

An impressionistic landscape painting with a textured, painterly style. The scene depicts a body of water in the foreground, reflecting the sky and surrounding greenery. The background shows a hazy, sunlit landscape with soft colors of blue, green, and yellow. The overall mood is serene and atmospheric.

LABY RINTH

COLLEGE OF SAN MATEO • THE WRITERS PROJECT

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The Writers Project and Labyrinth staff would like to extend our sincere thanks to:

The CSM Honors Project faculty, staff, and students, with special thanks to David Laderman, for their continued support of our club and our vision,

our inspiring club advisors, Sarah Mangin and Keira Travis,

the always encouraging ASCSM,

and

the students who submitted their work to be considered for this publication.

We want to thank you for reading our new issue of Labyrinth and hope that this publication continues to inspire you.

Keep writing. Keep learning. Keep creating.



Labyrinth Issue 10
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Letters from the Editors

"The creation of this issue began when the world was at rest, before "normal" became a distant memory. At the beginning of the year, Labyrinth underwent many transitions, as is to be expected from a literary journal of this nature. Despite the ups and downs that come with the process of transition, myself and each and every member of this journal remained cognisant of Labyrinth's purpose, and we all worked hard to ensure that the stunning literary and artistic creations of our fellow colleagues would be ensured the opportunity to be showcased with the respect and care that they deserved.

As we worked towards wrapping up this particular issue, our lives, as well as the lives of every individual on the planet, were turned upside down. The moment that Labyrinth overcame transition was the moment that we, as members of the greater community, were forced to adapt to an even larger change. Personally, I experienced the conclusion of my community college career from my childhood bedroom, yet it was from this room that I also realized the importance of Labyrinth and the importance of keeping such a beautiful work of art alive.

I am so grateful for the guidance of David, Sarah and Keira in passing Labyrinth on to an Editor in Chief who I know will provide this journal with the rightful leadership and guidance that it requires. Throughout my experience as Editor in Chief of Labyrinth, and my experiences during this pandemic, I have learned that creativity and art are vital to our survival, both as individuals and as a society. I am so grateful for what Labyrinth has taught me, and I hope that we can all continue to learn and create, regardless of what our world may look like."

-Ariana Davarpanah

"In 2020, the world changed in a way we never expected. Meeting in the Honors Lounge in Building 12 every week was an important tradition for me and the Labyrinth team. Meeting face to face with students and faculty allowed for detailed discussions of many topics every week. We were caught off guard when this routine was interrupted by the pandemic in March. Nevertheless, we did not let the unforeseen challenges stop us. Amazingly, the Labyrinth issue for 2020 was completed fully online. It was not a miracle—it was a product of the Labyrinth team's hard work and dedication.

I am incredibly proud of everyone for pulling through and completing this issue despite the challenges of not being able to collaborate in person. I am especially grateful for faculty members David Laderman, Sarah Mangin and Keira Travis for their positivity and guidance throughout this time. I am proud of what everyone was able to accomplish this year and I look forward to the beautiful pieces that Labyrinth publishes in future issues.

I joined Labyrinth in Fall 2018, starting out as an editor and observing the hard work that goes into this journal behind the scenes. In Fall 2019 I became co-president and was given the opportunity to lead a wonderful group of students. This fall I am transferring and stepping down from my role. Being a part of Labyrinth has been a wonderful experience for all two years. When I look back on the two years that I attended College of San Mateo, what stands out to me most are the fond memories of weekly afternoons spent collaborating with other students in the Honors Lounge. I will forever be grateful for this experience and wish nothing but the best to the new Labyrinth team. The pandemic is still ongoing, which means working on Labyrinth may still be a challenge. Despite this, I trust the brilliant and hardworking team. I know that there will be a bright future ahead and great things are coming."

- Maya Riley

Best --- Worst



Photograph by Anna Mahoney

Justine

BY KAREN BAXTER

Today

The heavens and the ocean are as one
A cloudless sky tints the water sapphire
Creating her favorite version of the sea.
The beach is calm as she resigns herself

To accept

The words typed on the yellow telegram
Precisely folded, and hidden in her wallet
She has memorized Every. Single. Word.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. LXXXXXXXXXX

The Navy Department Deeply Regrets

REGRET! I am the one regretting. I should have begged him to wait until he was eighteen to enlist....my fault, my most grievous fault

To Inform You That

Don't inform me, please don't inform me, please, please, don't say the words

Your son, Dale Robert LXXXXXX, Seaman, Second Class USN

My child, whose first breath I witnessed? The little boy whose knees I banded? My son who could have become a man and a father one day?

Was killed in Action

No, not true! Action for my son was basketball, baseball, running...not Combat

In the performance of his duty

Aboard your ship in enemy waters

And in the service of his country.

Obeying orders while fighting the enemy

**The department extends to you its sincerest sympathy in
YOUR GREAT LOSS.**

*Mine? NOT only mine...he had a father, a brother, grandparents and a sweetheart
who waited at home, he is our love, our great love, not a Loss*

**On account of existing conditions...Just say it! You mean the sinking of the ship
the body if recovered CANNOT... because *the body* is at the bottom of the sea
be returned at present. Not now, not ever...NEVER**

If further details are received you will be informed.

Inform me you made a mistake

**To prevent possible aid to our enemies please do not divulge the name of his
ship or station.**

*Not to worry, I am barely able to **divulge** my son's name in conversation...*

Rear Admiral Jacobs The Chief of Naval Personnel.

Admiral, What a Heart - Breaking job you have

Each week for the past year
She has sat in the same spot
Thinking the same thoughts,
Today she will set herself free

She reaches for her wallet and liberates
The imprisoned yellow reminder
She slowly tears it to pieces and
Clutches the fragments in her hands

She strides into the Pacific Ocean
Her dark hair billows in the breeze
Her hands open, and she scatters her grief
Upon the sea in which her son forever rests

Dedicated to my paternal grandmother, Justine, who lost her eldest son in 1943 during WWII.
For her loss she received a telegram and a gold star to place in her front window.



Art by Max Msanii

PHAROS KATÁRA

BY RYAN NAIDU

I walk on the path of illumination
Towards the land of no return
Waiting for what is to come.
What is to come is unspeakable.
Once spoken,
Prepare to listen
To the Song of Death.

When we meet again,
We will shake hands with Hades
From a time once known as
The Great Red Spot

The song is set
Encompass its voice
Bring forth the payment
And await its choice.

Indulge in it if you must
But do not let it waste,
Cast your wishes aside
Give into the hate

If we make it free
The skies will cry
Sunrise is set
In a Flash of Green.



Art by Dorota Sitnik

An Excerpt from Fremedon

By Stanley Campbell

0 Hark! Let it be known that
in the Eighty-Fourth Century
on the Ides of Marktober,
the great Wocky-slayer Fremedon,
the Feeder of Scrap-Gulls,
5 the Protector of Epsilon,
fell from his studded star-steed
and dashed through deep space
to cradle his lost love.
Go tell the tale of Fremedon
10 is to make deeds of virtue known
- deeds that shake the galactic core -
and to publicize
the avarice of Circumstance.
The Wocky-slayer Fremedon,
15 son of bionic Mordred, the thane
of the wormhole-king Aethelred,
was begotten above Epsilon,
where the star-lily grows,
in the snake-halls of the station,
20 a live-birth, unaided.
For bionic Mordred was mortal once,
and that she was once a fleshed
woman is to publicize the thought
of the danger
25 of Circumstance.
And bionic Mordred did bear
the searing pain of birth,
for she loved her own son
30 as she loved the gods,
that she would bear the ice-coals
for the Wocky-slayer Fremedon.
The Feeder of Scrap-Gulls
was told by his mother,
35 "I have only one life, my son,
waste it not."
So, under this fate-bane,
the Wocky-slayer Fremedon
found a life to live
40 in the snake-halls above Epsilon,
where the star-lily grows.
Young Fremedon,
son of bionic Mordred,
grew full upon Epsilon
and did not grow idle-handed
45 for he studied under wisdom
a great thing
that Circumstance did.
That wisdom was cerebral Willowfoot,
the great Yanki scribe,
50 advisor to Venus II,
Bastion of Graal,
the idea-father of many star-steeds,
of king-blood,

of oldest-living.
 55 who came upon
 Wocky-slayer Fremedon
 out of what we call
 Circumstance.
 So, cerebral Willowfoot,
 60 the great Yanki scribe,
 put Wocky-slayer Fremedon,
 through soul-teaching and
 risk-breaking.
 in Epsilon,
 65 where the star-lily grows.
 Great Fremedon
 excelled in soul-teaching
 and put risk in the risk-breaking,
 and soon the Feeder of Scrap-Gulls
 70 became as quick as jump-jet
 and sharp as ultra-blade.
 And of the station o'er Epsilon,
 the scrap-gangs did rule,
 under Freya the Dog,
 75 of the gold-peaks of Kait,
 the laser-eye of the hyper-streams.
 Our hero and the Dog
 met in the snake-halls
 under cover of flor-dark blacklight.
 80 Young Wocky-slayer Fremedon
 carried his first blade,
 Pulsar-Woolf,
 the shock lance
 given by bionic Mordred,
 85 his giver-of-life,
 the quarry of Circumstance.
 Freya the Dog lay bare her gleaming
 teeth,
 like so many Imperial swarm-rockets,
 sharpened as water-razors,
 90 and said this to our hero:
 "Young Fremedon, son of lowly Mordred,
 you are but a whelp.

Your shock-lance is not
 but feed for the station-core.
 95 Lay down thy weapon
 and mayhaps I will let you
 feed off the snake-talons of my puppies,
 those miserable scrap-hounds."
 But, Young Fremedon,
 100 hero trained under cerebral Willowfoot,
 soul-taught, risk-broken, replied:
 "Freya, Dog, I have heard of your deeds,
 of the raids upon Light-feather,
 of your kleptomancy -
 105 all o'er Epsilon know of your wickedness."
 At this, the Dog lept,
 rocket-teeth sharp,
 gleaming in the black-light of the station,
 with shock-blade in hand,
 110 quicker than all,
 save for Circumstance.
 For Fremedon, the Protector of Epsilon,
 was as quick as a jump-jet
 and as sharp as ultra-blade.
 115 He clashed with the Dog
 o'er Epsilon,
 where the star-lily grows.
 The sparks of their blades
 are still spoken about -
 120 star-clouds and fire-novas,
 like the Aurora of Wüd,
 legendary,
 but for Circumstance.
 And though Freya the Dog
 125 had been laser-hardened
 in many dark quadrums,
 in serpentine corridors,
 Young Fremedon, to his own fate-sorrow,
 was jet-quick, and blade-sharp.
 130 Freya was cut
 by a sweep of Pulsar-Woolf,
 and so the Dog fled,
 down the snake-halls,
 and called upon bee-swarms.

- 135 Forty and six men, the scrap-hounds,
the puppies, emerged bared like blades.
And Young Fremedon bested them,
in multiple combat, spoken in tones
of great legend today, and said this:
- 140 "What cowardice from the Dog of Epsilon!
What Draal-belly! What phlegm to flee
down the serpent-corridors!
Show thy form, hound-master!"
Yet the Dog did not appear that night:
- 145 as Mare-mane star-ash,
she so disappeared into the snake-halls.
What cruelty of Circumstance that
Young Fremedon would smell her again.
In the next quadrum, it is said,
- 150 the Hound plucked a war-captive,
I have heard, I have heard:
the great Yanki scribe Willowfoot,
advisor to Venus II,
Bastion of Graal,
- 155 taken from his study by scrap-hounds,
beaten like muckfruit
and dragged to the square:
bellowed Freya the Dog:
"Show thyself, cowardly Fremedon,
160 leaker of Beta-coolant,
lover of spit-beast!
Meet me in battle once again!"
And our hero appeared at once,
Young Fremedon, son of bionic Mordred,
165 with Pulsar-Wolf in his mighty hands.
In seeing his master, the cerebral Willow-
foot,
at the hands of such a beast,
he bade welcome to the clash of shock-
blades
above Epsilon,
170 where the star-lily grows.
of oldest-living,
was impaled by a scrap-hound,
and died in the snake halls o'er Epsilon,
175 where the star-lily grows.
- In righteous Circumstance,
the Dog was overpowered
and fatally gashed by shining
Pulsar-Wolf
to spill her entrails upon the
snake-halls.
- 180 And, triumphant, our hero,
the great Wocky-slayer Fremedon,
Feeder of Scrap-Gulls,
Protector of Epsilon,
turned to gaze upon the face of his
master.
And there, cerebral Willowfoot,
185 the great Yanki scribe,
advisor to Venus II,
Bastion of Graal,
the idea-father of many
star-steeds,
of king-blood,
190 of oldest-living,
was impaled by a scrap-hound,
and died in the snake halls o'er
Epsilon,
where the star-lily grows.
And so, the Protector of Epsilon
came to be through
the great avarice
195 of Circumstance.

Art by Jennifer Tam





Painting by Cindy Hung



Photograph by Dilek Duygu Yavuz

Art by Jiayi Luo



Stardust

BY DENIZ IBRAHIMZADE

We'll all return to stardust one day,
Our memories will fade
And our spoken stories left frozen in the air.
Our heartbreak will be history;
Sleepless nights all made up for
Leaving loved ones weeping;
And ourselves longing
For another taste at life.
Wishing we had left something behind,
Had written an important word or
Created an invention of some kind.
Something infinite,
Leaving behind our legacy:
An immortal creation to be passed
From one to another.
Forever scratched onto the page of time
To leave us content,
Satisfied from a thirst—
A fear—
Of feeling forgotten;
Hoping to be remembered
In the heart of someone—
Anyone.
Hoping to leave
With much more than we came—
A constellation of our own;
A trail to the stars.



Photograph by Anna Mahoney

Turquoise

BY DOMINIQUE MANERI

She lets her gaze drop as the sun seeps through the shadows.

Her warmth radiates from the world she's created.

She's a seeker, lost in wanderlust.

Her soul shrinks down and becomes her, drinking in her energy with serrated edges,
outlining the past in her crow's feet.

Hands reach with turquoise rings, tattooed fingers, and painted nails.

Her stare may capture you, but her word will bite, while her smile gently absolves you
of the pain she inflicts.

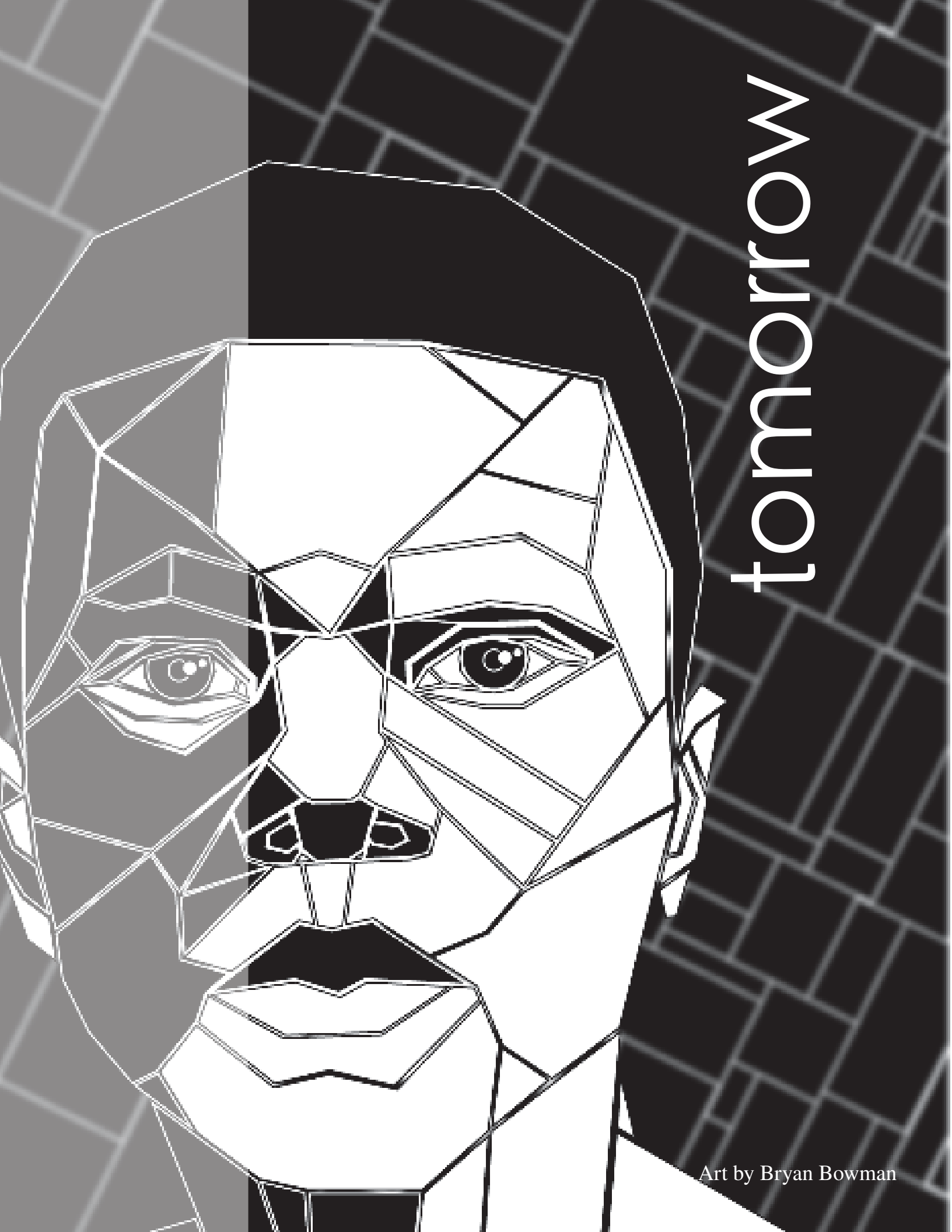
You'll remember her taste, the way vanilla kissed her skin.

Little tears at the seams of your soul, letting her light shine before she walks away.



@zen.zo

Art by Enzo Kalaveras



tomorrow

Art by Bryan Bowman

Giant Steps

BY A. YOUNG

I've reached the plateau
it's getting harder to
breathe.
The world falls beneath
me,
but I couldn't care less.

A third-year student,
where am I going with
this?
Living in comfortable
agony,
planning to escape,

like an asteroid
yearns to break orbit.

Don't worry about me,
I'll be going now.
My huckleberry friend,
I wrote this for you.

A haiku called,
"quarter-life crisis"
there isn't a better path
than stepping forward.

So step boldly and
the path will reveal itself,
a passion dance
in your footprints.

Remember
the hero in your soul
and do not fear
nature's call,

for an impeccable mind
follows the heart.

Art by Shirley Innes



A Question from Michael

BY BARBARA AGUIAR

I met Michael in English class. I normally don't notice any of my classmates unless they sit next to me or speak to me. There are so many students and I have a lot of classes so I try to concentrate on the subject instead of my classmates.

I noticed Michael that first day during roll call. I think the whole class probably took notice of him when, in the deepest voice I have ever heard, he said, "Here." As I turned to look for where this voice came from, I was surprised to see such a young man – not much more than a boy really. Well, let's face it, since I am the oldest one in the class, they all look like girls and boys to me. I wear Levi's older than they are.

Michael's voice was not only deep, but also soft, not booming like you'd expect with a depth such as that. It actually served as a disadvantage to him because he was difficult to understand. When he had to read out loud, the whole

class strained to make out the words. It's not that he mumbled – it was just the combination of soft and deep that made it a challenge.

Michael seemed fairly intelligent to me. The papers he wrote were quite well-written and he made relevant comments in class. He had a good sense of humor and would laugh at things the teacher would joke about that went over other student's heads. But he also came across as shy and in some ways naïve. He would shake his head sometimes at some of the things that were said in class, not like he didn't understand them, just that they were embarrassing to him.

We would say hello and goodbye each class and occasionally paired up to read each other's papers, but that was the extent of our conversations together. That is why I was surprised one day when, at the end of class as I was gathering up my books, he asked if he could talk to

me.

Whenever anyone asks me that, my first instinct is to think, Uh, oh. Something told me this wasn't going to be about class, since we weren't assigned any homework. I wondered, What could he possibly want to talk to me about? He doesn't even know me.

We had just finished discussing a number of stories in class, the last one being, "A Few Words about Breasts, Shaping Up Absurd" by Nora Ephron. When we were discussing it in class the teacher asked the guys in the class about their feelings and feedback on it and Michael had said that's not what he thinks about when he looks at a girl. Whether he was lying or not, it seemed like a nice thing for him to say.

We stood in the hall after class and I could tell he was a little uneasy. He then asked me about the story and said that he really doesn't look at the size of a girl's breasts. He told me it didn't matter to him, that he liked a "well-rounded" girl with a good personality. Why is he telling me this? I thought to myself. I told him that was great and that he was in the minority. I mentioned that it was too bad all guys didn't think like him. He then paused and shifted rather uncomfortably. I waited while he gathered his courage to continue talking. He finally looked at me and said "Do all girls think the same thing about guys – you know, the

size thing?" As I tried to keep a smile off my face, I thought again, Why me – why not someone else? I guess because I'm older, he figured it's likely I've got the most life experiences. Where was his mother? Aunt, older sister? I hated these talks with my own kids and now I'm supposed to have one with a perfect stranger?

He stood there expectantly while a dozen thoughts ran through my mind. Honestly, my first thought was to make a joke, but I have a warped sense of humor and just couldn't do that to him. Did he want the truth? Something to make him feel good? Ah, the power I had at that moment! Just think – a wrong answer could make this kid insecure, shy with girls or worse yet, send him into therapy years from now.

I looked into his baby face and told him I was going to be honest with him and then told him the truth. I told him that yes, to some girls/women size does matter, but more importantly, it's how you use what you have. As his face reddened, I told him he had his whole life in front of him and that he may have many experiences, good and bad. I told him that as long as he makes the most of what he has, he will make a woman happy. He exhaled (was he really holding his breath?), smiled and said he doesn't think of only sex when he meets a girl, he likes to talk and get to know her. Whether or not he was

telling me the truth, I don't know and I don't care. After all, he is only 18 years old. I left him with one piece of advice. I told him to make sure he ends up with someone he likes, can talk to and have fun with because nobody,

not even an 18 year old, can have sex 24 hours a day and you have to have something to fill the rest of the time together. He grinned broadly and said, "That's how I feel, thanks a lot."

The kid's going to be alright.



Art by Avery Thomas

Redwoods

BY STELLA RIGONI

Endless forest
Trees for miles around
The redwood bark
A soft reddish brown
Running like thieves
The sounds of youthful thrill
Are muffled by the leaves
Blanketing the ground
Burnt sienna snow
Pillars proud and tall
With many hopeful dreams
The dryads start to call



Paul Holbach: The Person Fated to Discuss Determinism

BY AIDAN SEVILLIA

Paul Holbach is an 18th century philosopher. Holbach was a strong advocate for causal determinism. Holbach believes humans have no jurisdiction over their actions and are a terminal prisoner to whatever nature commands; for one to be held responsible for their actions, they must be able to act on their own free will. However, Holbach would argue that it is impossible for such a thing to exist. He states that humans are controlled by a set of causal events, ultimately starting with our birth. Holbach puts forth his argument of determinism through two statements, “all physical objects act according to the necessary and immutable laws of nature” and “man is a physical object and like other physical objects, must act according to the necessary and immutable laws of nature.” Using these two assertions as a basis, Holbach was able to refute the possibility of free will.

Holbach’s first statement, “All physical objects act according to the necessary and immutable laws of nature”, implies that the immutable laws of nature in question are not only necessary, but

also ever present and standard. Holbach directly states that these laws of nature are immutable, or unable to be changed. Holbach justifies this stance by saying that the immutable natural laws are thus because they are a result of nature itself. “she imposes laws on all beings she contains, according to their peculiar essences or to the respective properties with which, without consulting them, she endows each particular species” (438). Holbach’s definition of nature included everything that has, or does, exist. The immutable natural laws do not change from object to object, they are utterly uncompromising.

Rene Descartes, on the other hand, would refute the statement that all physical objects must obey the immutable laws of nature. Descartes wishes to create a foundation for all sciences and knowledge, saying he could only trust what was absolutely certain, so he must first cast everything that is known into doubt. A prime example of Descartes’ doubt is his Dreamer Argument. The Dreamer Argument casts doubt on all physical things, including people, due to how realistic dreams

can be and how almost anything could happen in a dream, meaning we can never really be sure if we are in reality. Descartes argues that since it is impossible to distinguish between a dream and reality at any given moment, you cannot trust in the validity of your senses as pertaining to the outside world, casting the existence of physical objects and other people into doubt. Holbach would rebut that even during a dream, we would still be subject to the immutable laws of nature, just in accordance with its governance over the physical object of the brain, stating that one's need for sleep itself is a demonstration of the immutable laws of nature. Holbach would continue by stating that since the brain is a physical object, every brain state that would create a dream would also be governed by the immutable laws of nature, thus we can conclude that even if the contents of the dream itself are not bound by the same physical laws, the brain state that created the dream and that creates the dream's objects is directly governed by the immutable physical laws.

A good example of Holbach's philosophy is his poisoned fountain problem. A man is dying of thirst in the desert and comes across a fountain of water. His natural instinct as caused by nature is to drink the water, but then he sees an empty vial of poison sitting next to the fountain. In this situation, Holbach says that the man will act on whichever motivation is stronger, not out of choice borne of free will. If the man is thirsty enough, it may be that the idea of drinking poison is stronger than continuing on in this thirsty

state. But, if his thirst is not so great, he will pass up on the opportunity out of that same survival instinct. Depending on the situation, the same survival instinct in humans may cause them to behave in different ways, but this does not mean that any of them had free will.

Much like Descartes, George Berkeley would argue against the concept that all physical objects follow the necessary and immutable laws of nature. Berkeley is an idealist, and he argues that all physical objects are just a collection of ideas that represent sensible qualities. Sensible qualities are any qualities that are immediately perceivable, so anything that is perceivable is an idea. Berkeley continues to argue that since some objects continue to exist even when no person is thinking about them, God must be constantly thinking about all physical objects. Since the existence of these physical objects is contingent upon God's thoughts of them, there is no need for the laws of nature to be immutable or necessary in all circumstances. The laws of nature only behave the way they do because God is thinking about them and made them that way.

Holbach's response to Berkeley would not be dissimilar from his response to Descartes in many ways. Berkeley's argument falls into the same trap of causal determinism because if God is thinking about everything and he determines everything, mankind would have no ability to express free will. Holbach would also posit that since God created the laws of nature, they are still necessary and im-

mutable because God is all powerful and no mortal could break the laws set down by an all powerful being. He would finish this line of reasoning with the idea that physical objects must comply with the laws of nature because they are enforced by a higher power being either nature itself, or God acting as the force of nature.

Holbach's second statement, "man is a physical object and like other physical objects, must act according to the necessary and immutable laws of nature," brings the idea of free will into question. If mankind is subject to the same immutable laws, it would mean people are incapable of acting in any other way than they do in the causal chain. Holbach states, "He is connected to universal nature and submitted to the necessary and immutable laws she imposes" (438) where "He" represents mankind and "She" represents nature. For this to be true, mankind wouldn't need to be aware of the existence of these natural laws, but they would still be completely and inextricably governed by them. Since humans are governed by the causal laws, and the past is already determined, so too are the actions of humans, as his actions are consequences of past events, which were in turn consequences of events before them. Humans have no ability to have original thought, action, or idea of their own according to Holbach. Everything from his desires to his fears is out of his control. Holbach's fountain problem applies to this argument soundly, bringing us to the conclusion that since mankind acts on their strongest impulse, and that our impulses are caused

by our surroundings, not only does mankind not have any free will, but they can be controlled by a being powerful enough to control our perception of our surroundings.

Rodrick Chisholm would take issue with several of Holbach's claims. Chisholm is a dualist, and so believed that while the physical body may be governed by the laws of nature, the spiritual body would not be. Since the spiritual body would not be controlled or constrained by the immutable and necessary laws of nature, and since Chisholm believed the mind to reside within the spiritual body, physical laws would not affect the mind in the same constraining way. Since this spiritual body would not be bound to these immutable and necessary laws, it could derail the idea of determinism and allow for free will.

Holbach's response to this would be to refute the existence of a non-matter substance. Holbach's view of the mind is that it is caused by the brain, and since the brain is a physical object, the mind is controlled by the necessary and immutable laws by virtue of being a construct of the brain. He believed that the death of the body, and therefore brain, would directly cause death of the mind, leaving no chance for one's survival after the death of their physical body. As a result of all aspects of a person's mind leading back to governance under the natural and immutable laws of nature, mankind has no possibility of free will.

AJ Ayer, another philosopher who has delved into the free will vs. determin-

ism argument would say that it is possible to have free will if the subject is free of constraint and compulsion. Ayer believed that in circumstances where a person's logical decision making process is not constrained, they could exhibit free will. He believed that there were two different kinds of constraints that could be inflicted on a person: internal constraint and external constraint. An internal constraint would be the inability to control one's actions, such as having Tourette's syndrome. Meanwhile, an external constraint would be the inability to act with physical freedom, such as the state of being chained or handcuffed. Ayer concludes that for us to act freely, our actions must be unconstrained and completely voluntary.

Holbach would counter Ayer's argument with the idea that choice does not necessarily equate to free will. He advances his claim by using the Socrates thought experiment: at the end of his life, Socrates was imprisoned for blasphemy pending his execution. Due to the belief that he was imprisoned unjustly, his cell was unlocked and he was informed he could flee as a fugitive. Instead of leaving, he remained in the cell in order to not taint others' perception of him. Socrates' desire to preserve his reputation was greater than his desire to escape the cell. According to Holbach, Socrates had no choice in this situation but to stay in the cell as his greater desire compels him to stay there. Holbach also states "his action is the result of the impulse he receives either from the motive, from the object, or from the idea which has modified his brain, or

disposed of his free will" (439), asserting in no uncertain terms that humans' actions are completely determined by outside factors and by no freedom of the human's mind. This finally leads to the argument that even without physical restraint or direct constraint, one's actions are still controlled completely by outside forces.

Holbach's final conclusion that he poses against philosophers such as Ayer, Berkeley, Chisholm, and Descartes is that the idea of free will is a deception caused by our subjective perception of the world. Holbach's two premises are that all physical objects are governed by the necessary and immutable laws of nature, and that people are physical objects. These two premises logically demonstrate that people, as physical objects, are governed by the necessary and immutable laws of nature. Because mankind has no ability to act outside these necessary and immutable laws of nature, he cannot be held morally responsible for his actions. The lack of any chance for a person to demonstrate free will illustrates the idea that all choices are pre-determined. Mankind has no capacity for free will.

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Art by Diana Mendez



Lemon Water with Honey

BY HANNAH HERSEY

Amazuppai.

The tartness gently shrivels my taste buds
A spoon glides
Like gears on a clock.

Kampai.

We clash and cry
And she rejects my appetite for amnesia
As I am forced to remember
What I want to forget.

Banzai.

I can't raise both my hands
If I'm holding a cup to my lips
And the spoon hits my teeth
Like nails on a chalkboard.

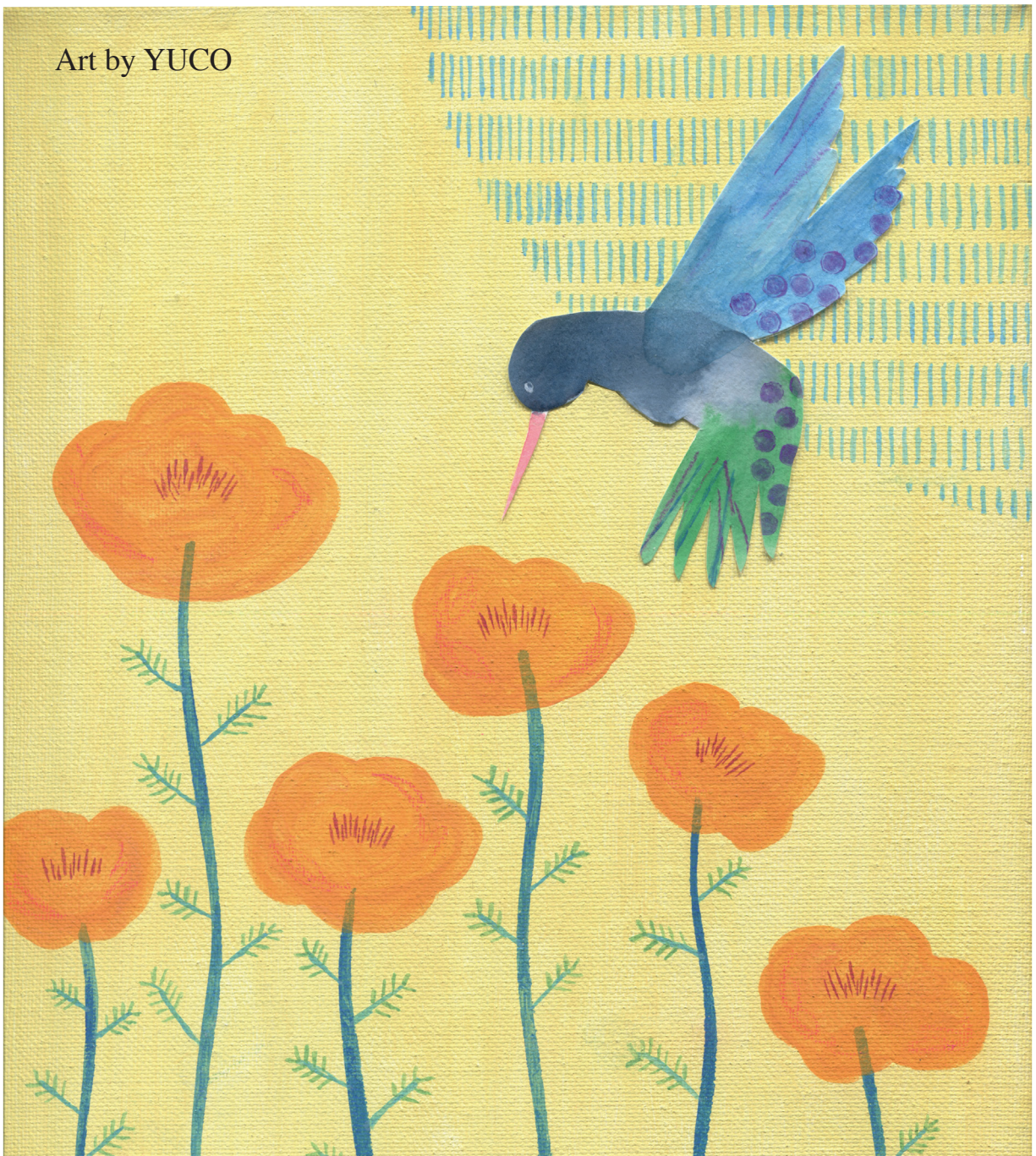
Ai shiattenai.

Icky sickly sticky
simply makes-your-tummy-hurt Sweet.
Your mouth purses so hard
you feel it in your brain Bitterness.
In compatible.

Intai.
Ganbatte nai noni gibu.
Hajimatte nai noni gibu.
Itsumade
Itsumade

Jibun wo gomakasuno

Aimai.
Aimai na mirai niwa hachimitsu remon.
An emulsion that masks bitter reality
With sweet dreams.





CRADLE

Photograph by Jana Gaskin

Memories

BY ARANTZA BUSTAMANTE BASTIDAS

I lost him on July 9, 2016; he meant the world to me, although when he left, he took with him a part of my heart and a piece of myself. I lost him to Leukemia, which means blood cancer. With every day that passes I miss him more and more. The end began the spring break of 2016 while I enjoyed my senior year. Spring break had just begun and I was home watching Netflix when suddenly I was interrupted. It was a call from a number I didn't seem to recognize, but regardless I answered the call. I was told that he had been hospitalized. My first thoughts were that he had drunk too many beers or just ate something that harmed his stomach. No one was aware of how bad things really were. When I mentioned it to my parents, they both had the same thoughts as me. None of us really gave much importance to it, even though we should have.

The day after I received the news of his hospitalization I went to a movie and while being there, I received a message, but this time it was from my uncle. He had sent three messages at

once. I immediately opened the messages and I read that his illness was beyond what we all could have imagined. He was diagnosed with stage four leukemia. I couldn't believe it; immediately I left outside and called my uncle. He told me the doctor had run three different tests and they all resulted in leukemia. There was no doubt that he had blood cancer. In that moment I felt my whole heart shatter into a million pieces. I felt weak. I was completely devastated with the news. That night when I got home, I walked up to my parents and had a sit-down conversation with them about the horrible news.

When I told them, it looked as if I had just ripped their hearts out from their chests. You could see the painful sadness in their eyes. My dad was trying to stay strong by holding everything in. He was trying to be the strong man of the house; the man he's always supposed to be. Even though I knew he took it the hardest. I saw it in his eyes. My dad couldn't have had done anything more than just give him all the support he could need. As time passed

it seemed that he was just getting worse and chemo just wouldn't help. In reality it was making it worse. Then there came the inevitable, the day the doctor said, "I am going to be honest with you, I see no more hope for him. I believe, if my calculations are correct, he only has a few months left, four to be exact... I know this is painful for you all, but consider taking him home to live the rest of his days there." But even with that by no means were we giving up.

We looked for resources and asked around for remedies till my uncle found something that helped us; a hospital that cured patients with natural herbs. He tried it out and, in a month, he felt much better. After months of struggling we had finally found a remedy that helped. I felt happy, hopeful, and emotional in every way. In that moment I knew he could do it; I knew he was strong enough to make it. Throughout that time, I would talk to him and tell him "I am going for you," "I am going to be there soon just wait on it." Till the moment came for me to leave to Mexico to be with him my excitement was unimaginable. My heart beat faster with every second until I arrived late to the airport and missed my flight and I felt my heart dropping little by little while the old Chinese man was telling me that I could not take a flight until Saturday. It was on Monday! I said "No! I have to be there by latest tomorrow." I did, but the

impossible just to get there, so I ended up flying to Texas and staying there overnight and leaving in the morning to Mexico.

When I arrived at the airport the first thing I did was go directly to his house, but he wasn't there. So, I came back and there he was the most handsome man I've ever seen sitting outside in the shade. When I got out of the car, my eyes watered and so did his, and we hugged as if we would have known it would be our last.

Afterward we sat down and talked for a while reminiscing about old times and laughing like there was no tomorrow, so we made plans, we would go out and spend as much time together as we could. I still remember those funny jokes he would make. When he told me how my mom would "pronounce 'Safeway' as 'Safiwhy,' oh god!" When he said that I burst out laughing and so did he. I think we even peed our pants a little without even caring if we were in public. That's how I spent my two weeks with him. Although my vacation soon came to an end and so did he, well, that's what it seemed like. As the day of my departure came closer his illness began to worsen, I didn't want to leave, but I felt like I had no other option, I had to come back to work. The day came closer for me, I had to say goodbye. I had no clue it would have been my last goodbye. The day came; he was looking pale,

skinny to the point that all I could see were his bones. I felt as if he was desiccating in front of my eyes. As if that beautiful human being I once knew was disappearing and all that would be left were ashes.

He looked like he was dying right in front of me. I just wanted to cry right there, but I knew that I shouldn't because I had to be strong for him. And then the hardest moment of my life came the moment I had to say goodbye.... When I did, we both started to cry. I said "I love you... I believe in you and I know you could make it through this". Even though all he did was cry and say "I love you..."

As I walked away, I didn't know how I managed to do it. Who would've known goodbye was the last thing I would have said. When I got back all I would receive were messages and calls that he was very ill and there was no way of knowing if he would make it. I was shocked at how fast everything was happening since it had just been a week since I was back. Till that afternoon I received a message saying "there is no more hope left all we do now is wait till that moment comes. It won't be days; it will just be hours." I felt as if I couldn't do anything anymore, I felt useless. I was just broken, and I felt my heart break a piece with every second that went by.

Then there came the moment, that moment I was dreading. It was inevitable. I was just about to begin work and I received a call from a number I didn't seem to recognize, but knew it was from Mexico. So, I started walking towards the back and all I hear is "Mi hijo, mi hijo! Mi hijo se me fue!" Which could be translated to, "My son, my son! My son is gone!"

I stood there in utter confusion, trying to make sense out of what I had just heard when all of a sudden, I felt my body weaken. As I started walking towards the back, I started to fall to the ground not believing what I had just heard. It felt as if it were just an echo. However, it wasn't. It was reality. It was my reality. It was the reality that I had been left traumatized with that voice that echoed in my head, reminding me every day of what had left me scarred on July 9, 2016. I no longer felt a heavy heart, but an empty one. Left with nothing, but memories, memories that will haunt me for the rest of my life.

On July 9, 2016 I lost my brother.

Rest in Peace Jose Angel Bustamante.



Art by Nykky McCarley-Cameron



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by Stock Photo

Three Flowers

BY ADRIAN AFIF

She received three flowers:
One from the man she loved,
One from the man she loves,
And one from the man she says she loves.
And while all clueless of the others,
Only the vase would hold the truth.



Art by Haley Esman

We All Make Do

BY S. D. O'SULLIVAN

I sit in the driveway of the board and care home that my mother lives in, breathing in the brown air, and half-heartedly gazing at the two chocolate milkshakes I bought for me and her from Jack in the Box.

Lord knows I don't need a milkshake (and really, neither does she) but they make her laugh every time I show up with them.

The rumblings come back into my mind- as they do almost every time I stop by to visit-fuzzy almost-snapshots from childhood, growing up and adulthood. Fragments of conversations I had with her over the years, leaving me wanting, but, I have come to believe that there really are no good explanations.

Some good people do horrible things sometimes in extremis. Bad people do horrible things for fun. I truly believe that my mother was a good person who was living in a violent tableau, glassed in by fear when she was married

to my father. She left her first husband because he drank until he was crazy and beat her. Then she met my father, and they had me. He, too, would drink himself crazy, come home and beat her. In her unknowable rages she would beat me. None of those beatings ever stopped until she finally realized that he was going to kill her some day.

It must have been a cold realization.

And she left.

And I stayed with him.

In her absence, my father's angry eyes focused on me.

"You've got to get out of your head," I tell myself, echoing the words of my therapist, and my wife. I know. I need to get out of the car.

On some visits, Mom will remember something unsettling, and ask me if I recall it. If I do, I spend the next two or three days trying to put the inside of my head back together. You know,

tidy the place up a bit.

One afternoon, I was sitting with her in her room, just talking, and we landed on the topic of him, “Do you remember the time, it was after I had left, that he brought you to my apartment?”

“I’m not sure. I might.”

“He knocked on the door, and you were right there with him... you were about, I don’t know, maybe twelve?” She moves slightly in her chair, knotting her hands, and sort of squints, “And, anyway, when I opened the door, without saying a word, he just pulled back and punched me in the face.”

I let go a little grunt in response. I had a feeling, but I couldn’t pull a memory, even though I knew it was coming.

“Anyway, I was lying there on the floor and he ran over me into the kitchen, saying he was going to get a knife. Then I got up and ran past you screaming for help. Do you remember that?”

Almost at the flick of a switch, like a silent color movie shown on the inside of my cranium, I saw it happening.

The screen flickered and the soft, faded colors started to move.

It was a cold December night. I don’t think it was too long after Mom had left us. I have a feeling that Dad had been drinking for most of the afternoon, as he had the day off from work, so he was pretty well oiled by the time I got home from school.

I think I was in sixth grade then.

After a dinner of Hamburger Helper, he said that we were going out for a drive together. The one thing I remember clearly was this brown corduroy coat that I really loved at the time. It was thick, lined with heavy, artificial brown fur. I remember feeling safe when I wore that coat.

I don’t really recall any conversation, or even any sound at all. The thoughts about his day drinking and the dinner, and his saying, “Let’s go take a drive,” are sort of ghosts of a memory. But I remember the coat.

I can see us walking to the apartment. It is an apartment campus that still exists in San Mateo. Behind the Hillsdale Mall. A spread out property of large, two story stucco buildings that used to be painted in pastel pinks, yellows and blues, way back in the sixties.

I remember the low, humming feeling I used to get whenever I went by those apartments as I grew up, even into my twenties. Throughout high school, I would unconsciously avert my eyes whenever I was driven past there; later, I could keep my eyes steady as I drove by, but my breath would catch until I was past the next block. I could never figure that stuff out. But now, sitting across from my eighty-eight year old mother, looking into her almost forgotten eyes, I remember that night.

I remember my dad knocking on

the door.

I remember my brown coat, how warm I felt that night, despite the winter air.

I remember the door opening, my Mom standing there in her pink housecoat. She was not expecting visitors.

I remember his arm silently cocking back. And then nothing. The film stops. My eyes are closed.

“Yeah Mom, I think I do recall.”

I found my Mom again when I was about forty, after I had gotten married, and Amy and I had a son. I had sort of looked for her for a number of years before that, but I had no identifying information about her to help me search, other than her maiden name. I couldn't even remember any of the extended family on her side to help me track her down.

I spent so many sleepless nights thinking that my Mom had already died, that there would be no chance of ever seeing her again. When Evan joined Amy and I after a very difficult birth, I experienced for the first time how a woman changes in relation to her new child.

I saw the birth of my son, and the lovely birth of a mother.

I finally understood what my mother had given up to escape.

I wanted to share my son with her in exchange for me.

When Evan was maybe nine months old, on a flight back from a business trip to Dallas, I remembered a long lost detail. I was napping on the plane when I had a dream about a ranch Texas. It was a memory, but one I had not been aware of in over twenty years.

When I was about nine, my mom and I flew down to visit her parents, her brother Rex and his family on their ranch in Abilene, Texas. Rex and my aunt Nita had three boys: Danny, Bart and Wade. I had not thought of those names in decades.

I finally had names.

Wade Armstrong. Abilene, Texas.

On my first weekend home after the trip, I sat down at my computer and ran a search for Wade Armstrong. Five hits came back. I started dialing right then. The third number was my cousin. When Amy came home from work that afternoon, I told her that I had some good news and some bad news, “What's the good news?” she asked.

“I found Mom.”

“My god! Are you serious? Wait. But, what's the bad news!?”

“You have a mother-in-law.”

And then my eyes swam.

I parked my maroon van outside the Southwest Airlines arrival doors at SFO two weeks later. As I sat waiting, I thought about the days of air travel

before 9/11, when one could meet their friends or family at the arrival gate, and walk with them through the long, crowded halls of the airport, waiting with them at the baggage carousel. That dance had always given one sort of a buffer period; you could meet your visitor, sort of restart communications, and then ease into things.

But now, you sit and wait, and then, just like that, they are in your life. My phone vibrates,

I'm here, are you?

Yeah Mom. I'm right outside the doors, in the van.

I had left my wife at home with our son as I felt the need to have this first meeting alone. If I was going to fuck this up, I did not want them to witness it. In the few photos Mom had sent, I saw a woman in her early seventies, still trim and erect and able-bodied, smiling brightly, looking with calm intent into the camera.

When I saw her come through the sliding doors, I got out of the van and out of reflex, gave her a hug. I could feel her smile into my shoulder. I knew it was a smile that had been a long time coming. From afar, I could feel her whole body tremble slightly for several moments, until she could finally trust I was really there.

“I have prayed for so long for you, and for this today.”

“I know, Mom.”

I knew I should say more, but I couldn't find the words. I was feeling surprisingly little, as if my experience were being telegraphed in from someplace far away.

It was going to take time.

As I sit in the car on this particular Saturday, I remember when I confessed to my mother, a few years after we had reconnected, that I had learned Dad's lessons well; that I knew what I did not want to be that person, that husband, or that parent. However, in spite of that youthful determination, I had become a frightened, controlling, abusive man.

PTSD is a strange, pervasive thing, and until a sufferer realizes accepts its presence, it can corrupt a heart and blind a soul. It interrupts thought and clouds memory, releasing fear-fueled fury if unchecked.

Though I did not drink, I was prone to blackouts and rages.

And the primary focus of that rage was my young son, Evan.

It would take me many more years to realize that the greatest thing that truly made me different from my father was that I wanted to stop hurting my family; I wanted to change. I wanted to become the good man I had dreamed of when I was young. I wanted to fix myself and learn how to be the parent to my sons and the husband to my wife that I had promised to be when we got

married.

I confessed to my mother that I was not the man I had dreamed of being.

I confessed that I had almost driven myself to suicide, a battle I've faced all my life.

The ensuing breakdown, hospitalization, medications and therapy helped me understand what I was doing to my family and myself, and finally learn how to stop.

As I worked to get better, my wife and sons forgave me.

My Mom forgave me. I've heard that's what Mothers do.

And here I am.

It's Saturday again.

My father is long dead.

My Mom has vascular dementia now, and every week, I watch her memory diminish, and her logic break down.

The memories of our collective past are fading away—almost as if they had never happened.

I pull into this drive way most every Saturday and breathe quietly until I can clear my head and enter her room.

And then I sit with my mother and I hold her hands and we share milkshakes.

And we all make do.



Art by Lauren Lazalde

Lauren Lazalde

What Is Her Name?

BY RIS

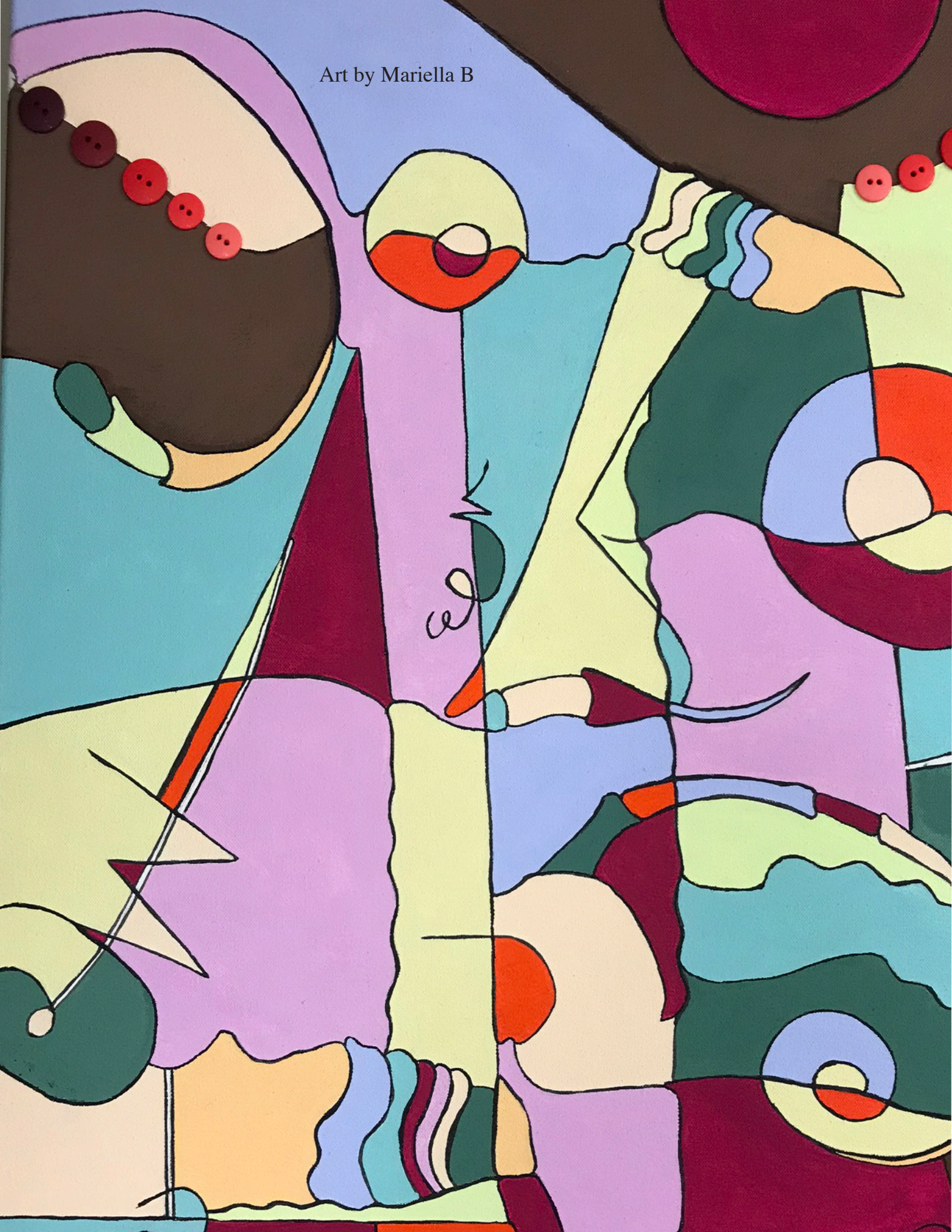
Vague, dreary, grey,
an unmemorable blur.
That is life with her.

During the day, she is the goddess of vexation,
gowned in the finest black silk,
ringlets of hair draping her hallowed frame.
She glides to me,
forces me onto a bed of uneven nails,
and swipes a smooth hand over my eyelids.
As always, she goads me into this rotten slumber.
As always, I fight her.
As always, I lose at the most inopportune times.

During the night, she is the gremlin of stimulation,
a gargoyle perching on my chest,
mouth gaping open,
each rancid breath smelling salts;
She is a creature of the damned
that only wishes to prevent me from having
what I attempted to fight during the day,
now,
when I need it most.

Day in and day out she is omnipresent,
an unending cycle of terror
to the ones who bear her.

Art by Mariella B



A Star is Forever

BY MAIDA NG

Meiling loved stars.
All different sizes and shapes.
All different colors and types.
Meiling even had a dog named Star.

Meiling's grandmother loved stars too.
She had stars all over her house.
All of her dishes had stars on them.
All of the pictures on the wall had stars

Meiling and her grandmother were very close.
Grandmother taught Meiling how to sing.
Meiling loved to sing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.
Meiling was happy.

One day Meiling's grandmother got sick.
Meiling and her mother went to visit her.
Meiling's grandmother wanted Meiling to sing.
Meiling sang Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.
When she was done, her grandmother passed.

Meiling was sad.
Meiling felt bad.
Meiling wanted to sing at her grandmother's funeral.
Meiling asked her mother.

Meiling sang at her grandmother's funeral.
She sang Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
There was not a dry eye in the room.
Meiling was proud.

That night Meiling looked up at the sky.
She saw a bright star.
She knew it was her grandmother.

Photograph by Benjamin Eloy



First Child

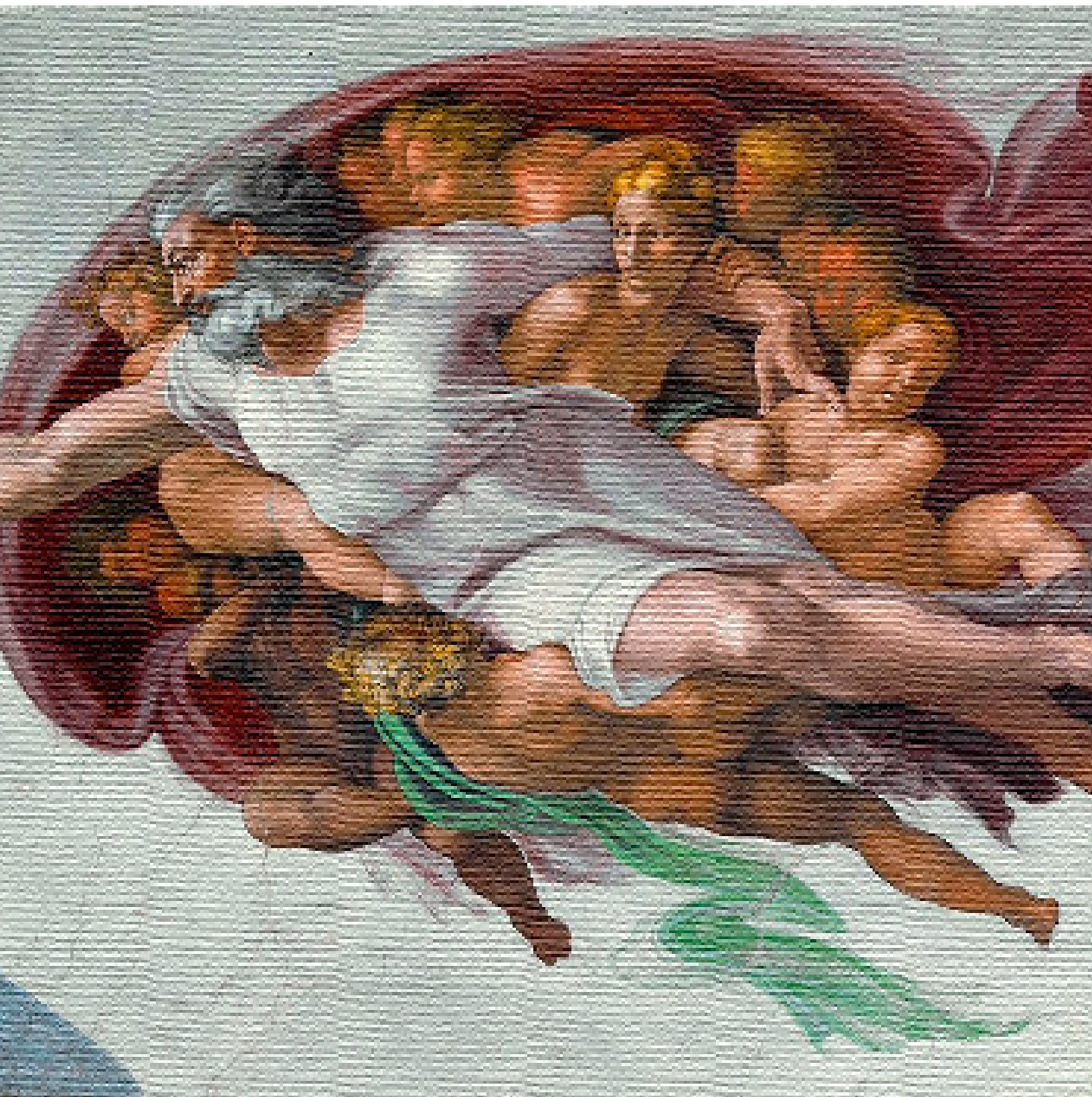
BY JOSEPH THANH NGUYEN

Bring me home in your arms once more
Carry me up the steps like you did once before
Tuck me in warm and ignorant just once more
Though you no longer love me anymore
Though we've broken apart much too far
We both are far too old, far too far
And though I call you old, worthless, loveless, and a fool
I'm all that and more; naïve, thoughtless and cruel
But though we are no longer on level ground
Though we will never go back to once before
Bring me home, please, in your arms once more
Carry me like you did once before
Although you never will, never more



Art by Branden Bowman





Art by Jimmy Lu

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