

Venture Literary/Arts Magazine

Volume 2015

Article 1

1-1-2015

Venture/Literary Arts Magazine, 2015

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VENTURE

LITERARY | ARTS MAGAZINE 2015

VENTURE LITERARY | ARTS MAGAZINE
2015

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Taylor Preston

Poetry Editor

Dan Carey

Fiction | Non-Fiction Editor

Meaghan Coughlin

Art Director

Brenna Lopes

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Brianna Dewalt

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Scott Kayhan

Xochitl Martinez

Claire Mulvena

Susie Nicolasyen

Karina Santiago

Mariel Tenney

Amelia Tornatore

Anna Ye

Joshua Yu

A SPECIAL THANKS TO...

All the Contributors for their talent and dedication to this magazine. I am truly humbled by the work of Suffolk and NESAD as this whole publication would be nothing without their immense talent.

Dan, Meaghan and Brenna for being true team players and making this magazine a success. Publishing this magazine takes a lot of hard work, patience, being available at all times, and dedication. I could not have asked for three better people to work with than you.

The Editorial Board for their continuous hard work and surpassing any expectation I had, for being available at any time, and rolling with the crazy changes this semester has brought.

Nicole Pimental for her incredible talent, immense dedication to this magazine's design, and truly surpassing any expectation I had for my vision.

Natasha, Alexandra, Nicole, and the Student Leadership & Involvement Office for always being available, answering every question and their overall help in guiding me through the management of this magazine.

Jennifer Barber and the English Department for having the utmost confidence and dedication for this magazine.

VP Nancy Stoll for her unwavering belief and support for this publication and what it means to the Suffolk community.

John Winter and The Ink Spot for his patience and incredible assistance through the printing process, always being at the ready for my many questions, and for being a pleasure to work with.

Mom, Dad, and Christos for their unconditional confidence in my capabilities, listening to my endless, meaningless rants, and supporting my involvement in Venture in every possible way.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Venture has received over four hundred submissions between seventy-five unique artists and writers, but how many of them are truly artists and writers?

All of them.

Art is a means of expression that starts with pen to paper, brush to canvas, fingers to keyboard, spray paint to wall, eye to view finder, idea through medium.

All means of self-expression can be elevated to be identified as art. It is simply at the discretion of people to deem it great or not. Street art is illegal, commonly ridiculed, but it never stops, passion and inspiration override all deterrents, and all that is left is the artist versus the wall. Street art embodies a purity that belies our most common misconception about what art is. It is not for sale, unless you buy the building, and it is not for others, even though it is in the public eye. Street artists believe their work can make a city more interesting and beautiful, and is an expression of not the city itself but of the regular people living in it. Despite its illegality and social taboo, Street art is real art.

The chosen to be published in this edition of Venture represent art in its most undiluted state. Each artist and writer defied convention by picking up a pen, a brush, can of paint, camera and represented themselves. Each artist and writer is mostly unrecognized and amateur, but are truly incredibly talented people. While they may never have their pieces framed in a gallery or museum, Venture has strived to provide a glossy frame for their work.

As you flip through these pages, I hope you acquire the sense of accomplishment and raw talent showcased through poetry, art, photography, essays, lyrics, and fiction pieces. But mostly, as you flip through these pages, I hope you are inspired to reveal the art inside of you; to finally pick up the pen, brush, can of paint, camera, or open your computer to create something so raw and great that you will continue to inspire yourself.

I hope you are inspired, because I know I am.

Enjoy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Taylor E. Preston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Taylor Preston,
Editor-in-Chief

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POETRY AND PROSE



THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Alexandra Balevre

A Public Service Announcement
To those with burdens beyond comprehension -
A war between your eyes and face
Like a pen at standstill,
Benevolent but disassociated,
May this message guide you.

Ecclesiastes said "To everything there is a season;"
For every drum there is a beat,
So hang the coat, and reminisce the day
The same as you would in defeat.

Today, something holds you back.
Are you West, rising with the sun, going backwards?
Are you East and moving ahead, but without progress; the same routine every
day?
Or are you South, where you do not know?
We must all be North.

North is staring at a brick wall and becoming inspired,
Treasuring footsteps upon an open plain.
North rewards you for waking up in the morning,
It is a gift that allows you to see what others never will;
So whenever we climb toward self-actualization,
Or quake in the land of tranquility,
There is no way to prepare
But to head North.

BEFORE THE CITY WAKES

Dan Carey

Mindless walks
From downtown
Over to Kenmore
Square, I cut
Through the Commons
And cross abundant
Gardens without
A care as the sun
Rises in soft
Glow, asking
Questions to which
I say I know
I think I know
But just don't care
As the sun keeps rising
During early-
Bird journeys
From downtown
To historic places,
Where belief is restored

By sports fans,
But man this warmth
That brings me back
To town before
Noon proves
It is so nice
To be here
It is so nice

THREE HUNDRED AND TWELVE MILES

Felicia Krentzman

Four Years ago,
and you were taken.
Times Square screamed your name
as Newbury street sung mine.
How could perfection have been in our reach,
and our only prevention-
Time?

Two years ago,
your visiting brown eyes were back.
Our glances were distant,
thoughts raced and voices were lacking as
perfection
was galaxies away.

Now,
you are inches away.
My pen writes poems
in our hometown café.
It stops short
as the door crashes open.

My heart vacates body
as yours struggles to find its rhythm
again.
My pen loses its ink
as my thoughts lose their destination.

Green eyes meet brown.
Hearts find their home.
The second hand finally
moves in our favor.
Seven years later,
we aren't alone.

ALTERNATIVE SPRING

Serina Kentara Gousby

Crooked nails and ladder fright
Alongside wood, hard hats and paint
Working long hours with sore feet
To build this family's masterpiece

Water drips from crystal glass
Of heaven's sweetest southern tea
I hear the music of honey bees
Bowed heads, hands clutched, including me

Red crisp Coca-Cola museum
Fingers drenched in doughnut frost
Beyoncé haunted our rented car
Our laughter spread while home is far.

They welcome us into their homes
With Chili, meat, and full of sweets
The mountains match the grayish fog
Its echoes praise the bark of dogs

NATURE

Felicia A. Kalil

To observe a part of nature as it unfolds before your eyes you must take the time to stay in the moment. The experience is one of true connection happening between yourself and nature. You experience these layers piece by piece, each one a lesson in the way of being. A change happens that creates a thought in you. Nature is being brought to your eyes; you are brought to life.

There is a certain immediate quality to life and its lessons. The moment that you learned to see yourself beyond a mirror. Finally, you saw yourself reflected back in the mountains, or was it in the ocean, or in the rolling hills? I saw the beauty of a woman and all her curves in rolling mountains. All of nature's curvaceous mountains were the explanation of earth's beauty and my own.

Each moment has its own sound, each bird its own home. I hardly even know my own nature after observing the vast beauty of the world. I think to myself, "The sun is setting and it is so much brighter than before." I see everything in this new light.

Each day there is a new sun rising and setting inside my soul. This nature moves within me and it fills me with flight. I am now a painting with colors seen in all my observations. I sense that I am always expanding, just as landscapes go on and on. It is a change I never would have grasped had I not taken the moment to peel back the layers.

I see the River with its flowing waters, which flow right through me. I walk slowly alongside and my mind drifts in sync with the current. There is the reflection of myself on the surface; of what I once knew to be my nature.

The ocean is my nature; I experienced it the first time I dove into it, discovering how deep my soul goes when I washed in the mass of cold dark blue. It's so vast you can't see beyond the horizon. It's worth it to feel the sand in between your toes.

HELLO STRANGER, YOU ARE A NEW FEELING WITH A GOOD FACE I KNOW

Meaghan Murray

he touched the edge of my hand,
held it like you'd hold a page
you were nearly finished with—
about to turn it gently,
flip it over, read the back

his page-turning hand
concussed my clock— for a second
it stood still, hung back to watch
where the voltage went
faithfully leapt back into action
faster now, sending gems from
head to sole

and I forgot who he was,
right then, with me that feeble,
a melting clay pigeon, at a loss
for words and ammunition, there
would be no need for either.

BLACK EXCELLENCE

Serina Kentara Gousby

From struggle of the African
Roots that desperately ran
For freedom, created
Rights for you and I to
Choose and not be abused
Or accused—yet the system
Is not always true.

It has to start with me

From permanent scars
And whips and chains
That brought suffering pain
To die for, to be killed for
The families that we love and
Generations ahead of us.

But it has to start with me

From the march of justice and
Boycotts of the buses and
The speech that released a dream
To one day be seen
And lived in reality
For unity.
To talk show hosts, millionaires
And filmmakers and actors
And musicians and business
Men and women of color,
Talented like no other,
While race problems continue
To flutter in this world
Of trial and error

But it has to start with me.
It has to start with me.

SPIRALING LOVE

Aqsa Mugal

With every falling leaf and autumn's breeze
You took my breath away, never left me displeased
Days flew by followed by months and years
Trust rushed along, I let you conquer my fears
Gently placed my heart in the palm of your hand
Never did it beat without love's command
Invested very prayer, hope, and dream in you
Let my faith define us; in struggle our love grew
No matter how great the distance, no matter the time
Our love has prevailed; wear these scars like pride
Differences bond us, so secure and deep
Your presence essential to my existence and deeds

STRANGE TIDES WASH ASHORE

Anonymous

Strange tides wash ashore
Nothing less, nothing more

The subtle rain, a gentle kiss
Distant lovers, a lost wish

Silence speaks a gentle murmur
Banging out to Bobby Shmurda

The pavement screams,
It's red tonight

I drop a body,
With lead tonight

PIPE DREAM

Kyle Coen

Surges of fire from rose-stem glasses run
down your throat and into your chest.
They fill my belly as they flow
from dark brown bottles and rattling tin cans.

I want to look away
as your pale face drifts off into
the grass-green sea but I cannot avert
my glassy eyes reflecting images
of skinny fingers sewn together with hydrogen bonds.

I want to call for you to swim
back through the hazy green glass.
Peeking into my stain-glass windows
let butterflies in and I cannot find a way to get them out.
I watch them flutter around the banisters,
their silent wings in my imagination's ear
imitating your leaps and bounds across the stage.

I knock on these windows
surrounding my memory of you and I
strolling through corridors past Monet and Renoir,
hearing them laugh and snicker as the tours pass through.

Looking up at Juno
looming twenty feet overhead,
your legs are free from the
bonds of elephant skin concrete
and we are happy.

You picked me up. I had my hands on your shoulders, and my knees ran along your chest. We were staring into the only mirror in the whole apartment. You held me up, tightly against your front side. It was a dark hall, only illuminated by the sunlight from the window in the bedroom a few feet over. We looked in the mirror together – smiling and giggling. It was as if we had an audience in the average-sized square mirror. My soft, pale cheeks touched your middle-aged stubble and I didn't care how itchy it was. I pressed my cheek until you took a hand off of my back. You took your finger from your freed hand and pointed at the mirror – "Who's that? Huh?" you said with the most masculine and baby-refined tone I have ever heard from you. "Daddy's girl," you told me. I smiled. You smiled. Your white mustache was then hitting my little peach-pink upper lip. I wrapped my arms around your neck and held on.

Now your telling me that you have nine months left. I'll be blowing out birthday candles. You will be bed bound and ashy. Hollow eyes and heavy eyelids waiting for life to slip from your lips for the last time.

Just a couple of weeks ago you were telling me that you couldn't wait for me to buy an old run-down house that needed work. Preferably with lots of greenery—you know, a lot of room for a ton of beautiful dogs. You would fix it up for me. Not in this world, though.

I've lived twenty-two years. Most of them without you. Most of them wondering why you didn't want to know me. Why have you never tried to open me up at the seams? How come you have never bothered to notice that I was as whole, deep, and dense as the winter's night sky? Nine months to wonder why you couldn't have come earlier,

You, me, and that old mirror that was probably broken and thrown-out fifteen years ago, equally depressing as it is satisfying.

You'll be at my next graduation and I will feel your heavy regret above me, but you'll be smiling. I can't imagine why not.

TWIN EYES

Felicia Krentzman

Twin eyes meet
as smiles shine
undeniable
chemistry.

Two souls
chained by gravity.
Two hearts—
divided by circumstance.

Opportunities untouched.
No emotion disclosed.
Chances unseen.
like stories untold.

Two hearts
meant to be
bonded,
will forever
find a way.

THE NARROWS

Dan Carey

Soon again stars pierce the ocean currents,
Thin rockets like stony earth and granite,
Unlike when we never sleep and skin
Touches on beds that don't take us, instead
Following us, they extend our dreams in their false cloud,
A growing boulder, downhill. Time begins
In thought a hope that's all too clear and candid,
Like the trains running in directions of descent-

Ride down with me, my hand will rest
On top of yours on poles that accumulate grease -
Evil is built the same way when it unfolds
Itself and takes over the route to our goals,
Where I'm already teetering lines I've tried to avoid
Having your thighs guide my paranoia.

FRIDA

Sammie Mayaleh

Blue eyes versus her Mexican soil
Boxers and panties
Both at the mercy of her teeth

A beautiful padlock
Made of nature's unedited material
Insinuated her clay-colored forehead

A crash, a joke about the fishnets
At the mouth of her womb
She laughs in a prison of gypsum

Chameleon lady
Both within her blood and her thrust
Pull from your veins and pick a shade

LONELY IN A CROWDED ROOM

Amelia Tornatore

Lonely In a Crowded Room

Lonely in a crowded room;

They laugh and joke,
And roll their eyes;

I feel like I missed something.

I try and laugh too,
It catches in my throat;

My jokes are not funny.

They touch and sprawl,
Comfortable in the same space;

I am an island.

She tells me it's nothing,
That it's all in my head;

Then why do you talk to me like that?

They drink and they smile,
They dance and still laugh,

I watch, and I wish;

Forever lonely in that crowded room

STEP ON THE CRACK

Meaghan Murray

There's a crack in my personality

In daylight I am dancing careless.
I could fuck whoever but I don't.

I'm not good at playing sad girl
I'm good at doing mad girl horny girl not good at doing love girl
soft girl I'm good at doing gone girl, lost girl not good at doing
found girl, bound girl I'm good at listening
"there there"-ing
not good at venting
asking for help

I'm not a bitch but
I'm not a pussy,

not good at being cornered on all fours
good at getting in the position
not good at holding still for all that long

This won't be the part of the night where I go weak
and tug on your sweatshirt, "drive me home"
I dance on, dance on, with my double buns
And a kiss is
appreciated,
not needed

You're cute, I told the whole crew
They'll never see you cause
I'm bad at picking
mile high men.
Blindly flying, I do
all my bitching blind –
the pen took my eyes

Stay light, float like a mermaid
but swim in the deep end cause you're daring and dirty

Hair up, panties off, smoke a blunt in my dark room
I could call so and so or so and so but nope I don't

I'm not good at playing rag doll
I'm good at doing black cat feline not good at playing Dorothy
surrendering I'm good at doing witchcraft, witch/cunt not good at doing
ruby shoes, begging, I'm good at licking
"right there"
not good at weeping,
leaning on shoulders

I told the crew I go to you on matters that mean more
to me than anything,
they nod you must be great.

PAINT HIM BLACK

Serina Kentara Gousby

(Ode to Gil Scott Heron's "Paint it Black")

Picture a man of nearly twenty
Who seems twice as bold with goals rich and plenty
Give him a song with explicit thoughts
Jeans leveled down that mama never taught
Give him women to hit, sleep with at night
Expose him to life in the rap spotlight
Glorify drugs to increase his wealth
And lying a jail bed afraid for his health
Carve all these things behind his back
Then tell him, his skin color is black.

OPEN THE HEART

Katie Conery

You prove that people really do always leave.
So I set fire to all the lies and I let it burn.
I let the pain from my heart drown in pools of sorrow,
And I push away anything that could ever mean something to me again.
Forget everything.
You broke the lock so I threw away the key.
Promise me this, don't ever make promises again;
You made my head spin like a broken record on repeat.
You're crazy to think we'd ever be together again;
You're just poison to me.
And now it's time to crack that container of misery
The way you shattered my heart.
So I let the cold bury me until I can feel again;
Until I am finally set free.

LYRICS



NIGHTLY VISIONS

Sylvain Gaulier

Cold winter nights may never be peaceful again
In a heartbeat, all my efforts collapsed in vain.
Deceived by a false sense of immunity,
Life unraveled my vulnerability.

Losing all, losing hope.
Nightly visions keep my head up straight.

Deprived of words,
Meaningless stories bloom and wither.
Unable to relate to others,
I fear my thoughts would be left unseen on the board.

Easily satisfied,
Most would ignore their lines,
Though doomed to decline
In complete ignorance with patterns exemplified.

Losing all, losing hope.
Nightly visions keep my head up straight.

Blurry memories fade away
But, my head can't let you go away.
The road ain't finished yet;
There's still so much to write and get.

Dreary pictures keep coming back
Of a glorious past I can only cherish.
One certainty remains: I'll always lack
What I once had and couldn't see tarnished.

Some time, we have to resolve to drown.
Air is missing, demons are teasing, and absolution vanishing
While letting it go to better see the railing,
An obscure character uses you as a pawn.
Miracles are long-forgotten;
A ruthless pragmatic I've become.

One the inside, I already feel rotten,
Reduced to millions of atoms.

Losing all, losing hope.
Nightly visions keep my head up straight.

From fiction to reality, there's only one step.
That's a simple face one can't forget.
We must inspire from famous tales
To remain sharp and close the sales.

Abandoned by many,
We'll only go so far without reading.

This decision as appealing
As it may be will only make you stall eventually.

Losing all, losing hope.
Nightly visions keep my head up straight.

Solitude makes its way
When there's no one to turn to say
My four truths on a stormy night.
I won't stop the fight
But, they will always be out of sight
Enclosed in my mind, an everlasting ray of light.

SIMPLE BLISS

Jacey Carol Bullens

(lyrics inspired by A Portrait of Dorian Grey)

Simple bliss
And happiness
Overwhelm my senses.

Joy Prevails
Nothing fails
And splendor is everyday.

My life is great,
And without fate
I'll live forever happy.

But sense time does pass
And nothing lasts
My happiness will fade away.

And with my age
Will bring rage
For I hope to be forever young.

This portrait of beauty
Is a sign of cruelty
For it will mock me forever on.

As I grow old
My heart grows cold
Because my youth is broken.

And without it
I would quit
With words no longer spoken.

ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY



MADÉLIÈNE

Jesse Magnifico



EXHALE

Devlyn Kelly



HARBORWALK

Nick Centrella



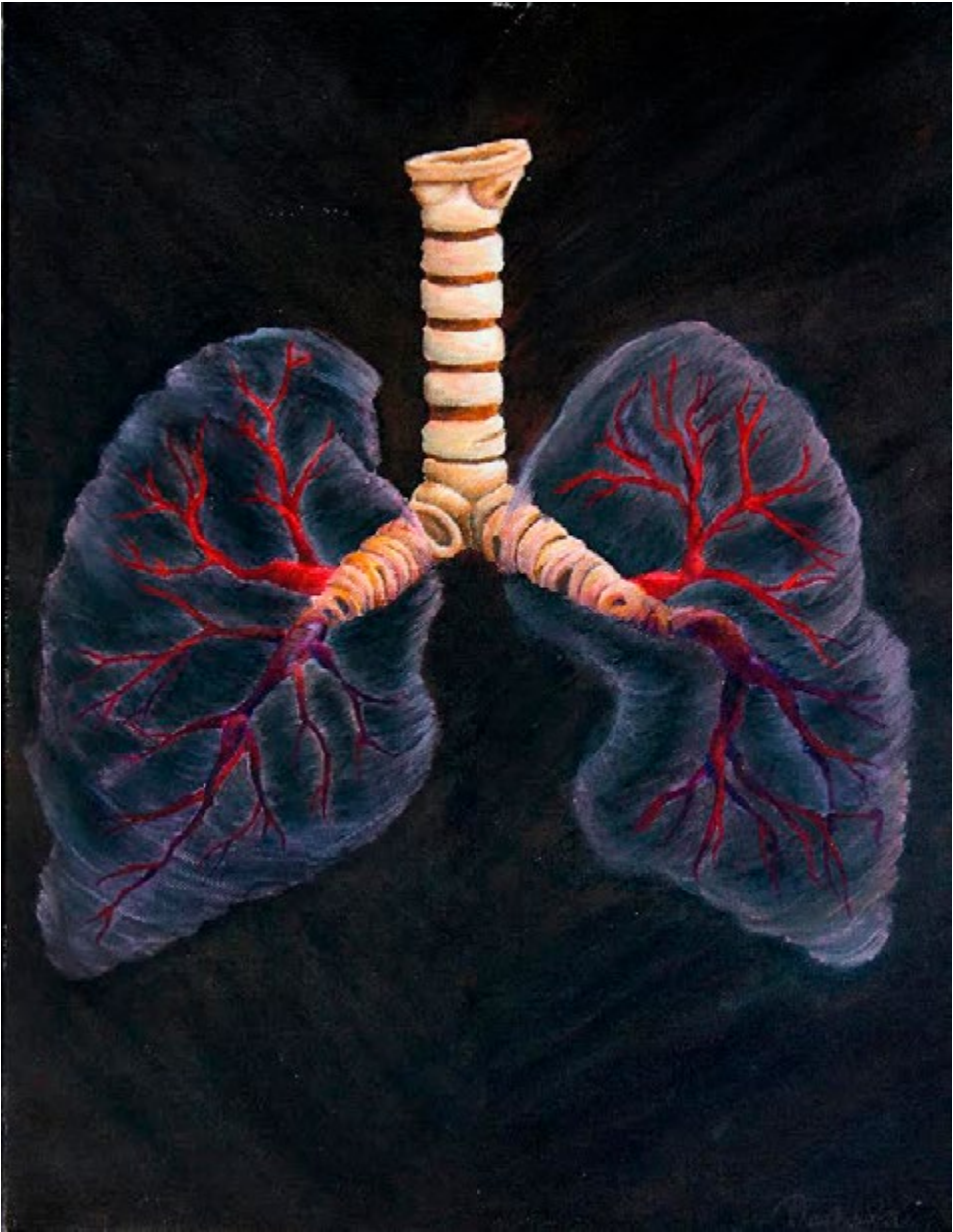
WOMAN

Brenna Lopes



UNTITLED

Devlyn Kelly



THE FISHERMEN

Renae Rients



SHADOWS OF CULLODEN

Victoria Greenleaf



PIXIE

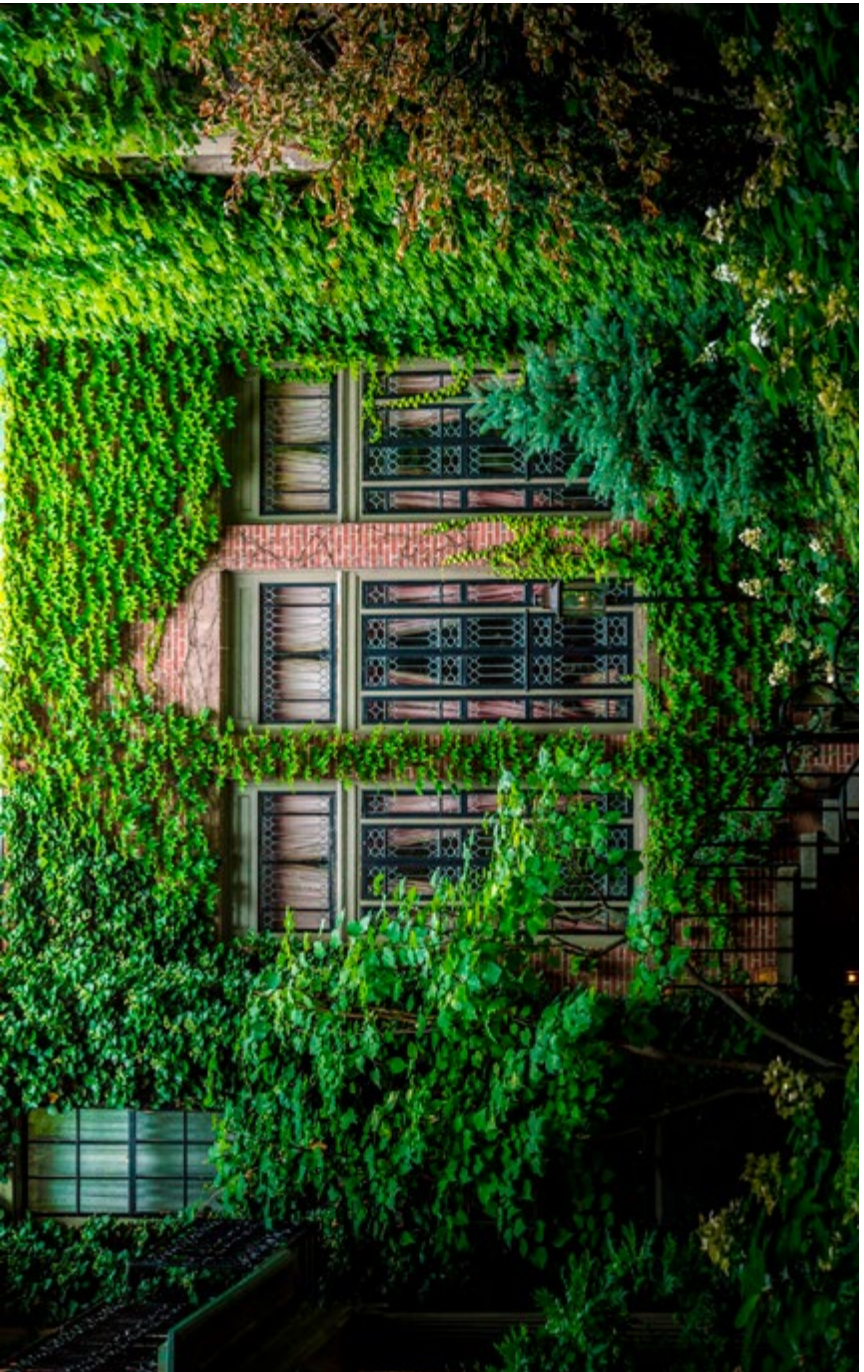
Brenna Lopes



SHROUDED

Joshua Yu

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UNTITLED

Phong Nguyen





UNTITLED

Ashley Sheehy



TRAILS

Nick Centrella



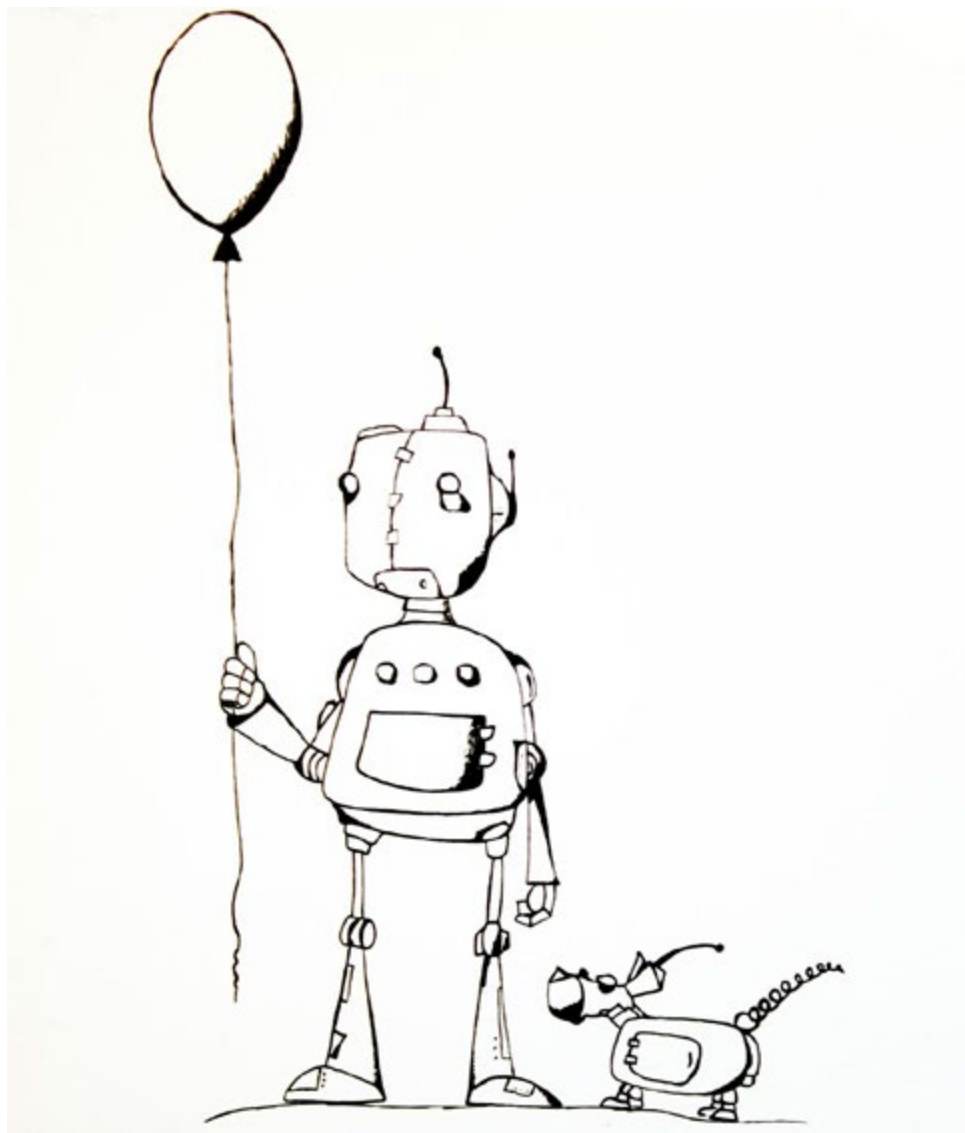
UNTITLED

Sarah Welch



Taylor Preston

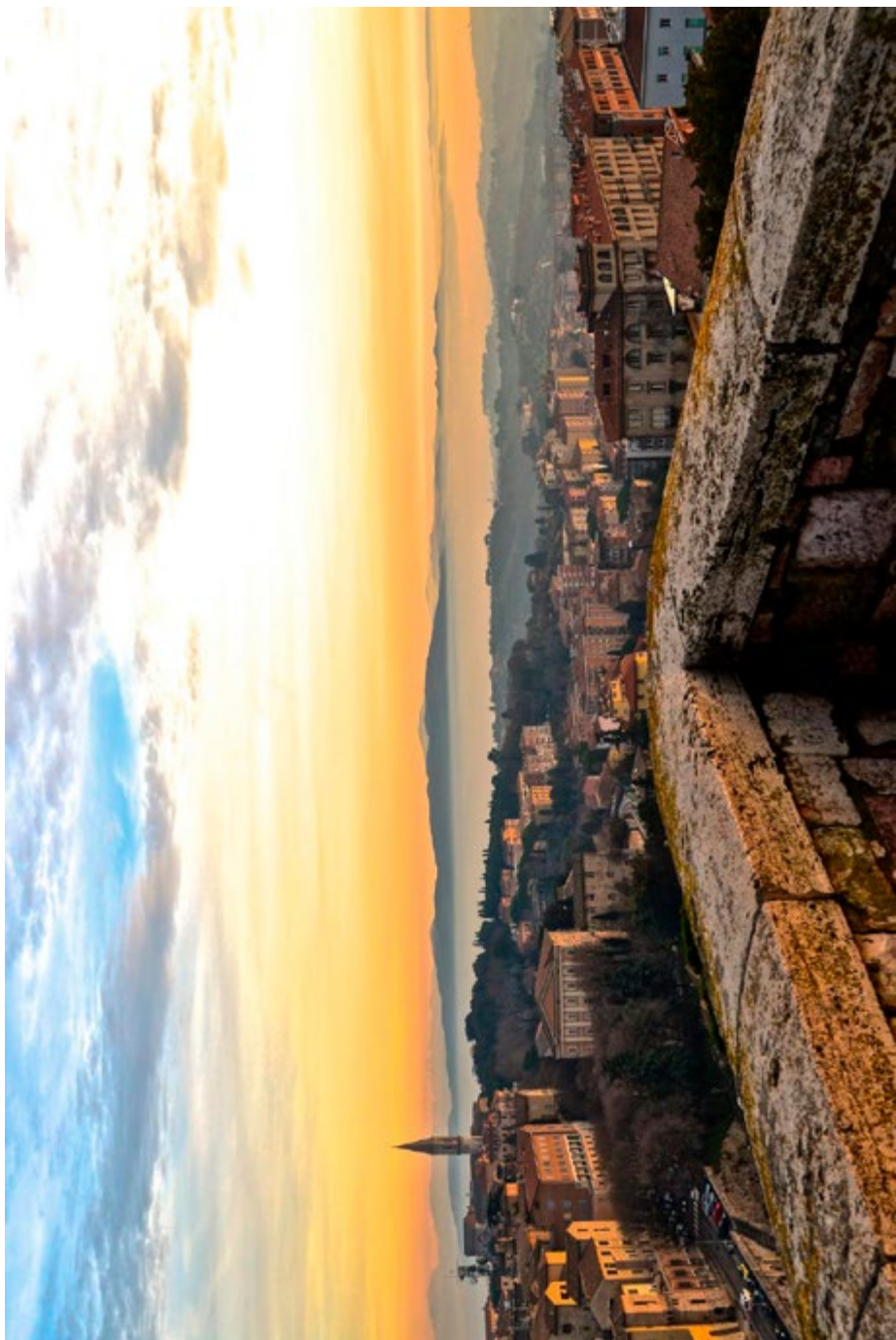
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PERUGIA, ITALY - THE LOOK OUT

Rebecca Navarro



PETRA

Hamzeh Zahran



BOULDER MAN

Amy McAleer



SKULL , STILL LIFE

Hong Vo



WINTER CELLOS

Ashley Sheehy



SAKIZOU

Kennedy Parker



ARLINGTON, BOSTON

Sherley Soraya



SherleySoraya

I'VE BEEN SPOTTED

Kennedy Parker

Venture Literary | Arts Magazine



Art & Photography



RED

Anonymous

Art & Photography  Venture Literacy | Arts Magazine





FIRENZE MARKETS

Amy McAleer



CHILL BIRD

Kennedy Parker



A FAIRY'S DOOR



UNTITLED I

Jesse Magnifico

Venture Literary | Arts Magazine ♀ Art & Photography



UNTITLED II

Jesse Magnifico



SWIRL

Zoe Saaf



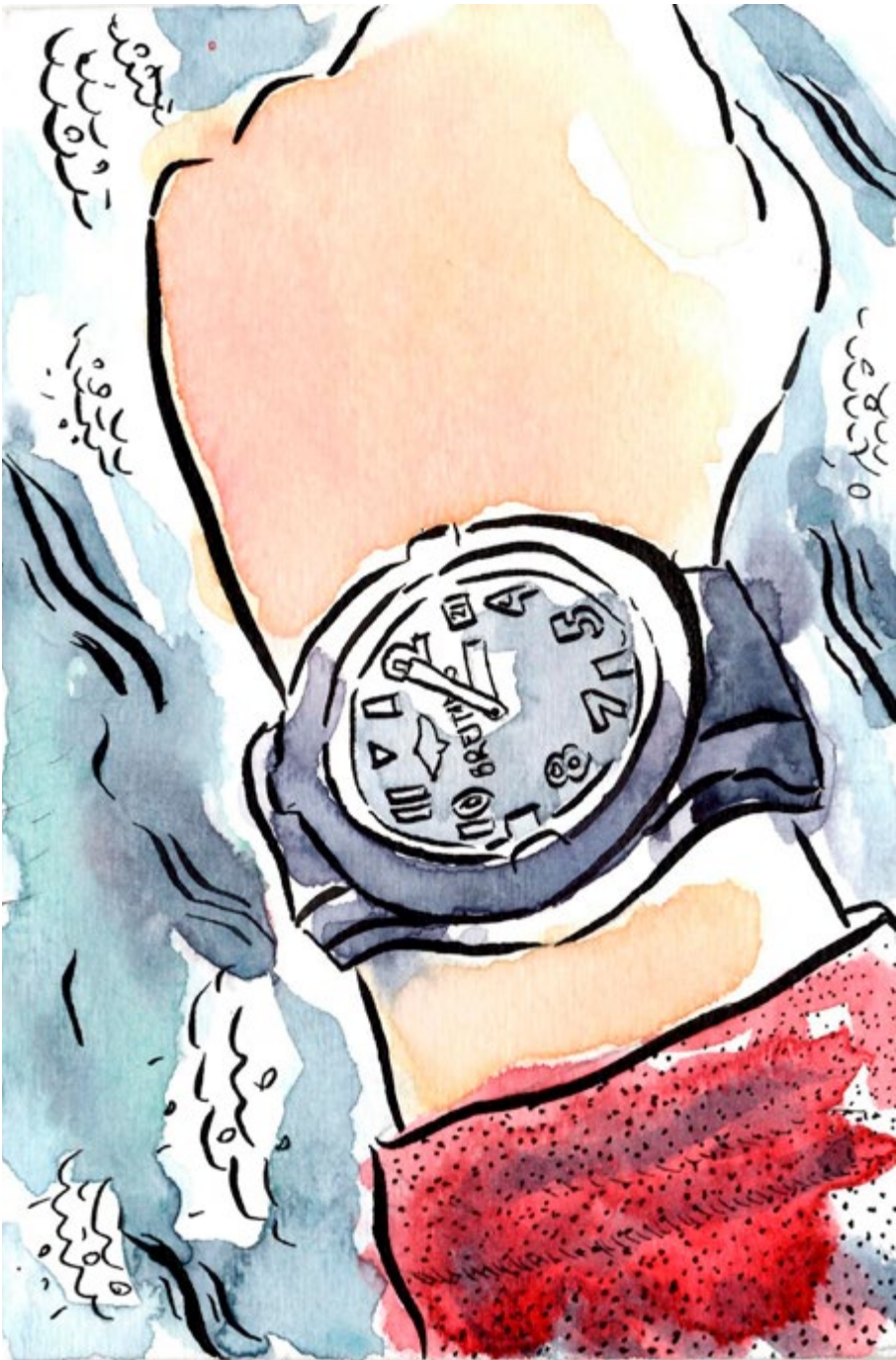
LIGHTS

Erin Cronan



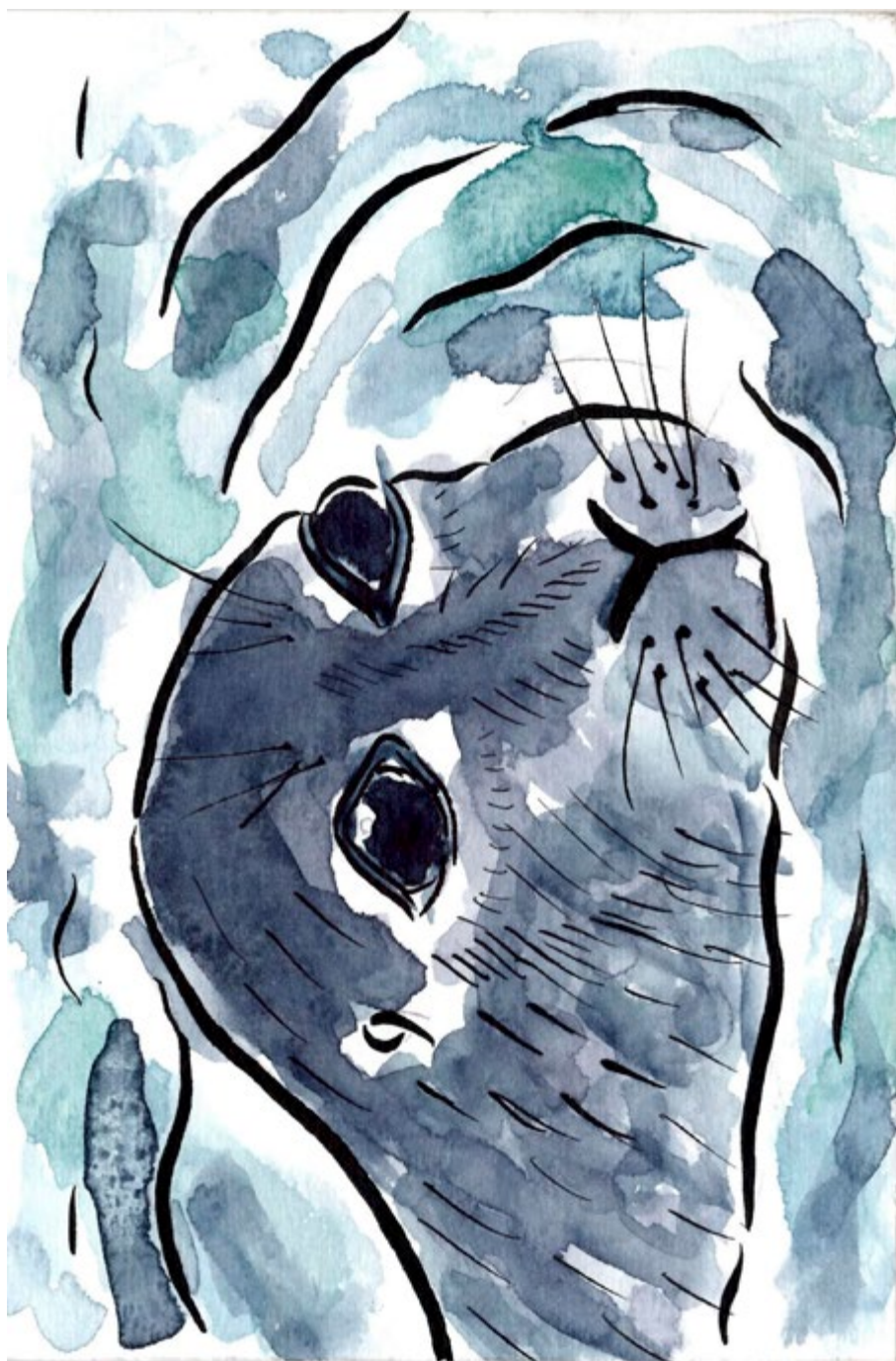
NANTUCKET SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS I

Elizabeth Ruby



NANTUCKET SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS II

Elizabeth Ruby



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RED DRESS

Taylor Preston



THE SWIMMING POOL

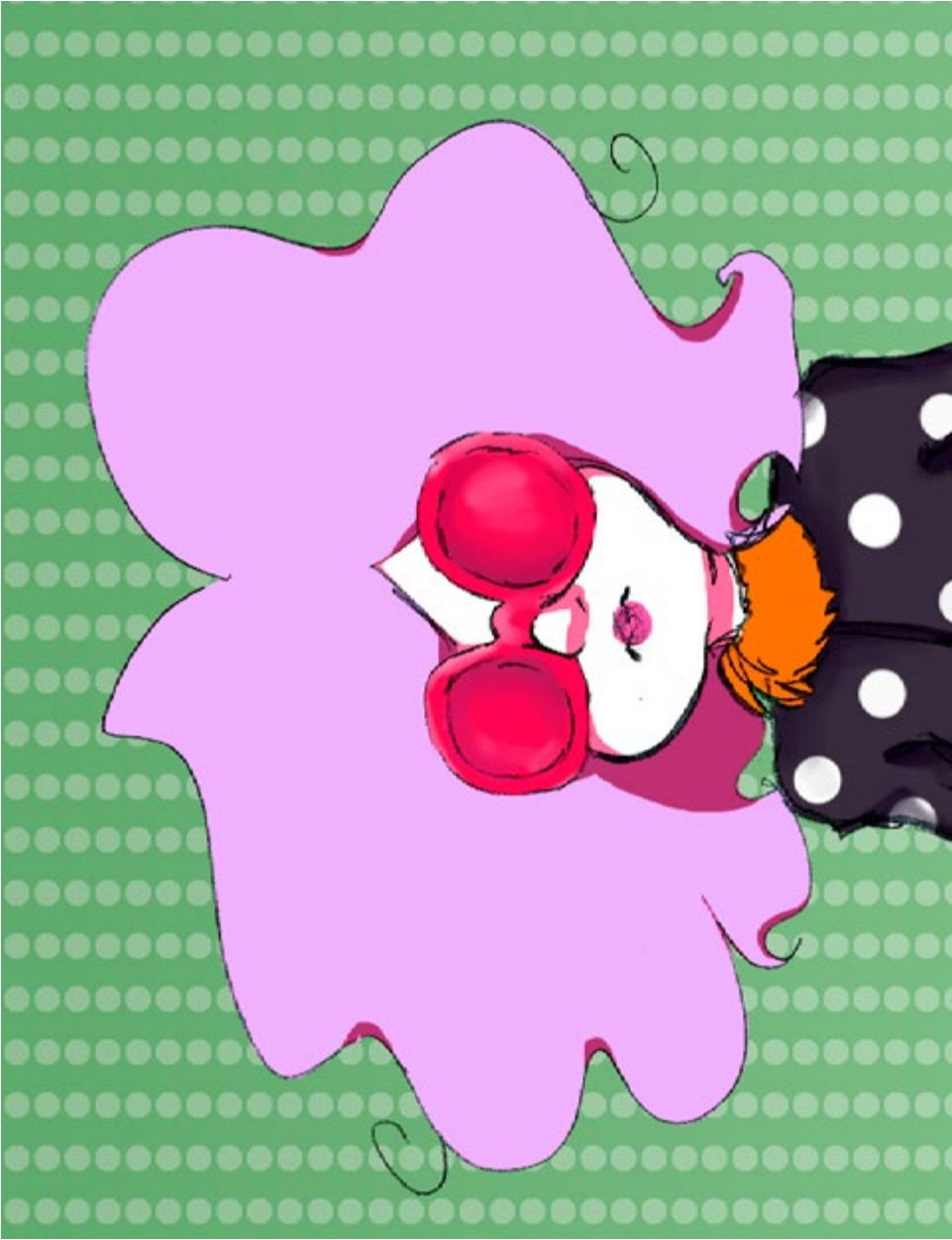
Mariel Tenney



Art & Photography  Venture Literary | Arts Magazine

MONSOON SEASON

Kennedy Parker



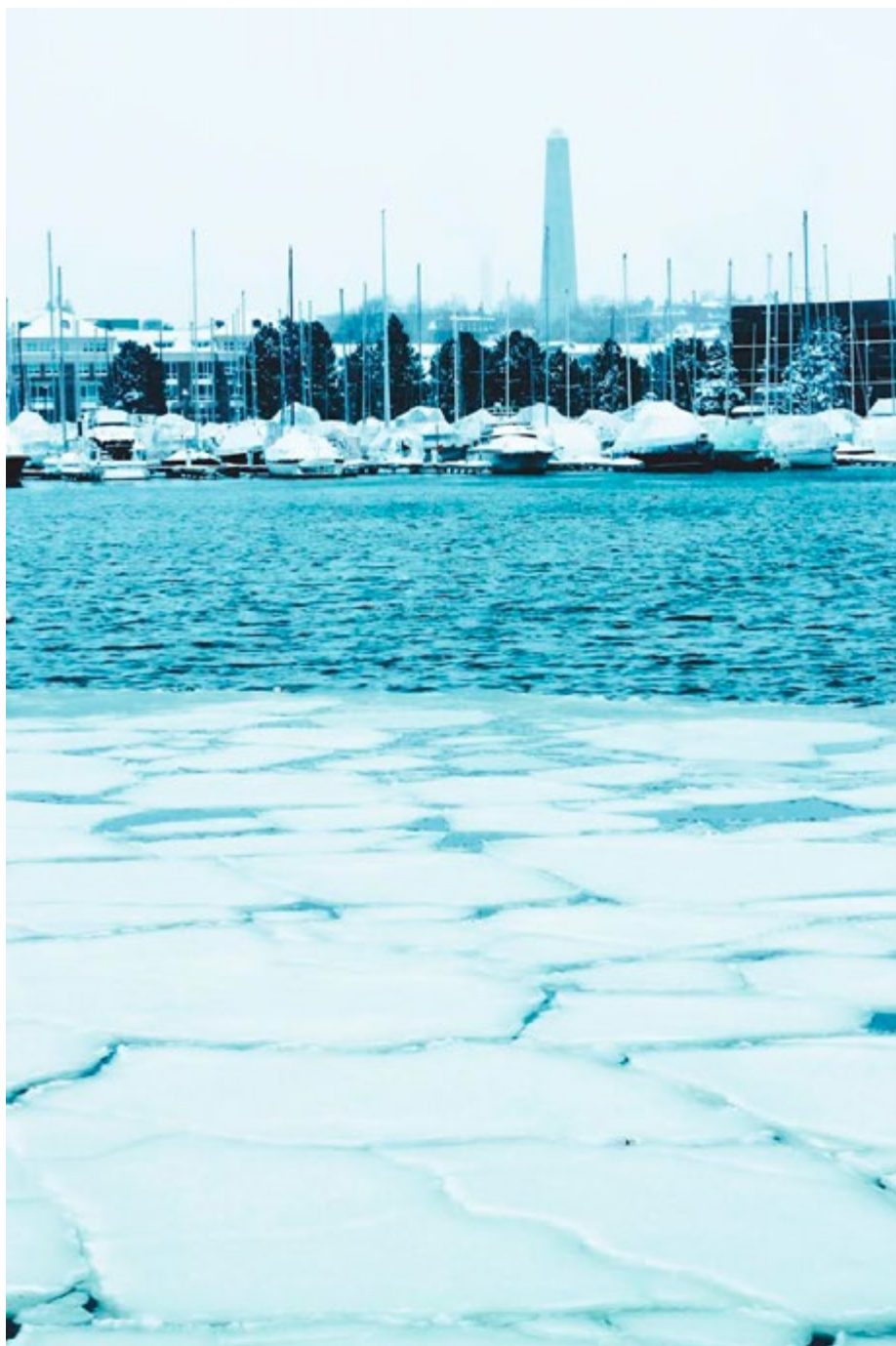
KAZUMI, CHIBA

Ken Martin



FROZEN

Amy McAleer



NEW YORK CITY

Ivan Lanz



DOWNTOWN MIAMI



KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE

Kennedy Parker



NEW YORK SKYSCRAPER

Sherley Soraya



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SherleySoraya

SIOBHAN

Elizabeth Ruby

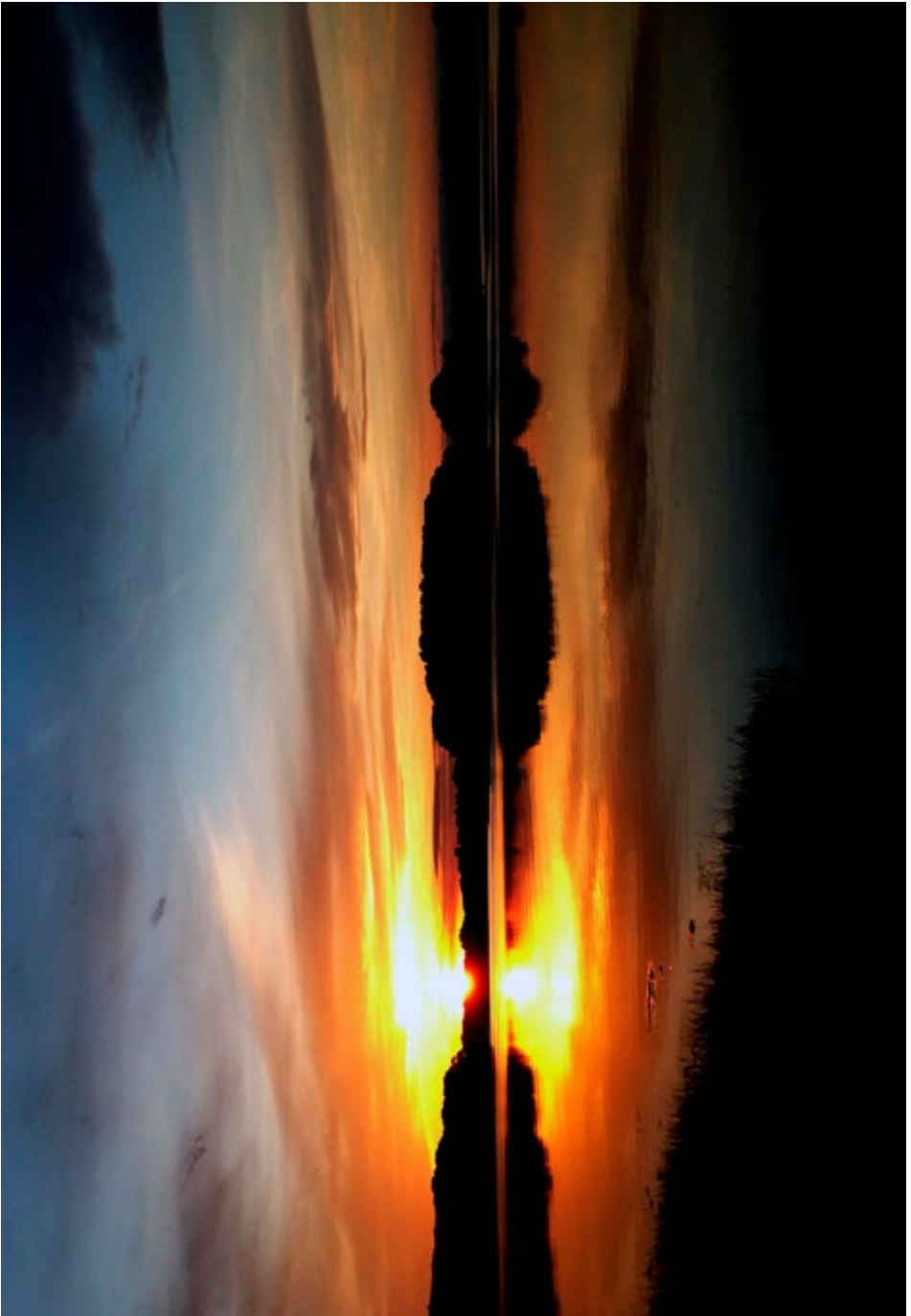
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REFLECT

Taylor Preston

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THANKSGIVING

Elizabeth Ruby



DO YOU NEED HELP?

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MONADNOCK METACOMET

Dylan Clifford



B A N A N A

Joshua Yu



FREEDOM STATION

Ivan Lanz



STRANGE LITTLE FRIENDS

Brenna Lopes



SHOES

Sally Diana



LOPE DE VEGA HOUSE

Angélica García-Chico



TIME TO FOCUS

Ivan Lanz



MADRID

Angélica García-Chico



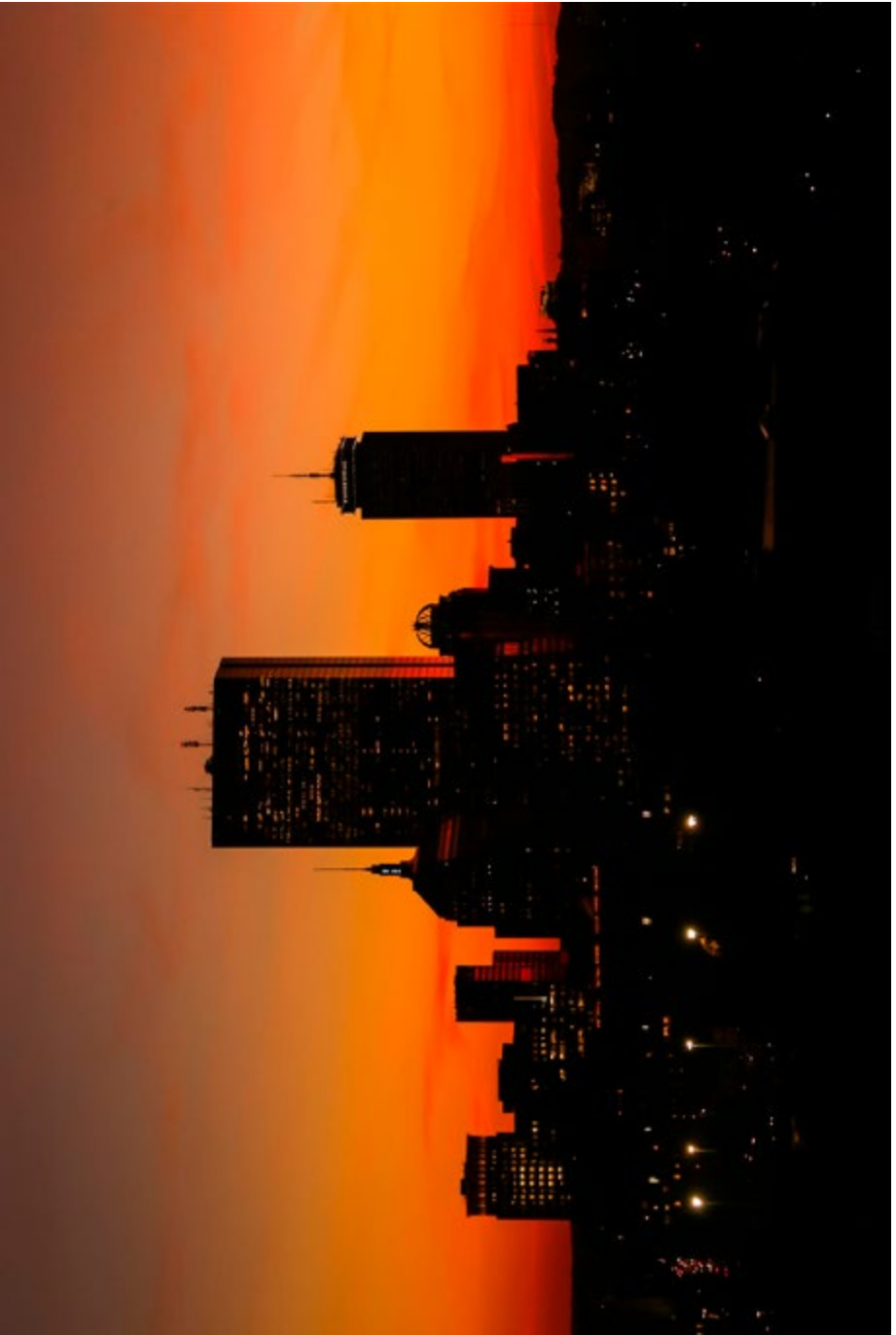
SANDPIPERS

Dylan Clifford



BOSTON SUNSET

Zoulikha Madkour



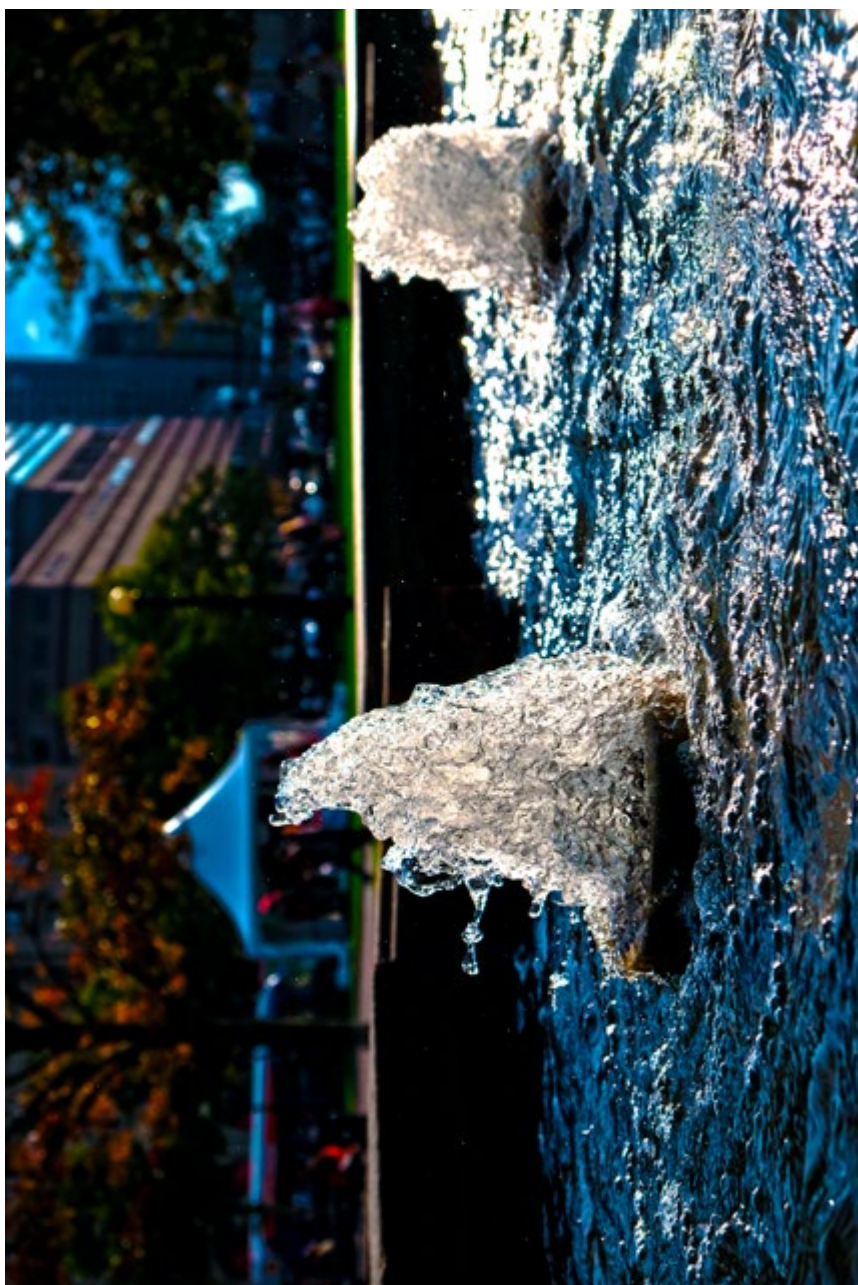
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RED

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STREET LIGHTS

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UNTITLED I

David Braz





BOSTON COMMON

Ivan Lanz



PUERTOS

Gabriella Aldana



RISK EVERYTHING

Ivan Lanz



UNTITLED II

David Braz



UNTITLED

Gabriella Aldana



REMEMBER ME

Renae Rients



PROFESSOR CAPUTO

Brenna Lopes



ESSAY AND MEMOIR



BACK ON BAKER STREET

Victoria Greenleaf

Shouldn't there be more rain? The thought dances through my head as I walk briskly along Baker Street in central London. Everyone told me that in this city it always rains, yet it's bright and warm. I feel the sun caress my face, close my eyes, and adjust to the light before surveying the scene around me.

I read somewhere that people cannot dream up faces. While you sleep, if you are painting, or drawing, or daydreaming of a seemingly imaginary person, you have actually pictured them from memory. If you pass a stranger on the street, the human mind will subconsciously remember how they look. Humans simply cannot create other humans' faces from scratch. I wonder how many people on the street today will see me in their dreams tonight.

I carry a brown sweater over my shoulder and a book of Shakespearian tragedies under my arm. People swarm about like ants scavenging for the latest scraps—they dart and scurry in and out of restaurants and stores, and many step out from the red double-decker busses that continue to pull up beside me; they emit raucous screeches as they pull into the bus stops.

This is a dream. This is the most beautiful of all my dreams, because rather than being imprisoned inside my head, I am living in it, walking in it, breathing it in; experiencing the beating heart of London itself. A nervous-looking pigeon darts down from above and lands harshly on the stone-slab sidewalk near my feet before bobbing away after some spilled chips. I never noticed how pigeons have purple in their tails, I think to myself before walking on.

I have no real destination. Where could you really be going to in a city such as this? Everywhere you look is a potential destination. The sun hangs hot and iridescent in the sky. It casts shadows under everyone's feet—makes them look like they're floating. It's about two o'clock, and the city feels alive.

I believe that there is an undeniable rhythm in this world, and there are only a few places where you can hear it. London is one of those places. You feel like you're part of a bigger picture. I breathe in the sweet air and suddenly I can picture the Victorian-era city, complete with the thick smog that drapes the skyline. I see horses, ornate carriages, beggars, and the esteemed upper-class. Women

walk along the dirt road holding parasols and wearing pastel, flowered hats. I open my eyes and see a shiny-red Maserati whiz by before stopping at a red light—the rap music blaring from inside the cabin.

I catch the smell of fish and chips as I pass by a small café. The smell of the fried fish invades my mind, beckoning me to come in and indulge my taste buds, but I press on—the café is crowded with people. A young man and a woman sit near the window. They look to be immersed in a conversation that appears to have a flirtatious overtone. She silently laughs behind the glass and he leans closer; puts his hand on hers. I feel the need to lend them privacy, and so I turn my attention to the rest of the activity on the street.

There's a swing in my step as I pick up the pace near George Street. I tune into the clack, clack, clack, as my boots scuff the stone underneath them. I catch a bit of a deep conversation to my right as two well-dressed men hurry to pass me.

"I feel like she will never get it," one laments.

"She will. You need to give it a chance, mate," The other assures with a hand on his friend's shoulder.

I watch them go ahead and silently say goodbye to the two strangers who unknowingly allowed me a glimpse into their lives. They are then swallowed up into the multitudes of people crowding the sidewalk ahead of me.

I have reached the end of Baker Street now, and I think about crossing onto Oxford Street. I turn around and head in the opposite way that I came. There are far too many people crammed onto Oxford Street at this time of day, and I don't feel like being swept into a symphony of voices that I do not recognize. Sometimes it can be too much. Sometimes I forget that I'm 3,000 miles away and across an ocean from home. I briefly think of the ones I care about waiting for me back in Boston, but their smiling faces drift away as new things fill my senses.

I notice an old woman hailing a taxi cab on the side of the road. She's carrying four or five shopping bags from Tesco. I stop and wait for her. If she cannot get a cab then I will help her hail one, I think. After about a minute, a bored-looking driver and his taxi pull up on the corner next to her. She shuffles to the window, and a young man from the street runs to open the back door for her. He smiles; his blue tie and grey suit look brighter than usual in this light. I shade my eyes to see more of the scene. Squinting, I see her briefly touch his hand in thanks before scooting into the back seat. The cab heads onto the road towards its destination, leaving the Good Samaritan to watch it go, a faint smile on his face.

How many people have I seen today, a hundred, a thousand? I always think of things like that; I can't help it. I love to think that, even though people go about their business and ignore one another every day, it's always a sham, a ruse, an act. They notice how your hair looks in the sun, and how you walk, and how you speak. What you're wearing, and who you're with. They watch, take mental notes, and remember. Everyone does. It doesn't matter where in the world you may be, people will always be people. And as much as you may think that you won't leave an impression on a city—you will. Even if it's not on the city itself, but on the people that call it home.

WHAT DREAMS MAY COME

Cierra Morson

"To die, to sleep, to sleep, perchance to dream -ay there's the rub, for in that sleep of death, what dreams may come?" For we have never known, nor do we now know, nor shall we possibly ever know. Surely we have grown slight desires to learn; to know that after death, too, shall one day prance about in fields of painted flowers and rescue our loved ones from Dante's seventh circle, as Robin Williams has in *What Dreams May Come* a thousand times over. Yes, that would be lovely, but its loveliness shall fade with time, as life once had, and the eternity of bliss shall grow lonely, as all eternities do. After spending too long in your own perfect world, you will grow blasé. Not everything is designed to be perfect. You will soon crave punishment and persecution, brimstone and fire as a change of scenery because, even in heaven, sunlight grows to burn all eyes much worse than fire and brimstone ever can.

Now to address the auxiliary issue of sleep: it is a blessing to some and a curse to others. Some spend hours tossing and turning, looking for a sleep and a release that is incontestably not looking for them. Sleep, in itself, is "taking the rest afforded by a suspension of voluntary bodily functions and the natural suspension, complete or partial, of consciousness," and is considered necessary to the function of any human being. What people fail to realize is that sleep is, by definition, a form of death. All who participate in this nearly primal ritual are merely practicing for their eternal rests. When one is lying there cold and still, it is hard to argue otherwise yet, even though death is practically at the doorstep of all who are sleeping, most only feel alive whilst they are asleep. Why is that? We have corrupted and created a world so vile, so uninhabitable that the majority of its residents would rather be a hair's breadth away from dying and, at the same time, be much happier than they would ever hope to be while fully awake and alive.

The indisputable answer as to why people would rather be asleep than awake is the existence of dreams. Dreams give both humans and animals the ability to lead lives and go on adventures that they would never be able to experience otherwise. The realm of dreams and of the subconscious has become our escape from this corrupted and uninhabitable world that we have created. There is also a sort of thrill that dreams bring: being in a world that is unknown, playing the role of a hero or a villain, or some mixture of the two, saving loved ones, hurting enemies, or merely existing amongst associates. The world of dreams is one where the

abstract becomes tangible and where the impossible becomes commonplace. In dreams, one may surely prance about in fields of painted flowers and rescue their loved ones from Dante's seventh circle, if that is desired. With that being said, we know that there is sleep in death, death in sleep, dreams in sleep, sleep in dreams, and death in dreams, but wouldn't it be lovely to know if there were really dreams in death? Wouldn't that ease the blow for everyone? There would no longer be a fear of death and people would happily climb into their coffins to rest after a long life, just as they lay down in their beds at night.

However, one must wonder that not all dreams are in the control of the dreamer and that a wonderful dream may quickly turn into an awful nightmare from which the dreamer wishes to immediately awaken from. Maybe this is "the respect that makes calamity of so long life", for we are afraid that we may get stuck in an eternal nightmare, which is unpleasant for all to imagine. There are those who can control their dreams and what happens in them because they are aware that they are sleeping, a concept known as lucid dreaming. With this in mind, it is nearly impossible not to consider this question: do we know that we are dead when we die? If such is the case, then we would all be able to control our dreams and ensure our eternal happiness in death, again causing the fear to diminish. But then again, what is the point of having an amazing dream if you can never awaken to appreciate its brilliance?

RAISED IN A CONCRETE JUNGLE

William Contreras

Abolitionist Frederick Douglass once described in his literary work *Learning to Read and Write*, that there was a time in his childhood when his owners would try to “[shut him] up in mental darkness” (185). His writing has always had a great impact on me because, as he endured suffering in his youth, so did I. I was not raised in an ordinary neighborhood, in an ordinary house, or an ordinary community. In fact, I was raised in the slums of my country’s capital; Caracas. At times it seems like a dream, for it has been a long while since I left that filthy place. Although it was long ago, I still remember my days there. “My dark days, I call them. Days so sad and miserable, that most people would not be able to endure a week living in such conditions. The irony is that, although my childhood was rough, it created this hunger for learning inside of me that led me to discover who I am today.

I remember walking down the crowded streets of Venezuela’s capital when I was a child. Hearing the crazy man on Bolivar Street shout that we were “all sinners of one kind or another” was frightening. His expressions were distant from this world. His eyes seemed possessed by malice and hatred towards everything that laid in front of him. His face was dark and rusty from months of not bathing. My father would tell me to look away because “that man was lost in cocaine”, but it was impossible to ignore his screams. He would go on and on for hours talking to the shadows of the capital. He would say “God forgive you, for the Devil is waiting to devour your soul in the underground”. I remember being afraid. After all, I used to live just around the corner from where he stayed.

My father had recently been fired from his job, and we were all just adapting to our new life in the sordid slums. My family’s apartment was small: One floor, One bathroom, One stove, One everything. We lived surrounded by beggars, thieves, prostitutes, gangsters, and pimps. They would often try to persuade my father into working for them. Sometimes they would even offer my mother quick cash in return for quick favors, to which she would always say no. Truth is, at times it would be really hard because we didn’t have enough food to feed the four of us. Living on a meager subsistence of tuna, fruit, and bread is a memory I will never forget. However, even though things were tough, my parents always taught my brother and me the importance of having morals and values when it comes to work. After all, my parents had a great life before my father was fired; thus, they knew that honest hard work was all it took to be successful in life.

The building where I lived was located in the most dangerous part of the capital: Chacaito. Chacaito is well known around the country for its high crime rate. Dozens are murdered in Chacaito per month. Some even say that “Chacaito swallows its citizens,” because they are all unworthy of life. In any case, that was my home. I would wake up every morning, go to public school, and pray that I would make it back in the afternoon for lunch. Most days, I would eat on the dirty floor whatever my mother was able to find, and then my brother Cesar and I would hit the streets in search of some money.

Cesar and I would juggle and dance in hope of earning some cash. Whenever we would manage to gather enough money we would buy the family a nice dinner from McDonalds. Cesar would buy my father a hamburger with no cheese and no tomato. I would get my mother nuggets with a lot of barbecue. As for my brother and I, we would buy ourselves fries and ice cream.

Don't get me wrong, my childhood was not always this dreadful. It all started when ex-president Chavez came into power. When Chavez came into power he began firing workers who disagreed with his political views. My father, who saw him as a corrupt tyrant was among those who openly criticized him; therefore, he was dismissed from his work place. I will never forget these memories because they made me who I am today—a seeker of justice, and a seeker of hope.

Those days when I lived among the lower class, I realized that life is nothing without money. It was funny to me that a green piece of paper could define a whole society. Basically, money equals power and lack of money equals hunger in the streets. When I was younger, I hated listening to my parents conversations because I couldn't understand anything they said. They would talk about the economy, politics, and more often about escaping. Every time my parents mentioned fleeing the misery we were living in, my eyes would glow. I would get excited because I could picture my old life, when we had it all. Before my father was dismissed from his job we were somewhat wealthy. We had a normal house, a normal car, and more importantly, we had an abundance of food. Times were rough when we lived in the slums. However, what affected me the most was my lack of a good education. My education was unfortunate because the public schools in Venezuela lack respectable teachers.

These teachers were paid poorly, therefore worked poorly. I learned about socialism when I was in third grade because the government tried to brainwash the youth into loving poverty. In a sense, as Frederick Douglass was deprived of an education because his master thought educated slaves were a “danger” upon society, I was being deprived of a good education because the government saw danger in cultured citizens. My classmates would always be happy because they

did not know anything beyond the borders of the slums. On the other hand, I hated every minute in that congested school. I knew that what they were teaching me was false. I knew because I used to have it all, and because of what the government called "equality among the classes", it was all taken away. I would say that at some point like Douglass "envied his fellow-slaves for their stupidity" (186), I envied my classmates for their ignorance. I would hate how my teachers would promise me a bright future, but all they would teach me was to be submissive and to believe in the government. All I could think was: how can you be successful and live in such a place?

It didn't take a genius to realize that they were feeding us lies. It only took one glimpse to notice the conditions of our school. We were situated around waste. The classroom smelled like trash because all the factories would dump waste in the nearby river. The streets were filled with holes because the government would never invest in the infrastructure of the ghetto. They would hide behind the phrase: "We need poor people in order for socialism to succeed". Yet, it was ironic because we were paying the price of a corrupt regime, while those responsible for our misery were living in mansions. Even the size of the school was pathetic. It consisted of ten rooms, and two bathrooms. Imagine sharing a class with a hundred students in a room designed for thirty people. I felt suffocated within those corrupt walls. I was not learning anything valuable like math and history. I was being brainwashed into oblivion!

As soon as I told my father that I was not learning anything, he made it his priority to teach me all the basic things that a child should know at my age. After all, my dad had graduated with honors from his university and was very smart; thus, he was perfectly fit to be my teacher. Whenever he would come back from job interviews we would sit in the living room (which was also the kitchen) and study. We would grab whatever books we found and he would teach me to read them. I remember that the first text I read was a book in English called *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It was very difficult because I didn't understand the diction being used in that book, but there were no other books to read so I made it my mission to understand it. I probably read that book twenty times before I understood what it was about. The problem was, when I finally grasped what the book was about, I realized that the world was unjust and cruel.

The book made me furious because I realized that African Americans were discriminated in the United States during the 1900's, like my people are in current times. I hated the reality that we were living in poverty. I felt useless because I couldn't do anything to save my country. However, that all ended one chilly evening when my father came back home and told us we were moving away. It took me a couple of minutes to realize that we were finally escaping those four walls

we called home. For the first time in many years, I had hope. This time I didn't feel useless because I knew wherever I would go, that I would learn enough to come back to Venezuela and save it. In the morning, we left for Colombia to start a new life. My father had gotten a job as an oil engineer at a prestigious company and that gave my family the perfect reason to leave the country.

When we landed in Colombia, I remember my anxiety. I wanted to rush down the stairs of the plane and breathe the fresh air of freedom and opportunity. As I walked out of the airport, I remember being mesmerized by the streets. This time there were no holes, no smell of waste, no crazy people all around, and most importantly, there were colors. In my previous home everything was white and black. In Bogota, everything was bright. There were no shadows running around desperate for money. Everyone here had hope. It was beautiful to see people walking in the streets with smiles on their faces. A smile most likely produced by the lack of insecurity, the lack of hunger, and the lack of fear.

This lack of fear was the most vivid sensation I possessed when I lived in Colombia. It prompted me to follow my dreams because I had no socio-educational barriers stopping me from doing so. I know I am still young, but the dream and ambition inside of me burns strong with desire. I will succeed in changing my country because through my life I have grasped the meaning of right and wrong, and I know that unsuited gladiators who call themselves our representatives are tearing Venezuela to pieces. I won't lie; I wasn't always concerned with the situation of my country. However, my ambition was born through my journey around the world. It was through the deserts of Saudi Arabia, the mountains of Nepal, the crowded streets of India, and the majestic shores of Marbella, that I now know what beauty is, and therefore plan to make my country as beautiful as it should be.

FICTION



THE VIGILANTE

Kalene Hess

My mother doesn't like me defending the devil, but I feel obligated. He never gets a fair trial. I know evil humans, but none of them go by Lucifer. My mother oozes puritanical platitudes. The loaded bible verses drip, drip, drip from her nose as her eyes go blank. She says "The devil is unholy," but I disagree. "We are all unholy so doesn't that make YOU the devil? Doesn't that make ME the devil?" My mother refuses to consider this opinion.

My sister and I play with Play-Doh scissors. I convince Julie to close her eyes and reassure her that I will cut her hair with the purple plastic. She closes her eyes and I reach for the rusty metal scissors on the kitchen counter. I twist the front of her bangs and with one fatal chop her hair falls rhythmically to the floor. Julie's face is expressionless as her big black eyes start to swell with water. I continue to cut her hair by taking chunks from the side and back, which at least takes the attention away from her bangs. The kitchen floor is covered in her pin straight brown hair. Julie is picking up the pieces and crying so loudly the dog begins to bark.

My mother runs in and snatches the scissors from my hand and tells me to pray for forgiveness. My mother says, "The devil made you do this awful act." We argue over my actions. I am certain I did this because I wanted to. Her only response is the devil made you do it. I begin to scream, "I am the devil! I am the devil! I am the devil. I am THE devil," as I jump up and down on the cold hardwood floor. Julie begins to chant too with her fucked up hair.

My mother tells my father, who tells the pastor, who tells the congregation. On the following Sunday, he dedicates his sermon to my spiritual guidance. He says, "this poor child is suffering from a tormented soul. She doesn't acknowledge Our Savior because the devil has a hold of her." His priggish tone bounces between the empty wooden pews and his holier-than-thou Sunday followers. The stained glass windows enumerate the pain and injustices of the religious scapegoat and now the vigilante; condemned for not molding or transforming into those high religious expectations.

He now speaks of the devil's disguise and his ability to transform or shape-shift. He compares the devil to a snake or even a lowly worm. Their slithering bodies deceiving countless individuals "who lost their way."

I cannot stop thinking about the worms: They only come out when it rains, their bodies covering every inch of the sidewalk. The worms' strange scent pierces my nose. They smell like peas which smell like dirt. Cut a pea in a half and nothing happens. Cut a worm in half

and it will physically heal itself by reattaching the missing limb. No need for a God or a doctor. It just asks for time and acceptance. The pastor squirms at the idea of no need for a God even among the lowliest of the insects.

It is a can of worms he is afraid to open. He fears falling in. He imagines the worms crawling over his body as they enter his mouth. The pastor can feel the evil pulsating through the worms as they make a home in his entrails. The worms don't mind the stench; they can't smell.

I approach the can of worms and peer over the brim. I light a candle and say a prayer, "Forgive me, Father, I am the devil."

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Venture Literary | Arts Magazine
Suffolk University
Office of Student Activities
41 Temple Street
Boston, MA 02114



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