he was only a boy on the precipice of manhood, heavy crown in his hands. For one night more, among the stars and a weary old man, he would be the lad who had brought Ambrosius flowers from the riverbed because they were the same color as his favorite shirt. He would be the child who had thought he could teach the birds to speak and the fox to dance. He would be the boy who believed that if he just had enough faith, he too could call dragons from the sky, spin ashes into starlight, and magic thunder into song.

“Your father would be so proud of the man you are becoming,” the wizard whispered into the still air. His thumb gently stroked the boy’s temple; he leaned into the touch. “You have his courage and determination. His stubbornness too.”

Wart’s wide grin reappeared.

“But you have your mother’s smile,” he continued. “And her spirit. Her gentleness is your greatest strength. She would have adored you.”

Both pairs of eyes were reflecting the stars, now clearly shining; their tears glistened in the twinkling light.

“And you?” Wart – though he was right: no one called him that but Ambrosius anymore – asked, head tilted. He always did that when he asked the wizard questions, and here something had not changed at all. His bright blue eyes still held depth and queries Ambrosius could not answer in all his centuries of life.

The old wizard smiled, and beheld his grandson in all but blood, bright eyes and bold laugh and valiant heart.

“You have all of my pride, dear boy,” he whispered, fingers running through those golden curls. “The greatest moment of my life was when your mother placed you in my arms. All of my pride.”

And all of my love, but he heard it anyway.

“That is enough to go on, I suppose,” the boy smirked. “Wouldn’t do to begin my reign with

your disapproval.”

“Best not,” the magician smiled back.

The sun disappeared behind the horizon, and the sky grew dark. Far below in some forest grove, an owl hooted its wakening greeting. The early autumn breeze brought with it the scent of wheat fields ripe for the harvest, and laughter continued to fill the kingdom with light.

The moon rose, and the grandfather and grandson watched the stars.

TIME ITSELF

Dr. Scott Foran

time itself is a profane
luxury.
it unwinds
as cas
 cad
 ing
threads of sand
to be gathered loose-
ly together
as we murmur, half apologetic,
“listen, did i ever tell you about?”

EPHEMERAL

Saraya Goodman

There is something so gentle about vapor
Performance without performing; holy
Deep calls to deep. Melting away softly
A warm hearth pulses as candles taper

What a blessing that good things come and pass
Rolling white clouds cool the oppressive sun
For a moment there’s rest and then it’s gone
When the heat breaks through, the memory lasts

Off’ I am a wax figure: all body, no head
Foaming and sputtering near a small match
Forfeiting the parts of me that will catch
Vapor whistles the kettle, form shed

Vapor blooms spices and wafts o’er the lake
Being breathed in. Giving while others take.

A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

Zoë Doust

the flowers flutter, pearly white,
desperately holding on for dear life,
shying away from their inevitable diminishing,
as they slouch and buckle under the
weight of the rain that ruptures,
but then grows...



the squashed gray clouds converge in the sky,
sidestepping each other before it
all becomes too much,
sidestepping reality—
but for how long?



the summer wastes away,
the green gasping for one final hurrah,
drinking up the atmosphere—
but soon the leaves will fall.

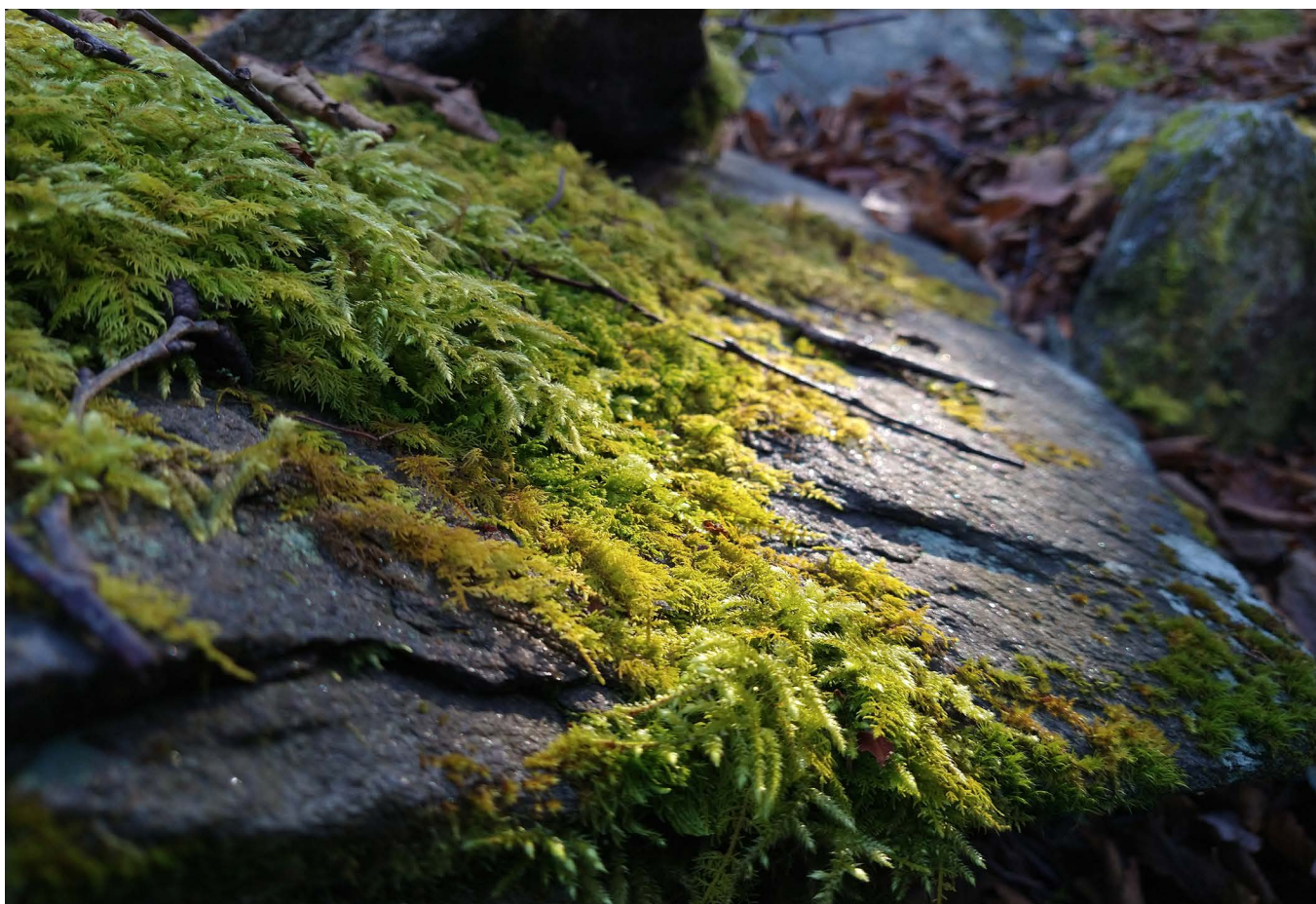


it's like me, wringing the
last few drops out of the
washcloth of my childhood,
my nomadic soul, so used
to a dandelion life

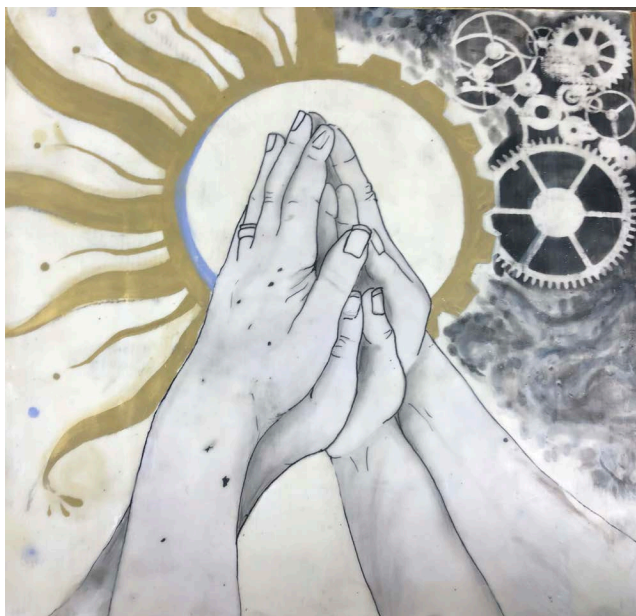
but now I need to be a palm or a willow
or something,
burying my roots, my past,
swaying with the winds and august storms,
but being tethered, still.

I need to find my place
in the soil of my Lord.

I need to relish the rest of
this,
but let go when the time comes,
when autumn rolls in with its sad goodbyes,
with its needed death, making way
for spring, for life,
for the new colors to light up our worlds.



(Whitby, Eden. "Moss")



(Goodman, Saraya. "Victorian Sensibilities")

THE DIVIDE

Saraya Goodman

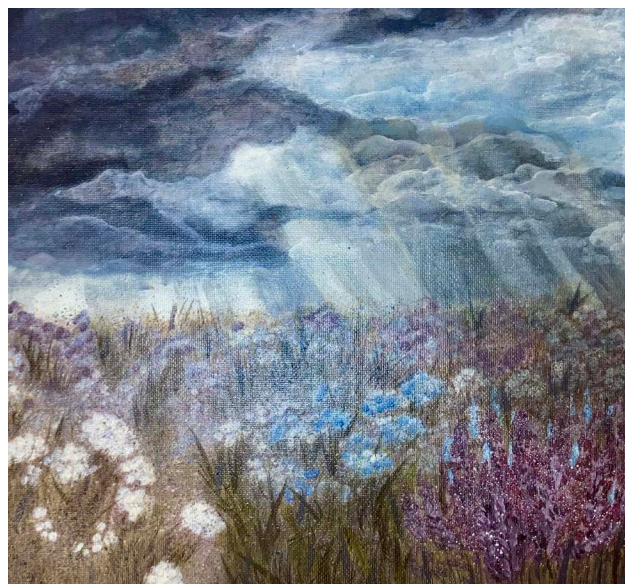
The cold February wind wafted across the surface of even colder water and drummed my barely lucid body in unrelenting waves. Spray from the waterfall pelted Hannah and me as I prepared myself to make the plunge. My fearful anticipation of the freezing moments under the water paralyzed me entirely. It was less about the physical discomfort of subzero temperatures, and more the weight of the moment. Unlike me, Hannah remained unphased. She giggled and danced in the waist-deep icy slush as I adjusted. She was more of a pastor than I was a convert, slowly repeating the baptismal liturgy that she had gleaned from witnessing, in her words, "literally thousands of baptisms in my career as a Southern Baptist."

Up above us on the shore a makeshift group of witnesses stood shivering in excited support. All sweet, gentle friends waiting in reverence to embrace me once I left the water. Lingering behind them, but still eager, he stood, one of my closest friends, leather jacket wrapped tightly around his thin frame. If he judged my religious expression, it did not show on his face. Hannah pushed the damp curls out of her face. "I think you should just do it. Just commit." Surrendering, I let her lower me into the glassy water. Through my half panicked, half hypothermic trance I caught a blurred glimpse of him up on the rocky shore above. The water flooded over the edges of my vision, until he was all I could see. Hannah's

words latched in my ears. *Just commit.* Time felt slow. Lethargic. Like the moment before a car accident, a strange, unweildy silence set in. *Just commit.* Mentally, I was transported out of the pool at the base of the waterfall, out of winter, out of that moment, and flashed back to a hot day in late summer the year before. A memory I had completely forgotten played before me. The rocky riverbank morphed into the sheer raw stone face of an old building. I saw him.

"*You just have to commit.*" He contorted himself awkwardly on his perch, trying to make a bigger foothold while still giving me a hand to hold onto. For some reason, the gap between the grassy hill and the open second-story window seemed a lot more impressive when I was stretched out across it. I had watched him bridge the gap so effortlessly. He would sling his body weight into the open air with full conviction, like a raven taking flight. The golden sheen of his silky blond hair stood out peculiarly against the rest of his all-black ensemble.

He was himself just an odd personage. The imposing black attire on a pale, frail frame. His agnostic external persona softened by devotion so adamant it was almost Christian. He swore like a sailor but spoke with strange tenderness about everything and everyone around him. I would never have imagined before knowing him that I could have liked him. We had no common ground. And I found his misunderstood, aesthetic emotionalism to be embarrassingly kitschy. I never would have believed that I should like him so well as I did, or even that I should be proud to call him my friend. Though I did not love him yet,



(Choi, Wonhui. "After the Rain")

there was something undeniably lovable about him. And, as I lay stretched out in the heavy August air, I felt vaguely aware that I would not want anyone else helping me jump across.

The first time I ever saw him, he floated in through the window with such off-putting causality that I almost overlooked him. I was inside, when he slid in with the same disinterested nonchalance of one walking through a door they walk through so often that they no longer recognize the distinction from one room to another. Nobody in the class even acknowledged him as he settled into his chair. I followed suit. If he had been anyone else, I would have disliked him. Or judged him at the very least for trying so hard to be different, for being so childishly desperate to make a statement. But I did not mind him.

He just was, and as he was, I could not find it in myself for him to bother me. There was something, a moment, whenever he laughed that made me as if I would be missing an essential human experience if I did not entertain him. All the poise in his icy eyes would melt away as he threw back his head, leaving a sweetness I had rarely seen before. The closest sweetness I can think of is the sincerity found in the eyes of sleepy children or in the eyes of young lovers immediately after the first revelation that their tenderest hopes might be reciprocated. It was a strange mixture of complete contentment and hunger for the next thing. He was all paradox, and yet it wasn't confusing.

The same laughing sincerity egged me on now, as I vacillated between the ground and the open air. He reached a gloved hand down. "Commit." Even as he reached for me, I was divinely aware of the irremediable choice in front of me. I had been in flux for too long, not only between the window and the ground but between everything. My life was vague and undefined. I was vaguely dating someone I vaguely disliked. I was vaguely well, though I vaguely suffered. I was vaguely Christian, though I vaguely avoided knowing that I was. I was my father's daughter in name, but not in practice. He never heard from me.

My right foot reached out hungrily into the great divide while my left lagged insincerely on the ground. As I vaguely began to spin out

over every vague, nondescript passivity in my life. I did not notice that he had retreated back into the window like a snake recoiling to strike. In one fluid, inhuman motion (like an elastic snapping back into place) he projected himself across the expanse, pulling me back with him. What a strange, agnostic picture of grace: sincere, irremediable, and utterly inescapable.

I came to, gasping for air as the blood rushed back into my body. I was baptized. Pulled out of the water by expert hands. I stared up into the starry blue sky as the cheers of my loved ones filled the brittle air. I took a long, fresh breath. An earthy air filled my lungs. It was real; a quality that is impossible to communicate and undeniable to any who have experienced it. The real, raw wind rushed across the water and straight into my gasping mouth. Hannah threw her arms around me, smothering the chill in my wet clothes. He smiled gently from the riverside. I was over the divide.



(Goodman, Saraya. "I am so Sick")

A CONVERSATION

Sophia Jordan

Hello, God, it's me again
Your confused, terrified, anxious, doubtful child
Who is coming to talk to You
I know that it's been a while since I have talked
to You like this
But I also know that You listen to me
And I know that You already know my fears,
concerns, and cares
Yet I come to speak with You, God
I come to lay my anxieties, desires, and hopeless
situations at Your feet
God, I am struggling
My thoughts and emotions keep my head
unleveled and my heart weak
I'm having thoughts about things that I thought I
was over and done with
And emotions that make me want to lash out
My mind worries about the things that You tell
me not to worry about
And I'm developing confusing feelings that I
don't understand for someone
I hold onto things and judge others in my mind
And I get upset when I feel like no one is
listening to me
I am full of sorrow and frustration
I am holding a lot of grief and anger
Lord, You gave me emotions
But the ones that I'm currently feeling aren't
healthy
I feel lost and left out
I feel like I don't belong here
I feel like an outsider in friendly territory
I feel like I'm falling very short
I felt You calling me here, Lord
So why do I feel this way
I think too much, and it leads me nowhere
I feel like crying, but my tears can't represent my
sorrow
I feel like I'm questioning too much and getting
insufficient answers
I'm confused and too suspicious for my own
good
Help me, Lord, please help me out here, my God
I need to understand the things that I don't
I don't know how much more of this I can take,
God
I am too weak to even carry on
My feet are failing me, Lord
My hands can't hold on much longer

My mind is fooling me, and I can't stop it
My heart might be tricking me, and I don't
understand it
The waves are getting higher, and the wind is
blowing harder
And my doubt is pulling me under the rough
water
But I feel Your hands, God
I feel You pulling me up out of the deep sea
You steady my feet and strengthen them
Now I am standing on the water with You
And You're going before me and behind me and
all around me
You're leading me, and I'm fixing my eyes on
Your face
You call out to me, and I walk towards the sound
of Your voice
My feet fail me, but I know that You never will
This world is lost, and it will continue to be lost
But, Lord, You are raising up Your people
You're calling us and making us whole
You're taking care of us even when we can't feel
it
You hear our cries even when we're silent
You are working everything out even when we
can't see it
You're leading the way even when we feel like we
haven't taken the right steps
You are right next to us even when we doubt
God, You give us everything we need
You make a way out of no way
Through the works of Your Son, You bridged the
eternal gap that kept us from You
You calm our raging minds and weak hearts
and bring Your peace that passes all
understanding
You take us as we are and shape us into who You
want us to be
You have never left us or forsaken us, and You
never will
You're so good, God, and You love us more than
we can comprehend
Your grace sustains us, and Your mercy is new
every morning
Lord, You know the plans that You have for me
And You will lead me into those plans
Even though I don't know what Your plans are
I can trust that You are not bringing me down
the wrong path
I can trust that You know exactly what You are

doing
I can trust that whatever happens will work out
for good
I can trust that You will always be with me
And I can trust that my life and future is safe in
Your hands
There is nothing I could ever do that would
separate me from You
No sorrow, no grief, no anxiety can separate my
heart from You
No sin, no misstep, no mistake can undo all that
You have done for me
There is no trauma that cannot be forgiven and
fixed by You, Lord
God, I need You every day, every hour, every
minute, every second
And You're right there, You're always there, Lord
Help me to never forget that You are always good
Help me to not doubt, not turn away, but to
always remember to trust You, Lord

JESUS IS FOREVER

Ali Zakariasen

Someday when our song dies,
When the throb of our hearts' give way
In a far better place we shall stay
Where tears will be only of joy
And sorrows a forgotten memory

But alas, will all my strivings be in vain?
Will not my life leave one stain?
Why do I long to be remembered when I'm
gone?
To still be sung like a never-ending song?
Is this an evil desire I ask myself
To live a life they will remember?
It's hard to totally surrender
To not want at least some glory forever

Lord, give me your desires
To lift your name without tire
Every day of my life I want to know you better
From meaningless knowledge of you let me
depart
I want to truly know your heart
Your mercies make me sing with pleasure
Jesus, your love goes on forever.

THE ARTIFICER

D.C. Bussey

The relation between all things,
Alive or not, is orchestrated
By the same Mind from which creation springs.

Particles of light move at the Father's commands
And rest upon the leaves of the apple tree,
Causing the growth that gives fruit to eager
hands.

Drops of water fall from the sky,
(Released by one word from His mouth)
And answer the dry land's cry.

Red ruby wine, that brings smiles to faces
Is but a taste of creation's gifts and our ingenuity,
Each breathed out by heavenly graces.

The sun, the stars, and moon above
Light the paths of mice and men
Reflecting the light of He who is Love.

A beating heart, a perceiving eye,
Live and move in their Creator;
With His one thought both could die.

The deer evades, but loses its flight
By the will of One who balances all;
So the lion eats and everything is right.

Wildflowers are by pollinating bees blessed
Just as aphids, anemonefish, and oxpeckers
From mutual fellows find their help and rest.

In wisdom the Son has created them each
And placed them in their habitats
So that creation might His glory preach.

See the ashes of a recently kindled land,
Reduced to nothing, its animals have fled,
The future seemingly without beauty or plan.

Yet the burnt remains of that wooded
community
May in time find their blackened patches
Renewed with vibrant verdant trees of hickory.

The green growth shall revive, and waters burst
anew,
Birds making nest in young limbs,

For life often succeeds after death tries to
subdue.

The sent Spirit of Life breathes again
And “the face of the earth” is ever remade
Revealing to all creatures God’s good reign.

Consider the bursting forests and fertile
grasslands,
Sandy sun-scorched deserts and frosted tundras,
Rich kingly estuaries and thriving coastlands.

Look on the lakes, reflecting crystal stillness;
Wade into the marshes, fresh with produce;
Drink from the river’s head, pure flowing
clearness.

Dive beneath the ocean and find a colorful sight;
Worlds of creatures that quiet at each level of
depth,
From bright to twilight to complete and total
night.

So then, from mountains of white
To foaming waves and sea depths,
Every realm subsists under God’s sight.

His hand has carved the coasts of rock,
Raising valleys and leveling mountains.
His greatness shown in every snail and hawk.

Countless words could not tell the glories of this
earth,
A sphere of living and non, that no painting
could rival;
Only the Upholder of nature can claim its
careful birth.

Humanity, of all beings, crowns this world as the
hyper-keystone,
Endowed with sight to see and understand,
To explore, hypothesize, and rediscover the lines
Christ wrote.

These lines etched in the skies and below the
ground,
Glowing in the handiwork that He ever remakes;
Words which only by believers and scientists can
be found.

The words of creation, discoverable to faith and

sight,
But only readable to those who live by heaven’s
light.

Glory to the Artificer, who orders and sustains,
To the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
To the Uncreated Trinity, who alone remains.



(Doudt, Zoë. “Sunset”)

Burnt Norton

Love is itself unmoving,
Only the cause and end of movement,
Timeless, and undesiring
Except in the aspect of time
Caught in the form of limitation
Between un-being and being.
Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage
Quick now, here, now, always—
Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after.

~T.S. Eliot

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Ephemeral theme of this edition naturally lends itself to the unique juxtaposition between the intimacy and transition inherent to the Montreat experience. It is nearly impossible living and learning in such a polarizing place to escape the finiteness of our time here. Both the patchwork of fall leaves and the watercolor spring fade in the blink of an eye. Before you can get your bearings, your time is up. Seasons, college, life—it is all an ephemeral vapor, wafting away. And yet, there is a bittersweet gratitude that arises when meditating on this harsh reality. Things may pass us by, but at least they passed *us* by.

It has been an honor to work with some of the best and brightest creative minds that Montreat has to offer. Thank you to the editorial team who put endless hours into curating this edition. *The Lamp Post* staff are endlessly grateful to our terrifyingly talented illustrator Lydia Basham for the cover art she created. Her work can be found on her Cre8ive Mango Studios Etsy shop (<https://creativemangostudios.etsy.com>). A massive thank you to Dr. Zachary Rhone for being our devoted faculty advisor and for being our hero in the endless battle with InDesign.

Most of all, thank you to every artist who submitted their work to the Lamp Post. You not only make this publication possible, but you make it worthwhile. This edition is unmatched in the variety and quality of art included. We are honored to represent Montreat.

Thank you so much for supporting us!

Saraya Goodman
General Editor

THE LAMP POST GUIDELINES

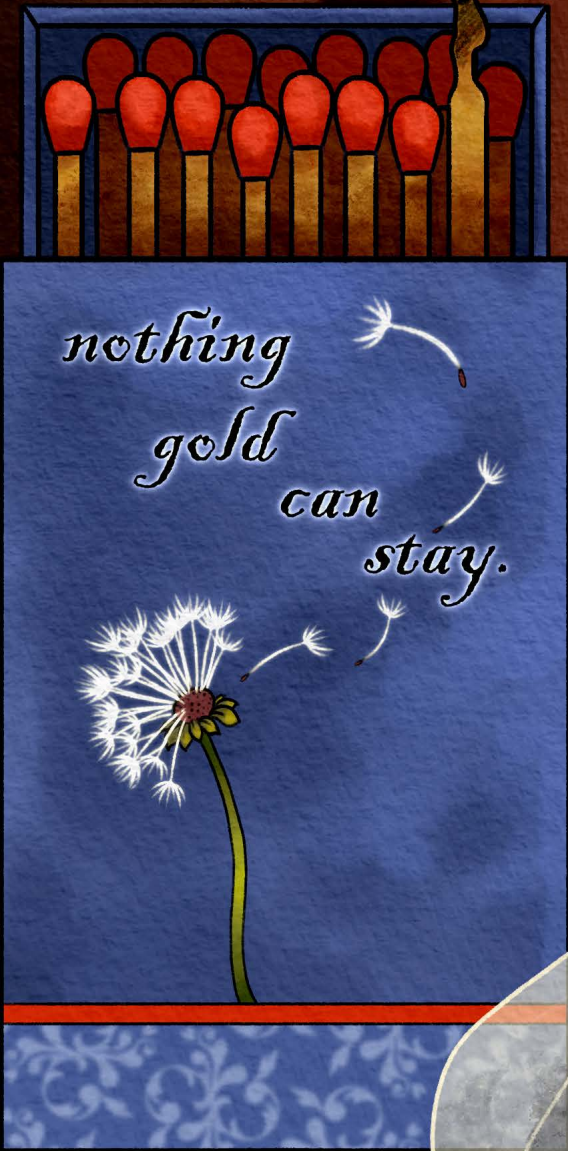
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2. *The Lamp Post* strives to reflect and further the mission and standards of Montreat College. Therefore, *The Lamp Post* editors intend for publications to work within Montreat College guidelines.
3. *The Lamp Post* believes that authors should be free to express themselves through their works of art. Therefore, we welcome authors who would like to submit their work anonymously.
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1. *The Lamp Post* accepts submissions via email at thelamppost@montreat.edu. Upon receipt of submission, the submission will be reviewed by members of the editorial staff and faculty advisors. *The Lamp Post* reserves the right to edit texts received; however, substantial changes are made in consultation with the original creator.
2. Please submit text documents in Microsoft Word (.docx) format, attached to your email, not as links. There is no limit to the length of submissions, but shorter (two pages or less) textual submissions are preferred.
3. Please submit visual art submissions in standard image formats (such as .png, .jpg, and .tiff). Visual art submissions should be sent as attachments to an email with the artist's contact information present.
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Opinions presented herein are those of the student authors and editors and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of the Montreat College administration, faculty, or staff.



*nothing
gold
can
stay.*