

Ramblings 2015

Glenbard East High School
Lombard, Illinois

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"Oh captain, my captain"

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Zach Wolff - Warriors

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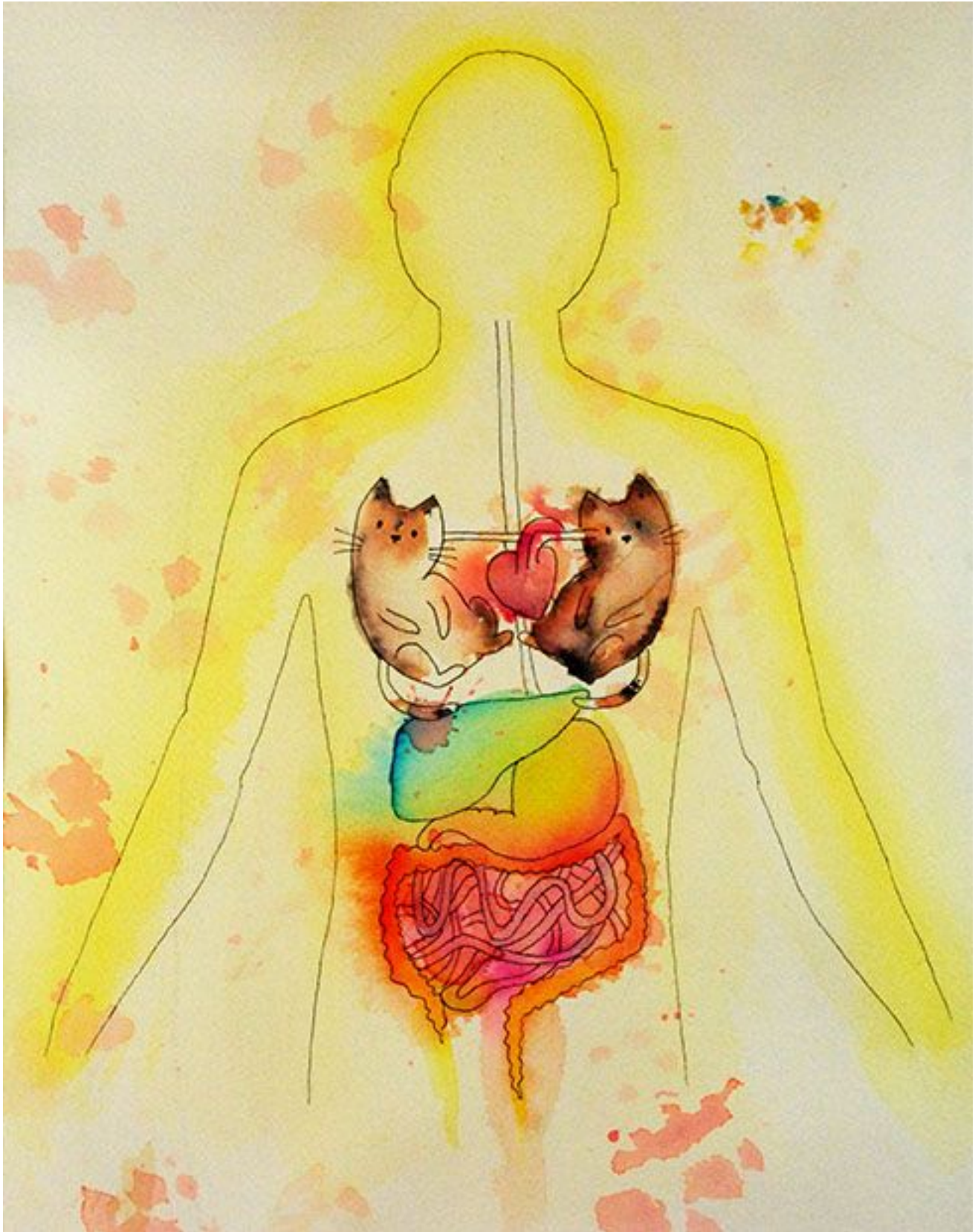
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Alex Stratton - Cat Lungs

Knowledge

By Ariel Barbee

I feel the burn in my legs as I force myself to run, to run faster, to run harder. I am drenched, water streaming down my face as rain pours. My dress, once such a deep violet and covered with flower print, is now splattered with mud. It is viciously torn down one side. I glance behind myself, frantically searching for them. I see nothing, blinded by the torrent of water rushing down on me. All I had done was read a book. All I had done was begun to think for myself. All I had done was speak my mind. All I had done was now for nothing as I stumble towards the woods thinking "What was so bad about that book?"

-Knowledge is power. Don't be ignorant.

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Where I Come From

By Kelly Womack

I come from imagination
I come from worlds unseen
Sounds unheard.

I come from the whispers of dreams
The things beyond reality
With no limitations

I come from creativity
The colors of the day
The shading of the night

I come from a place beyond time
Beyond sound

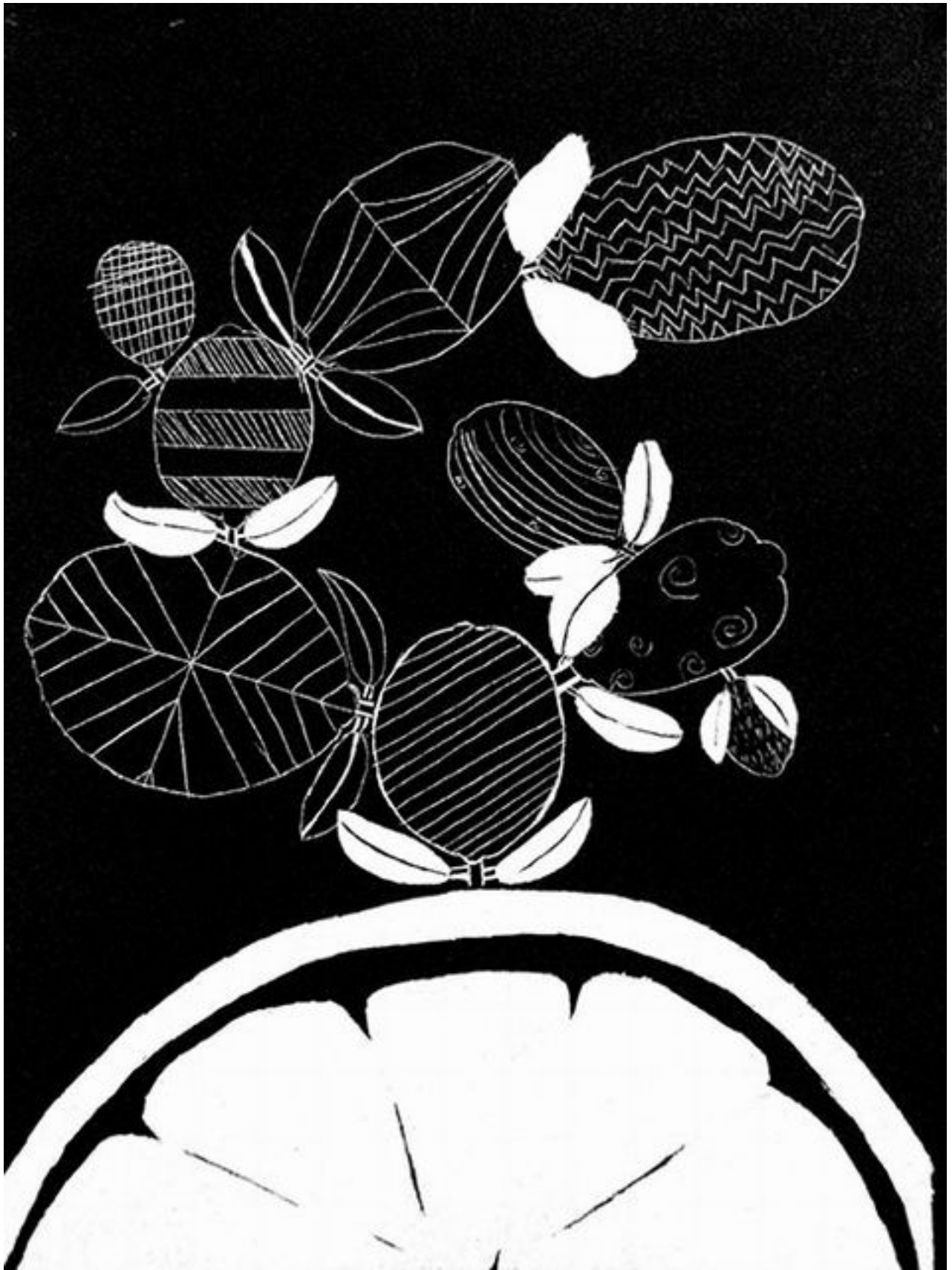
Where minds are free to wander.

Where there are no limits
No expectations

Where the only sounds
Are the song of the wolf
And the whirling wind.

This is where I come from.

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Adam Armstrong - Growing Lime

Confidence

By Rebecca DeCata

I used to think I was special, I used to.
I'm confident, I'm smart, I'm pretty, and I'm special.
I lie to myself
I lie to others
I lie because I don't even know who I am
How can I describe myself when my ideas contradict themselves?
I'm not me, I'm you.
I'm not you, I'm her
I'm not even her I am us but just me.
I'm crazy
I've heard it before, they laugh, I laugh.
What more do you want from me?
I can't even speak coherently or make sense anymore because who in
the world am I
Don't ask
Shut up
Anything more?
Please stop
I'm everything you want me to be nothing less
Tell me what you like I can be that
I used to think I knew me
I lie to myself
It helps me sleep at night
Is anything I say now even true?
I'm sorry, I am always sorry
I'm crazy
I just want to be what you want me to be
I'm confident, I am pretty I am SPECIAL.
Anything more?
I won't be nothing less for you let me be what you want me to be
Because that's what we revolve our lives around
Who knows I told you I am a LIAR.

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Anything more? Nothing Less

By Monae Jones

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Jose Bravo - Soccer Hands

Eyes Half Open. Mind Half Awake.
By Cynthia Cabral

She walks through the halls, with her her ear buds in.
Her eyes half open, her mind half awake.
While the people around her stir about, she notices one standing out.
That kid with the look of an entangled dream, the one that she's out to see.
He wears the same look she had, eyes half open, mind half awake.
He walks through the halls with his ear buds in.
His eyes cold, cutting like a knife, but the strikes are in the clouds.
To her surprise, she grows fond.
But she just keeps distance away,
The face of a girl with the eyes half open, with the mind half awake.
But when no one notices, she steals a glance
At the one who differs from all the rest.
After he's out of sight, but not out of mind, she returns to the indifferent girl, her eyes half open, her mind half awake.

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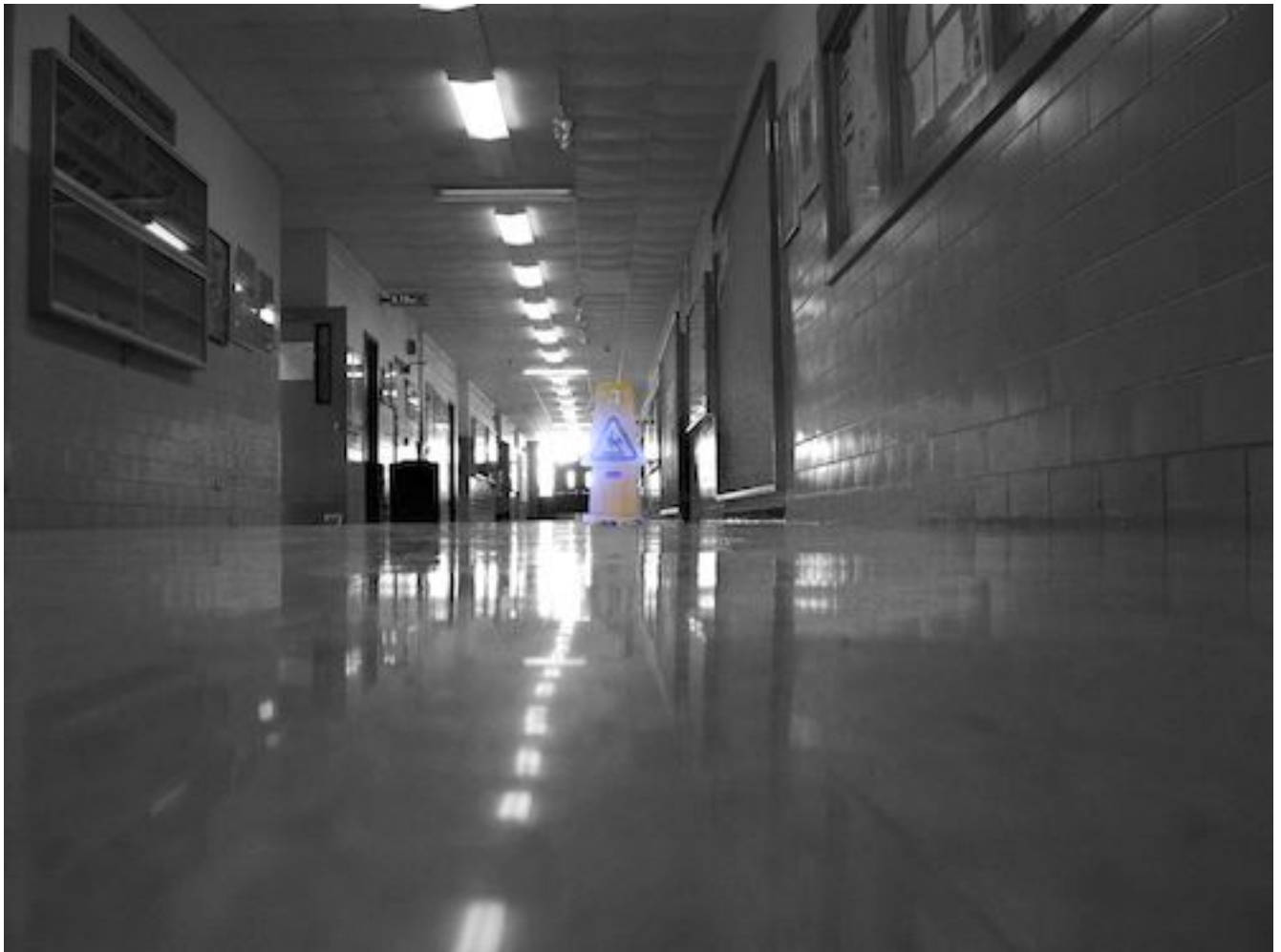
Grown Up

By Aubrey Shumate

Driving down the dimly-lit highway, I knew I wasn't missing home. The experience of being on the wide-open road with so many possibilities of where to go was the best chance I could have ever received. The cool summer breeze blasting through the open window and my radio playing all my favorite songs made me feel invincible. In the beginning I was hesitant to leave home, but now that I've done it I don't regret it. This was my chance to not be treated like a child; it was my chance to be an adult, which I had longed for throughout all my high school years. I was fed up with the constant nagging of not being able to do what I wanted just because I wasn't in a wide array of activities or the "you don't know what your doing" lectures from my mother when, in fact, I did. I knew my future wouldn't be based off my mother's ideas of what a high school student's needs are to fulfill

dreams. I was now, in fact, living mine and I knew I was going to back then. I didn't care what anyone's preconceived idea was but I knew what I needed to get done and what I needed to accomplish in order to get to where I am today. Go against what you're taught to believe because you're bound to get something done or a new opinion that's completely original for all to either disagree or agree with.

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Brian Luedtke

Shy Girl

By Aubrey Shumate

I'm that girl walking through the halls not saying a word, sometimes smiling at friends. People see me as a stuck up person when truth is I'm shy. People don't understand that shyness isn't a person thinking in the back of their mind that they are better than someone. Shyness is, well, shyness. People reading this wonder what's the point of talking about a shy girl walking through the hall with a blank look etched across her face? She's just thinking. I think a lot! Like ninety nine percent of my time I spend thinking or analyzing. Some would call it people- watching. I know a lot about people and it gives you a humongous opportunity to absorb what people do, or get to know someone slightly better than an average person would. Shy people envy the ones who can just say hi to any and everyone they want. I've tried and oh gosh it is hard. Maybe you could say hi to me? I encourage it and I will gladly say hi back, just please do me the favor and don't make me say it first. A lot of us are fantastic secret keepers too! We don't have any desire to share anyone's business with anyone it doesn't concern. I myself don't tell anyone anything you don't want repeated. A shy girl walking down the hall is what I am. I have my experiences, life stories, advice and thoughts just like anyone else, and I encourage you to come say hi and tell me your name.

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Untitled

By Taylor Roylance

I spent my childhood wishing for someone else's tongue
I wished for a different way to say my rage
To speak my love
To cry out to the world.
I wished for someone else's lips

To be able to curl them into the soft sounds
Of a tragic romance
Or the form of a loving lullaby for my someday baby.
I hated my own mouth
For not doing the things I wished.
The red hill on which my yellowing horsemen stood
Became the enemy's army.
They fought with every syllable
No guns or swords needed,
Only nouns and verbs repeated
Then I found the secret weapon --
The ultimate tool in a fight of words:
I used my hands.
They fought word after word trying to sedate the raging beast inside
me.
I would never be satisfied
Working overtime
All ten digits flying over the keys
Pounding out the melody.
But it never worked --
My fingers weren't made for talking --
I had to stop the foolishness and return
To a battle I had tried so hard
To quit

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David Carillo - Rise

Gone

By Taylor Roylance

I hate feeling out of control
But that hardly explains my actions
I'm afraid I have no answer as to why I do the things I do
I act so sporadically because then when I spiral out of control
I only have myself to blame
And myself to damage
My worst fear is being stuck, yes
But my biggest mistake is thinking you imprisoned me
If anything, you set me free
Showed me how it's supposed to be
That I wasn't living
Merely existing
So please accept my apology
Scribbled on this used napkin
For I've got nothing left
But to say goodbye
And actually go away

Farewell my dearest
I won't be long
But when I return
I might not be the same
I might truly be...
Gone

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In which I explain my existential mood swings

By Taylor Roylance

All I see is red sometimes
Blazing fire
And scorched rock
It burns through me
Reducing my veins to ash
My lungs to smoldering bits
My heart is untouched though
It continues to beat
Ba-bump
Ba-bump
Like a steady drum beat

All I see is green sometimes
Grassy plains
Budding trees
It settles throughout me
My veins grow back like roots
My lungs puff out like pink balloons
My heart goes on beating
Ba-bump
Ba-bump
Like a steady drum beat

All I see is an endless cycle of green and red
Like Christmas never ends
Red kills
Green revives
But then, the pattern changes drastically
And

All I see is blue sometimes
Deep, deep oceans
Endless skies
It swallows me whole
My veins no longer exist
My lungs have folded into specks

My heart no
Longer
Beats
It is not a steady drumbeat
But a hallowed, hollow silence
That carries the weight of
My whole world

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Amelia Fletcher - Tiger Lily

A Thing Called Hope

By Elizabeth Somodji

“Are you alone?” he asked.

“Well not anymore since you’re here.” The redhead said still gazing towards the darken sky.

“Anna, this is no time for jokes, did you come alone or not.” He said with slight irritation dripping from his voice.

Anna giggled in amusement, “Of course I did.”

His face lightened. “You know we might not survive this.” He said while planting himself next to her.

“Well, of course we might, but there is always still hope.” She giggled with a childish grin.

“Not for me I see.” He sighed. She glanced at her calm companion and looked back towards the sky.

“It’s a beautiful night, isn’t it?” She asked in wonder. “How the sky itself looks so dark and menacing but with the stars it lightens up to a more... comforting picture in a way.”

He glanced from Anna back towards the sky seeing a dark, menacing blue color, but with just enough white speckles to replace the feeling of nervousness and doubt with relaxation and...comfort.

“That’s one way to put it, yes.” He said as he continued to stare off in the hypnotic sky.

“My favorite part is the stars, they give off that feeling of wonder and amazement to bring out the color in the sky in a whole new meaning,” she said dreamily.

He hummed in agreement and gazed into the night sky canvas, taking in every detail of it. They sat in content silence for many moments, neither one of them wanting to break the moment of peace. The redhead was the first to break the silence...

“What’s yours?” She asked.

“Mine?”

“You know, your favorite part about the sky, what do you like about it?” She asked innocently. He took a moment survey the sky.

“How despite how dark it is, it still seems to let off some light to make it more...” He paused and sighed, “... hopeful.”

“Funny, I thought you were one to believe there is no such thing?” She asked while tilting her head like an innocent puppy towards her friend.

"Very clever, Anna," he barely whispered as he looked over the lands. "I've had enough with your jokes, we leave at first light. I will take first watch." He claimed as he got up and started to leave back to their start of a camp.

"I wasn't joking." She said stopping him in his tracks. He looked behind and saw her looking up towards the sky.

"You still, somewhere deep down, believe in a thing called hope." She claimed.

He became silent for a moment and then countered, "Anna, there is a difference between describing something that is hopeful and actually believing in it."

He then continued to walk back towards the camp leaving the girl alone. She smiled and said to the night sky,

"But you can see it, now all you have to do is believe it to make it true."

*We Live in a World of hate, darkness, and violence that some may see
there is no way to escape, but look up and you will see the light in the
dark to help keep you going.*

*All you have to do is believe and then you will truly see and feel the
light in your life.*

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Don't Forget the Little Things

By Hannah Szcapanik

When I'm gone
Don't forget
I wrote you everyday
The simple notes holding so much truth

When I'm gone
Don't forget
The Eskimo kisses

That left stained feeling on your nose
Forever holding comfort

When I'm gone
Remember the long talks while walking in the rain
Soaking through our clothes
Our bodies numb but our minds flowing

When I'm gone
Don't you dare
Forget that my favorite color is blue
Second favorite is green
You might need to know that...

When I'm gone
Come to my funeral
You must smile
Because you must know
You made my life worth living

When I'm gone
You must Love me.
Love me
Even though I'm rotting
Underneath

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Heily Guitierrez - Flowers In Space

Dandelion

By Emily Davies

Are you a dandelion? Friendly and approachable. Your beauty is enticing yet many people don't know your worth. They put you down and break you apart because of your title. They blow you away from them, stripping you down to the stem. But you have an army. Armies of others like you willing to help. Straighten your stem, and continue living, no matter other's opinions because their opinion is not worth your beautiful life.

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Daisy

By Emily Davies

Are you a daisy? An example of modesty and innocence. They pick you apart little by little. She loves me. She loves me not. They twirl you in their fingertips like they have complete control of you and your body.

Spinning you until there is nothing left to offer. Until your beauty rises once again for all to see and love just for them to bring you back down.

Over and over again you are messed with like you have no meaning. Like they are in control and you can't do anything about it. But you can take control. Step forward and be brave like you never have before because in the end, you'll grow stronger than you ever could before.

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Rose

By Emily Davies

Are you a rose? Elegant and classy yet provocative all at once. You're a model of physical beauty. Each thorn on your stem is a symbol of the pain you've felt, and the pain you somehow got through and became stronger. Yet you're everyone's last resort. A last resort to say, "I love you." You're bright and inviting but taken advantage of all too often. You're popular only when desperately needed by someone else, who doesn't understand that it hurts to be second best. Always next in a never-ending line.

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The Tent

By Gina Farfan

Through those thin walls
The moonlight whispers a familiar story.
Comforting darkness surrounds me as the light disappears.
My sleeping bag holds me as I fall asleep in its relentless warmth
Hugging me ever so tightly as the night grows cold.

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Haley Jenkins

Looking Through the Crack in the Door **By Hannah Szczepanik**

If you were to look through the crack in the door
You would notice love seeping out of the thin slits
You would probably judge our weird tendencies
And wonder how many people are in there
Because of my ever-changing laugh

If you looked through the crack in the door

You would see him stroking my hair
Me looking up beckoning him with kissy faces
Then him licking my cheek
Because that was his odd way of showing he loves me

If you looked through the crack in the door
You would be jealous
And wonder how someone like him could be with someone like me
And how we can be so odd
Then notice how comfortable we are together when we look into each other's eyes
And completely understand

If you look through the crack in the door
You would understand why we couldn't be separated
And if we ever broke up
We couldn't be with anyone else
Because of the weird things we are so accustomed to
When we see each other

You would see the tickles
Wrestling that never goes well for me

We laugh, scream, and piss each other off
In the most wonderful way
We fart, burp, and pick our noses
Pop pimples
Then Tickle and love
And you would understand everything I say
If you would just look through the crack in the door.

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Emily Kozak - Violet Vixen

Opened

By Monae Jones

Standing on the ledge, I've never felt so dead inside.

I've never burned for the desire to let go so bad, not of my life, no not my life.

The life where I veer away from the squint of my eyes as the sun burns at me

To the soft droop of my eyes as the moon shines in the dark.

But I do want to let go of the pain, the confusion

I want to be freed from this in-between feeling, of happiness and dread.

Locked away in my body like I committed the most lethal horrendous act of crime.

I feel alone almost as if I've been caught in an abyss.

I feel alone almost as if I'm reaching for a hand to hold...

I can never even grasp the idea of their being someone who can touch me,

Touch the rough remains of what is left of my body, uncared for
I wish I were in a hospital bed.

Filled with dread and oh so much attention and "love"

I want to lay there and see if the scars that I have internally
Have flipped and surfaced on my external body...

Ugly, brutal, for all to see, for all to feel

Just so that they can touch a bit of what I've burned through.

Fierce tears awaken from deep inside of me.

Heart be still, you've hidden long enough

No need to show yourself now.

I shouldn't have gotten burned so bad.

I owned and embraced my solitude,

My broken emotions hidden

Only a blank paper receiving my pain

But then the burn turned to fire

And unfroze my cold heart.

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Saying Goodbye

By Lisa Valgiusti

Saying goodbye to you was one of the hardest things.

But I never really got to.

And that killed me.

You were the only one I knew cared about me.

Like when my infant fingers got caught in the door and you helped calm me down so that they could be released.

You were the only one I knew who loved me.
You were the only one I ever met.
You were the only one still alive.
I wish you could come back because I am older now and can actually listen to your wise words.
I miss your company.
I miss playing checkers and chess.
And how one day I was winning and you were proud and frustrated at the same time.
I miss watching the golf channel with you.
Even though I thought it was very boring.
I miss being your alarm clock, lying by your side, eager to watch your big blue eyes open.
I miss your deep, warm voice, and the way it would call out "How's my Munchkin?"
I miss being your hairstylist, and combing your snowy white hair just the way you liked it, parted on the left, and combed over to the right.
I miss helping you make your bed, I was the only one who knew how to do it right, sheet pulled high, blanket over, top of the sheet folded over the blanket and no wrinkles.
The weekend you passed away, I had no idea how sick you were.
Mom and Dad sent me off to my cousin's house out of love because they did not want me to see you in your sickest state.
And when I came home, sad words spewed out of their mouths like spitting out hot coffee.
I couldn't believe what I was hearing.
I did not want to believe it.
Like a smack to the heart they told me, grandpa passed away.
My insides turned cold and my eyes swelled with tears.
Saying goodbye to you was one of the hardest things.
But I never really got to.

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Tyler Koziol- Untitled

Bravery

By Brian Sukowicz

I grasped her tiny, warm hands with my own. Noel looked up at me, her

stare was the sentence and her eyes were the question mark.

“What are we gonna do?” She choked out of her quivering lips. Her doe eyes saw me, but not what I saw. They were unaware as the buildings cracked like glass and the sky crashed down inside me. Her ears couldn’t hear my internal shrieking. She didn’t know my world was falling apart.

And I couldn’t let her.

I’d use the ruins left inside me and build silver-plated armor with it. To protect Noel. I’ll be brave or at least strong enough to pretend to.

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Woody

By Bridgette Kolls

It was a cold fall day and I was walking through the forest. My feet were killing me, so I decided to sit under this tall tree and chill out for a little while. Nobody was around. Then, out of nowhere I felt someone massaging my back....

“AHH!” I turn around to a tree that has eyes and arms!

“Hi, I’m Woody,” says the tree. I’m so startled I don’t even know what to say, except introduce myself. After I introduced myself, Woody started to laugh with his deep voice. It reminded me of how a giant would sound. I was still in shock. “HOW CAN YOU EVEN TALK?” I screamed.

Woody replies, “Well, a long time ago, believe it or not, a magician was walking the same path you are today, and let’s just say, he was still learning some tricks. One of his tricks was to make animals speak, so as he tested the trick on a bunny, as the spell was cast the bunny hopped away and the magic hit me instead!”

“Wow!” was all I could really say. I asked if Woody needed anything, and he replied yes.

“All I really want is another tree I could talk to. I’m a very lonely tree. What’s the fun in being able to talk if I can’t talk to anyone around me?”

I'm thinking to myself how impossible Woody's wish is. How am I supposed to get the magic and do that to another tree?

"Please! I don't want to be alone anymore," says woody. I believed in myself that I can do this. So I quickly ran to the local library. I go to the oldest magic book and I couldn't find anything about making animals or objects talk! I'm having no luck, so I leave to quickly to get back to Woody.

"SHOOT!" my phone had dropped in this vent the library had. I open the vent to get it out and I see a book; I pull it out,

"This is it!" I scream. Everyone in the library shooshed me. I grab the book and run to Woody. Surprisingly, Woody was very intelligent. He remembered it was the same book the magician had.

"He must have hidden the book in the vent you found it in before he passed. Open to page 187," says Woody. I see the spell, and I tell Woody to pick a tree. He had picked the tree standing right by him. The spell may be able to make objects talk, but not walk. I was nervous as I was casting the spell. After reciting it nothing had happened... Woody was in sorrow. It then started to rain as Woody wept. All of a sudden we hear the highest pitch of laughter, and we look at the tree.

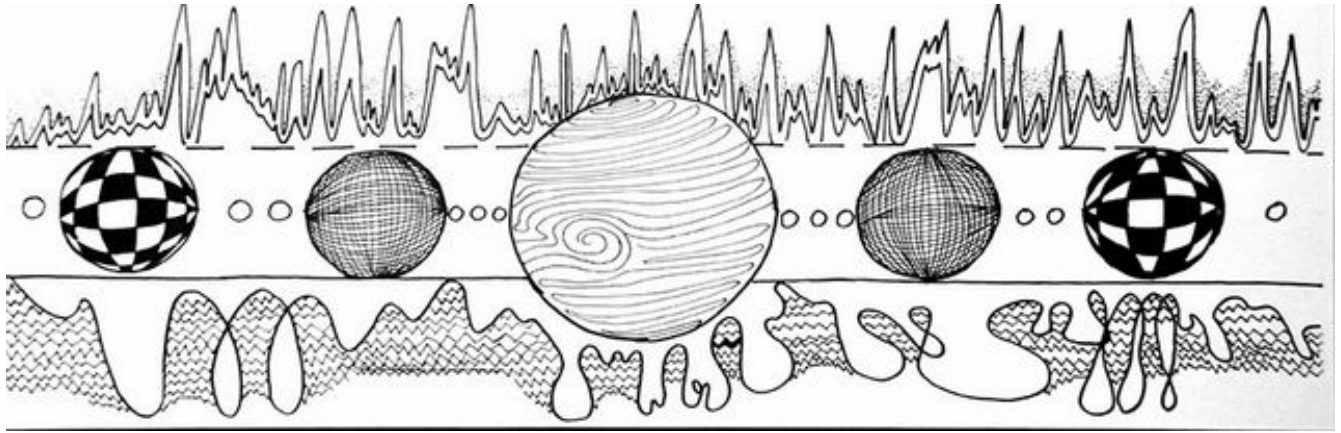
"Hi, Im Treesa.!" she giggles.

"Why can I talk?" she asks and continues to laugh.

"It's a long story," says Woody.

"Well my work here is done," I said, and to this day I see Woody everyday on my walks.

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Donteika Lovett - Bleeding Out

Catfish

By Sierra Jones

Catfish... not when my mom will be in kitchen cooking but catfish is when I'm unlocking my phone and typing in 52314 as a pass code ... Catfish is when I text Chris 5-23-14 with a heart emoji next to it and tell him that I love him... Catfish is when he texts me and says I love you too, but send me a picture of you ...that's when I tense up and get nervous with my anxiety flowing into my body, causing my legs to feel like jelly, and my feet feel like they're walking on needles, and my heart to become weakened... Catfish is when I go on Facebook to Brenda Vasquez and download her picture to my phone. Catfish is when I send it to him and he says wow you're beautiful and that is when I get addicted... I take someone else's identity because I don't feel beautiful.

52314 was the day that one photo turns into five photos that five photos become 10 photos and when 10 photos become 15 photos and I'm only 15 years old. I'm only 15 years old and I took someone else's identity because I'm struggling to feel pretty. Why is it that I'm dealing with mild insecurities because a boy says my best friend is hot and I'm just not.

52314 was the day I realized that the cargo make up my mom brought from work will never help my face. When I realize that the weave she puts into my head will never help me because they say I look like a man with horse hair. That trying to go to the mall with my friends to Forever 21 and going to shoe stores trying to buy the new Jordans is that I know my mom can't afford either of the two, not even when she gets her child support. Will never help me because I don't wear it like the Tumblr girls.

52314 The day that I noticed that a thigh gap was a really unnecessary thing to have because, apparently, thick girls are winning, Latino girls are winning, light-skinned girls are winning, short girls, girls with red hair, with long real hair, when a girl with her eyebrows on fleek is winning. This should be my appearance goal...this should be my makeup goal, this should be an inspiration to lose all that weight on my body, that's what they said to me. Maybe if I ran a mile to lose weight so I can actually find my private parts.

So this is why I catfish... because I'm selfish.

You see I want to feel pretty since I can't be it and

It's something about the way he called me gorgeous, I fell deep and let me tell you it was steep..

And he liked my personality so why can't I be comfortable with me?

Run a mile not for my weight but for a smile upon my face.

So 5-23-14 isn't for me.

I'm not Brenda, nor Paulina, not Mexican or Korean..

I'm 15 with a dream, strong heart, and with insecurities that will no longer be with me.

Catfish is a food to eat, not something that I should change to try and make a better me.

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Midnight

By Kelly Womack

So often the color of midnight is dark,
Forgotten and dismal

Most people view midnight
As lost
Filled with hopelessness and fear

Children are afraid of the dark
Many adults are too
Midnight is fear

But I see midnight
As something else

Midnight is the time of dreams
Of serenity
Midnight is not fear
It is the midst of imagination

Midnight is a time of beauty
Of freedom

A time of joy and bewilderment
Midnight is life

In the dark
I see a light.

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Gwendolyn Merrick - Reborn In Fire

Behind

By Kelly Womack

Silence of night
Glow of the moon
Magic of falling snow
The way the flowers bloom

Sound of silence
Feel of the forest
Future excitement
Prospects of tomorrow

Taste of success
Feeling of accomplishment
Warmth of the sun
Song of the birds

Voices of encouragement
Warmth of fire
Imagination of creativity
Chill of water

These are the things I will miss
When it is my time
However, I will have made a difference
Through the abyss called life.

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Alex Nguyen - Banana Soldier

A Soft Bed

By Tala Clower

“Take this, sweetheart,” Anna’s mom whispers, handing her a bright yellow pill.

“And remember to have good dreams.”

Anna grabs the pill and swallows it, walking groggily to her bed and pasting the Transportation Tubes to her forehead. She checks to make sure the Nightmare Filter is connected properly and lays down, her world slowly dissolving into dreams.

I’m running, but my legs can’t move--can’t move, no matter how hard I try. They’re getting closer, I turn around, see them. God, they’re terrible, horrible, can’t run. Closer, closer, getting closer. Move, move! Anna thrashes in her sleep, her blankets wrapping around her in a suffocating grip. My legs are pumping, I’m sweating, trying hard to run but I’m not getting anywhere. They’re getting closer, much closer. Hands reaching, pulling, running but not moving.

She hits her arm against the wall and then lays still, her expression changing. She lays like this for a while, still and peaceful.

Walking through a hallway--yes, I’m in school. There are lockers and faces I don’t know but somehow recognize. I smile and wave at the boy in the corner, the boy with the glasses. Standing at my locker now, turn the dial, 22, 13, 49. Won’t open. Wrong combination. 25, 7, 33. Not opening. Numbers, numbers, not opening. D i s s o l v i n g into another dream...

He’s grabbing me, pulling my hair. I’m screaming, screaming, calling for help, but no one comes. More surrounding me, pummeling me. A woman, yelling at me for not doing my homework. A man, screaming at me for not running fast enough. Kicking, kicking. High heels connect with my face: green, scaly heels that hiss like snakes and bite at my nose. Fists, feet, screams, my screams. Help! Help! Help!

Anna wakes up, the three dreams hanging over her mind like a fog. She knows she had four others, but they’re missing; they must have

been good dreams, then. The tubes only take the good ones, leaving her mind to mull over the terror that had consumed her memory last night. Anna's mom is already awake, smiling at her.

"The car's fully charged. You must have had lots of good dreams. Let's go." Anna follows her mother to the car, shaking her head to rid her mind of the voices. She sits down, strapping herself in and cranking the music loud. She knows that it will drain the car more quickly, but at least her lucid moments won't be lost reliving nightmares.

They're driving through the middle of nowhere when the Dream Light blinks, signifying that the car is running out of juice. Anna doesn't notice; she's lost in her mind, thinking about her friend whose parents use only bikes to get around. She wonders if they have good dreams, if they remember them. Maybe that's why they always seem so happy, in a world that sells sadness on the billboards like it's a prize.

Anna's mom notices the blinking light, and takes the first exit into a small town. They find a charging station--a cheap motel where they can stay the night while the car replenishes its fuel. Soon, they've checked into a room and start to unload their things.

"Mom," Anna asks, her eyes focusing on her feet. "Do you think that people would be happier if cars didn't steal their good dreams?"

"Don't you dare take that tone with me, Anna! Cars don't 'steal' dreams! They put the dreams to better use. You can't rely on your dreams to make you happy. You should know that by now." Her look freezes Anna before she can retaliate. "Let's go to bed so we can get back on the road. I can't wait to see our new house!"

"Our old house was just fine," Anna grumbles.

"Yes, but it had too many memories. There were too many rooms; now that your brother's off in college, and your father's...gone. It felt big."

Anna doesn't respond--she only takes the yellow pill provided by the motel and goes to strap on the Transportation Cords. The pill works a bit faster than the ones she had taken at home, and Anna is asleep before she can check the Nightmare Filter.

flowers

dagger

smile

tears

laughing

endless screaming

Anna wakes up, baffled. She has never woken up to an empty mind before. Exhilarated, she smiles. A whole night without nightmares! Looking around, she realizes that her mother has already left the room. Anna almost skips outside, she feels so light and happy. As soon as she gets out the door, however, her nose is filled with smoke, and noise surrounds her.

“What did you do?!” Her mother screams, waving at the foggy air so she can look her daughter in the face. Anna stands stricken, her happy mood dissolving in the air with the smoke.

“I...I don’t know,” She responds fearfully.

“The car’s engine exploded. Exploded! Tell me you don’t know how this happened.” Anna’s mother rants.

“Did you check to see if your Nightmare Filter-”

“I didn’t. I’m sorry.” Anna whispers, her eyes falling to the ground.

“Well, we have no car now.” Her mother huffs. “Good job, honey.”

Anna grabs at her blankets, pulling them over her head in the desperation to shut out the noise pouring in through open windows. It’s been three years since the car exploded, and nothing has really changed. Except that Anna dreams more and sleeps less. And her mother is married.

“Anna!” Her mom calls from the other room.

“You have to walk to school today - I don’t know why, but the Transportation Chord didn’t get any of your dreams. You’re lucky we have another car, or your father wouldn’t be able to get to work.”

School. No. No, can’t go. Bury deeper in my covers. Memories, or maybe realities. Whatever they are, they wash over me and I drown.

He grabs me and turns me around, yelling, yelling, screaming. Asking me where is it, but I don’t know, where is what? Where is what, I ask. He doesn’t respond, slapping my face, my arm, punching, kicking, where is it? I open my hand, show him the thing I’m clenching there. This? I ask and he says yes, but by the time he snatches it up, I’ve

forgotten what it looked like. Then my hand is bleeding. Bleeding, bleeding, all over the nice white carpet, all over my pretty blue dress. Help, I yell at him, I'm bleeding and he smiles and says I know and walks away. I go to my mother. Help, help, I'm bleeding. He made me bleed. But she frowns. You liar, she hisses. Doing this to yourself and then telling me it was him, you filthy liar, you terrible daughter, I hate you.

In a graveyard, and there's a new grave, and I ask the grave digger, who died? And he says you, and I say impossible. I'm right here. But he just smiles and turns away, calling over his shoulder: no, you're not. You weren't, not for a long time.

A growl from mom's room-the monster.

"Get your ass outta bed!" Anna's mind is whirling as she stands and gets dressed, the voice penetrating her thoughts. She hisses in pain as invisible barbs dig into her skin, grabbing, pulling - they're hurting me. She ignores the non-existent thorns and hurries out the door. Anna slows her gait, taking her time on the three streets it takes to get to school. She balances on a curb, not wanting to get her feet wet on the fake grass outside the houses. It'll grab me, never let me go. I won't be able to run. It'll pull me into them and eat me alive.

The teacher walks around the class, making sure everyone has uploaded their homework.

"Anna?" He asks. She is sitting slouched over her desk, hands on her head. I can hear his footsteps - closer, closer. It's him. He's come to take me home.

"You can't have me!" She screams, jumping up and sending her chair crashing to the ground. The students begin to laugh. All Anna hears are threats. We're gonna get you. Gonna tie you up and cut off your ears. Watch the blood trickle down...down...down.

"No!" The teacher walks toward me, holding out his hand. 'Give it to me. Where is it?' But I can see the glint of the knife hidden in his belt. Anna launches herself at the teacher, knocking him over. His head hits the table with a sickening crack, and the students begin to scream. So much blood. So much noise. Anna sits on the ground, staring as the teacher's blood flows onto the tile flooring. The nurse enters the room, followed by two security guards. Anna glances up, her eyes widening

in fear.

“No, you can’t take me!” She screams. Their smiles, they’re evil, they’re going to kill me...The security guards advance, speaking soothing words, but Anna can’t hear them. There, sparkling, is a light. A bright light. Anna stands up and runs to the window. The security guards yell and run towards her, but it’s too late. Anna jumps. The world whizzes past me - below is a soft bed. Maybe I’ll finally have some good dreams.

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Dear Friend

By Alyssa Palazzolo

Society: labeling us from the moment we are born to our last dying breath. Wait... We are society. Let that sink in for a moment. You are part of society... We label our peers, our friends, and people we don’t even know. I have come to believe this is our origin of bullying. Next, add the “glorious” movement of revolving our lives around technology. But friend, please don’t assume me bitter until you hear what I have to say. Our fast, minute-by-minute lives are “updated” every second... we push send, post. Don’t forget to add the everlasting memory of the internet. These, my friend, added together get you cyber bullying. Now a question you might be asking yourself is, “Why does it hurt so much?” And between you and me, friend, I don’t think it is because of the things said by the anonymous voices of the internet. I think it is because when reading a screen, and not being able to hear the voices of the people behind the words, we hear our own voice...

Sincerely, a product of society

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NicoleTuren - Cannot Disconnect

Wilting of the Rose

By Krystina Ladonski

Reddest of them all
She stood strong and tall
She protected herself
Making others bleed in the mist
Indestructible, she bloomed in rays of light
Beauty and peace in a place of destruction and hell
She was bound
To say farewell
As her thorns dulled to an edge, her stem clipped
Her petals wilted
And falling leaves
Leave her bare without pollen
With no source of light or hope in sight
She, who once stood tall,
No longer stands at all

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Effortless

By Emily Hartmanowski

Waking up to share morning breath
Pressing shoulders at the bathroom sink
Creations made of French fries and chicken nuggets

And laughing over the stupidest things

Child's play that makes them giggle and squeal

Like creepy crawly spider hands that tickle

He sacrifices his comfy spot to fetch her a glass of lemonade

Or "the juice they always have"

She watches shows with fish and 1940's junk

Because he enjoys it

Making sure one another is staying hydrated

Offering leftover mashed potatoes

Remembering what she wore when he didn't exist

And remembering what he said four months ago

Taking turns choosing a movie to snuggle to

Letting her take sips of his coke

Reminding him where he left his glasses or car keys

Giving her all the space on the bed

Searching for each other's lips at 3 A.M.

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April Olvera - Lime Flower

What Makes a Mexican Home?

By Jose Bravo

Make four servings of Posole for Great Grandmother

Pre-heat the sun and rise it over far away hills

Start on tamales because they smell like peach blossoms

Pour colorful Gladiolas all over the front yard

Add in some mariachi music for getting the chores done

Mix in cemitas to complement the delicious mole for lunch

Shake well until colorful decorations bright up Halloween night

Separate the cricket chirps from the silent night

Blend in a beautiful sunset with a thunderstorm

Refrigerate beautiful dreams in a deep sleep

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Feels Like Home

By Rhianna Olson

In solitude or company, comfort

warms me like a soft wooly blanket. An

aroma of blossoming flowers wafts

slowly through the air like a spring garden.

Door closed, drapes drawn, sandy walls surround me.

Memories of loved ones adorn the walls.

Glowing stars across the ebony sky

brighten the darkness as twilight falls.

Small like a kitten snuggled against his

mother, I burrow under downey sheets.

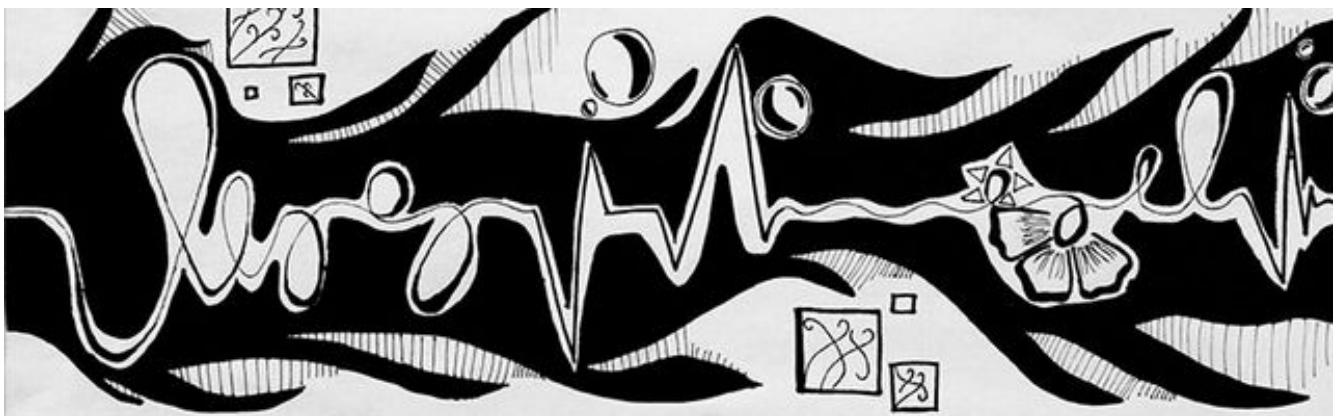
In my den I hibernate every night,

safe from the outside, I retreat.

As I lay in a cloud, I close my eyes.

Warm, safe, loved, pain of the world slowly dies.

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Palak Patel - Untitled

Sick

By Eden Dolinski

I felt it.

The unstoppable force
that everyone encounters once
in a lifetime.

The undeniable,
scorching,
awakening,
fiery sensation of falling
to depths unknown.

Falling constantly through day-to-day life,
your heart locked inside your stomach.

The brainwashing,
inhibiting,
persistent worry.

It brings a stream of emotions,
rendering blindness.

Love.

It grips first at
the heart,
moving slowly,
stealthily.

Capturing your arms, stomach, and toes.

Permeates your lungs,
runs up your spine,

Then- the spike of an adrenaline rush
as it enters your brain

clouding our mind,
tearing away

your innocent perception.

Obliterating life as you know it

For it's cruel game.
From then on you learn to deal with the agony.
The fear.
The reality.
All spiraling, swirling and engulfing you whole.
What did I do to deserve this?

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Ily **By Jianna-Rae Lesavage**

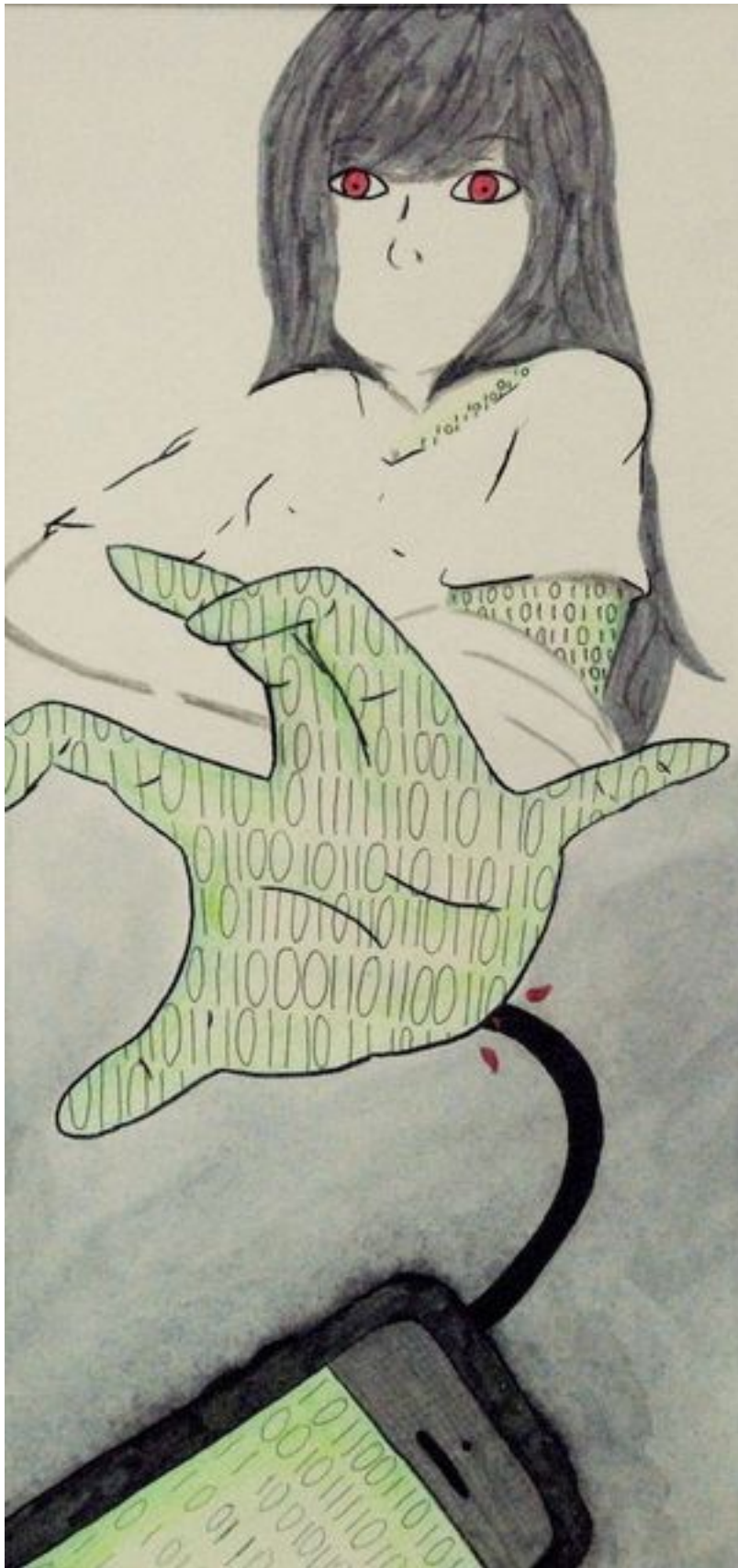
What does love look like in today's world?
A slew of texts waiting to be unfurled?
Maybe an emoticon with heart eyes,
Perhaps an emoji bouquet that never dies?
But what does that amount to?
No sweet way to say "I love you"
Not even spelled out,
Or better yet, said out loud...
We've reduced love to a ding,
Sometimes not even a real ring,
Just a short vibration
Occasionally laced with temptation
But once met face to face
In an unusual place
We are quiet.
We are silenced like the ringer on our phones
Sitting next to each other, feeling alone
Our minds racing wishing to tap words into texts
Because our mouths seem to be locked,
Not knowing what to expect
"Hey"
"Hi"

Is the awkward silence a product of nerves?
Or is it the inability to speak real words?
Shamelessly we send texts
Knowing exactly what to say next
We speak with short phrases
Nothing spoken that amazes
We become tongue-tied with simple words
No nouns, no verbs
Just empty phrases with awkward pauses
"What's up?"
"Nm, u?"
"Just chillin"

We've failed to connect unless we're on wifi
Why?
What happened to eye contact?
What happened to those long-winded messages?
Full of interesting sentences
Now reduced to an awkward exchange
"see ya"
"talk to you later"

Now, this is what troubles to me
What used to be someone standing in front of me
Now a blank stare as if looking at a screen
Do we really even need to meet?

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Nicole Turen - Cannot Disconnect

If She Could, She'd Choose The Sea

By Jane Jemmi

Shameless is the sea she splashes in with a defiance for simplicity. She rebels only when she truly feels she has nothing to lose and she feels that often. She longs for adventure- gelato in Rome, Parisian dinner dates, biking the Golden Gate Bridge- but stays rooted in her hometown. But oh, she dreams. She would swallow the sun if it would make her days brighter. The moon hangs on her every word. Love has a way of making her uncomfortable, because she tires of temporary people. She struggles to remember nothing is permanent. Things are kept simple in her soul but her heart tends to run away at times. She can never follow her own rules. When she gets lost while driving, she becomes a time bomb, suddenly anxious to return to a place she had finally escaped. There may be more to this. You won't ever find her with a cup of tea- no, her beverage of choice since age five is chocolate milk. The caffeine keeps her up later than her thoughts. She sleeps to forget, if she sleeps at all. She can appreciate music by day but lives it by night. Each piece of her heart is a jagged sea glass red that should be able to foresee pain by now. However, she learns more about herself with every forgiving tear. And she fights to be free like the pure white sea foam that curls itself around her ankles and cleanses her without the need to settle and make a home.

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Someone's playing the piano

By Elle Sammarco

It's dim the house is silent, the only thing bright enough to see are the flickering streetlights down the street. No one is home, the room is empty, but someone's playing the piano. Sitting in what used to be my mother's chair, I zone into the sound of someone playing the song my mother played for me as a child, the tune that had a soft mellow beat to it. I can hear my beautiful mother's soprano voice shooting up to those high notes that I always wondered how she made sound so perfect. A melody that could be stuck in your head for days on end, but you'd never get sick of it. Sitting in my own sadness for what seemed like forever I got up and looked in the room...the keys were being played but there was no one sitting there actually playing. Turning off the lights to see a shadow start to appear, I didn't realize who it was until it took me a second to realize that I knew who it was...it was my mother. Falling to my knees as the sound that should never stop comes to a fade...I sit and weep wishing for her to come back.

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Seth Vervaet - Insomnia

Where I Would Rather Be **By Ellery Wiemer**

Cold, dragging nights. February,
I sit in the gloom. Lombard
dead like a cemetery.
Thoughts of the lake bombard:
smells of crisp pine and fresh air,
sand too hot to walk. Soothing
high tides and lawn chairs.
But trapped in Illinois, refusing
this rusty wood desk for pontoon
floating like a butterfly. Feel
the heat blazing in June,
refusing a truth that is real,
and presence not concrete. I'll never let go
for this place is real. Summer say hello.

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Dad **By Jianna-Rae Lesavage**

Home is a blacktop driveway
Sidewalk winding up to the garage
Cracks scattered about
And so begins the "how nots"
Hoop stands nervously
Wavering in the wind
Faded backboard

Sloped court
Tall wooden fence to my left
Warped chain link fence to my right
Ferocious beasts on the other side
Yard just beyond
Filled with landmines
The ball gets swallowed up.
Do I hop over or walk around?
Either way is a pain in the ass.
Speakers spew static
Daylight fades too quickly
Flood light never positioned quite right
And our shots don't always go in,
But that's okay.
Home is not about perfect basketball.
It's about the chalk on my pants from "keeping score"
The sound of swishes when we hit our rhythm
How the cracked sidewalk marks the free throw line
And those ferocious beasts lick my face
And protect my home.
This is where we became engineers.
Explorers.
It took us around the world
We rode horses and tamed pigs,
This is where bent rims and faded backboards create projects
Broken speakers create loud music
Chain link fences create mad hops
And this blacktop driveway creates memories that will last a lifetime

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Summer Nights
By Lexi Witt

The light breeze blows in through the window

Carrying a smell of burning wood from a neighbor's fire pit,

Hitting the curtains that slowly drift away from the wall and

Move around as if dancing.

Silence fills the street

But it's a silence that carries faint noises

Of cars driving in the distance.

Streetlights brighten lonely roads.

Soft moonlight shines down on lawns

Where crickets rest on the soil.

Nearby owls sit on tree branches hidden

By rumbling leaves hitting each other from whistling wind.

I sit on my deck feeling de-stressed,

While the breeze hits my loose shirt and

Goes through my hair.

There is nothing worth worrying about.

I lose track of time distracted by enjoyable weather.

I wish these summer nights were endless.

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Kelly Womack - Cut Off The Head And Two Will Grow

Garden Maze

By Dana Hoffman

I dance in timeless circles up and down the path as a wave bounces endlessly in an abyss at night. The bushels of leaves reach heights unimaginable, there is no spoiling the outcome.

Seeking and searching for a pathway unblocked, I grow more curious of the mysteries held in the center. Stronger and faster, I hunt down my demons. I face my fears and conquer my past.

Now, reaching the endpoint of the maze, I gaze upon beauty at the center of the garden. A pond lay gracefully in the middle, moon light strikes the petals of the water lilies.

I have found grace and beauty, nature embraces me with cool breeze. This is it, I have won the war in my mind and no longer shall I forget the journey I endured.

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Her Button Was Undone

By Sophie Khan

Her feet wore ruby-red velvet heels, resting on pencil-thin towers
Her ankles flexed, exposing her perfectly toned legs with every step
she took

Her skirt was taped air tight to her thighs, which exposed the two
flawlessly robust mounds of skin behind her

Her shirt was crisply creased, not a wrinkle in the silken sea of black
she wore

Her arms were perfectly polished, showing off the golden glaze of summertime sun

Her hair was a sleek river of hazelnut brown, raked back into a firm ponytail that left no chance for hair to escape its tight grip

Her eyes were sapphire blue galaxies that beamed with pride

Yet, her button was undone

She was perfectly imperfect

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Years Wasted

By Ben Symonds

Hours and hours spent here everyday,

Hanging from the cracked ceiling, just one dimmed light.

The unforgettable nightmares never go away,

Creature-infested carpets are not an appealing sight.

Gloomy surroundings have no effect

on children who play for hours on end.

Years of darkness turn to neglect,

On their own they are left to fend.

Buckets of toys overwhelm the eye,

As timeworn spiders climb the walls.

Childhood memories wait to die,

Since the time children first learned to crawl.

Fighting, playing, sleeping, this place was constantly a mess,

It transpired to be a room free of stress.

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Don't Forget the Little Things **By Hannah Szczepanik**

Don't forget the little things

When I'm gone
Don't forget
I wrote you everyday
The simple notes holding so much truth

When I'm gone
Don't forget
The Eskimo kisses
That left stained feeling on your nose
Forever holding comfort

When I'm gone
Remember the long talks while walking in the rain
Soaking through our clothes
Our bodies numb but our minds flowing

When I'm gone

Don't you dare
Forget that my favorite color is blue
Second favorite is green
You might need to know that...

When I'm gone come to my funeral
You must smile
Because you must know
You made my life worth living

When I'm gone
You must Love me.
Love me
Even though I'm rotting
Underneath

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HOW TO BREAK.

By Sam Reyes

There are easy steps in the path to losing
the essence
of yourself.

They are specific, but I am sure you are capable of achieving them to
the final tier. The final tear. The final tear.

Look around, but keep your head down. No one wants you to spread
your curiosities, as they are busy walking in straight lines with their
habitual confrontations with authority, as they do every week.

Speak up, but shut up. Not everyone wants to hear what you have to
say, and the ones that do ask you to repeat and repeat and repeat over

and over and over until you are tired and your stomach is sore from the frustration built up inside you. What does mellifluous mean?

Do nothing wrong, do everything wrong. No one wants someone picture-perfect. They need to have grooves and chips, like the shapely muscles of a marble man from the renaissance.

Walk, run. Run faster, faster faster FASTER FASTER FASTER. Away from the tsunami that has followed you for years, taunting you with soaked pant legs and eyes.

Contrasts are keys, elements to the mind in which we have no absolute control over and if you think for one goddamn second that you have the reigns--
Then you need to learn your abcs
Once more.

Your lover is panicking.

Yell at yourself. Let him listen to the abhorrence carried within the duffle bag that's held between your lungs. Let him wonder what he did wrong whilst you scream obscenities to yourself. He panics and you breathe in the color of the room in which you are trembling. You will not have a good night then, but it will be worth it.

It is a fickle thing, a petty thing, bestowed in front of you. You lose grip on your priorities and sidetrack and wander a little too much and write a little too little you are gasping and teachers shake their head. Paint the word petty onto a hundred pound weight, let it fall onto your neck. It isn't a big deal.

Let your mother get mad at you for the dishes that were left as tarnished as the words on your tongue waiting to be spat onto the bathroom mirror. Fight the urge to snap back because you can't always control yourself and you always tended to be a wordy soul with too many sentences packed up into a cartoon-esque case, bulging with dirty clothes and without any spare change. You have an excuse to be this obstreperous, this clouded.

Yet you actually don't. Make sure not to say anything like this, as you will sound self-aware in your acts and though you can do them without hesitation you do not want to admit that you do so, be humble about how wretched of a body that you have grown to be. Don't face your issues that are blatant. If you try to turn and face them, they hide in lockers and bed sheets and behind chat logs.

Lay in bed and relax, do nothing, just let your homework rest on the nightstand without the scars of granite they so proudly should wear. You have no responsibilities, You have no inclinations, no obligations. Your alarm clock has been dormant for the past three months.

Just blankets. Blankets wake you up with a nudge a little too light, a voice a little too hushed and sweet. Just like you wanted.

Allow everyone to pile on their responsibilities with mouths just as restless as your own, with teeth unbrushed or throats sore, tongues still tasting the salt of their own lives. Stack the rest of yours onto your back. You have no control, yet people call you sweet and they call you the best thing they have ever seen and if you were ignorant you would have been able to see that they were RIGHT.

Just
Just--

Let it go. Let it go. Let it go. Let those tears go and let your lover vomit out only air from their stomach, as it hasn't seen food in days. They cannot bear to scream any longer. They leave you for a meal. You lie back in bed.

Blackness. Darkness, dimness, whiteness, Nothing.

Nothing might seem like nothing, as nothing is nothing. Nothing is nothing anymore, nothing is ideal. Nothing is better. Breaking is so much better. I feel so much more happy now that I feel worse.

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Matt Zanorak - Happy Flower

In the Backseat

By Becky Marquez

In the backseat, cardboard boxes pressed against the faux-leather interior,
Plastic bags stuffed to the point of being a grenade of clothing, ready to explode,
This is all I have now.
17 and newly independent, I cruise lightless parking lots in hopes of

finding a yellow-bordered box that no one will kick me out of.
I breathe in the cold and throat spearing winter air,
I breathe in the bitter tasting joys of being a rebel,
I close my dark and baggy eyes as I wallow in a sea of self-pity that
I've created for myself.
This 4-wheel hunk of metal constricts me beyond suffocation.
I am free.
But a slave to my metal mobile cage and a man I call boss.
I belong to no one now except my cheap used \$950 car, boss and my
alarm clock.
I glance at my dash clock as I see from the corner of my eye
The numbers changed
12:00am
With a heavy sigh and a sarcastic smile, I say under my breath,
Happy birthday.
Welcome to adulthood.

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Fallen Soldier

By Becky Marquez

The common misconception, that is well used today, is the one where
your heart is the source of love. It has been scientifically proven that
the heart recycles blood and distributes it to the rest of your body and
that your brain contains all emotions and feelings.

So tell me,

Why did my chest feel so tight?

Why did I lose feeling in my fingertips when your battle brothers sent
me your last written words that were dedicated to me?

Why did my heart feel as if it were a cracked egg on a skillet?

Why did my stomach feel as if it had been dropped from a 30-story
building?

Why did you leave?

Why did you melt me with your "I love you" and your "I'll see you
soon"?