

The  
Asbury  
Review

Vol. 61  
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Tectonic  
*adjective*

1. Relating to the slow but constant movement of the earth's outer crust. The changing positions of tectonic plates fundamentally shape earth's geology and geography, especially by opening volcanoes, forming mountains, and causing earthquakes.

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"Be Still." *graphic design*

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Begin in the Beginning  
Klara Kinman

I wish I could whisper to my  
younger self to start with  
the freckle in the corner of my left eye.

Or the way my chin dimples like my father's.

Begin with the tongue burnt  
from boiled tea or the fingertips  
calloused from violin strings.

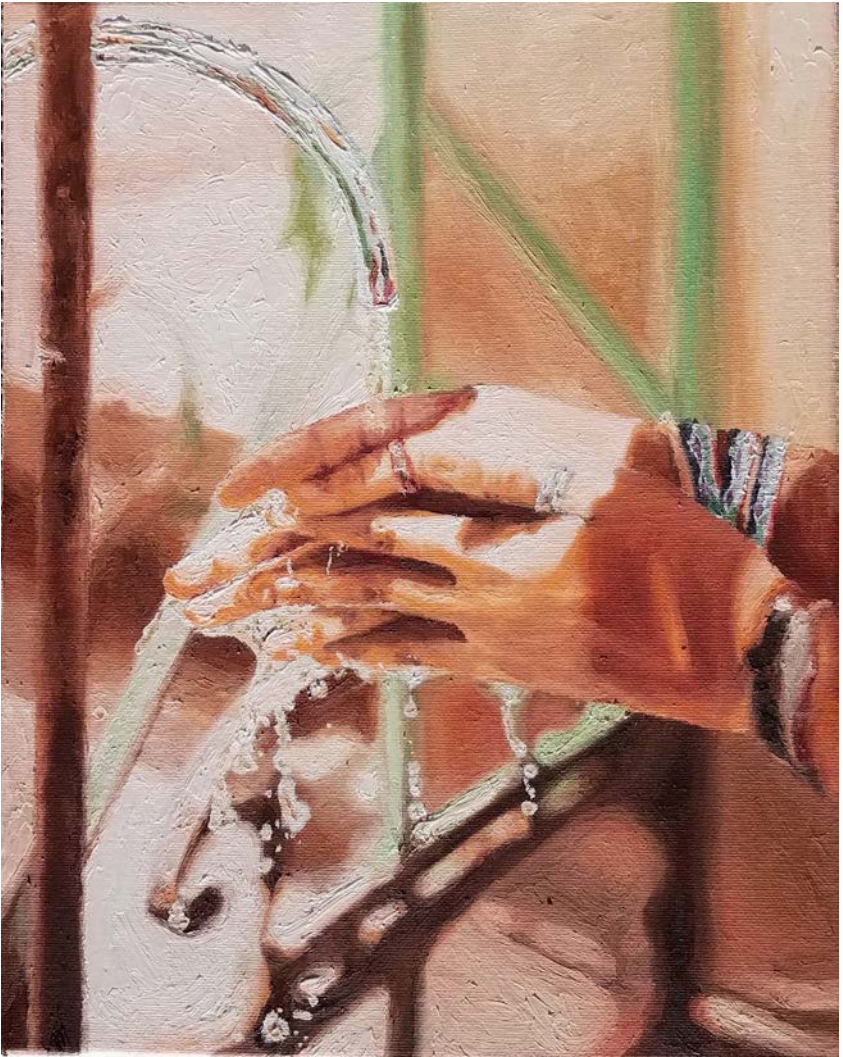
The way the hair on my legs bristles  
like the bed of the forest.

How I like forests.

How the sun trickles down my skin,  
and my skin is good,  
and I feel sorry for my skin when it burns—  
more sorry because I hurt it than  
the fact that I am hurting.

Begin with the body and the breath  
and end with the wart that used to rest  
on the slope of my knee.

Begin in the beginning,  
and end with *it was very good*



Shalom  
*oil on canvas*  
Rissa Green

seasonal  
Kaitlyn McCracken

January is fickle.  
Unblossomed buds, too eager,  
frozen over.

Tea is left cold  
and honey sticks hard  
clinging to the bottom of the cup.

The morning feels more hopeful  
than the night  
and dust sits heavily on  
a window unopened.  
But I like the way  
that it floats  
in the light of four o'clock sun  
through the pane.

I've never broken a bone  
but sometimes on cold  
and dampened days  
I still feel ghost pains,  
aches from resetting something  
that was never fractured in the first place.



## Empty Arms

Klara Kinman

The stars begin to blink shut as the carnival lights up the night sky. Neon rays project from midnight roller coasters, illuminating teenagers kissing on park benches, their lips sticky from cheap cotton candy. Beneath their feet, cigarette butts litter the sidewalk. A passerby steps in a wad of chewed-up gum.

A woman stands in the wet grass. Her pink dress hangs limp while chipped toenail polish peeks out from underneath her sandals. Late July is hot and sticky, like ice cream melting down your arm, so the woman bats herself with a flier she found buried in her purse.

Every July, the woman returns to the carnival, and every July is the same. She stretches her neck towards the corroded signs with flashing letters, each one beckoning her to *Experience the Tower of Terror* or *Enter the Haunted Mansion*. Laughter trickles through the winding lines, a sort of anticipation hovering in the air. She scans the crowd outside the nearby Ferris wheel, blinking as the neon lights contort each person's face.

Every July, the woman stands alone in the grass, watching the lights dance among the blades. The hot air hangs onto her skin, and she waits—

For the lines to not be so long.

For the couple to get off of the bench so she can sit down.

For the funnel cake she ate an hour ago to settle in her stomach.

For someone to press their dirty palm into her own and whisper, *it's gonna be okay*.

The crowds continue to mill from ride to ride and booth to booth. Sometimes she cups the glass neck of a coke bottle in her hands, letting the fizz burn in her throat. Other years she sticks a cigarette in her mouth and takes deep breaths in and out, watching the smoke swirl around her.

Every year, after a few hours of this, she will eventually wade into the night with empty arms. With shoulders slouched, she will search for the stars in the neon sky.



Destiny Calls  
*acrylic on canvas*  
Autumn Seymour

i feel like a chewed-up barbie sneaker  
Tiffany Rutledge

crisp morning grass, just enough sun  
to feel warm and not miserable.  
i am five years old  
and have never learned sin.  
all these years later  
i realize that  
peace is so much better  
when you don't know you have it  
especially when your mother says  
you are the most peace i've had in years.  
life is so much sweeter when it is tucked away  
in your tiny pair of grass-stained jean shorts  
along with a couple pieces of lint  
and that one barbie sneaker  
your cat chewed up and spit out.



Stuffed Friends  
*ink on paper*  
Seraina Weatherford

delicate,

for Wallace Station in Midway, Ky

Lily Kesten

everyone told me that i reminded them of  
my father the summer i worked at my  
hometown deli—the way i flipped my cap  
backwards, my eyelashes thick  
despite coatings of bacon grease,  
a baked in knowledge of grills  
& sandwiches that only a college kid has.  
flipping hot browns endlessly in june heat  
& a coleslaw haze, i thought of you  
full tasting like the front of house pickles  
i spread across rye & wheat,  
tall & calm-brained like my hands  
folding cubano pork into portions.  
i want to know you as i know my father's figure  
like how i know which scalds are stained black  
onto hotel pans & which burns are just cheese  
melted on. is there a way i can slice you  
just perfect, my greased knife through  
warm brie? heated over four grills,  
my shape not of my mother this time,  
i picture you: spatula, wooden handle  
molded to my gloved hands,  
hot with friction & tart with cleaning vinegar.  
i hate that i can only daydream what  
your order would be when i want to already know it  
& stack tacitly, like your grandmother could  
to know you is to fold the ham into  
your whorled fingertip pattern,  
to toast the bread to match your crisp & soft laughter,  
to teach my fingers to spread the leaf lettuce  
between your teeth nicely & wonder how it tastes.



Comfort Food  
*acrylic on canvas*  
Grace Statzer



Frenzy  
*mixed media*  
Annie Wilder

Reactions to Captivity  
Jimmy Hale

I. Northern Slimy Salamander, *Plethodon glutinosus*

Mottled little creature  
unmoving, in the corner  
of your invisible cage  
silently pressed against freedom.

Only the bob of your throat  
tells me you're still alive.

II. Red Salamander, *Pseudotriton ruber*

Twin flames trailblaze a way  
to nowhere. For all their wiggling  
of stubby legs, they cannot break the glass.

No one could fault their slipping,  
sliding, striving,  
on the dewy floor of their cell.

III. King Snake, *Lampropeltis getula*

Hiding beneath the mulch,  
you take what privacy you can;  
I watch the hook-rake dig you out.

Now knotted in my cupped hands,  
you dig into the darkest corner of my palms,  
a delicate, cold cord.

IV. Self, *Homo sapiens*

Which one of us is trembling?  
My efforts to hold you gently have  
let you wring about my wrists,  
cord to chain, bound in ophidian  
deceit.

Dribb

Krysten Meyer

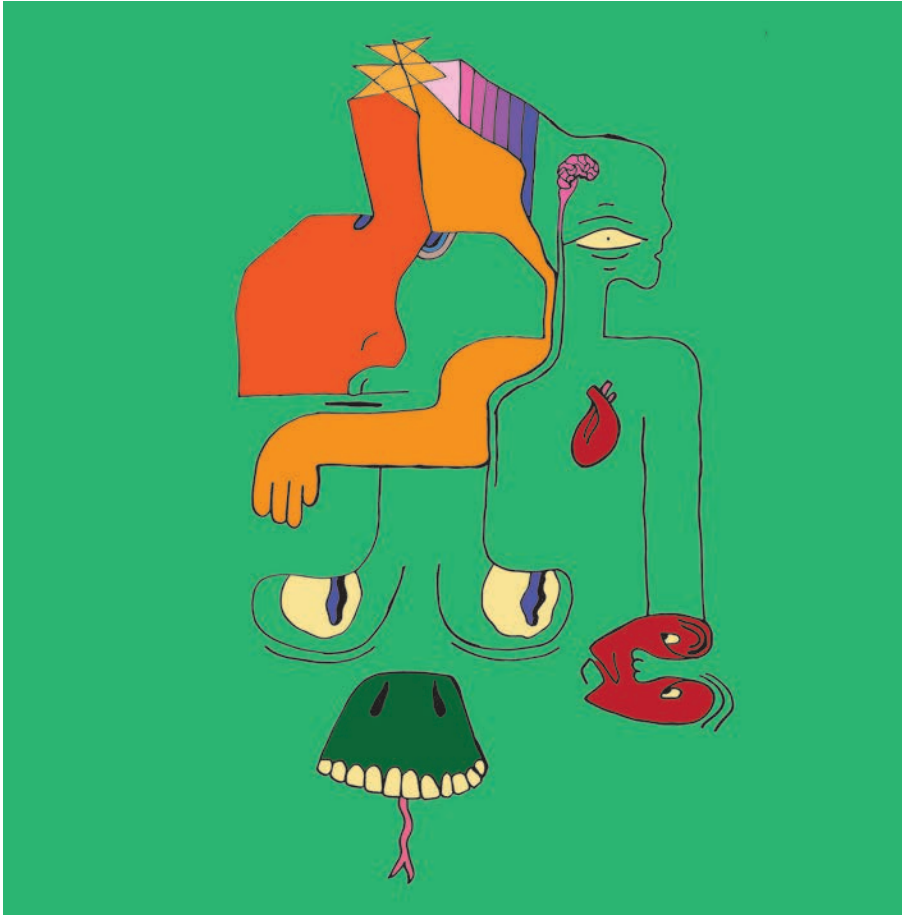
Froggy feet spuddle along, little Dribb wanders the rain-soaked trail. Wheezy breaths from his throat are swallowed by the rain. Yellow blocks of light seep from windows, neighborly figures darting through the warmth. Clammy skin soaks up the wet, a longing, damp handprint left on the door. Little Dribb sits under the torn velvet of a gentleman's hat, waiting for the deep pouring to cease. Faded tracks of past creatures muddle together in the water. Hedgehog prints, the slitherings of a newt all fade together, forgotten in the rain.

Little froglet

Alone under abandoned hats

It's cold outside





Limbic  
*graphic design*  
John David Walt

## Diary from the Recovery Room

### Tegan Merrick

Out of all the universal human experiences, physical pain is the only one that escapes language. It's too personal and deep inside you to be fully enunciated. For most people, pain is an unwelcome house guest, a small stone in their shoe, a spill that doesn't stain. For me, pain is cemented into my life, synonymous with my existence.

If my body were a house, pain would be the bathroom tile, the built-in bookshelves, the heavy marble countertops, the hardwood flooring.

2021 was a year of pain. The disk (or cartilage) between my jaw and skull slipped forward so my jaw hit my skull every time my mouth opened. It started summer of 2019, and I got surgery for it in early January of 2022. It felt like my head was on fire, flames curling over my face and ears, shutting out the world. There is white-hot liquid in my veins, ricocheting around my head like a lightning strike. My head was made of iron, so heavy that sometimes I couldn't lift it off my pillow or stand up.

If you fall down from the weight of the pain and cannot carry it, you must sit, or lie, and wait for the pain to dissipate. Even if it only dissipates enough that you feel like your body is your own again. If it is too heavy, and you cannot carry it, you float away. Pain takes your body and divorces it from your mind. Now you refer to your body as separate from yourself. It's the death of the small civilization that is you. The death of feeling at peace and like you're at home in your body.

Most people are freaked out by this. They feel immense pity or apologize for my overwhelming reality. They don't know how to react. Friends had sympathy but didn't know what to say. I'd accepted the state of my body, the surgery, and the days and hours and minutes of pain I'd experience before the surgery a long time ago, since before nobody but my mom and dad knew. It took time for me, and I saw the time it took other people. They would turn away to process my terrible truth, laugh to cover the discomfort. Whenever you tell anyone of some great personal suffering, you're left to sit there like an idiot while they process it. Wasting away in a dark passenger seat, staring at the streetlights while they grimace and shake their head.

Friends cannot connect the happy, smiling version of you with the one who can't get out of bed for three days and nearly passes out from the pain. Family isn't much better. My dad's face does this thing whenever I talk about it, his lips pout and his eyebrows slant inward, the lines on his forehead increasing. My pain affects them, I know, but it affects them like a loose thread on a shirt, a nuisance to snip once you find scissors. The pain my body gives me is more like a tidal wave. It leaves me gasping on the deck of a ship I used

to think was sturdy, water crashing down again and again.

That's part of what made it so hard to tell people. I knew they would sense the weight of it, the weight of dealing with something this hard at 18 and 19. Telling friends felt like confessing. A secret had slipped out. Announcing it to the world felt gratuitous. "Hello, I am in pain! Please understand that I am functioning on anywhere from 1-60 percent battery until I get expensive surgery!" I made a GoFundMe that explained the whole situation and shared it via email and Instagram with almost everyone I knew.

It felt so self-indulgent.

My former youth pastor said, "Really? But you're so cheerful all the time." I remember feeling so lonely at that moment. Sharing your pain with the world feels like showing them your diary. So vulnerable, the classic nightmare of going to school in your underwear. But it is much better to suffer with other people. Being able to say, "sorry, it's a really bad day and I can't make it" without any extra explanation is a small bit of respite that is so desperately needed when crying on your bedroom floor.

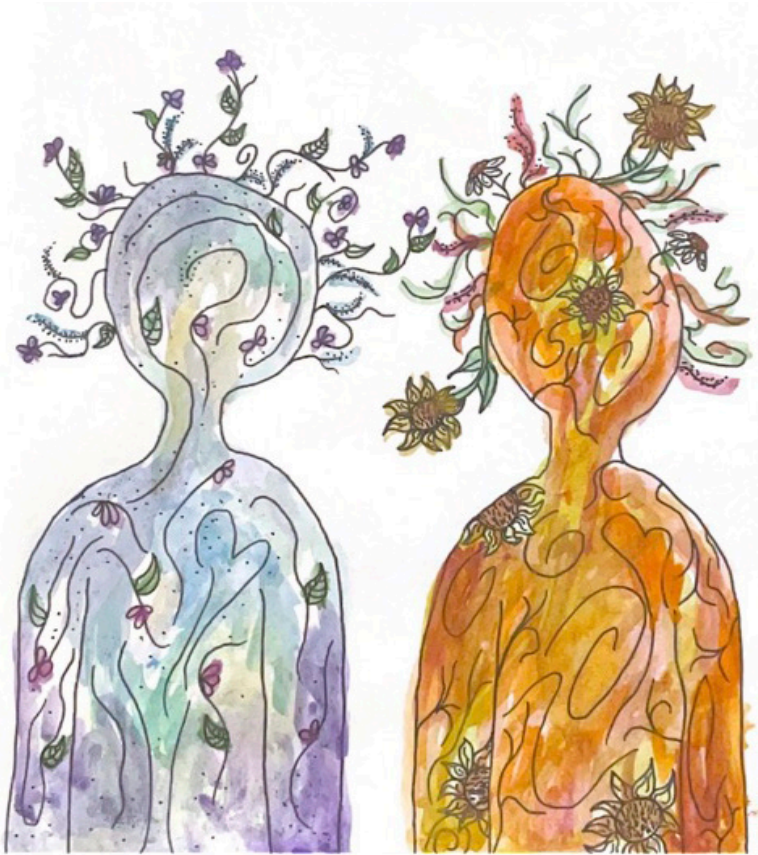
Sharing your pain is difficult because it is so isolating. There is no easy way to talk about it. Communicating how it feels can be done either with legalistic language or poetry. Neither fully works. Using poetry is dangerously close to romanticizing it, converting it into an easily slain fairytale dragon. Choruses of "you're so strong!" were heard from aunts and old friends and my dentist. They wanted to believe my pain made me a saint or an angel. There is the danger of suggesting there is a grand purpose to our pain. How quickly would they twist my pain in to a lesson or punishment?

Legalistic, medical terminology also falls short. Sitting in the sterile white room and telling the doctor where and how the pain lives in your body usually grants you a solution. Using the medical language is helpful, but it doesn't convey the heaviness of it. It can't communicate how hard it is to live, how weary you are. The way pain mentally weighs on you, day in and day out. Tearing your hope apart piece by piece until there are only shreds of it in your hands and heart.

The ability to turn my pain into poetry into pain held my hand while I was in the depths of it. A three-day headache so bad I can barely remember became material. It was like trying to remember a dream. Foggy and you're not sure what happened or how you made it through. But pain isn't always poetic. Pain isn't philosophical. Pain is not noble, or a punishment, or strength, or anything except a deformity that can only be seen on an MRI by a specialist.

My well of empathy has gotten deeper in the time that pain and I have been intimate enemies. The complaints of other chronically ill people land softly on my ears. Amanda tells me about recovering from the first sur-

gery she's had this year. My hand and heart extended toward her, I know she feels safe and understood. If you tell me you have a headache, I'll lend you my heating pad and make sure you get to bed early. Pain is a deep pool, and always an individual one. Although no language can ever truly encapsulate pain, attempting to put it into words lifts a small part of the burden.



Fruitful  
*pen and watercolor*  
Elizabeth Bevins

Camp Indicoso  
Bekah Deich

*Oak trees have ridges like old workman's hands.*

You showed me how to breathe with the forest  
as I wove our family's pinecone wreath.

*Sycamore trees are the ones with pale bark. Just remember they look  
kind of sick.*

We sang about Johnny Appleseed under vaulting summer skies.  
Our laughter like prayer over evening meals.

*White pines have five needles per bundle.*

I painted hollow gourds to fill them with birdsong  
while my sister wrapped a technicolor God's eye.

*Red pines only have three.*

Campfire flames burned squishy faces.  
We leaned in closer, stories and embers joining the stars.

Steadfast reaching trees,  
I remember all your names.  
Do you still know mine?

# Iris

## Ellie Eberhard

EXT. PARK - EVENING

A teenage boy in a purple shirt stands beside a teenage girl in a white dress. They face a colorful playground nearby a wooded area. Two younger children, boy in purple, girl in white, run across the mulch to the swings like younger versions of themselves. Their laughter echoes off the trees. The boy looks to the side and searches the girl's face, but her gaze is fixed on the kids. The bright colors from the playground swirl in her irises.

GIRL  
I guess this is it.  
BOY  
I guess it is.

The boy smiles nervously.

BOY (CONT'D)  
We've never said goodbye before.

GIRL  
No.

BOY  
I feel like I don't know how.

GIRL  
Then don't.

BOY  
But I-

A car drives by behind them. The boy flinches almost imperceptibly, but she notices. She half turns, a flash of orange added to her eyes as she tracks the car's progress.

She SIGHS softly.

GIRL  
We should move away from the road.

The boy shoots a brief glance behind him and laughs weakly.

BOY  
I thought you said that you couldn't read my mind.

GIRL  
I can't.

The girl walks into the edge of the woods as if she expects him to follow.

BOY  
(Under his breath)  
You also swore you would never leave.

He runs to catch up.

They pause in a almost cave like area of trees. A tangle of honeysuckle grows up in the underbrush.

GIRL  
I have to go.

Her eyes collect white, yellow, and green.

BOY

(A beat). I'll miss you.

GIRL

I know.

BOY

Maybe... I mean, what if... couldn't you... Stay?

She shakes her head.

GIRL

No. There's nothing for me here.

His face falls.

BOY

What about me?

She looks to the sky. Her eyes fill with blue.

GIRL

I don't belong here.

She reaches a hand out and he grabs it, her slender delicate fingers clasped between his callused palms.

BOY

Will I see you again?

He stares at her intently.

GIRL

I think you know.

Her eyes flick down to the ground and gather brown. He tugs at her hand desperately.

BOY

Wait, I-

She pulls away.

GIRL

I'm sorry.

She takes a step backwards and the colors leach out of their surroundings towards her silhouetted figure. The scene around them becomes muted and muddy as she grows more vibrant.

BOY

(Whispered) Look at me. Please.

She raises her head and locks eyes with him. Her eyes are deeply, completely purple.

The boy blinks his eyes against the intensifying colors.

The bright lights fade.

He opens his eyes to see the clearing returned to normal.

On the ground where the girl was standing lays a single purple iris.

The boy, mournful, walks forward slowly. He picks up the flower and cradles it against his chest.

FADE TO BLACK.

Two Cardinals  
Sam Alexander

It's you and I  
Sitting on a groaning couch  
With its guts frazzling out  
As we watch anime,

It's you and I  
Cutting off our noses  
To avoid any compromise  
Since we learned to be territorial,

It's you and I  
Liking the same local cajun  
And thinking it a delicacy  
Put in styrofoam boxes t  
That makes me wonder  
Who am I without your input?

Was I, an island  
of misfit fraternal artifacts,  
Born to live in your wake?  
Would I still be your shadow  
if we had more capital,  
And do I disown the pieces  
That I inherited from you?



Draw it out of me with an inhale,  
Rissa Green

I can nearly taste the rose petal  
suggestion of nightfall in the sky. Nearly. Nearly.

I pause here.

The white noise takes a breath  
with me, with me, I'd  
take you with me  
if I could.

I only have so many pictures left, but  
I'm taking on memories like water.  
Here: a flash of sunlight.

Here: my sister's hands.

Here: fresh mint pressed to my  
face as I breathe, & breathe, & breathe,  
and  
we can only follow each other so far  
in this direction.

Soon the wind will change  
its course.

(If you ask me again I'll gladly tell you,  
but to listen and to relive are  
two very different things.)

(I can point out all the seagulls in the sky,  
but I cannot give you wings.)

things that go bump in the night

Alex Nicholson

It didn't take much to figure out where Elijah lived. As the manager of the esteemed Waffle House establishment, he had a habit of thinking he was all-powerful—hence how he'd kept Vlad past his shift until the sun rose and made him unable to leave. As a result of his egomania, he left his personal information all over the back rooms. *Jerk.*

On the bright side, though, the situation had possibly made Vlad a new friend—he wouldn't have met Matthew if he hadn't been forced to hide in the freezer during the day for a coworker to discover.

He'd never met a normal person who'd been that invested in both his wellbeing and the wrongs someone else had committed against him. It was always non-committal shrugs and “*well, maybe if you hadn't said you're a vampire, things would have turned out differently.*” Matthew, on the other hand, seemed not to *care* about the whole vampirism thing—either that, or he *did* care, just not in a pitying way, like most everyone else. Vlad wasn't sure which one he preferred.

“So,” Matthew said, breaking the awkward silence that had lingered since they'd left, “how long have you been a vampire?” Not even a second later, his eyes widened as he coughed and tripped over the next few words he tried to force out. “I-I mean—what I meant to say was...uh—”

Vlad couldn't help it. He *laughed*. He actually had to stop walking for a second to put his hands on his knees so he could catch his breath. He could hear Matthew chuckling nervously above him, as if he wasn't sure whether to run away or to wait and hear the answer to his question.

Vlad decided to enable the latter, once he could breathe properly again. “Don't worry—not very long.”

The oldest vampires were the most powerful...and also the most incapable of controlling their bloodlust. There were very few of them remaining anymore, since the more the normal world advanced, the more capable it became of defending itself. Vlad, on the other hand, had been turned when he was twenty-one years old, and barely knew the difference between myth and reality.

He straightened and racked his brain for a moment. “Actually, probably for about two years now.” It was strange to think about how he would age so much more slowly than the people he knew. Vampires still aged, of course, just at a fraction of the rate of a normal human; to most folk, they probably *did* seem immortal. “So, no, I won't go berserk and try

to feed on you, or anything crazy like that.”

Matthew’s eyebrows must have been trying to touch, the way they furrowed on his face. “That wasn’t—no! I wasn’t worried about that. I just wanted to get to know you a little.”

“Oh.”

If Vlad tripped a little bit when he heard that part...well, he tried to tell himself it was because of the cracks in the sidewalk.

Matthew took it in stride; having recovered from his momentary awkwardness, he sidled back up to Vlad. “Got any plans? Other than egging Elijah’s house, of course.”

“Like...*Plans*, or just plans? Because I don’t really know what else to do with these.” The egg carton held in Vlad’s hands made a small jostling noise as he gave it a light shake.

“No, I mean, like...okay—” The other boy took a breath. “—I want to be a therapist someday. Hopefully. It’s what I’m going to school for. What about you?”

Ah. The whole “*what do you want to do with your extremely long, mostly undead life?*” question.

“Art,” Vlad said, hugging the carton of eggs closer to his chest as they walked. “I want to paint things. To...*say* things with it, about being a vampire. I...don’t know if that makes any sense. I haven’t really figured it out yet.”

Matthew just smiled and nodded at him. “I think it makes perfect sense.”

They passed the Walmart not long after that, a glowing beacon of capitalism in the night. Vlad couldn’t help the *tsk* that escaped from his mouth at the sight of it.

“What?” Matthew asked, bumping his shoulder into Vlad’s.

“It’s...stupid.”

“No, what is it?”

“Are you sure? It’s—”

“Dude. I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t want to know.”

Vlad ducked his head a little bit at that, then said, “It’s...Walmart is one of the stores I can’t really get into most of the time.” Matthew cocked an eyebrow. “You know how vampires don’t show up in mirrors?” A confused nod. “Yeah, we don’t really show up on motion sensors, either.”

It took a moment—filled with Matthew looking between Vlad and the automatic doors of the Walmart now behind them—before he seemed to get it. “*Ohhhhh!*”

Then he frowned. It was...a strange sort of assuring to see him so worked up over it. “Wait, they don’t have normal doors that you can use?”

“Some do. Some don’t. It really depends. The ones in this town... not really. If I want to go grocery shopping, I have to sneak in behind some normal people. It makes me look like a creep.” *As if people need more reasons to think that about me.*

Matthew’s scowl deepened as he crossed his arms. Vlad blinked at the sight—the motion sensor thing had become such a normal factor of his life that he had almost forgotten that he shouldn’t have to deal with it. Matthew was like...a reminder of common sense. Or maybe Vlad’s worth as a person. He wasn’t sure which one it was yet.

But the words that came out of Matthew’s mouth next weren’t angry, or even annoyed. Instead, he fiddled with the blue denim of his shirt, the deep lines in his face softening as his fingers ran over the stitches in the seams.

“I...” he started, then brought up his other hand to play with the hair at the nape of his neck. He was a strange sight—nervous and fidgety when he’d been agitated just a half-second before. Vlad thought he might get whiplash trying to keep up.

“I want to be a therapist for...uh, well. I want to...” Vlad elbowed him lightly and watched the anxiety fog in the air with his breath. “I want to help supernatural people. Through therapy, I mean. I’ve looked at the statistics, and there are just...so many supernatural people who need help just because of how people treat them, let alone the other normal human issues that they face, and...why are you looking at me like that?”

Vlad blinked. Without his permission, his face had shifted into something softer—something with a heartbeat tripping over itself, with thrumming veins, with a genuine smile. By the time he’d realized it, however, Matthew had started his nervous rambling again.

“Is that weird? Am I overstepping? Crap, I’m so sorry—”

“Matthew.” Vlad stopped walking, and Matthew took another step before he realized that Vlad wasn’t following, then turned to look at him with wide brown eyes. In the dark, it was almost too easy to mistake him for a bird quivering on a branch, ready to make an escape at any moment.

Matthew wasn’t afraid of Vlad—he was afraid of saying something stupid or offensive. He was trying, when most people would look at Vlad and only see a pair of fangs

Vlad’s ensuing grin split his face in half. “You don’t have to be

one of us to fight for us,” he told him. “Honestly, the fact that you’re not supernatural is helpful too. You can go places we can’t and hold the door open.”

Matthew stayed silent for a long moment. Then, with a voice of uncertainty, “Kinda like Walmart?”

“*Exactly* like Walmart!”

Their laughter exploded down the street. Vlad was aware of how absurd this looked—a vampire and a human, dressed in Waffle House uniforms and carrying eggs, laughing like there was no tomorrow.

There was an understanding in the air, despite it all. Despite the fact that people like Elijah would say Vlad was dangerous just because he was a vampire, Matthew trusted him not to be all the worst things people had ever thought of him. There was a wide gap between horrible expectation and wonderful reality; in that chasm, Vlad found a beginning.

And he knew—he *knew*—that the mere instance of it was the bare minimum of how he deserved to be treated, but Matthew turned it into something more, something *human*. There was more in the way he playfully bumped into Vlad as he walked, in the way the scar beneath his lip bent under the weight of his smile, in the echo of their laughter down the empty streets.

The moon rose higher. In the coldness of night, Vlad felt warmth.

---

Elijah never did find out who egged his house, but the combination of yolks dripping from his window and a small egg, unblemished except for the words “SUCK IT!” in pristine handwriting, was enough of an indication.



Why  
*acrylic paint, texturizing  
materials, book page  
cutouts on canvas*

Dani Grace

ribs

## Lily Kesten

one: the heart pumps in complete darkness.

two: the old mill smells like death tonight.

these two thoughts run parallel in my mind.

behind me, the 8'clock train screams hawk-like,

i notice that it's two minutes early.

night walks on the railroad always

run the risk of muttering cheap prayers

over possum carcasses, and tonight is

no exception. my mind bends towards you

like the metal around main street,

and the way is dark. the ghosts are here,

hell is empty, the hawks have gone to bed.

where is the moon tonight? it isn't enough

to say that it is new, and therefore the sky is black.

no woman is a light unto herself,

and like rebecca says, blue is never just blue.

but back to tonight. somewhere,

a stomach is opened, i smell the orange rot.

headlights perform an autopsy,

picking out the last meal and shreds of artery.

my heart tears itself at the thought of this being your car

and there is light inside my ventricles

but blood was not created to be seen.

the soul of the rose  
Alex Nicholson

in the garden, in the villa,  
where the walls are not enough  
to hide the flame in the crown  
of your skull,  
where the vines and thin branches  
curl over each other, over the divide,  
where we tend to the bees  
and the fruit of their efforts,  
where you press the flesh of your hand  
into the stone and feel the  
bite in your fingers,  
where you are clothed more beautifully  
than anything the toil of my hands  
could produce—  
it is here that you ghost  
the petals of a rose  
over the petals of your lips  
and i have never,  
in all my days of greenery,  
wished to blossom  
more than in  
this moment.

*(based on "The Soul of the Rose" painting by John William Waterhouse)*



The heartbreak's in the details  
Grace Clark

The second time I passed out my mother said my limbs  
looked like chalk lines on the kitchen floor.  
I do not know how to explain the way that this hurts except that  
it is poetry in its cruelest form.

The first time I came home after my friends left,  
the wooden sign holding the name of our home was hanging on  
by one remaining chain,  
And I couldn't help but say that has to be a metaphor for something.

One of the first lines of my first poems:  
*"Imaginary" fears become your next news story.*  
—three months later we found his mugshot

Last week a poet told me I am too small to carry the weight of the world.

My brain takes what I wanted to be and throws it back at me  
like an insult from someone once trusted  
and tells me you can never turn this off, it will only  
rattle around inside you,  
bruising wherever it lands, and  
you will try to say it but you cannot and you will finally write a poem and  
it will not be enough.



Windows  
*photography*  
Caitlin Donner

Inheritance  
Mark Wood

I watch two strangers greet each other,  
the one stands a head above, and kisses the top of her head.  
My scalp, though, is exposed, raw, kissed only by the sun.  
Note how my hair is a threadbare hat. It was my grandpa's,  
passed over my mom, passed it down to me; now it's ours  
and hours pass long. There are many long days ahead:  
the sky gets dark dark darker  
dark sky, darker eyes dusk-colored  
like my mom's—lagoon library green.  
As I drown in libraries and black lakes,  
I remember how my grandpa nicknamed me Rebel.  
Would to God I had learned to swim!  
God to wood: you did—before you could ever stand,  
you floated.

AMPERSAND  
Madison Anderson

last year's summertime apartment emanated of two dews:  
ceiling mildew mold and evening barred-owl air-dew.  
mornings raised the bedroom blinds  
to see if the irreparable window cracked open cars sounding of redeye jet  
planes during the night  
seasonal airport insomnia.

the microwave whirred next to the living room sofa  
and a scallion plant grew across the smallest flatscreen television I have ever  
seen,  
pointing to a kitchen so small, the refrigerator door could not fully open and  
wielded two knives that would not cut summer's stick.  
In other words, I was a surefire twenty-something.  
In other words, *bliss*.

I brewed coffee for dawn's company and  
routinely walked the neighborhood once the condensation  
dried into the door frame,  
lukewarm creamer swirling in the bottom of my mug  
taken as emergency caffeine, even on days that I did nothing.

&

in all cases, I shooed time away like a pesky garden rabbit  
simultaneously unaccepting of the fact  
that with each gesture, I was the creature  
stripping cherry tomatoes in vegetative state.

&

a young boy apart of a high-school community service team  
painted the apartment door funeral black on my lunch break as I fried sulfuric  
eggs  
my mind gnawed at the cabinet's wood grain  
with a half-melted spatula in hand.  
summer's sigh billowed through the open door with a smell of fresh paint  
as he small talked— "how's your day ma'am?"

I am not *ma'am*---

women are assigned *ma'am* through TSA metal detectors  
or in the niceties of lawyers in divorce court  
or to which level they are taking the elevator during menopause

I am not *ma'am*--

with which comes planned pregnancies, *the good old days*,  
and the cubicle that I must return to in twenty minutes.

anyways, I asked him about school, his summer plans,  
what he wanted to do when he grew up to *an age still younger than me*  
he seemed content, painting the open door from the threshold  
“I’d like to go to college for some sort of science.”  
vague and flat

like how the cholesterol simmers in my yellow-yolk skillet  
*Does he know, no matter what he chooses,*  
*he will question it for the rest of his life?*

I flipped my unseasoned sulfur-egg patty  
tongue-swished the morning’s spoiled coffee cream,  
waiting for the boy to reach his last year’s summertime apartment.

Today  
Levi Smith

love is a decision,  
and the-uh  
the correct choice  
is uh  
No.



Colorful Bride  
*colored pencil on paper*  
Rose Branan

Withdraw  
Andrew Stephens

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

EMILY strolls down the hallway, bags of groceries in both hands. She hums along to the upbeat music in her earbuds.

She fumbles with her keys, barely getting it into the lock.

She tumbles through the door into her apartment.

INT. EMILY'S APT. - DAY

Emily regains her footing and looks around. Her apartment is small but cozy, with multiple houseplants and comfy furniture. It's clean but lived in. She smiles.

Emily dumps her groceries on the counter. There are faint sirens and distant traffic.

She pauses to inspect her houseplant.

EMILY  
Looking good today, Bert.

She snags the TV remote off the counter and spins to the TV.

Emily dances along to the song in her earbuds and switches to the news. The TV shows a news story about a rescued puppy.

She moves to sit down, but there's two sharp knocks at the door.

Emily sighs and tosses the remote on her cushy armchair, takes out her earbuds, and heads to



the door.

She opens the door wide and sees an expansive green forest.

Shocked, she slams the door shut.

Emily tentatively opens the door to reveal the same nature scene.

She glances back at her apartment, then steps through.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Emily looks around. Birds sing, a brook babbles in the background.

She shakes her head as if to wake herself, and heads back through the doorway into the apartment.

INT. EMILY'S APT. - EVENING

Emily looks around the apartment unnerved. It's neglected and messy. The overhead light is extra bright. Her previously healthy plant is wilted and dry. She squints against the harsh blue light of the TV as it blares a news story about the latest addiction sweeping the country. Sirens and traffic sound like they are right outside. With each point of distraction Emily becomes more and more panicky.

Her phone rings. She ignores it.

She scrolls through a multitude of voice mails from Sarah Wilson. She presses the most recent one.

SARAH (V.O.)

Emily, I've been calling for hours.

Please pick up. I'm worried.

Emily, fully upset, sprints from the room into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Emily slams the door behind her and sprints away into the woods.

She looks behind her into the forest and runs straight into the door.

Groaning, she pushes herself up from the ground and gazes up at the door.

Emily stands up, dusts herself off and purposely walks around the door further into the woods.

The door is in front of her once again. The muffled voice of Sarah emanates from the door.

SARAH (V.O.)

Emily? Are you in there? No one has seen you for days!

Emily, horrified at the door walks around it.

It happens again.

SARAH (V.O.)

Stop pushing me away! Just answer the door!

Emily, runs around the door, angry.

She walks around it to reveal an abandoned warehouse.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Emily pushes her way inside. The door, silent, stands in the middle of the warehouse floor. She walks up to it.

The door creaks open slightly.

Emily pushes it shut. She lets go, and it immediately opens. She pushes it shut more forcefully. It opens again.

She runs and grabs an abandoned chair, and shoves it under the handle.

The chair moves as the door pushes it open slightly.

INT. WAREHOUSE - 20 MINUTES LATER

Emily dumps a final piece on top of a large pile of furniture in front of the door.

It holds for a beat. Emily sighs in relief.

The door blasts open, throwing the furniture to the side, and the overlapping sounds of the city and the voice of Sarah come through.

SARAH (V.O.)  
Come Back!

EMILY  
(shouting)  
NO!!

It slams shut. Her shout echoes off the walls and it slowly fades. Silence.

Emily raises her arms in celebration and does a victory dance.

A lock clicks into place.

MONTAGE OF EMILY EXPLORING THE SPACE

Emily looks at the wall and pulls on ivy.

She kicks some rocks around.

She lies on the ground, bored.

END MONTAGE

Emily gets up and warily approaches the door,  
and reaches out for the handle.

She pulls on the handle, it doesn't budge.

She yanks on it and then again. She pulls faster  
and faster. Tears gather in her eyes.

She lets go of the handle and attacks the door.

She lets loose a flurry of blows on the door.

Emily steps back and turns to face the door.

EMILY

(CONT'D)

(Through tears and rage)

Let me go home!

Once again, the only reply is echoes.

She listens to the echoes and crumples to the  
ground in tears. The keys in her pocket jangle.

Emily pauses and pulls out her keys.

She wipes away tears as she approaches the door.  
Her door.

Her hand shakes slightly as she pushes the key

into the lock.

The key clicks into place.

Emily takes a deep breath and turns the key.

CUT TO:

INT. EMILY'S APT. - GOLDEN HOUR

Emily finishes putting groceries into the cabinet, then turns to the TV that is quietly playing.

She turns it off; all is quiet.

Emily basks in the warm light and waters her healthy plant.

She sets the watering can down and pulls out her phone.

EMILY

Hey, Sarah...

FADE TO BLACK.



Buskin Page 5  
*ink on paper*  
Emelia Conley & Joy Hibshman

When I First Called You “Home”  
Emily Ellis

At sixty-three days, you counted  
down the distance between us  
until miles turned to inches  
& hours became forgotten  
goodbyes, & my hand discovered yours  
curled by my side. *Love is patient,*  
*love is kind,* & your patient hands  
cut carrots & peel potatoes  
while I watch you work through half-  
open eyes. Your eyelashes quiver  
when you say grace & I pray  
God forgives me for keeping my eyes  
open to watch you & the slur  
of your *amen*. You put too much cilantro  
in the rice but it tastes like summer  
& Christmas all at once & my heart  
& stomach have never been fuller.  
We small talk while Taylor sings,  
*all we are is skin and bone,*  
but you're more heart & soul  
& home, & I tell you this  
as you fall asleep closer to me  
than you were sixty-three days ago.  
I remember when Zoom was our summer  
savior, & all I wanted was to touch your face.

# Gravity and Several Thousand Miles of Earth

## Hailey Small

### I.

Between you and me, something  
buzzes. This is an old weight:  
gravity twists magma upon itself.  
The two-thousand-mile molten middle.  
Little solar system spins  
the core.

### II.

My neck cranes to Sainte-Chapelle ceiling,  
star sparked and stone arched.  
Afternoon light shades jewel  
on the fleur-de-lis  
and my sneakers.

From here,  
I hear your first morning breath,  
watch six-hour late sunrise  
over hills I saw last autumn.

Sub-Atlantic wires tug  
my lips to your jaw  
in my brain. I remember  
your thick column of spine,  
the arch between your shoulder blades,  
the magnet pull  
between us.

My stomach twists  
against axis stretch.

### III.

Seven centuries ago,  
stoneworkers stacked limestone  
on scaffolding.  
Above them,  
they saw the sun revolve  
around a still,  
metamorphic, earth.

My phone buzzes with you. I wonder  
how we could ever believe  
in an earth that doesn't spin.





Ripple Effect  
*multimedia collage*  
Meggan Absher

## What Lies Below

Jamie Hampton

“...Well sir, it wasn’t until I was alone that I started hearing the whispers. At first I figured it was just the wind moving through one of them fissures in the rock. That sort of thing is pretty normal when you were as far down as we were. You gotta understand, I’ve been caving since my folks could fit me in a pair of jeans and a headlamp. Family tradition you know. My dad, brothers, and I were no better than those survival freaks you would watch on television, in and out of caves like fish and water. We’ve been doing this sort of thing for as long as I can rightly remember. Micah—that’s my dad—always told me that crawling around underground ran in the Jameson bloodline. He would laugh after he said it too, just like that. He had a mighty funny way of talking you understand, real slow-like...”

*Mr. Jameson takes a few seconds to regain his composure. He looks like he is blinking back tears. After a moment he lets out a sigh and leans forward, continuing the story.*

“I reckon he was right. Something about inching around on your hands and knees with only the light of a headlamp always felt like home to me. That probably sounds pretty crazy to you, but to our family, it was everything. Like I was saying it wasn’t until I was alone that I heard them whispers. In my fifteen years of caving I ain’t never heard nothing like it. Dad and my brother Sammy were crawling in front. I don’t rightly remember how it happened, but I fell behind a ways. Maybe I was catching my breath, or fixing a knot in my shoe. Well, however it happened, it sure happened quick and before I knew it, I couldn’t see or hear them no more. That’s when the whispering started. I was in what we called a turnaround room—that’s sort of a corkscrew tunnel—and I could hear whispers coming from somewhere below me. I thought it had to be Dad and Sammy so I gave a little shout. What did I get back? Pin-drop silence. Eerie enough to put the fear of God in me. I sat a minute wondering what to do, but I admit I was getting a little paranoid so I set out right quick to hunt ‘em down. Like I said these voices weren’t no better than a whisper, so tracking ‘em through two miles of cave was a nightmare. But hey, you’re looking at a pro so I managed alright in the end.”

*Mr. Jameson takes a sip of water with a shaking hand. A long pause passes before he continues.*

“I made it down that turnaround and out into a big old space. You know the type; low, low ceiling. Crawl-on-your-belly low. Stretched out wide in every direction as far as my little headlamp could show, but from the feel of the air I reckon it went quite a ways past that. Hairs were standing up on my neck. I ain’t typically religious, but you best believe I was praying when those whispers started again. It sounded like they were speaking in some foreign language. Italian maybe, or some kind of Latin. They were loud too, like someone was pressing their mouth against your ear. It was downright dreadful, let me tell you.

“After a while the space between the ceiling and floor was too small to even shimmy through. I had to leave my backpack behind just to fit, but I was desperate enough and stupid enough to keep going. Every once in a while I would call out for either Dad or Sammy, figuring they couldn’t have gotten this far on their own, but I never heard anything back. That crawl might have been hours or it might have been days. Just when I was ready to give up, I found it. Lying in the dark. A wristwatch, busted all to hell. Same one I had given Dad last christmas. That scared me worse than the whispers, and I forced myself to keep going. By the end my legs and arms ached something awful, and my throat was so full of dust and dry air, I could barely call out no more. Then... it finally opened and I could see what was on the other side.”

*There is a noticeably longer pause. Mr. Jameson stares at the floor for a long time, lost in thought. He continues at last, but refuses to make eye contact.*

“Mister, have you ever seen something you just can’t describe? Have you ever been in one of them grand European cathedrals with those ancient paintings... or been staring up at the size of a big old sequoia tree and just... been at a loss for words? You gotta understand, what I saw down there isn’t easy to explain. To be frank, I... I *can’t* explain it. It was... well it felt like something bigger... something Biblical.”

*Mr. Jameson raises his eyes from the floor and there is a wild light in them. He seems full of some fear or excitement.*

“That floor dropped off into a chasm. A chasm so far down that trying to see into it with the light from my little headlamp was like trying to cut through stone with a pocket-knife. When you’ve

been caving as long as I have sir, you get used to sort of *feeling* how big a space is. Sort of sensing it, if you follow. When I tell you that cavern felt big, I mean it felt like I was outside. Like there was no ceiling or floor. Like I had come out on a cliff edge on the side of a mountain, but I knew full well I was still four hundred feet below ground. And what I saw... What I saw in that chasm... It was like... like towers rising out of the dark. Big old stalagmites, made of pure black stone. Real shiny too. That was when I heard where the whispers were coming from. There... somewhere *far* below me: far, far below me, something... something e-nor-mous...was moving. It looked like the dark... sir it *had* to have been a trick of the light, but somewhere down there... something was wrapped around them towers. It... it *saw* me. I don't know how but I knew it sure as I know you're lookin at me right now. And it kept whispering. It whispered in my ear even while I ran. It kept whispering as I crawled up into that turnaround room. It didn't stop whispering until I had scampered my way right back up to the surface. Let me tell you, it only stopped whispering once I saw the sun and the trees and those sturdy old mountains and Sammy. It wasn't until we were good and far and I had stopped shivering so bad that he told me. He had lost Dad. We had lost Dad. Somewhere down there, my old man was still crawling around in that cave with that whispering... *thing*."

*Mr. Jameson sits back and sighs again.*

"I reckon I won't never set foot in another cave for the rest of my life, sir, and that's a promise I intend to keep. Maybe caving does run in our blood. Maybe it's a curse. Maybe I'll never see my old man again. I say whatever's down there had better stay down there. I say you'd better seal off that cave and keep people as far away as you can. I say some things are better left in the dark."

*(End Interview)*

Interview conducted by:  
US Deputy Ranger Malcolm Bern  
Missing Person's Report: *Micah Jameson*  
Yosemite National Park Services



"Lost in the Sound of Colors"  
*photography*  
Canaan Yan

Radio

Levi Smith

Transmitter: signals fire into the ether,  
scrape the heavens, search for a

Satellite: to know and make known.  
the great communicator, showers down on

Antennae: stories out of the darkness,  
sound and color static.

Listen

## Icarian Sea

A sea within the Aegean, where Icarus fell  
during his flight from Crete

Jimmy Hale

Hyperion must have hated you, with your starry-eyed bluster;  
you sought to join him in the sky,  
but were thrown into a wine-dark grave.

But now the sea itself shines brightly with your wounded light,  
with those embers you managed to steal  
when they struck your heart and seared your skin.

Those wretched high powers,  
who condemned you to water,  
could not extinguish your joy.

Those who bound the Fire-Bringer,  
who cast the Son of the Shining Charioteer from his mount,  
cannot stand the sight of your freedom.

But I swear by Daedalus' wings that, when you flew,  
I saw a second path to heaven.



Frozen in Light  
*photography*  
Canaan Yan



We are gentle, break us softly.

(In which I try to explain childhood before  
adulthood covers my eyes)

Grace Clark

We are only new things;

Unfamiliar fingertips prick on angry red thorns.

Young ears pick up everything we shouldn't hear,

Whispers burrowing into brains, sailing with the neurons.

Forgive us, we are only young.

It will take so much to reshape this.

Pain is a not-yet thing so why does it already hurt,

why are elementary shoulders so heavy?

We are still small, unaccustomed to word-twisting worlds.

Accusations we are not tall enough to reach serve as reminders  
that this place is not built for us.

This world screams a warning:

Enjoy it while it lasts, kid.



Eye Grouping Blue  
*ceramic*  
Kate Hull

Emily Ellis

The First Mistake

was taking the peanut butter cookies your mom made for me. I cradled them in the palm of my hand & tried not to brush crumbs onto the floor of the Corolla. The second mistake was not listening to music on the drive home, so instead I watched the curve of your left hand on the steering wheel & your right hand drumming on your thigh. The roads were quiet at 2am but the streetlamps were still on, blinking in & out of vision like fireflies as we drove by. When we reached the quiet of my house & I stood on the kitchen step at eye level with you, the third mistake

was that I finally determined that your eyes are both brown + green (but not hazel), + the scar over your left eyebrow was my favorite part of you. In this life, I told you that I loved you before you let the kitchen door close behind you, + I watched the flash of your headlights as you pulled away. In this life, I ate the peanut butter cookies, + they tasted like home.

After Eve Ewing, [a re-telling]

Mark Wood

Longer Nights,

that sound like summer and smell like fall,  
the hum of cicadas and the crick in my neck.  
the late-blooming lilies flower, while the rest  
have long since languished into grass.

i am living in the late afternoon of my being;  
the empty, sad boredom of its air settles on me  
like a weighted blanket,  
trapping my limbs and crushing my lungs.

it's times like these  
i am amazed that such humid air,  
full to the brim of water,  
can leave the cavern in my sternum feeling so empty,  
longing for someone to fill it.

for the girl told she could do anything  
Kaitlyn McCracken

I grew up with constellation cereal

*save the stars for last*  
they said  
*they taste better at the end*

I grew up with galaxy milk  
slurped from the bottom of the bowl  
and stardust residue  
coated tongue  
from siphoning liquid light to my mouth  
to my throat,  
to my stomach churning  
in anticipation for future days and future nights  
and finally savoring those stars I'd been told so much about.

constellation cereal  
and coffee ten years too soon  
vocabulary quizzes lined with  
gold-sticker stars  
and running so early  
I'm not sure I ever learned how to walk.

stuttering lungs  
and two left feet  
tripping over shoelaces  
still untied two decades later.

galaxy milk and constellation cereal  
and stars that never even touched the spoon  
and now I think those sticker-stars are the only ones I'll ever get.



Shading Eyes Lady  
*ink on paper*  
Rose Branan



Heirlooms  
*graphic design*  
Kaitlyn McCracken

Routine  
Hailey Small

The wood fence rots  
above the swing set.  
In the grain, moss webs draw  
like shag carpet,  
growing up.

It is December. The dogwood  
is gray empty. In the kitchen,  
wind laps through cracks  
between sliding glass back door  
and frame, cracking my knuckle-  
dry skin. Whistle in each creak  
of swing chain.

Outside, my daughter's skinny legs  
—her father's skinny legs—  
pump up and down and back.  
Flight tethered. She has my fire hair,  
feathered in knotted layers.  
Around her, shoulder-length wings  
tickle her nose.

I wonder if I should gather her shoes.  
If winter's late afternoon  
seeps between bare toes.

Two blue sneakers  
the length of my palm  
splayed on the staircase.

I smell rosemary and roast potatoes  
and chicken burn  
on the stovetop.



# Contributors

**Meggen Absher** is a freshman Art Education major at Asbury. She enjoys exploring different mediums and her art is often inspired by nature. She also thrives under a tight deadline. In fact, this bio was written on a hiking trail minutes before it was due.

**Sam Alexander** is a Louisville native, freshman, and the youngest of four. They say he's an English Education major, but he could be going to law school with how often he plays Devil's advocate. If not sleeping, you might find him in the library, and he might or might not be reading C.S. Lewis.

**Madison Anderson** is a senior studying creative writing and journalism while working in the writing sphere as a freelance publicist, editor, and blogger. She loves the Charlie Brown films, thrifting "ugly" clothes (as her mom says), and doing newspaper crossword puzzles.

**Elizabeth Bevins** is a current freshman at Asbury, is majoring in Pre-Art Therapy, and has lived in Wilmore, KY for eight years. She loves the ocean, enjoys going on walks, spending time in the sun, being with her family, and hanging out with dogs!

**Rose Branan** is from Wilmore, KY, and is a Pre-Art Therapy Major. She enjoys going for walks, watching her favorite Si-Fi shows, and drinking tea. This is her second publication in *The Asbury Review*.

**Grace Clark** is a sophomore creative writing major who does not have time to explain where she is from. She likes poetry, her friends, and her friends' poetry. You can find her in hidden corners of the library, in the depths of Kresge or the Stuce, and at your mom's house.

**Emelia Conley** is an Ignited Sophomore studying Communications with a Minor in Theatre (~ drama dahl~) and hails from the lively mountain town of Asheville, NC. She loves stories and people, especially when the people she loves get to enjoy one of her stories. She is generally confused but is doing her best, she likes plants and cute things, and she absolutely loves cream-cheese bread and cats.

**Bekah Deich**, of the Surrendered class, is an Elementary Education major from New Albany, Indiana. She enjoys sharing her love of reading and writing with young students, drinking tea with honey, and watching scary movies with her eyes covered. She also genuinely loves talking to people about their day.

**Caitlin Donner** is from Hinckley, Ohio. She is an art & design major, with a photography emphasis, and is part of the surrendered class of 2023. She has recently become a swimmer (retired swimmer), and enjoys spending time outside taking photos.

**Ellie Eberhard** is a sophomore English and Media Comm double major and thus spends all of her free time reading and working on projects. She grew up in Indiana and then moved to Ohio but has never lived far from a cornfield or cows. She enjoys drinking lavender lattes despite the fact that she's allergic to coffee (it just makes her nose stuffy it won't kill her).

**Emily Ellis** is a junior Creative Writing and Sociology double major with a Christian Ministries minor, a Wisconsinite with a dairy intolerance, and a big fan of 80s pop culture. Her top artists on Spotify are Taylor Swift, Skillet, Queen, Bread, and Luke Combs, which should tell you enough about her personality. This is her third publication in the *Review*, her second year on staff, and her first time publicly admitting that she has an odd obsession with Jeopardy.

**Dani Grace** (he/they) is a senior Worship Arts major and double minor in Music and Art, and he is a connoisseur of Harry Styles' music and a lover of most things rainbow, yellow, and glitter. Constantly mesmerized and inspired by nature, sunny rainy days are their absolute favorite. You can check out more of his artwork on his website: [danigrace7.wixsite.com/dani-grace!](http://danigrace7.wixsite.com/dani-grace!)

**Rissa Green** is a Creative Writing and Art double major in her freshmen year. As her majors suggest, her life is consumed by the arts in nearly all forms, including but not limited to, playing the cello, writing poetry at any given moment, and painting as often as time allows.

**Jimmy Hale** is an Oneiros from a cave beside the River Lethe. His poems are beamed straight into his head by a being defying all attempts at aural or verbal description (his Dad). His hobbies include playing Jazz Piano, reading Greek Mythology, and cloaking himself in a shroud of misinformation.

**Jamie Hampton** is a Sophomore Media Communications major from Wheaton. He enjoys the mountains, staying up late, and starting projects that will never be finished. Hopefully he manages to finish another story before the next *Review* is ready to be published!

**Joy Hibshman** hails from the small town of Palmyra, Pennsylvania, is a happy member of the Ignited Class, and one of the rare souls to be found on campus with an Ancient Languages major, Biblical Languages emphasis. Joy also wields a Literature minor as her backdoor key to the wonderful world of the Asbury University English Department. Her contribution to this edition of the *Review* might best be described as "Muse for Emelia Conley's Featured Artwork" (which is lovely, btw).

**Kate Hull** is a Senior art major who's from Wilmore KY and has frankly spent too much time there. You may have seen her around campus looking tired and/or carrying ladders late at night. You may see her other work in the her show in the Red Gallery titled SEEN, it's very cool check it out!

**Lily Kesten** (she/her) is a senior Media Comm and English double major from Midway, Kentucky. She currently calls the great city of Atlanta home, but to her, "home" means less of eight lanes of interstate traffic and more so the horse-lined, pothole-spotted curvy backroads of Woodford County. Lily is currently learning how to dress in sports corporate (or, 'sportporate', as she calls it) from a wardrobe that mainly consists of thrifted dad sweaters, and it is kicking her butt. This is her seventh publication in *The Review* and her fourth year on staff. You can find her work in *Kentucky Monthly* and at [occulum.net](http://occulum.net).

**Klara Kinman** (she/her) is a sophomore English major who makes it her entire personality. She loves used bookstores, Earl Grey tea, and anything by Ada Limon (how typical). A frequent poet who occasionally attempts creative prose, "Empty Arms" is Klara's first published fiction piece.

**Kaitlyn McCracken** is a sophomore English and Sociology major from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – and yes, she still watches *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. When she's not reading, writing, or taking photos, she can be found nerding out in other ways: including but not limited to bingeing obscure podcasts or playing Dungeons and Dragons (it's not a sin – she promises).

**Tegan Merrick** is a sophomore who transferred from Chicagoland. A crocheter who journals and bakes for fun, Tegan is happy being an English major stereotype. This is Tegan's first publication in the *Review*.

**Krysten Meyer** is a Sophomore creative writing and equine studies major. She is surviving on Goldfish, energy drinks, and the tears of her enemies. Future plans involve surviving finals week and fleeing campus for the welcoming mountains of Colorado.

**Alex Nicholson** (she/her) is a junior double major in Bible Theology and Creative Writing from Canton, Ohio. Recently, her dream job involving armor and knighthood has taken a step forward now that she is the proud owner of (2) swords. She has a (still totally healthy) obsession with the color red, dragons, and plenty of other interests that she plans to implement into books similar to Tolkien's works while serving in ministry.

**Tiffany Rutledge** (she/her) is from Louisville, Kentucky. She is a psychology and history double major, an FNL cast member, a dedicated Queen fan, and is almost always ready to take a nap. This is her second publication in the *Asbury Review*.

**Autumn Seymour** is from Signal Mountain, Tennessee and is a member of the Courageous class. Her major is Equine Studies, but she enjoys taking art classes when she can. This is her first art publication in the *Asbury Review*.

**Hailey Small** (she/her) is a senior, English Major, and Editor in Chief of *The Asbury Review*. Working with *The Asbury Review* singlehandedly sparked her interest in creative writing, and growing alongside the magazine has been the greatest delight. Find her work also at *Anthrow Circus*, *Kentucky Monthly*, upcoming in *The Linden Review*, and in just about every edition of *The Asbury Review* since she found the guts to send her first submission in 2020.

**Levi Smith** is a songwriter born and raised in a renovated cornfield just outside Des Moines, IA. Purportedly surviving his third year studying music, he walks barefoot in the rain, loves chaos, and sometimes wishes he could be a real cowboy.

**Grace Statzer** is from Nicholasville, KY and studying Communications with an emphasis on leadership. She has two minors, Spanish and Art/Design, because choosing just one thing to do with your life is hard. Grace is also an avid enjoyer of all things bread.

**John David Walt** is an imaginative creator made in the image of god just like you. He calls home to Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas. You can find his work at [farmstrong.co](http://farmstrong.co).

**Annie Wilder** is a Senior music major who is so glad to finally be done with her recital. On an average day you can find her watching *The Daily Show's* coverage of the 2000 presidential election. Quirky, am I right.

**Mark Wood** is a fourth-year senior majoring in English and Ancient Languages. Writer of a truly ALARMING number of poems about the moon and stars, he is shocked (and slightly embarrassed) to have found that he has not one astronomical poem in this edition of the Review. He apologizes for this continuous and severe lapse in his judgment, and will be sure to submit more of them next semester.

**Canaan Yan** is an international student from China studying Media Communication at Asbury as a member of the Ignited Class. On a regular Tuesday evening, you will find him cruising on his longboard with a violin in hand, rushing not to be late for his orchestra rehearsal. He's quite a big fan of turtle necks and trenchcoats, and his go-to drink is none other than a hazelnut latte with honey and cinnamon.