

The Ultraviolet Issue

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The University of South Carolina
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and Art

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In honor of the Ultraviolet Issue that our contributors created within these pages and the conviction that we hope it incites in our readers, our staff has composed an Exquisite Corpse to serve as this issue's Manifesto:

Ultraviolet

Whispers dance through veiled night
A melancholy kind of light

The lilac light leaks
Somber notes bordered by the beauty of life

Blinded by unobservable brightness
I talk like Rimbaud, the violent hues of TV dinners

& I reemerge, basking in the unseen
Released— in a regal wave of wandering haze

Ultraviolet is in discriminant in its choosing
All-encompassing in the light of day

Co-Editor's Letter

Dear Reader,

This past fall, The Nocturne Issue played with many themes surrounding metaphorical and literal darkness, with an emphasis on the idea that the dark is not something to be feared, but something to be embraced and utilized and accepted in order to move through life, for we cannot sit in the dark forever.

Now that we find ourselves on the cusp of spring, we've the opportunity to emerge anew like the fragrant magnolia blossoms lining our campus, basking in light so warm and glorious it can often be imperceptible to the human eye.

The Ultraviolet Issue celebrates the nonlinearity of existence, continual reemergence, and the ups and downs that come with being alive.

Thank you, Dr. Malphrus, for leading by example in living a life in the light, and for reflecting your prisms of wisdom and inspiration to your students.

Thank you to our Co-Editor, Chad Merritt, as well as to Editorial Board members Elizabeth Blanchard, Cameron Chen, Jackson Cox, Thillah Maybin Arocho, Logan Murray, and Rebecca Taliaferro, for all of your hard work over the semester. Creating these journals takes a sort of creativity, humility, and work ethic that no one is born with, and I admire you all for your willingness to contribute to

the artistic culture of USCB through the creation of this journal. You've done more for your peers than you know, and I look forward to seeing what you all do with *The Pen* in the coming semesters.

Thank you, reader, for picking up this issue of *The Pen*, for having the courage to read and understand and live in spite of it all, to look for the light we cannot always see. Thank you for trusting me with the privilege of co-editing and editing on this journal for a year-and-a-half. My time on this staff has taught me more than I could've imagined, and I am very, very grateful to have worked with and for a number of wonderful people.

I'm a big advocate for awareness of the world and being an active participant in the change you wish to see, though I know it's easier said than done, I hope you're able to resist the current of the seemingly never-ending sources of darkness. I hope you enjoy the art of living. I hope you read and write the words that free you. I hope that you are able to create a life of luminescence, of all the dazzling colors that bring you joy, even if you sometimes find that you're the only one who can see them.

All my love,

Sophia McKeehan
Co-Editor

Co-Editor's Letter

Dear Reader,

How joyous it is to have another issue here in your hands, at this moment. We thank you, most of all, for continuing to read the journal that we love to put out every semester.

Hours and hours of collaborative work has led to this specific second in space and time, with you choosing to pick up this violet portrait in your hands, ready to indulge yourself with the bold, vibrant and vivacious work of the ever-so talented creators in this journal. It is, of course, always a pleasure, to not only read everyone's work, but to breathe it, to feel it surrounding us like the sun in the dew-dropped morning.

I've been on *The Pen*'s editorial board for three semesters now, and believe me when I say that the submissions we read just get better and better. These creators keep delivering on every level, and it elates me to see their work blossom and continually sit in bloom.

As for the staff, thank you. My friends, this book would not be possible without all of you. This is it: the product of your hard work, and you crafted it from nothing, from springtime, rain-tinged air to a flowerbed with all its pages and beautiful inscriptions.

And to Sophia, thank you for all the semesters of the most dedicated work I've ever seen. It will be a

challenge to live up to *half* of what you've accomplished here. It's been an honor.

Chad Merritt
Co-Editor

Advisor's Letter

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the Ultraviolet issue of *The Pen*. As you read expressions of the human condition that are contained between the covers of this handsome journal, I invite you to consider celebration and certainty, along with angst and doubt—all situated just beyond the visible spectrum of existence, in those “ultraviolet” chambers of the human heart. What matters most is often unseen, isn't it? And yet the writers and visual artists represented here have strung together words and created images that helped transform that which is invisible into the volume you hold in your hands. Oh, the transcendent magic of creativity.

Yet that magic would not be shared in this way if it were not for the talented staff of *The Pen*. The team has been led this semester by an extraordinarily dedicated pair of Co-Editors, Sophia McKeehan and Chad Merritt. Sophia will be leaving us this semester to pursue her graduate studies in the fall, but her legacy of devotion to the USCB Society of Creative Writers and *The Pen* will remain as an example of unflagging professionalism. We will miss her. We will also miss graduating senior and former editor Selena Menjivar, who holds the record of the longest serving member of The Pen staff. The good news is that leadership now lies in the capable hands of Chad Merritt. More than leaders, both Sophia and Chad are team members who have worked alongside fellow top-notch staff members Elizabeth Blanchard, Jackson Cox, Logan

Murray, Rebecca Taliaferro, and newcomers
Cameron Chen and Thillah Maybin Arocho.

Finally, it is with utter delight that I tell you *The Pen* has been recognized nationally—for the seventh time! We were awarded First Place in the American Scholastic Press Association’s annual competition for the sixth time, with outstanding marks for content coverage, organization, design, presentation, and creativity—and we were selected to receive the rank of “Distinguished” by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in the Recognizing Excellence in Art and Literary Magazines (REALM) Competition. What wonderful accolades—not only for our editorial team, but also for the diverse student writers and artists whose contributions were honored, and for the University of South Carolina Beaufort.

Ever onward!

Ellen Malphrus
USCB Writer in Residence
Faculty Advisor for The Pen and the Society of
Creative Writers

Imposter's End

Elizabeth Blanchard

In the dim night
Moon holds only light
Perpetual adoration lives on
with no chords, no chorus, no song

Trust traced by hand,
Blank ink laced each line,
Segments of my soul
pour onto page—
forcing their stoic silence
to tell its shame

Wick exhausted down to wax,
smoke rises, steeples collapse,
words unite
&
I burn as I write.

Fever Dreams: An homage to Scott Fitzgerald

Z

I want to be a thing

I want to be a thing

The reason why drool drops from pursed lips

That have just been licked

For the sixth time since you laid eyes on me

I want to be a thing

Compare me to a summer's heifer

Pull my udders make me moan

Too late

The butcher came

My howls filled fields

Eckleburg eyes stared at pasture grass soaked in my
blood

There's the gun that he aimed at the cow's head

Then at your sister

Trigger pulled

Eckleburg eyes stared once again

I want to be a thing

Not the reason why my mother's back

Is split in half from all the cracks

I jumped on

But how do you kill one who is god incarnate?

Those eyes stalk me to my house

Leaving tears at my doorstep

When I asked for blood

Not your sister's

Which pooled at your mother's cold feet

Eyes blink,

Sweaty hands grip the Tallmadge Bridge

The sirens are nearing

I release

To Die on Your Nineteenth Birthday

Chad Merritt

it rained the day i turned eighteen
as steady and silent as a cradled
cloud approaching autumn, tangled up
in every word i have ever known
and leaves shift to a browned dead
crisp and fall, to my feet and fathoms down

like apparitions, hallucinations groan
aquiver, for the trembling hosts have
poem apothecaries, filled shelves for
a broken young man to traverse
an inner shadow sewn long and aching
by the grey sun, i am become the shadow life

and the shadow death, all within myself
for another nineteen years of poetry, today
an old shell is shelter to an eternity of mistakes
and tomorrow, oh, how i long for tomorrow.
an old shell is blinded theatrics, a coward's
knife to cut every tie, every leaf from grass

and draw blood from devotion's wreckage
a banished blade, welded from the depths
of mindless quarries to another sharpened
edge: the sold symbolic sound
of new life on my nineteenth birthday.

Your Warning Hymn Might Change

Rebecca Taliaferro

*Bruised and bloody
purple eyes strain to see
a love that doesn't always hurt,
or at least not the love you imagined.*

*Longing kisses and light gestures does little
to stop the prayers of sweet release.*

But how long are you allowed those thoughts?

*Because folded hands and pale skin
can no longer reflect
on a love that doesn't hurt.*

For they can only display one that has.

777

Tyler Johnson

she's the kind of woman that'll
stick to your fingers,
follow you home and tap on
your opposite shoulder,
shake her head to what matters
and leave you prying and poking
for a blink of passion.

you've seen her on the t.v.,
heard her on the radio,
seen her sulking behind the register
of your local liquor store,
not batting an eye to the nudist
or laughing for the failing comedian.

she doesn't sing on tightrope,
but will tell birds to just walk
she won't pass on some praise,
she keeps old flames in her pocket
to light up an old man's candle,
and drip the wax from her spine
onto a letter to explain where
she's been, and where
she will be.

if you're on a train to Omaha,
she'll smile and say
"you're going nowhere"
then turn some keys,
unlock some doors,

and let in the man you swore
 was a locksmith,
to have a crack at your safe
and a night in your slippers.

a slight smirk will erode your sullenness,
for the rails will take you
 far beyond Nebraska
and she, alongside the man
 with a stethoscope,
will keep listening for clicks
but it's not until they unseal
 to discover you're gone,
that she loses balance on the tightrope,
and the birds tell her to just walk.

j walt

Chad Merritt

reach back into your youth
and pluck from the branches
the son of isaac, his helmet
visor reflecting all prior to
the eighth grade dance
do you remember that?
or does memory serve
another crumpled dream
the mirrors of which are
strewn all along the
highway, with bruised
fruit and potholes and you
forget he was always
just a person away
now: a dusted lifetime
so when you see him
think to quip quick
before he goes on
to another friend
that you both know
but never at the same
time, you'll regret
not tinkering, the same
way you'll regret
not knowing him longer
or taking the time to
know him any at all.

A Chapter In Death's Seat

Elizabeth Blanchard

(inspired by William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*)

This time, I mourn behind my funeral—
Befallen to forget forgiven foes
I hear the faint, soft slanting cry of yours
Remains can lie upon my tomb in ground
Chrysanthemums cascade beneath it all
The ravens sit, surround, and burn awhile
Tonight's await will rise the passing rain
As I, the low and untold, *Lay Dying*.

Her

Rebekah Garbutt

They look at her first
They laugh at all her jokes
Her smile livens up a room
You take one look at her and you're in love
And when I stand next to her and I see how he looks
at her
I know he's fallen too.
I wish he would look at me
Not her

Maybe it's jealousy, or envy
But it's hard when you can see the power she holds
They'll always chose her
But I'm not her
There's her and her friend
That's me
I'm there to ask what she likes, dislikes, enjoys
I'm there to play matchmaker while my love life is
lackluster
I wish someone would see me
But I'm not her
And she'll never understand
But I wouldn't expect her to.



Savior Complex

Lessle Rodriguez

Medium: graphite and colored pencils on Bristol
paper – 19x15”

Outside the Binary

Haim

To grow up lost is a world of itself
To be split so far between
Quietly banished into an unknown
Not understanding why and never being told
A ward of silence left only to confusion
And then one day light appears
Spreading through cracks in the darkness
A feeling of a Spring bloom overwhelms
Warmth washes away the tears
Eye opening I'm found
Not within the unknown
But traveling to a new home
One that's been waiting for me
And as I walk I see others alike
Others lost
But now we've found, a reality unveiled
A home illuminated
Cracking through the unknown
Our home outside the binary.

A Vengeful Kiss
Rebecca Taliaferro

My trust is bestowed upon your cheek
And bathe in it you shall.

My eyes sing the words
My mouth will not say
My hands cradle you
My beloved world.

Breaking free of my loving hold
Is something you cannot do.

Because you were given unto me
A sentiment frowned upon by you.

Your eyes lit with venom
Your mouth yearns to say
Your hands scar mine
Your world, now torn.

This resentment only draws your blood
And bathe in it you shall.

Burden Barbie

Z

You take handfuls of her hair and put it in a locket
Kiss her till your lips turn blue
And when she doesn't kiss you back
You know exactly what to do

Throw her against the wall
Till she bleeds glitter and bullshit
What the fuck is wrong with this barbie?
What the fuck is wrong with this barbie?

Hi

I'm Barbie

You want me to make you young again
So I give you a locket of my locks
You want me to make you whole
So I start to take my mismatch parts and sew them
into your soul
You want to feel good about yourself
So my legs go weak and I become helpless only to
find that no one is there
You want someone to listen
So I hear you till my head implodes with all the
bullshit you feed me
But my smile won't crack
My lips are chapped from all of the mouths that
have kissed me
That now have all seemed to disappear
I have cellulite thighs and want to cry
But I can't shed a single plastic tear

I was never good Kenough at listening, giving
advice
Making people feel whole again
I was never a good daughter, mother, friend, lover
and especially not a good soul mate

I'm literally just a piece of plastic
I'm trash
I'm junk
I'm all out of luck
Cause barbies don't die
And well I
I am just a burden with a great embrace

Hi
I'm Barbie
I'm Burden Barbie

bestowal

Sophia McKeehan

funny how the eastern bluebird never lands close
enough
some insect or other waits for her sisters' return
i hope they return

i carelessly smear black ink on my cheek
and my mind cogs back
to last night's obscenely late shower

breathing too fast
knowing this will end
someday

and yet

i can't help but watch the ground move under my
worn shoes
the small piece of quartz on my desk
books to be read

love letters in my drawer
coffee in my mouth
poetry on my tongue

and think
not yet
not yet.

***the seventh suicide of eden supernova, as observed
by the famed film critic phantom***

Chad Merritt

(inspired by *New York Movie* by Edward Hopper)

the night projector, smoke from eden's juke
arose to crimson curtains, chokes and thieves
the slowed perennial canal of heartbeats
bombarding ribs, convulsions that assume

façades of solitude, and bluing screws,
the glowing motion picture show, backseats
of taxis on manhattan roads' deceit
all bleed the same released defiled blues.

and when my introspection ends, and when
my frock is lashed by drops and ghosts, benign
within my books, the reel that just won't end,
i will corrode so that my bones incline

a flesh to brine, descent aligned, condemned
by nine, ascended lives, enshrined by knives.

Midnight's Pacing Around the Room

Elizabeth Blanchard

The correspondence breathes of pain and paint
Its complicated nature dies a saint

The call of Oxford lives inside the mine
An institution enters voyage minds

Please

Hope Taylor

Have hope in my future during

Ever evolving times and

Love for my being as

Past, present, future versions

Morph into my one

Eternal being

The Odalisque's Charade

Rebecca Taliaferro

Lousing upon silken sheets,
glossed looks spies over shoulders.

Ruffled hair and porcelain skin freckled pink
Invites all and deludes some.

Poised as a statue, yet you preen
under their lustful eyes.

Your back turns,
and your breath steadies.

Angling away just enough
to trap them once again.



Bullfrog Reflection
Lindsay Pettinicchi
Medium: photography

Pond of Lilies
Traliya Mitchell

I despised you
now I embrace you
I ran
you chased
my springtime warmth
by the water
bittersweet
you are collected fragments
of memories
and suddenly
everything has meaning

When I've Found You

Q Fields

(Inspired by Disney Prince and Princess Stories)

I was determined to find love,
The way that you cared for me
I figured you were my special dove.

Clouded thoughts and lonely nights
the thought of infatuation was absent,
But when you came around I knew I had to take the
main role
and not just the background enactment.

40 days and 40 nights
the Israelites wandered in the wilderness,
Our first conversation wandered in my heart so far
that the spot you had in it grew rampant and
endless.

The need for quality time
was definitely evident,
because the aura you have
is buoyant, bodacious, and benevolent.

Who am I?
a dynamic dude,
Who are you?
a girl with a heart that's been screwed.

God didn't make you
for you to be desolate,
He needed you to wait

so that you could engulf in my love that is
unconditional and intimate.

So take my hand
and be my guide,
Show me the way
to your love that's been disguised.

And get those Christmas lights hanging
for the gift I'm going to unwind,
Because only in your heart
is the only place I would love to reside.

Tale as Old as Time

Kathryn Tovar

I know of a place deep in the woods
That hides a dark deep cavern
Where lives our dreaded Creature
Though he is not the danger, he sleeps deep and in
peace

It was not just our creature who awaited her
summons
But also the invisible Beast which watched in the
shadows

She longed for the bed in their shadows
On her return, found a voracious need for her
beloved in the woods
She waited to see him cross the way and waited for
his summons
It started with a kiss that was as deep, and dark as a
cavern
Which warmed her and led her to feel at peace
And he was ecstatic in her whispered "Creature"

All this time the Beast laid and burned for our
Creature
Watched even more furiously as he carried her off
to his shadows
How had he found peace?
He contributed his enemy's joy to his guest he met
in the woods
She would say it was the sybaritic love in the cavern
Enthralled our creature would say he was glad he
answered her summons

The Beast was enraged by her call forgetting his summons
And she had answered gratefully because she longed for our Creature
Not realizing it was the Beast's magic that called her to the cavern
That his enemy would think it was he who should claim her shadows
Yet our creature kept on living, enjoying her and the woods
Which he was rewarded the carnal pleasure of their union, he also gained the peace

The two of them had one another and eternal peace
One you only have when your spirit finds one who craves the same summons
Which they had found lying together in the woods
She knew she should fear our Creature
But could not find him to be terrifying, even in ruinous shadows
So secure was she, not knowing that there was danger in the cavern

The Beast destroyed her in the cavern
All that was made by the two was crushing their peace
Our creature held her, but it slowly killed her filling her with the Beast's shadows
Which never frightened him before, but now they had such a dark summons
Called for him to take revenge like an animal, or beast, or like his nature a creature
But instead of giving into carnal rage, he took her to the woods

If you go into the woods and you'll find a cavern
If you search you will see our Creature, forever
weeping for peace to return
Some will feel a Beast summoning; for you to be
his beauty in their shadows

Deception and Greed

Kayla Sheriffe

Deception and greed.

How else would you describe the land of the
“free”?

Narrated by cheats and believed in heartbeats.

Although, the true story is incomplete.

Stolen off our land, packed on ships like sardines.

We're told it was a favor, Africa is for the weak.

Infested with fleas, and children have nothing to
wear on their feet. That's no place to be.

We're told we wouldn't have survived, that defeat
was destined to be.

Then how is it centuries later, our home has become
a popular retreat?

Rich in resources and wealth exceeds.

Sounds like the American Dream to me.

Remember my words of deception and greed.

Leaving our accomplishments out of the textbook to
mislead.

Forcing us to believe we don't have what it takes to
succeed.

Our reflections must be integrated into teachings in
order for the message to be received.

After all our triumph is how this country came to
be.

Crispus Attucks, first person to bleed so this
country can be free.

But that didn't stop them from beating us in the
streets.

Selling us to other masters, then going over the receipts.

That's deception and greed.

Because the truth sets in that we are what they will never be.

So, they mislead, proofread, and release this altered version of American history.

It's contradictory

You're welcome

- creator of the land of the free

L'amour Au-delà

Traliya Mitchell

I love you,
does not embody the weight of my feelings.
there are no words in our language
strong enough to express,
so I'll tell you
I love you,
til my last heartbeat,
with my last breath.
yet even that is not enough to express
how, Je t'aime de toute mon âme

Heed

Thillah Maybin Arocho

Abide by me,
For supplication is in way.
Their hands reaching out for hands.
Hearken, the bare shall be honored.
Take them as they are.
Selah.
Take them as they are.
Hearken, the bare shall be honored.
Their hands reaching out for hands.
For supplication is in way,
Abide by me.
Selah.

A Trip to the Bottom

Logan Murray

I justify myself as I turn key in ignition,
Pardoning doubt before my mission.
I can't sleep without it; I remind myself,
Barren, lies the bottle on the shelf.

I drive away in earsplitting silence,
As not to betray connubial alliance.
She sleeps in ignorance and trust,
I peel away, filled with disgust.

I pass a beggar before the door,
I judge him as though I'm worth more.
The cashier gives a familiar glance,
As she readies for our nightly dance.

I grab the gas station's finest libation,
Eager to feel her temporary salvation.
I sheepishly approach feeling her eyes,
I think of turning back before all hope dies.

As predicted, I complete the transaction,
I chug the swill in one swift action.
I return home, breath reeking of shame,
Lie in the bed from which I came.

She doesn't know, so it can't hurt her.
But God Dammit, She doesn't deserve this.

The jump

Traliya Mitchell

Love is like jumping in the deep end
heart beats increased; fear inclined
Weight of the water
crosses your mind
before you jump
into the cold rebirth
And for you I'd jump a thousand times



Southeastern Searocket

Jen McCarty

Medium: pencil and markers on paper – 10x8”

ode to a safe space

Sophia McKeehan

i sit amidst a sea of hemlock and chickweed
overgrown
solitary queendom where the unwanted things find
their rest
copper water laps against forgotten fountain's stone

recasted garden of eden self-sown
a soft bed awaits, woven from daisies and
watercress
i sit amidst a sea of hemlock and chickweed
overgrown

up above, a canopy of bottle brush escapes a groan
whilst a gust ushers in summer's snow, a welcomed
guest
copper water laps against forgotten fountain's stone

browned gardenia petals gather on the shore
windblown
and mussels dressed in black sing at the retreating
wave's behest
i sit amidst a sea of hemlock and chickweed
overgrown

head peers over water where the sun a moment ago
shone
an image backdropped dark blue, the surface
reflects
copper water laps against forgotten fountain's stone

and for a moment, my esse is not solely my own
but a shared esse within this utopia of appeal
unstressed
as i sit amidst a sea of hemlock and chickweed
overgrown
and copper water laps against forgotten fountain's
stone

Basal Cogitations of the Mariana Warrior

Jackson Cox

What can one do but plummet into the whispering
dark?

Malign pain lingers under the hull of an aching
knight

The deception of svelte hands, their grip absolute
Vestiges of a shattered ego hang like iron weight

Drink in the dulcet elixir of the crushing sea
Bound to an incorporeal zenith as an ephemeral idol

Gambol in the gold, fate preys on those who idle

Beware the hungry jaws of the incipient dark

It will devour any and all until none are left to see
How easy it is to wander astray in labyrinthine night

Epiphany hides behind penumbra unable to wait

Who could know the secrets most absolute?

No one knows the secrets most absolute.

Archaic blood drips from a long-forgotten idol

The sand of time engulfs knowledge with its weight

Untold murmurings escape into beckoning dark

Seducing the heart of a once noble knight

Rhapsodic melodies call out from a somnolent sea

Visceral visages are all that pale eyes can see

Desultory thoughts breed cataclysms absolute

Look beyond the furthest edge of night

Hollow ambitions slow the minds river to an idle

Witness the lies tumbling forth from whispering
dark

There is no excuse, no reason to wait

Threadbare bindings release unneeded weight
Starlight reflects on the mirrored face of the sea
There is some comfort within the languid dark
The peace helps unravel what was once absolute
Cast off the fell chains of your would-be idol
Honor is not lost on the disillusioned knight

Woebegone ideation meets its moiety in the night
Sanctuary can be found after an endless wait
But without intention the symphony will idle
There is still more silence for one soul to see
Though these feeble torments are not absolute
As the offering delivers the sun out of the dark

The weight of an idol is forgotten beneath the sea
Nothing is absolute.
Rise, rise, lost knight, in resistance of the
whispering dark.

Thousand Years of Howling

Chad Merritt

(inspired by “The Delight Song of Tsoai-talee” by
N. Scott Momaday)

I am the lilac-hued
 sky on the misted plain
I am the weeping wind
 of the Redwood’s still breath
I am the titian fingernails
 of a tree on a late August ground
I am the swallowed sweat
 of the gulf’s sore throat
I am the hermit’s house
 laid upon the Eastern coast
I am the blooming blood
 of the Petunia’s stark veins
I am the stretched tangerine
 of an evening horizon
I am the vicious visage
 of the nebula’s shutting mind
I am the drifting lumber
 of a faded faraway land
I am the dreaming deaths
 of Angel Oak’s swelled wrists
I am the mushroomed soil
 devouring bone & rot
I am the gracing gleam
 of the sun’s wicked eye
I am the coyote in the dusk,
 bound to a thousand years of howling
I am the reaching song of the mountainside
 I am the cold, clean light of the moon

And I am the clouds between
As Ursa Minor tears closed the night
I am no Whitman,
mutters the earthworm
I am no Oliver, I am no Yeats
And I am no Momaday.

54

Hope Taylor

I'd die for you,
just two souls created
from the same star
yearning to come together again

I remain broken
in a state of despair
with no way to show
I'd die for you

No possibility of speaking my mind
Silently shouting for you to notice
surreptitiously reaching for your touch
I'd die for you

Loving you in full
Without the knowledge of how to forget
How much more could one want,
best friends and lovers
I dream of our life while hiding under my covers
I'd die for you

I love you not strong enough,
that means nothing
Darling, I'm still unable to reach, but
based on us we may be one in the same
I'd die for you

That is too easy
With you it doesn't suffice

So instead, I'll leave you with this
Until nature takes my very last breath

I'll live for you

It is

Haim

I have found treasure and I have seen ruin
I have tasted the stars
I have fallen into the deep
I have danced through the night
I have snoozed through the day
I have cried to the sky
I have stood silent against the crowd
I have loved and I have lost
I have experienced a million things
And yet far from everything
But I have learned one thing
That the journey isn't over until

hands of time

Laura Payne

so round and furry
no care in the world
letting life pass by
next to me, curled

like this forever,
i wish it could stay
but in my heart i know
there will come a day.

but as for right now,
my best friend you'll be
by my side, my comfort
as long as you allow me

the sun will still shine
the flowers will still grow
but a life without you here
is one i never want to know

Last life

Traliya Mitchell

Beautifully cruising with the wind.
Abruptly crashing into sound.
The journey is no longer your friend,
Slain, you laid on the ground.

Below The Belt

Thillah Maybin Arocho

Striking,

Blow after blow.

With the lift of your tongue,

Here I stand, wounded— deeply scarred.

Betrayed



The Brine

Jen McCarty

Medium: acrylic on paper – 10x12”

Beldam Cuisine

Jackson Cox

(Inspired by Francisco Goya's *Witches' Flight*)

Magicians three, imbibe defiling soul
Elated leeches kiss at flesh ensnared
Arcane designs repulse all but the foal
Taboo, thine grasp, avow to be unscared

Corrupted acts, akin to the perverse
A man, himself gourmet to cruel delights
Resist seducing words fermenting curse
Bystanders flee, dismayed blaspheming sights

Fulfill the heart's utmost depraved impulse
Remorse exhausts, accept displeasing taste
Unknown to most, debauching might repulse
Ingested superstitions all erased

Tonight we dance amongst sublime unknowns
Succumb to greed and gnaw upon the bones

To Wan's mother in 1587

Kathryn Tovar

To Wan's mother,

I felt the need to start off with a thanks. Thank you for giving me the courage to write roughly about grief that has and will be. I felt moved by your voice which has transcended time and space. I don't think even you can begin to comprehend the space and time you moved. It is a truth universal, Wan's mother, that grief and pain is part of the human experience. How did you capture the paradox of grief on a page? That it is through our profound love that we truly profoundly grieve.

I wonder what happened to you, where you went, who you loved next. I truly don't think you died of a broken heart leaving Wan alone. I imagine another man, who might understand that pain of grief. I like to imagine you had a life that you built together in this world, during your time.

I like to imagine I could do that too. That after all the profound horrific anguish I have felt in my life, I can move on. You gave me that fear that I just didn't know I could have. That my husband, my person, could be gone before I'm ready to lose him. I think too, you and your husband really did have the eternal human experience in your conversation:

“Dear, do other people cherish and love each other like we do? Are they really like us?”

That's something my husband and I have wondered too. That even centuries later, we humans just crave to be loved. Couples ask the same question, long after you are gone. We question if it's true, that others love just as deeply as we do. Surely, we are unique in our deep love for our own person. That if we love them so uniquely then our mourning must also be unique.

In that moment, when you wrote it, you were in that state humans know all too well. We ache to think about enduring it and we have also thought we wouldn't survive through the grieving pain. That pain, I have not experienced, the loss of my husband is not one I relish you in having. I do not think I could endure what you have, and I fear the day that it could happen.

But you're more than words on a page, Wan's mother. You aren't just your sorrow which has touched so many. You grew beyond that agony. I know you had to, the world continues even if we are in pain. Even for you.

I have to believe that's true. Because what is all that remains of me? My heartache on the page about a woman who didn't even share the same century as me. I don't even know her name. What if this is all I have left? And all I can think about is the letter I wrote my grandfather and put in his casket. Generations from now, will they dig it up? Find something in it universal? Is it grief or is it love? What did we wish to bury with our loved ones? You said it best yourself:

“You are just in another place, and not in such a deep grief as I am. There is no limit and end to my sorrows that I write roughly.”

I will hold my husband tighter for you tonight, Wan’s mother. I will dream, big dreams, he and I have together. I will imagine you being reunited with your husband, your hearts beating together again, just in another place. I like to imagine you can read this letter, and we can meet someday. I like to envision you are happy, and not in such a deep grief as I am.

Dios

Thillah Maybin Arocho

I am with you.
Whistling in the wind.
Inside the tears you cry.

Listen for me.
I'm always calling your name.
Settled in the guitar's cry.

Find me,
As I have found you,
As I love you.
As you breathe that borrowed breath.

You're never forgotten,
Always on my mind.

Loopholes

Traliya Mitchell

Loopholes

Destroyed.

Predetermined.

hopeless, helpless. *We drown*

inside our endless *Devotion.*

all's lost

Inside

Of our endless

Devotion, lies deceit.

Destroying. Wars predetermined.

We drown

Unmasking Eros

Cameron Chen

To Her

The worst thing a Girl can be is
Beautiful.

Beauty was a gilded cloak.

Her skin satin,

Her hair a latticework of embroidered threads,
eyes clusters of diaphanous gems.

Too fine, or too cheap to touch.

Aphrodite's jade, sea-salted gaze
picked at her seams.

To Her,

the worst thing a girl can be is
Beautiful.

Enscorced in a beaked mask,

cloaked in a silk void,

blessedly, Her husband was a monster.

One that She could touch.

Could fear. Could kill.

A razor biting into the palm of Her hand with
sharpened teeth,

She divulged him of his silks
and gasped.

For once

they were equals.

Because
To Her
the worst thing a Monster can be is
Beautiful.

All Else Below
Elizabeth Blanchard

fault in a beat runs the rhythm undone
collapse's gift unto you, quiets the drum
chamber's spear tightens the throat
gatherings of crows, murders of those
roses wilt by unheard tolls
epitaphs of guilt written for prose
below
all else

all else
below
epitaphs of guilt written for prose
roses wilt by unheard tolls
gatherings of crows, murders of those
chamber's spear tightens the throat
collapse's gift unto you, quiets the drum
fault in a beat runs the rhythm undone

You Are

Cameron Chen

You are the choppy void
A death clad Icarus
blithely greeted.
You are the heavy blanket of night
Settled on my shoulders
With gentle hands
Speckled with embroidered constellations.
The fabric of the universe
Weaved within your stretch.

I can't hate you.
I wouldn't know how.

You are a tepid thing.
An inscrutable thing.
Horrible, wonderous
You are the thing
That gives light
a place to fall.

Your daughter is a dragon

Kathryn Tovar

Like a child thrown on a pyre
I hear you scream your desire
That my flame be snuffed out with coals
But as I burned you froze
Because I rose from the fire
and destroyed that holy pyre
You watched as I flew away
From what really was a pathetic flame



Downtown Bluffton

Jen McCarty

Medium: acrylic on canvas – 10x8”

I shall not tell

Kathryn Tovar

Shall I tell you what I have heard about?
Ignored the signs that glared bright red, herself.
Her body called to men and she loves them.
The way they shift avoiding being seduced.
She breathes so soft and acts austere, we know;
it's just an act though. She declaims such words,
says it is speculation.
That almost sounds like something a troubled whore
would say.
He said that she took him abed and called
her own demise. She loves to choose the worst.
And worst of all she is a drunk. Imbibes
in drink— oh fuck. There she is. Smile and do not
repeat. it's just some gossip in the street.

Are You Going Home for Summer?

Chad Merritt

if you sung a little taller
i could hear you where i am
two towns over, and if
you spat out your pride
onto the sidewalk the way
my brothers used to, i could
hear that your night keeps
on going, at four a.m.
and you're in charleston
smoking one last newport
thinking about the philosopher
you used to be before
getting so tied up in work
and overdue medical bills
in the summer's melting
skinless reason, you play
over hegel's works in
your mind, and forget
the poet you were
long before any of this
long before you were
hollowed, and you were
nothing
but a lone teenager
drinking vodka in your room
before losing your mind
to the next cigarette
and the next summer
when your friends
come home, to soak up all
the nights you spent alone.

Fragmented Facsimiles

Jackson Cox

Hollow pleas distraught, but they will not stay
Repressed protesting locked within your chest
Thy raging does naught to permeate decay

Digging, digging, ever downward in the grey
A fruitless labor, though you can try your best
Hollow pleas distraught, but they will not stay

Looking forward beseeches only dismay
The days have passed when hearts professed
Thy raging does naught to permeate decay

Infatuated at first sight across a French café
Joining in your romance, but only as a guest
Hollow pleas distraught, but they will not stay

Remember that warm summer in Marseille
Forget what never could have been confessed
Thy raging does naught to permeate decay

Memories persist, embodied within a bouquet
The corpse of a love long lost, lain to rest
Hollow pleas distraught, but they will not stay
Thy raging does naught to permeate decay

All You hear is I hate men

Kathryn Tovar

I'm so exhausted with another tale of a heroic hero saving a victim of rape. I'm tired of her daddy stopping violence and protecting her purity. More importantly, I'm tired of men going off and being heroes beating in the face of rapists.

Because you don't do that, do you? You make stories where our bodies are consumable and usable. Also: they need to be protectable and predictable. We walk the lines you write and you feel all the better for it. That you, a good kind gentleman, would never violate a woman in your life.

I'm sick of you being the hero. Sick of you saving us and us weeping in your arms. I'm sick of the rape being in your perspective and your disgust towards that violent act. Because for some reason, you have to be the center of women's pain.

You are. Daddies, grandpas, uncles, and brothers, boyfriends, fiancés, husbands, and lovers. They are most likely to hurt us, more than anyone else. Does that list make you squirm? Here's something else: Colleges, roommates, coworkers, and bosses. Friends and acquaintances we met at some office. These are the violators now go be heroic and destroy the men you laugh with over poker. You make a crude joke and have a good laugh.

I'm so fucking tired of you blaming us, for patriarchy which our mothers spoon-fed us. Which they said to us: watch your skirt, watch your mouth, stop being testy. You'll attract the wrong attention, don't be so hasty. So once again we reach the point. You want to be the center of our stories. Just not this way? I'm sorry, let me rephrase.

It's not all men, no, not at all. But somehow women all know victims and men don't know violators. Good men don't keep that company. For the love of God, don't make me read that list again.

So maybe it wasn't a woman falling in your arms, weeping, saying she did no wrong. No, the words are: "I was cornered and blamed. I don't deserve to be treated this way. I didn't do it. It wasn't me." I'm so tired of men playing hero in our stories. And if you need more proof want to know an awful fact? The leading cause of murder in pregnant women is intimate partner domestic violence.

Untitled No. 1

Hope Taylor

Starts alone yet full of life
Beginning my days
dripping sweet serotonin
careless love for days to come
when suddenly it changes

loneliness seeps as the sadness deepens
quickenning the pace at which
I begin to decay
Decomposing from the inside out,
Heart crumbling into soft soil
As my lungs blossom with flowers
that shorten each breath
bringing me closer to death
only making the roses within wilt,
bringing more destruction

My soul dims as my limbs
become numb
All veins clot halting the flow
causing the lost soul to flicker
As none of the life source reaches
the center of it all

Hopes and dreams blow away in the wind
as if a dandelion being wished on
No longer whole
Piece by little piece
becoming earth again

Returning to my rightful home
No longer a nomad
No longer alone
Birthing new life
with strong support
to grow stronger and wiser
than I ever could

The Final Visage of a Mainland Mailman

Chad Merritt

they wouldn't clean the rust
for another eleven years

rugburn from hot pavement
and warm channels rushing down
from heart, seeping into road

pale blue stretched just enough
above suburbia to love, to hold
for clouds cannot truly suspend
a mangled round from a wound
or a silver casing from the ground
how unbothered, how unruly

there, thornbush shredded
child of saint helena, to see
her smile, scars bind
a visage so heartily, so blinded:
only a skull's bitter, established
thresher quill built of ink

bloodsoak from parted skin
and final prayers leaving lung
from adam, leaving back to home

they wouldn't clean the rust
for another eleven years.

This is the Power of Girlhood

Kathryn Tovar

At almost 30
I feel it now
The love of my girlhood

Girls tend to shun their girlhood
To enter into the pain of womanhood
For them being a woman is freedom
I wish I could go back and be her

That girl who loved bows and dresses
And making clothes for her dolls
Or sings her very own love songs
Who scraped her knees on concrete and cried

Or carried around her toy gun to end the bad guys
Who reads books and truly believes
There are fairies
That true love exists
And we can have everything
We can dream or wished

At almost 30
I know it is true
That unicorns are awesome
And girlhood is too
That all the beautiful things could be
Will happen to you.
Not just you but me too.

This is the power of girlhood

That it can really be
That we are the women
Who little girls dream to be
So I shall not fear
Nor be dismayed
For as in this woman:
the girl remains

A View from the Greenest Pastures

Logan Murray

Quiet streets cry loudest in times of unrest,
Kempt lawns, toy breeds, and flags waving high.
The divesting now disguised as the oppressed.

Pundit's quips echo throughout the empty nest,
Pearls clutched as their faces rubify.
Quiet streets cry loudest in times of unrest

The cul-de-sac cabal calls for an inquest
Into why *those men* deserved to die.
The divesting now disguised as the oppressed.

Gossip begins about the latest arrest,
"World's gone to hell" they say with a sigh.
Quiet streets cry loudest in times of unrest.

Mid-century nostalgia leaves them depressed,
Coping with gulps of decades-old rye.
The divesting now disguised as the oppressed.

The gates are chained as greatest fears manifest,
"Our power is gone; the end is nigh."
Quiet streets cry loudest in times of unrest.
The divesting now disguised as the oppressed.



Roseate Spoonbill Reflection

Lindsay Pettinicchi

Medium: photography

Immured in Daybreak

Jackson Cox

A soft gale seizes in the lungs as umbral sheets are
teased back by the dawn
With a glow that casts hues anew amongst avian
chirping symphonies

Empyrean tears rarely fall in the morning, for it is
the earth that cries dew
To settle upon the grass like minute glass beads
containing the azure

Unseen auroras drift above, leaving a trail of
chilling frost in the wake
Of their cascading crystalline dance of invisibly
scintillating glitter

Disorienting fog lingers in the daze, as the trance of
dream strands hang
Like a chaplet of St. Trina's lily festooned as a
crown of confusion

The warm embrace of a once stranger turned old
lover ruptures the stupor
As a long-held breath veiled in the chest is released
with a yawn

Maybe I have a foot fetish

Kathryn Tovar

We were lying on the tiny sofa. Our bodies crisscrossing in a way that would hurt our backs now. Smooshed between us is Boo, who groans with her ever-advancing age and her hatred of boys in my space. We are watching *Twin Peaks* and he is kissing and licking her feet, or something like that. I make a sound of disgust and you casually say “Maybe you have a foot fetish.” You smile without your teeth, trying to hold back the laugh. I wrinkle my nose and gag at the thought. You really think you’re slick saying something so devious. That you could believe that of me was another disgust as well.

I remember when we were still dating and your mom bought you those work boots you still have. You picking the pair. We spent an hour of trying on boots, you walking around, testing the leather. I was profoundly bored. You explained in great detail that good leather and solid boots could be resoled and you hoped to get them someday. You were so proud of those boots that are now stained with paint. Those boots that trip me in the hall.

Do you remember when we always would hang out in my basement bedroom? Back then, body to body was all we really wanted, but somehow we fit reading in between caresses. And I remember, huddled under a blanket, pressing my icy toes against you saying, “My greedy orphans will take all your heat.” We laughed as if I was a

comedian who had delivered a perfect punchline. We still call toes greedy orphans. And we still laugh as if it was the funniest joke to exist when really, it was stupid but has transcended into a heartwarming joke.

Not too long ago you got those boots you wanted back then. Real nice expensive boots that you wear to church or dates. You say it's coming time to get them resoled, and we will have to find a cobbler. They aren't dark brown but a maroon that shines and it sometimes feels like you're walking on fire. I think that color has always been good on you, and I will forever.

I watched as you pulled your toenail off your foot. It peeled up like chipped paint on your stupid boots, and I watched in horror. You seem terrified too, and the boots they provide nothing to keep your feet from aching from the run. It's like living in our nightmare. You: the pain, and me: the feet.

You rubbed my feet and chided me saying, "If you got new shoes that supported your feet you wouldn't need foot rubs as much." Then you would pretend you're going to lick my foot leaving me wriggling saying: "Stop! We aren't ready to awaken the foot fetish" and we laugh, and settle into one another, sprawled across our large sofa.

You told me to order myself some new boots from a shop called Duckfeet.

"Shoes really made for you!" We also ordered me barefoot leather shoes, because I hate

foot prisons. I spent so much money on shoes, on brands you inspected. Because you know what is best in this area in life.

All the love you gave me could fill all of me down to my toes. People forget their feet, as if they don't stabilize their journeys, quicken their steps towards their goals. They forget they make them dance. I feel your love in my toes to the very tips and in my cracked heels.

I imagine a home with boots lined outside, some of yours and mine. You put your slippers on and I pad through the house barefoot. The vision is happening right now and in the future. It is ingrained in my sole. Your feet and mine are always walking together through troubles and joys. Forever and always. Maybe you are right: I have a foot fetish. As long as they are ours.

under the table

Tyler Johnson

pre-packaged sin
spinning around in the
instant oven.

unwrap and unpack
feast your stomach
and console your eyes,
for they don't
have to watch.

blades and pitchforks
slicing and dicing
to cut off the
inconvenient
and drop it off
in a homeless shelter's
charity box.

“you'll know it
when you see it”
spewed from the
beer-gutted,
local Moses
who drinks to forget
just to forget
that he's drinking.

he sits at the table
breaking bread with
himself,

stuffing a savior
 in his pocket
 for later,
and waves a finger that
 so delicately clicked
 on the next page
 of pornography.

he appears alone in America,
 dining in solitude,
but his coffee-runner
 keeps him company,

under the table
 with a rat
 in her mouth.

Where Are You?

Michael Carver

To love and hold dear,
To be warm in embrace,
All that I wish,
Is to find you someplace.

They speak of you well,
Singing your praises,
I oft join along,
Through numerous phases.

Apparent though you are,
To their mind and their heart,
I never see you,
As my own counterpart.

“Why is it so?
Can I not love?”
I cry and I shout,
To the Heavens above.

Where have you gone?
Do you even exist?
Are you looking too,
For my soul through this mist?

How far can you be,
From my eyes and my reach?
Perhaps you're a fantasy, imagined,
Or just figure of speech.

I want it to happen,
How I desire it so,
But shouldn't I have met you,
Oh, so long, long ago?

When I think of you now,
I see only a void,
Deep in my heart.
Maybe I'm paranoid.

But I no longer see,
The love that I desired,
Only dying embers, and
Fire, having long expired.

Yet I move onward,
Accepting the wait,
I grow and I pray,
For a lovely soulmate.

Diary Entry #217

Traliya Mitchell

To be a cover girl:
Deserted,
I hid away
Wishing to seal those
cracked doors shut
in my dim lit home
with no one responsible
pot on the stove
Always on, but no one ate
Lighters and plastic baggies
on the living room floor
I smelled the smoke
heard the bubbles
I was told to stay away
until it was time to dance
Unseen like the weeds
But once I hit the stage
I became the rose
Prancing and twirling
My time to be adorned
My turn to be lit
I was a star
But stars burn out,
Just like spoons

If I said yes
Kathryn Tovar

But not anymore... not anymore
I think I felt good until that moment
I was in bed and feeling warm and safe
I trusted him to take me home
He made me feel so secure
Like a gentleman he led me to the bar
He asked what I like to have
It was just a drink and a kiss
It was just a drink and a kiss
He asked me what I like to have
Like a gentleman he led me to the bar
He made me feel so secure
I trusted him to take me home
I was in bed and feeling warm and safe
I think I felt good until that moment
But not anymore... not anymore

2 sides of the story

Cattera Driessen

To the girl who lives in apartment B6,
Hello.

I was going to introduce myself face-to-face,
But the nervousness consumed my body
And I couldn't bear to knock on your door
Plus it's Valentine's Day
So a handwritten letter seems more appropriate

I think you are absolutely gorgeous

I can hear you coming down the hall
Whistling your little tune
It's John Lennon right?
He's my favorite!
I'm not sure if you can hear,
But I play guitar.

Maybe I could play something for you?

- The guy from apt. B5 (sent @ 12:53pm)

To the guy who lives in apartment B5
This is your first warning
Stop looking at me like that
Like you want something from me
I can feel your eyes undressing me

I think you're absolutely repulsive

And were you just standing at my door the other
day?

You didn't knock, but I heard someone walk up

And just hover
Like a creep
Also please be a little quieter when playing music
The walls are as thin as paper
And I hate listening to John Lennon
- B6 Resident (sent @ 12:53pm)

On Playing Jesse and Celine

Elizabeth Blanchard

once, we walked lantern-lined lanes
&
the river watched us
through the caring, cobalt gates—
a shushing of kindred worry

once, we were the graves' last visit
&
aurora's air clasped the scent of you
reminding potted blossoms to root under
marbles of still-cherished names

once, into you— I danced
&
the record never faded beyond the curtains
there, the poet's play let out
our secret act of a kiss

now, teardrops consecrate your craft
&
in return
I inscribe your name in letters
as each one trades for one of mine



Passing the Torch
Lindsay Boyd
Medium: acrylic on paper

Anchored Between Confined Destinies

Michael Carver

Alas, as action and,
Battles bore, bringing back
Callous and crime,
Death, decay, and drought; we drudged
Ever on, encouraged and enticed,
Fearing folly and fire,
Giving and gambling our
Hopes in the horrors of hailstorm and havoc.
Incurring injustice, our
Judgement juxtaposed, we journeyed
Keeping the key
Locked in our look, leaving lodges and lives
Mangled, minced by man's massacre.
Nomadized by nations and nudged into
Opaque openings, our outbound
Passage passed through paranormal and perilous
Quagmires, quarantined in
Rough and repulsive
Suffocation, sealed in swaths of sludge. Smothered
by
Tar, taken through trepidation to the
Unknown, unnerved and undergone
Vulnerability in the void. Now vacated
We wheezed and wailed as our weariness waxed
and waned.
Xanthous, xenial xenophiles
Yodeling and yelling, yearning for
Zero, yet zestful as zealots.

The Simplicity of Life

Haim

Wherever we start this is the cycle that repeats
Pain peace love
You may start at any point
For pain only, peace resolves
For peace, love disturbs
And through love, pain occurs
The cycle goes on and on and on
But it's no tragedy
For without pain, we know not happiness
Without joy we know not the weight of our
suffering
And without love we lose the hope to get through it
all
But with peace we are reminded of the resolve that
begins it all
And this is the simplicity of life.

A Colonial Feast

Logan Murray

Indian cologne contends with Turkish
Tobacco, Vicuna threads absorbing.
Knafeh enters upon a sterling dish,
Enticing men to continue gorging.

Douro port is sloshing past rotting teeth,
As potato nosed Englishmen clamor
For more. Afghan opium grown amongst heath,
Is passed on porcelain paten from Namur.

Silken mouchoirs ingathered from Siam,
Stain with decadence and hubris unchecked.
Aristocrats prey on African lamb,
Unmolested land for crown to collect.

Yet, I couldn't understand a word they said,
The poor sons of bitches were quite inbred.

A Soldier's Sail

Elizabeth Blanchard

down breath's break
of the saltwater creek,
your soundless smile speaks
from the ol' patio swing
I hear, the wooden hollow
of the mourning dove's song
echo on maritime's bench,
through the narrow shadow
your flag of faith, flag of fight
covers those lost to life
leading toward the leak of light

in the hall of solemn stillness—
silence still devotes
a way of unreturned remembrance.

What Do We Tell The Children?

Z

In a changing world
One thing remains
I could see her eyes
One look into those eyes
May change your life
Evoking the burden of the world
She inspires a lifetime of discovery
With the sense of sight
She asks
Am I a microscopic speck in the universe?

What do we tell the children?
As their tiny shoes crunch over
Bones that wept and begged for freedom
That the toy bulldozers
Construction trucks in the sand
Buried the sick
And sealed the fate of the alive

What do we tell the children?
That there are no “knights in shining armor”
That the red and blue twinkling lights
Cause distress to so many
Do we tell the children that
They were born targets
Born to suffocate under supposed justice
Justice that thinks that when it steals lives
No one will be in mourning
That no one will miss the dead, that no one will
know

But the children know

What do we tell the children?
When they ask why men with firearms
Patrol the school
Why metal monsters hiss at them
Why some princes look like princesses
And other princesses look like princes
Why the Black kid looks scared
Why the girl in third grade died
Why why why why why

What do we tell the children?
They stopped asking questions
Stopped running around
Arms linked, hand in hand
They fear unity will be broken by steel bullets to the
back of the head
They know our hands are dyed
With guts, smithereens, and parts of human arms
We are the reason they are in mourning

What do we tell the children?
Will we say anything at all?

The Solitary Ghosts of Fort Dorchester

Chad Merritt

summer yard sale, years ago
my father acquired four rusted, ancient
nails, claimed by their harbinger to
be the bound bandages of francis marion
when he built a small home to house
his wife and him, long after fontainebleau:
his father, searching for a fertile host
not stained with past sentiment.
the miniature tarnished spikes once
sat in wood, now confined in folded paper
almost like a grave, or a memorial
for they have lost significant purpose
wood will be destroyed, forgotten
but bricklayers know they build deathless
and imperishable, lest they befall
the fates of cannonballs, and here
at fort dorchester, the wind so silent
the ghost of general marion noting
our held hands, espied affection
thunder amassing the whining fire
that nests in heart, in the air between
as we hold one another for this time, no end
the solitary ghosts of fort dorchester
remember enchanting eyes, and i think of
marion, those nails, his house, his wife's
touch replicating yours, as dragonflies
would have it, silent whirring 'neath bosom
and the husband's breath suiting mine
entangled vivacities do not cease or fall away
like church tower bricks bathed in cloudlight

the conversing of ideas and thoughts, wits and breaths between kisses, between ghost and us, the percolating creek, the fear of insects, and the touch of grass at our ankles, meeting optic soul leaks again and again, until we don't tire of one another nor our company, nor musings of warmth and fond endearments, sentiments of desires glowed and illuminated by starlight, to get lost within the capsule of your eyes, i find it funny that we find such beauty in graveyards and postcards and old ruined forts, the nails that held a house and bound it together, as the stars did us, while these forever ghosts watch me shut my eyes and lean into your kiss, in nostalgia for a time they mustn't forget, in a time we will never forget, in our locked quarters i shall maintain my admiration and scribe with my lips, to kiss your neck to make the years pass and my lungs will swell with affirming order this night, you are my only muse, and i can only beg the constellations to give me another few seconds, a few more blots of ink, a few more ghosts to witness our decipherers, a few more bricks to fill the halls of gazing, the only light fixture: the reflection of your pupils.

The Other Side

Haim

I imagine myself sitting on a ledge
Outside of a doorway
At the edge of a cliff
And over the cliff is endless space
All of its beauty is right in front of me
I can see it but I can't touch it
The only way to experience it, is to see it
If I jump I'll miss it
I'll fall until nothing
If I turn around I'll move on
I'll close that door
Turn my back on this beautiful space
I can return again but it won't change a thing
But maybe when it's over
I'll finally be able to experience it.

Restorer

Thillah Maybin Arocho

She is a psalm of David.
Victory written in every chord.
Can't you hear her story?
Listen and be made wise.
She lives to tell the tale's laughter.
Once stricken with darkness's ache,
She found the light and way.
Who she once was lives no more.
Each morning grants new grace.



At Peace

Lindsay Boyd

Medium: acrylic on paper

acceptance

Laura Payne

mistakes been made
promises been broken
disregarding the rules
that are left unspoken

things we can't control
and won't bring us peace
my mind, my sworn enemy
just breathe out and release

like a cat along with horses
respect and love are earned
the trust has come and gone
and bridges have been burned

don't wait for the storm to pass
acceptance is life-altering pain
acceptance is a hard lesson
just learn to dance in the rain

i'm having less death anxiety

Sophia McKeehan

i held a dead cicada the day before last
five years ago i'd have gagged at the sight
would've whimpered at what it represented
she would not have reached out with wide eyes
but that cicada died before this one
who's to say what she is now
but regardless
i didn't drop her at the touch
just turned her in my hand
held her to eye level
indulged in the beauty
the sureness of the little cadaver
appreciated it for what it'd been
and passed her along

Our home

Rebecca Taliaferro

This
Home
we built only seems
to hinder our love. These cottage doors hide
dry rotted walls yet express the complexities of us.
This home, a canvas of muted emotions,
speaks volumes in its silence. The windows,
once a clear portrait of dreams, now fog
with the residue of budding hate. This home,
tattered and worn, stands witness to
storms weathered, with no calm to be sought.
This house no longer a home continues to fall
just like the flame we lit when it was first built.

Devil's Sympathy

Michael Carver

Mark, in the last moments of his life, sat alone in a cold hospital room. The lights were out, but the muted TV illuminated the space. The old man breathed slowly as he felt his aching body gradually succumb. His wrinkled face contorted as he thought back to his youth.

“So? Were you happy?”

Mark flinched, his heartrate monitor beeping rapidly. He glanced around the room before his eyes landed on a tall, dark figure standing in the corner beside him.

“Who are you?” Mark asked cautiously.

The man smirked. “Were you happy with life?”

Mark looked away, gripping his sheets. “What does it look like?”

“Would you want to change it?”

“What’s it to you?”

Suddenly, the figure leaned over Mark. “Just hypothetically, what would you change? If you could change just one thing.”

Mark sat in silence for a moment. He closed his eyes. “There was... always one thing I wanted to change.” He leaned back with a quiet laugh. His face slowly losing its smile as he stared at his hands

for a moment. “I wish I had been there for Mom... in the end.”

The dark figure’s smirk vanished. “Your mother?”

Mark nodded. “I was still young, so I doubt most would fault me, but...” he shook his head, his eyes beginning to water. He swallowed the lump in his throat. “I should’ve visited that last time.”

The man stepped away from the bed. “That’s all?”

Mark leaned back and nodded. “Yup.”

The apparition only sighed. “You didn’t marry. No kids. You weren’t rich. You lived alone most of your life. Are you sure? Don’t you want more?”

The old man chuckled. “That stuff wouldn’t do me any good now.” He smiled warmly as he reminisced.

“Fine.”

Mark looked over, his eyebrows turned inwards, but the dark figure was gone. He blinked a few times before suddenly finding himself back in his old car. He was sitting in his second girlfriend’s driveway, listening to the radio. He remembered this day vividly. His heart sank as he watched his girlfriend walk out of her house. He glanced at the watch that he always used to wear. It was 11:07 AM.

You've got three hours.

Mark quickly turned off the radio as his girlfriend got in the passenger seat with a smile. It was odd seeing her again. "So? Where're we going today, hotshot? You said something about the mall?"

His head was filled with memories of that trip. The fight, the shouting. He shook his head as he glanced at her. Jane. Even after all those years apart, Mark still found it in him to like her.

"No, sorry, change of plans. I think I should go visit Mom today," he said. Jane's smile faded, but she didn't look any less determined.

"Okay. Need me to come along?"

Mark looked over, he glanced at his fingers as he drummed on the steering wheel. "Yeah. Sure." She nodded and quickly buckled up as they pulled out of the driveway. The entire drive was void of any conversation. A welcome alternative history for Mark. Upon arriving, they quickly made their way to his mother's room, where she sat in bed, staring at the ceiling. She looked pale and thin, like the slightest breeze would blow her away. Jane stood just down the hall as Mark walked in the doorway.

"Hey, Mom.," he said as a pang shot through him. He remembered why he didn't visit. She looked over, smiling, but with no signs of recognition in her.

“Oh? My, you’re quite handsome. What’s your name, dear?”

Mark walked over, crouching next to the bed. “I’m Mark. Your son.”

Her face lit up in wonder. “Wow. You’ve grown so much!” She laughed in delight.

A soreness throbbed in his chest, tears forming in his eyes. He nodded, letting the tears fall. “Yeah, I guess I have.”

His mother placed a hand on his cheek as her smile faded. “Oh, what’s wrong dear? Don’t cry.”

He shook his head, placing his own hand on top of hers. “Sorry,” he said with a strained smile. “How’ve you been?”

She didn’t respond. She blinked and almost looked surprised for a moment. “Oh, dear, I don’t think I know your name.”

Mark nodded. “It’s me, Mom. I’m Mark. I’m your son.”

Her face lit up again. “Oh! My what a handsome boy you’ve become.” She smiled as she got a good look at him. “I remember you being so small.”

He smiled through the tears. “Yeah, guess I’ve grown...” he said quietly, biting his lip as sobs threatened to overtake him. “Mom?”

She smiled brightly. “Yes?”

“I, uh. Well, I just wanted to let you know that... I love you, and that I miss you. Every day.”

“But, honey, I’m right here,” she said in confusion.

He leaned in to hug her. “I know.” He kissed her on the forehead, getting up.

“Where are you going?” she asked, her eyes worried.

“Don’t worry. I’ll see you again soon, okay?” He said with a smile. “Really soon.”

She nodded excitedly, her fragile body quaking with joy. “Okay. I’ll be waiting.”

Mark exited the room, holding his hand to his face as he collapsed on the floor. Jane rushed to him and hugged him as he began to sob. He spent the rest of his time with Jane as he waited for time to run out. Once his mother passed, it was over.

He once again found himself in a bed, wrinkled and far past the prime he had just re-lived. However, the cold hospital room he expected was not where he found himself. Instead, he laid in a warm bed, one that had a distant familiarity, as if it was where he had slept for years. The beeping heart monitor no longer felt as cold as before, instead being nearly drowned out by the echoing TV from down the hall. Almost instinctively, his thumb prodded something metallic on his left hand. A ring. Mark’s heart swelled as he glanced to the nightstand next to him, seeing a picture of himself with a

smiling woman. They were old in the photo, but far happier than he ever remembered being. A soft knock at the door brought him out of it.

“Mark, honey, you awake?” a gentle voice asked. He sat up, looking at the woman who walked in. She was the same one as in the photo, only much older. “Emily and Michelle fixed you some dinner, think you can eat?”

Mark became positive that the woman was Jane. Older, perhaps calmer, but still the same. He nodded as she walked over, sitting on the bed with him. The names she mentioned didn't seem unnatural to hear, and when she spoke of them, it was as if he could see them, even though he felt as if he never had. He smiled as Jane took his hand in hers. She helped him eat and put him to bed. She kissed his forehead, leaving him to sleep. As he listened to the beeping around him, Mark smiled. Thank you. A single tear dripped down his cheek as a final sigh escaped his lips.

Stairways and Well... Elevators

Cameron Chen

Sarah twiddled her thumbs, rocking back and forth from the balls to the heels of her feet.

She had always liked glass elevators. It was always a surreal experience to look out onto the people below, watching as their figures become smaller and smaller until there was nothing left but a speck.

This was something like that.

Filtered in translucent light, watching the earth below become smaller and smaller until it was nothing but a marble.

She always thought that she'd be going down. It was a pleasant surprise.

She wasn't as nervous as she was excited. Although, she had always figured that they were emotions that ran along the same vein, and right now they were coursing through her blood.

The end of things, she figured, were just as anticlimactic as the start. Say, the Big Bang for example. She had always imagined it as, well, a BANG. But sound can't exist in the vacuum of space.

So maybe it wasn't a BANG. Maybe it was something equivalent to a silent, black and white motion picture film. Something jostled and sparked,

then suddenly that soundless nothingness became a soundless somethingness.

Like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz. The once monochrome Kansas suddenly bursting into color. Newborn stars twinkling in the aether like a pair of red shoes.

But anticlimactic, obviously. Her metaphor was getting away from her, wasn't it?

The door dinged, startling her out of her reverie.

“Welcome to Heaven, ma'am.”

Star-crossed

Thillah Maybin Arocho

Son of the sun,
Daughter of the moon,
He made her darkness fade.
Shined brighter than June.
Exchanged all pain for beauty.
No more room for mutiny.

She was the song of blackbird.
Gave shade to the Sun's burn.
Awarded rest to the weak,
Peace to the height of the storm.
Saluted the sky at dawn.

Together,
Fire and ice.
The fruit of the vine.
Royalty.

Untitled No. 2

Hope Taylor

Cold and abandoned
Left with windows shattered,
floors caving in
Walls shake with each gust of wind
Lights dim evermore each passing day

Lonely days accompanied by sleepless nights
Visitors come and go,
inspecting the damage, I
desperately try to hide

Because the windows are my soul,
the floors are my heart
Walls make my bones
leaving the lights as my eyes
The blue slowly turning grey
As my soul weeps
mourning the life, I seemed to
have lost at such a young age

We Meet The Sun

Elizabeth Blanchard

a valley born of lilies breathes a voice
collapse and let me long to fall for rain
expect this—i did not, though i rejoice
to propose we walk antiquity's lane

arose the sun to our beloved rest
embrace the bare, survive above my lake
there, red and gold profess behind my chest
please drink my tears, the eyes of heartbreak

reside by me and swing in dirt and ground
this hope within my lungs can only choke,
inhale the aries air, as she surrounds
below me under night's consuming cloak

avail my silk, a time of our undress
and take this, all i wish you to confess

Elizabeth Blanchard, 1, 9, 18, 56, 84, 89, 110

Elizabeth is a junior at USCB majoring in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. She loves reading and writing poetry. Her work is inspired by nature, literature, late night walks, and anything she can conjure from memory. Her hope is to continue writing for as long as her pen has ink and for as long as the world lets her speak.

Lindsay Boyd, 85, 96

Lindsay is an acrylic artist based in Beaufort, with over 2 years of experience in wedding and pet paintings. She won the Neidich Memorial Award for her painting "Fishing" from the Beaufort Art Association Spring Show in 2023 and competed in the 2023 National Veterans Creative Art Festival as a Navy Veteran. Those who are interested can learn more about Lindsay Boyd and can contact her on social media by following her accounts under the name "Artistleboyd" on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook.

Michael Carver, 78, 86, 100

Michael is a Senior Information Science and Technology major at USCB. He always enjoys writing and spends most of his spare time thinking of the next fun story concept. Most of his work is inspired by things he sees in his daily life or things that he just finds interesting.

Cameron Chen, 54, 57, 106

Cameron is a junior English major at USCB, and decided it was high time to get their work out there.

Jackson Cox, 37, 48, 62, 72,

Jackson is a junior English major with a concentration in creative writing. He enjoys writing poetry and reading, but prose writing is his passion. He intends to become a fiction author after graduating.

Caterra Driessen, 82

Caterra is currently a sophomore at USCB studying psychology. She enjoys writing poetry and studying astrology in her free time. Her poetry mainly revolves around love and relationships, as she finds beautiful to write about.

Q Fields, 23

Quintilian, or Q for short, is in his second year here at USCB and is a Biology (pre-med) major. Q a Student Ambassador, Resident Assistant, and this year's Homecoming King. Q heard about *The Pen* through his friends, and they encouraged him to submit a piece.

Rebekah Garbutt, 10

Rebekah is a USCB student and a contributor to *The Pen*.

Haim, 12, 43, 87, 94

Haim is a Biology major, technically a senior due to credits but they still have 2 years. Haim wanted to share one of their writings that sheds some light on their experiences living with an Intersex condition. Haim's writings in general are excerpts of their life in the form of venting trying to make sense of and interpret their life and experiences.

Tyler Johnson, 6, 76

Tyler is a Communication Studies major. He knows better than to spill his evenings on loose-leaf like this. But when the paper calls, he never asks for anything in return.

Thillah Maybin Arocho, 31, 46, 52, 95, 108

Thillah is a senior communications studies major. Throughout her time at USCB, she's enjoyed poetry and fiction workshop. In her free time, she enjoys listening to music and baking. Her recent work has been inspired by her friends and family.

Jen McCarty, 34, 47, 59

Jen is a USCB student and a contributor to *The Pen*.

Sophia McKeehan, 16, 35, 98

Sophia is a graduating senior in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. When she's not in class or working as a barista, you can find her spending time with her family, friends, or boyfriend. She also enjoys reading, spending time in bookstores, watching historical fiction movies, and going on walks by the water. This semester, her poetry is heavily inspired by the gratitude she holds for the people in her life, as well as the little, seemingly mundane moments that hold meaning to her heart.

Chad Merritt, 4, 8, 17, 39, 61, 67, 92

Chad is an English major. He wants to live a life unobstructed, in some pine forest far from the Mississippi somewhere, with an ancient canine,

water-damaged novels, and David Lynch DVDs to keep him company. He dreams, but not as often as he writes.

Traliya Mitchell, 22, 30, 33, 53, 80
Traliya is a 2nd year psych major.

Logan Murray, 32, 70, 88
Logan is an English major with a concentration in creative writing. He is a product of the support he receives from his remarkable wife, Brittney. He is also propped by his dog, Lady, and two cats, Harriet and Dantès. Any future accomplishments are their doing.

Laura Payne, 44, 97
Laura is a junior Hospitality Management major at USCB with a minor in Professional Writing. She has thoroughly enjoyed her time in the Creative Writing courses offered in her college career. She enjoys watching television and listening to music in her free time. As of late, her creative writing work has been inspired by Taylor Swift, whom she enjoys listening to immensely.

Lindsay Pettinicchi, 21, 71
Lindsay is a USCB Studio Art major. She is an award winning, exhibited and published photographer. She discovered photography while biking on Hilton Head Island with nature and wildlife all around her. HHI is certainly a nature and wildlife photographer's paradise. Moving targets are her most challenging subjects; her Tamron 150-600mm lens is her

favorite. She also loves ceramics and the silkscreen printmaking technique.

Lessle Rodriguez, 11

Lessle is a USCB student and a contributor to *The Pen*.

Kayla Sheriffe, 28

Born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, Kayla has come to USCB to expand her talent of writing as an English major. Her aspirations include becoming a children's book author. Her books are specified for young black girls to promote self-love and confidence within their skin.

Rebecca Taliaferro, 5, 13, 20, 99

Rebecca is a sophomore English major at USCB and has had a passion for writing poems and stories since she was little.

Hope Taylor, 19, 41, 65, 109

Hope is a senior psychology major at USCB, and enjoys reading and writing poetry in her free time.

Kathryn Tovar, 25, 49, 58, 60, 63, 68, 73, 81

Kathryn is a senior in college. She is getting her degree in English with a concentration in Professional Writing. She enjoys reading and spending time with her puppies Atticus and Edgar. When not with them she is spending time with her husband or focused on her education. She likes romance and sewing when she isn't busy with school and looks forward to a nice long nap after she completes her degree.

Z, 2, 14, 90,

Z is a senior in the psychology department and enjoys his free time writing poetry and creating other types of art. He will hopefully be graduating at the end of the summer. He has thoroughly enjoyed his time and is grateful for the people at the university who have cultivated his creativity and the Society of Creative Writers.

About The Pen

The Pen is a five-time national award-winning literary journal sponsored by USCB's student-led organization, the Society of Creative Writers. It is produced under the English, Arts, & Interdisciplinary Studies department at the University of South Carolina Beaufort and is advised by Dr. Ellen Malphrus. This publication features creative works from students across all three of USCB's campuses. Accepted submissions include fiction, non-fiction, poetry, drama, music, and visual arts of all types. *The Pen* proudly showcases the creative works of its student and alum contributors, and *The Pen* Practicum (ENGL 211) serves as a credit-earning course for students from any major who wish to gain transferable skills and experience in the editing and publishing world.

About The Society of Creative Writers

The Society of Creative Writers is a student-led organization at the University of South Carolina Beaufort that meets weekly and sponsors the publication of *The Pen*, USCB's five-time national award-winning literary journal of creative writing and art. Our organization serves as a writing community for USCB's students of all majors. The Society of Creative Writers' mission is to provide a safe and nurturing place for students to share and discuss their work, as well as engage in writing activities to improve their skills and inspire them. For more information about meetings and events, please follow The Society of Creative Writers on Instagram (@scw_uscb). For additional comments, questions, or concerns, please email the editorial staff of *The Pen* at ThePenUSCB@gmail.com.

Submissions Guidelines

To be considered for publication in *The Pen*, those who submit must either be a current USCB student or alum with no more than two years since their last active semester. Students from all majors are encouraged to submit their creative work. All work submitted must be original, unpublished, and preferably produced while at USCB. **Submissions are open year-round; please note that there are deadlines for each semester.** Work submitted after the deadline will result in consideration for the next semester. Creative writing, visual art, and music submissions will be considered. Fanfiction will not be accepted.

Submissions should be sent via email to ThePenUSCB@gmail.com in one Microsoft Word document; any other forms will not be accepted, including Google Docs or PDFs.

Multiple submission emails within a semester will not be accepted. Please review the following before submitting:

1. The subject line of your submission email must simply read “Pen Submission.”
2. The submitter’s name must be included in the name of the attached file.
3. Any work submitted must include a short author’s bio blurb exceeding no more than 100 words in the body of the submission email.

Bio blurb example: Jane Doe is a junior psychology major at USCB, and has enjoyed her time in ENGL B222 this semester. She enjoys reading and writing poetry in her free time. As of late, her poetry has been inspired by her recent trip to Niagara Falls.

4. Please include a title with each submission.
5. Formatting requirements:
 - Page breaks between each individually titled piece
 - 12-point font size
 - Times New Roman font.
6. Ensure work is formatted as it is intended to appear on the page, and that any unconventional stylistic decisions that are intentional are made clear to *The Pen* staff via comments within the document.

For poetry, no more than seven pieces may be submitted per semester. Poems shouldn't exceed 66 characters per line. Character count includes spaces and punctuation.

For drama, no more than two pieces may be submitted per semester, and each piece shouldn't exceed 2,500 words per piece.

For prose, no more than five pieces may be submitted per semester, and each piece shouldn't exceed 2,000 words per piece.

Visual art must be sent within the same email submission as written submissions but not included in the same Microsoft Word document as written submissions. Each visual art submission must be sent within either a single JPG or PNG file, with images being no smaller than a 5” x 7” at 600 dpi. No more than ten pieces of visual art may be submitted per semester. Submitters must include their name in the title of each JPG or PNG file, with the title, medium (i.e., oil on canvas, charcoal on paper), and dimensions for each entry within their respective JPG or PNG file.

Music submissions should include an audio file, along with the transcribed lyrics in a Microsoft Word document, should the submitter wish their music to be presented in only a written fashion. Alternatively, if the submitter’s music already exists on the internet, a link/QR code to its location can be submitted so long as it is on a free and accessible website (i.e. Soundcloud, YouTube) and that QR code will appear alongside any transcribed lyrics in the submission.

Submitted pieces go through a blind voting process— no one on the staff knows the identities attached to the pieces to make certain no voting bias takes place.

The text of *The Pen* is set in 12-point Times New Roman font, a typeface designed by Stanley Morison that first appeared in The Times of London newspaper in October of 1932. The Pen is perfect-bound and is printed by DX Print & Mail commercial printer located in Hilton Head, South Carolina. The print and color process is 4-Color Process (4 Color/ CMYK). The cover is Lynx 80-pound uncoated cover stock, and the body is Husky 60-pound uncoated stock. *The Pen* uses 30% post-consumer recycled content approved by the Forest Stewardship Council.

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