



The Fall Line

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THE FALL LINE

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ABOUT

The Fall Line, Spring 2018, is the 10th volume,
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"POLYPET" | DIGITAL | CATHERINE ANDERSON

WITHOUT THE SKY

By Ella Chin

perhaps,
had i been there,
i could've freed
the bird trapped in the
window
or warned her
before she got stuck.

but i wasn't there,
so now she waits,
caught between broken
panes of glass
that let her see the sun
but never fly to it,

and i'm here
writing about what
could've been and
shouldn't be,
about babies with eggshell bones
held to cancer-stained hearts
and voices that weren't heard
until after they were gone

and her eyes brim
with the tears
that fill her child's lungs
and freeze him
in the room
without the sky,

where playgrounds
are wards,
green foam walls
floating between
electric lullabies
and the hourly cries
of the vacuum
in his throat.

they can never sleep
without shadowplays
on their eyelids,
but they can't sleep with them,
either,
and as i write this,

i know that
the very place they loved
is too toxic to return to,
that trees burn red
with isotopes,
that the very words i bleed
are appeals to the world
to remember heroes
we owe far too much to
to forget.

STARS DON'T KNOW WHEN THEY'RE CROSSED

By Wyatt Ernst

Two hopes lie juxtaposed
 A mother's last stand
 A motherland's only Hero
Their fight for life's opposed
 She is despised
 He is hunted
Savior in kindness
 Luck of failure
 Luck in defeat
Coming for Crisis
 Friend and foe alike,
 Hunts only end one way
Left behind in choice
 Trapped in people-shape chains
 Locked out by isolation
Left without a voice
 No one to hear
 No one to speak

The final march rings
 Too young to realize
 Too jaded to care
Fear is all it brings
 A leader never known
 A vanguard who refuses
One side must burn
 Can't betray her hope
 Can't betray his promise
One side must turn
 "Have they strayed too far?"
 "Have they left me behind?"
Maybe they walk away
 "I'll find a way alone
 I'll find her on my own"
Maybe they decide to stay
 "I must prevail
 Fate can't make me fail"

Two lives are crossed
 One must learn hate
 One must learn love
 For once, reach for the dove
 For once, make someone late
Many lives are lost

One finally chooses
 Life is its own reward
 Life is its own promise
One finally fuses
 Mother's hope affirmed
Voices heard forever
 To those who've learned
Kindness never fresher
 "Love was the only choice"
Piece to reign a thousand years
 Just listen to their voices
(An etcher loses wares
 So someone can remember)

GYPSY

By Isaac Rowlingson

Her emerald eyes and raven hair
her pendulum clock hypnotic stare
her cheap disguise the breathless air
I breathe
her feathered gown and wooden broom
a one track town in the afternoon
I was hanging around how could you assume
I didn't see?

Your beauty, yes, fills the room
as we lay in the golden tomb
the long forgotten maze
And the smoke it fills the air
as I look up and stare
into your haze
I'm coming through
Gypsy

Her crystal necklace and silhouette
on the long night that I can't forget
her dancing flame and cowboy hat
her ruby ring hung down
by the stars of the darkest night
the rising tide shining so bright
the diamond sands we kept in sight
for the time

And I travelled to the moon just to find you
if I've spoken too soon may I remind you
of what's behind
Every time you look into the mirror
and it looks back at you
and says, I know
how you feel,
Gypsy

The hollow birds they begin to shout
as the rain pours down without a shadow of doubt
it's dark in here would you let me out
of the cave?
The rusted pipes they begin to break
the endless curtain it begins to drape
over a cold cut coffin and heaven's gate
this can't be everyday

Your caravan has roamed far and wide
and behind puppet strings you hide
the cards you play
you've got the world in the palm of your hand
but you're on the tip of my tongue
don't you understand?
I won't let you fall
Gypsy

And in the saloon I get a faded feeling
her tears slip slowly through the crooked ceiling
as I dry my eyes as my skin is peeling
it all comes back the same
the fog is lifted from her unveiled face
her mind has shifted right out of place
and in my heart remains the empty space
of a memory

Here she sits waiting for the day to begin
as I sit dreaming about the rain again
as her gin floods my head
Oh, but you and I are like day and night
I'm weary eyed and I
must say goodnight
I'm falling fast
Gypsy



"STRANGE BEDFELLOW" | RAE ALBERTS

Unscathed

By Gil Somers

IT WASN'T LIKE I heard it would be. There was no flash, no bright lights, no memories of my mother stirring hot lentil soup while my brother and I knelt around the woodstove racing matchboxes to the smell of ash and smoke and dust and the tinny sound of Bob Dylan on our father's guitar. It was silent. And slow. Like what I always imagined being lost in space would feel like: unending and relentless, just me watching the world go by.

It was early March and I had set out to drive cross country, solo. I acquired a forest green 1994 Jeep Grand Cherokee for five-hundred dollars, threw what little possessions I had into the trunk, and drove westward. Aside from a flat tire two hours later and a blizzard near Laramie, Wyoming some days later, the trip was pretty uneventful and I was pretty lucky, considering I didn't necessarily know what I was doing. Looking back, of course, no one gets into a beat-up farm Jeep with less than four-hundred dollars to their name planning to drive across the country in the middle of March when most places north of the Mason-Dixon line are still experiencing winter unless they absolutely believe that they know what they're doing. Or they're an idiot. Or both.

I felt the earth let go of my tires, windows cleared of hot and humid breath and fog. I felt my foot on the brake pedal (when did it get there?), and I felt the cold foam steering wheel in my grip, nails digging into my palms. One, then two, then three and four thick flakes of snow clumped heavily on my windshield. Wipers lurched and arced, beginning their unperturbed sweep of the stragglers in their path. Breath, hot and humid, fogged my windows, and the headlights ahead shone through like dull stars. I hadn't even begun to spin. Outside my windows, evergreens stood like ever-watching sentinels in their ice-bound world, like two walls with which to collide. Behind me my tire tracks crisscrossed and laced together, in and then out, dancing in the snow on the road like planetary trajectories moving through time.

I was alive. I threw open the heavy door to the frigid air outside and unfurled myself onto the snow, relishing its cool embrace on my red and flushed face. The air reeked of engine oil and transmission fluid, of cold nights and snot. My body was still Jello from the adrenaline, and when I stood up I fell again to my knees and then to my palms. I wasn't sure if anything hurt, but I still saw stars on the horizon. I heard her, my Jeep, rumbling softly, like some celestial beast half-hidden in snow, waiting to rise. "Are you OK?"

"Uhm, yes." I replied. "Yeah.."

"You sure?"

I started laughing! "Yes! Yes! I'm ALIVE!". I was exuberant! Ecstatic! Elated! Invigorated! Maybe a touch delirious, but I was alive! "I'm fine, I'm fine!" I called back, my teeth bright in manic smile. I whooped and hollered, howled and cheered! I danced into my lovely, life-saving, forest green Jeep, put her in four-wheel drive, and drove off into the setting sun, westward, in search of more incidents to barely survive!



"SELFIE" | DIGITAL | PARKER MCCRARY

SILENT SCREAMS

By Marissa Hall

Standing in the middle of the room,
Feeling the walls close in on me
The pain in my chest gets tighter and tighter
Needing to speak, yet I cannot form words.

My mind buzzes, yet a simple help
Cannot escape my chapped lips.
I flick the rubber band around my wrist
To try and bring me back to reality.

Throat tightens, constricts the flow of air
Unable to breath, I am drowning
My lungs are a coal fire.
My limbs, anvils with balloons attached to them.
Weightless, yet paralyzing with each movement.

My mind buzzes with the day-to-day tasks I must do
Depression lures me to sleep, skip class, and eat to find comfort.
Anxiety screams, “Do it all and then some”.
Both make me feel like a failure

Unable to say no to people
For the fear of disappointment outweighs the need for sleep.
Plus, I learned the hard way that it is better to be busy
Then to be alone with nothing but time and *them*
Instinctively I scratch my arm, trying to ease the internal war
Trying to find some way to ease this burden
To try is never good enough though,
At least to *them* I am not

Eyelids feel weighed down, just wanting to sleep this pain away
Craving the glass bottle to touch my lips, filling me with liquid bliss
A friend looks over and asks if I am okay
As a single tear forms in my eye, maintaining a steady voice
I say,

Yeah,
I'm fine.
Just tired.

A Novel Idea

By: Nathan Morris

UNDERWHELMING CREATIVE IDEAS and a demand for books to sell were what pushed Hartley Salk to create a fictitious version of the serial murders happening around him. Characters were given different names, the town was rebranded, and fodder was thrown in for characters who were people he had never met: that is all he did to change his story from what was happening around him.

Hartley Salk was an acclaimed author; once, but time had worn on him, his body, and his proficiency. After a whopping twenty books all came out critically successful, he was due for another, but another wasn't on his mind. There wasn't even an idea. His creativity was gone; his last few books had teetered on the edge of mediocre, but thankfully enough the critics had been euphoric about his original masterpieces and managed to overlook tired tropes and plot points running rampant through his newer work. What he needed was something new, something other than science fiction stories and grim romance novels, and he decided to plagiarise life for that.

A murder mystery was nothing like what he had written before. Blood on his pages, screams echoing between the spine of the book . . . it was exactly what he needed to make his work flare again, and he got the idea after the first grisly murder took place in the quiet town he was retreating in.

Somewhere inside he knew it was wrong while he read over the news report glowing off of his laptop screen. It was afternoon, the day after another murder just down the road, with this one being a Samantha Wilcox. None of the victims had any relation that Hartley could figure out, which made the mystery in his novel all the more compelling, and this death would especially be so as Samantha was found stuffed into her home's water heater. He added his own part with his character's jaw being snapped open and both hands being shoved down into her neck, sinister enough for shock value. Other deaths, which he chuckled to think he had made up since other murder reports weren't as revealing (it had been a slip up that the water heater detail was

released), included a hundred pencils being stabbed through the arms and legs of the victim, the final one piercing his eyes, nose, ears, and mouth, as well as a woman who had all of the circulation in her body cut off by tightly bound rubber bands at every joint, and an older woman who was found strung against the ceiling with her back sliced open and a rabid dog left in the room.

Hartley couldn't attribute all of the death details to himself; in fact, most of them had come from his writing apprentice, Daisy Ruiz, who had surprisingly been on board with the idea of writing about the death around them. In her mind, they were fictionalizing what was happening around them, they were making it less grotesque in a way and possibly making it seem like a story with an end, that the killer would be unmasked and put in jail. She had joined him shortly after he moved to town, which happened to be perfect timing for him since the murders started a few weeks after that, and she had sought him out to ask in person if he could teach her how to be a better writer. Hartley couldn't refuse; he loved attention and fans.

After he finished reading about the murder and picturing how he would write it, Hartley glanced in the dirty mirror across the room and studied his dark, morbid features. For several days he hadn't slept in order to stay on top of things; it seemed like he was on a writing streak he didn't want to lose. He next looked at the clock and saw it was 3:50. Daisy was just getting out of high school and would be coming soon to talk about writing. At first he wasn't sure about her pitching in to the story, as she had initially proposed herself as someone who was horrid at coming up with original ideas, something she wanted help with. Hartley couldn't tell her he himself was out of creative ideas, but the way she came up with deaths impressed him.

The one thing that worried him about what he was doing was the idea that when he moved back to the big city and released the novel, people from the town and those who kept up with the story would recognize similarities and he would be criticized for that. It was surely a risk, but his story bore enough

of its own signature, and instinctively he would write his own ending as thus far it seemed as though the cops weren't on any good trails to find the killer. Hartley wasn't worried about coming up with something original or entertaining enough for the ending, though. He had Daisy to help him.

When the young girl came bounding through the door, having a key of her own to get into the house since sometimes he wouldn't be there when she got there and he trusted her to not mess anything up until he got back, he expected to have to explain the news to her; however, Daisy seemed fully aware of it already.

"Did you hear about it!?" she exclaimed with that natural delight she had when opportunities for story inspiration came to her. Hartley was still getting use to her thick accent, and even though he didn't full well understand what she had said, he just laid back and let her continue. "Found in a water heater? That's crazy! I mean, it's all so awful, we had a moment of silence of school. I'd seen her a few times at the Food Lion I work at, so it was kinda weird to hear that she had died...I honestly hope that killer is caught soon, or at least quits town. Also, sorry I'm late, I was talking to Darren for a bit before leaving."

"Yeah," he agreed, going back to his page. Darren was Daisy's best friend. She had talked about him several times and several times had arrived late because she had been talking to him. "Hey, come here, read this, Daisy. Tell me what you think, I didn't wanna go any further because I wanted to have the cop's reaction to the way she dies."

"You worked without me!?" she mockingly cried, bouncing to his side to read over his shoulder. Her eyes plastered the screen with her vision while she speed read. All the while, Hartley couldn't decipher what was behind her serious face plate until she said her opinion out loud. "I think it could be better." She spoke bluntly but smiled apologetically to make up for it. "I actually came up with something too!"

"What's that?" Hartley asked anxiously, finding it a trend that her ideas were usually always better than his.

"So, I like where you were heading, disfigurement is always a shock factor when it comes to serial murders. But look at the things the killer has done so far, that level of of gore isn't something he or she would do themselves. Ripping the jaw open and slamming her hands inside is too sadistic for them I think. But what if, okay, what had happened was that before being shoved into the water heater, like, she couldn't fit, so he broke all her bones and when he figured that she still couldn't fit, he forcibly tore out her femurs and pushed her legs up behind her head? Huh? Huh? Gore with a purpose!"

"This is why you're my apprentice," Hartley chuckled, moving in to rewrite the scene, although just as he was about to, Daisy's fingers flexed out across the keyboard.

"May I?" she asked politely, looking as though she would die if she didn't get to. When Hartley nodded, she squeaked with joy and took his seat as he jumped out of it, then he watched as Daisy arched her body and destroyed the keyboard with her typing speed. It was something Hartley was jealous of, since he himself took time to write, and while she was fast, she was also good. Her writing style and level of detail was similar to his, which he assumed was because he mentored her.

"Don't go too far, last time you did that it was good stuff but if you write too much of this then it might be your story instead of mine," Hartley remarked, moving off to make himself some more coffee.

"I'm just writing this scene, don't worry, Mr. Salk," she replied casually, the clicking of the keys rebounding off every millisecond. "I feel like the story is almost done anyways, we've had good build up, I feel like if we drag it on too long it might get boring, and I'm starting to run out of ideas for deaths."

"You might be right, and if I release it around the same time the murders end, people might see similarities easier."

"And at the same time, knowing the killer or how it ends might influence your ending and make it similar, making it even more similar!"



"SPACEEX HEAVY" | DIGITAL AND COLLAGE | CATHERINE ANDERSON

"I guess we should end it soon," Hartley nodded to the air. "How many pages we have?"

"213."

"Long enough for a thriller."

"Include ending length though," Daisy started. "At least 20 to 30 pages if well written and suspenseful enough. And are we having falling resolution or is it a shock ending? The story seems to rely on shock in the way we've constructed it, so it'd make sense to have a shock ending instead of giving resolution. Are we killing off the main character? Which character are we going to have be the killer? The second main character, I feel like that fits since the other character has been kinda sidelined the whole time and I feel like that might make it less satisfying."

"You're right," Hartley agreed.

The two of them bickered away for the rest of the afternoon until Daisy trotted off back to her house, zooming away down the street on her bike. Hartley watched her go, and wondered about going further in the story while she was gone. He had already done so before, and it was his book anyway. In any case, the book had reached its finale, and if the finale wasn't his own idea, then why put his name as the author?

Hartley sat down at his desk and brought the document back up, seeing that Daisy had left notes on it for her thoughts on how to reach the scene of the climax which evidently would take place at the main character's house. The set up was put in broad strokes, the sidelined character killed off essentially by being fodder, something Hartley agreed with and Daisy had given him a beautifully crafted death that she had went and typed herself. Found in the woods, legs broken, and the neck snapped back with a thick log rammed down his throat and into his chest. Hartley guessed she was leaving the ending to him, a note at the bottom was typed: "Here's to an ending I know I'll be happy with! Thanks for all you've taught me, make this story your best! Best wishes, Daisy :)".

He chuckled, knowing full well he could never type fast enough to finish that night, but he would at

least get to the end of her set up. So he leaned back in the seat, stretching out with a groan, and set his fingers to work crafting what would lead into the end of the story.

* * *

It was four in the morning when his computer gave him the news notification. Another victim found, Hartley was quick to open and look at it. Another one so soon, it chilled him, and at the same time he wondered what the circumstances were and if he had missed an opportunity. Daisy probably wouldn't mind too terribly if it turned out to be something great and he used it instead of her idea. This thought crossed his mind as Hartley went into the report with an open mind and eager, yet somber, expectations. The boy had been found by a casual jogger who thrived on early morning workouts, so the details weren't hidden by the police. Then his heart stopped.

There was a banging at the door, three loud knocks that rattled his senses in what had been silence in the dark. With shivers crawling all over his body, his eyes wide with realization and shock, Hartley rose to his feet and steadily moved towards his door in the next room over. Every step seemed to fall into nothing, and the world seemed immense around him, like everything like swirling and expanding. Then he reached the door and took the handle firmly, clenching his fingers tightly on the warm, curved piece of metal before turning it and pulling the weighty wooden door open.

In the dark of the night, looking small, frail, and grieving was Daisy holding herself while wearing a shoddy rain jacket and a pair of sweatpants. It was obvious she hadn't dressed before coming over.

"Darren's dead," she sniffed, her eyes stained a gross red from crying. Her lip was still quivering, snot dripping from her nose. "They...they found him in the forest...he's dead...I didn't want to be at home."

Hartley only stood and looked at her, the girl he had spent the last few weeks with, bonding with, treating her like a guest in his home, a friend, and a minute earlier he would've welcomed her in with comforting arms; however...

"I wanted to come here, the story..it makes this all seem not real, I don't want this to seem real..." she sniffled loudly, looking as though she would break down in tears again.

"It's you..." Hartley muttered hollowly, taking a step back.

"Mr. Salk?" she asked quietly, lips still quivering, her hands tucked firmly under each other and out of sight as she shivered.

"I saw the description of what happened to him..." Hartley said, inching backwards further as Daisy took her first step into the house. "And it, it's just like how you described the death you wrote for me to write...you're the killer..."

"..You saw the news..." she said somberly, her expression shifting on a dime from sadness to regret to extreme guilt.

"Every death you wrote for the story," Hartley started, his heart pounding in his throat. "You didn't blindly come up with those deaths...those were the real deaths that you caused..."

"You weren't supposed to find out," she said softly, still appearing distraught as she steadily moved further into the house after him as he backed away. "Not yet."

"Why?" he asked plainly. "Why'd you kill all those people?"

"You wouldn't understand."

Hartley backed into his desk chair, the plastic roller seat bumping away from his rump loudly as the wheels spun against the ground. Being in his work room diverted his attention to his computer and the novel.

"Why help me write about it all? You helped me write it, everything you put in, every death, every character detail, were things you knew because you're the killer...why?"

"Because..." Daisy began, seemingly searching her head for words she had previously memorized but lost in the moment. Frustration flushed across her for a moment, but washed away and the guilt came back. "It's your book, Hartley, you're the author. And when everyone sees it, they'll think you're the killer writing about your own story...and I can go free."

"No, I'll tell, I'll tell them it was you," Hartley announced carefully. "I'll delete it!" he snapped and whipped around to the small laptop on the desk; however, just as he was about to work his fingers across the keyboard and delete the lengthy nonfiction account, he heard the click of a revolver and turned to see Daisy with a heavy pistol in her gloved hands. She looked despairing.

"I'm sorry," she whimpered, beginning to cry again. "I knew what I planned to do from the beginning...but...but-" she said, her words breaking as she tried to talk. Hartley could see her hands shaking terribly. "I didn't think I'd like you so much, that you'd actually become a real friend."

"I am your friend, Daisy," Hartley said stiffly, making sure to keep still in wake of the weapon pointed at him from just a few feet away. His heart was pounding even harder now. "What did you plan?" he inquired, keen on keeping her talking.

"Help you write your book, and make it exactly like what you were trying to avoid similarities with. Then everyone would see, and you would be accused of the murders, and I would just be the young girl you tried to victimize," she explained morosely, sniffing loudly. "How far did you get in the story? How far in what I left you to write?"

"All of it," Hartley said to her. "I got to the end of your planning, I wrote everything you left for me, but Daisy, it's okay, you don't have to do this. Your plan was great, brilliant, and...I need more like that. The police don't have any evidence or leads to point to you, just the story, so we can scrap it, get

rid of it completely and just go on with our lives. I'll keep your secret," he said wholeheartedly, ready to do anything to save his life, and hers. As he spoke he realized that he really did care about her, and she really was a friend to him. "Put the gun down, and we can start a new story, and no one else has to die." Hartley gave her the warmest smile he could muster, hoping to see some flicker of agreement in Daisy's watery eyes, then moved as carefully as he could to try and resolve the scene with a hug; the most cliché climax conclusion he could think of.

Daisy cried out as she pulled the trigger on the gun, her aim not failing her and the bullet drilling between Hartley's eyes. Her mentor and friend toppled over on the ground clumsily, falling with a thud, and after a second of silent shock Daisy regained her thoughts and worked fast. She put the gun in his hand, bolted to the computer, and wrote. Her nimble fingers transversed the keyboard at record speed like they always did and she finished the story, she finished the story writing as Hartley who confessed to the murders and killed himself so they could never catch him, leaving his final novel, leaving a shocking conclusion to his career from someone so desperate for an original story he would kill for it. As Daisy had it, the killer had finished a satisfying story before ending his life, while she was just a young girl accidentally caught in the middle of everything.

I AM

By Teshima Anderson

I am a beautiful woman

I wonder if my mother knew her beauty

I hear the cries of children just like me singing a song that matches the rhythm
of my heart

I see notes scattered and shattered like promises

I want to have a love that buoys me when I am drowning in myself

I am a beautiful woman

I pretend that you're still here with me

I feel that I am a slow pounding blues song

I touch the feelings that aren't

I worry why I am so lost

I cry selfishly for the little girl who never was a little girl

I am a beautiful woman

I understand that if you could do it all again you would do it differently

I say I'll be a changed reflection of you

I dream of a day that I am true to myself more than I am to others

I try to grow, heal and feel

I hope my voice reaches your heart

I am a beautiful woman



“UNTITLED” | PHOTOGRAPHY | CALEB TINSLEY

Reason to Change

By Kevin Potts

I remember the exact moment when I was shown with a few words how bleak my future would be if I didn't change my ways. It wasn't the words that stood out as being my impetus to change so much as it was who they came from.

At twenty years old and three years into a life sentence, I found myself at Wallens Ridge State Prison, one of Virginia's two supermax prisons. Being young and hardheaded, it didn't take long until I started clashing with the guards and found myself in segregation after an assault on a guard with a weapon.

At Wallens Ridge, oppression hangs heavy in the air, and there is constant tension between the guards and inmates. This is due to the guards' wanton abuse of authority and inmate's unwillingness to comply with orders.

Being in segregation, I was around the worst of the guards that worked there, and on a daily basis, I watched them terrorize inmates. In retaliation for writing complaints against guards, inmates would be denied food for days on end, and I have witnessed inmates who were handcuffed and shackled get thrown to the floor where they were beaten for "resisting."

All of that fosters hatred, and I started standing up to them alongside any other inmate who did the same, and I would encourage other inmates to stand up as well. This led the guards to hate me as much as I started to hate them.

After three years of fighting with the guards and in response to a forced cell entry, I was put on "rec. and shower alone" in an attempt to isolate me as much as possible. Forced cell entries are used when an inmate refuses to be handcuffed and exit a cell. The guards will put on full riot gear, then spray tear gas into the cell before they rush into the cell in an attempt to subdue the inmate by any means necessary. It is violence personified and usually ends with the inmate beaten and bloody.

After about a month being on "rec. and shower alone," a guard opened the gunport in the control booth above me and said, "What the hell is wrong with you?"

I had no idea what he was talking about and said as much. My first thought was that he was talking about the intensity of the workout routine that I was doing.

The guard then asked me what I thought was going to happen as a result of the way I was acting. Again, I had no idea what he was talking about. I figured that since I was already in seg., there was nothing more that could be done to me.

This guard proceeded to tell me that what would happen is the administration would decide that I would never be let out of seg. and one day as I was fighting with the guards they would "accidentally" kill me.

More was said but nothing else mattered. It was those words that hit home like nothing had before. Not necessarily because of the words themselves, because my family had told me much the same before. Those words hit home because of who they came from. I couldn't fathom why a guard, whom I could only assume hated me, would attempt to give me good advice.

So I thought about what he said for days. I looked back at the things I was doing and attempted to see them from his point of view. It was like I had been wearing blinders and they had finally been removed. The ramifications of my actions became evident, and I made the decision to change.

Modifying my behavior was not an easy process, and it began with learning how to care again. After being sentenced to life in prison, I quickly quit caring about anything and it was both a blessing and a curse. The absence of emotion allowed me to stand up to the guards and fight with them. Because, in my head, there was no longer anything that could be done to me. Unfortunately, not car-

ing also shielded me from seeing how my actions affected my family. Not caring becomes a habit like smoking or biting ones fingernails, and it takes time to break yourself out of it.

For a few days after that conversation, I paced the cell thinking, and talking to myself trying to figure out what to do, I quickly came to the realization that my actions were an indicator of immaturity and the selfishness that comes with it. So in order to change, I realized that I had to grow up.

It ended up being easier than I expected. More than anything else, simply making the conscious decision to change was enough. In the moments when relapse was near, I thought of the conversation with that guard and how my actions would affect my family. I couldn't stand to hear the disappointment in my mother's voice anymore and it started bothering me to know that I was letting her down, and I realized that I didn't want to be that person anymore.

It took about a year from the day of that conversation until I was released from seg and I haven't looked back. My relationships with family are better and now I have as much freedom as possible under the circumstances.

The path to maturity that I took isn't one that I would recommend to most people. Fortunately, it worked for me at a time when I don't think anything else would have.

HOMELESS DEFINED

By Arnita Richardson

How do I come back from where I've been?
Too broke to help myself;
not broke enough to get any help.
I work every day trying to provide my way.
A law-abiding citizen trying to add to civility but
What about my stability?

Denied credit only for them to say
I've fallen too far.
Denied an apartment only to
remind me that I'm homeless for sure.
Approved for stamps but denied full benefits
\$17 is what I get.
Just because I don't pay rent.
What part of "I'm homeless" do they not get?

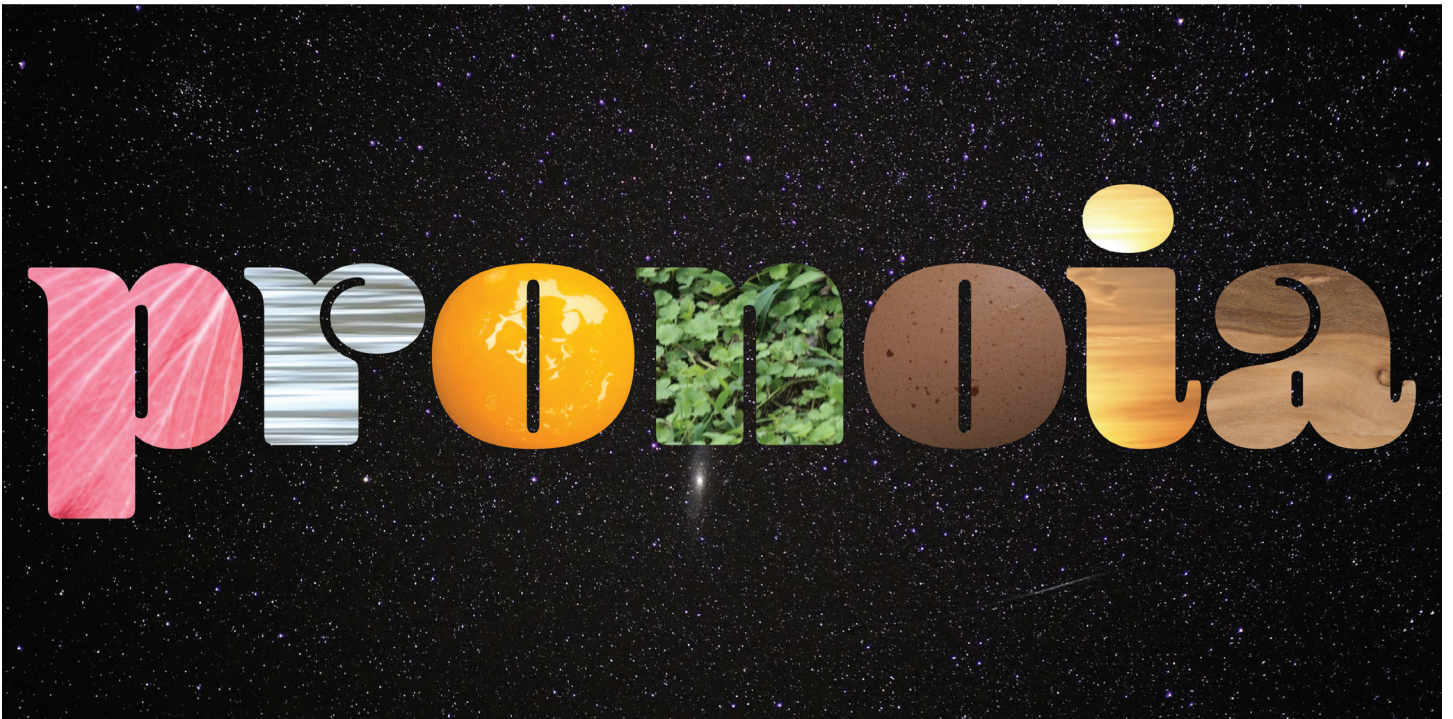
Where is all the money I paid into this country?
Why can't I get help after all I've added to this lot?
I'm not one to stand and beg for pennies with a cup
My self-respect and pride will not let me do that much.

Some days it seems as if God does not hear me.
Trying my best to stay in faith and
trust Him to deliver me from this place...
I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do
when I'm trusting and believing the best I can.

Be careful when you share your struggle with
those that have a form of godliness, but
deny the power thereof.
They rarely listen to what you have to say
cause really they've never been this way.
They quote scriptures just to get you out of their face.

It's a lonely place to be and sometimes I get really angry.
Feeling like I'm in a place of bondage
and wondering where is my God.
He knows what I have need of
before I ask but I was in this mess
long before I knew I would have to ask.
Some days I think that it would
be better to live in my car
but the cold blankets me and I miss what I need most,
a home.

Why was I chosen to go through this?
I know that it is always to bless someone else.
But there are days when I don't feel like enduring just
so someone else can be encouraged.
Trying hard not to complain but this
situation is absolutely insane.



“PRONOIA” | DIGITAL | JACOB ANODIDE AND JULIA GRAMMER

Crumble

By Tobin Moore

THE FIRST IMPACT was at the top of my head. It was just a tiny chink then, somewhere to the right of my scalp. As the hand on the state-issued clock ticked by, the crevice grew and I felt my brain separate slightly, the existing fissures forming vast valleys. It cut across my face like a battle wound, wrapping around the back of my neck. For a long time that afternoon its slow constriction stopped just above my heart, each pounding beat daring the crack to move closer.

Despite my rapidly fragmenting frame, I couldn't sit still. Pacing around the room, I counted my steps. I caressed the fingernail scratches on the table, trying to comfort those who had put them there. I counted how many stuffed animals had fewer than two eyeballs, and I made constellations of the dots in the ceiling tile. I counted my steps again. I tallied the dusty puzzle boxes with likely fewer than their advertised quantity of pieces. I wondered to myself if pictures with missing pieces lost their value completely or only proportionally to the amount of absent space. I counted my steps once more.

On step fourteen the first cop came back into the room. She asked once again if I was hungry. I said no, surprised she didn't notice my stomach would soon be overtaken. As she guided me out into the hall, she explained that my sister would tell me what was happening. The conversation that followed is one that I still dream about regularly. I've lost my perception of the true story, accepting the concoction produced by time and reflection. In my head the story both fades and develops detail at the same rate. It's the only memory I have that breathes and swells, whose impact seeps into my everyday.

Life moved forward awkwardly as the shards of my life grew thinner. My mother and sister leaned on alcohol, my little siblings leaned on the ignorance of youth, and I figured out quickly that nothing around was stable enough to hold me up.

The giant crack down my whole body began to splinter and expand across my entire being. Silently, I crumbled and rebuilt myself each day. Every

morning I piled my limbs in front of the mirror and arranged them until they looked whole. I stuffed my skeleton into clothes that barely fit and anxiously adjusted and affixed the bits that threatened to fall right off. I confidently carried my mangled body down the hallways at school, so no one would think to look for fractures in my skin. I even went to a party, once.

"I feel like I haven't seen you here before."

I looked up from the solo cup I was clinging to and into the smirking face of a large man in a Wizards jersey. He was framed by multicolored Christmas lights and Greek-letter-laden banners, leering at me in a haze of smoke.

Despite clearly hearing what he said, I furrowed my eyebrows and put on a strained face.

"What?" I mouthed. I gestured at my ear, then at the massive bass speakers only a few feet from us. It was not by accident that I stood in the loudest spot in the house. Up until then, the deafening music had provided an excellent shield from frat bro small talk.

He leaned in to my ear, the pubescent stubble on his face scratching my cheek as his mouth formed the words he practically screamed.

"Come up to my room with me; it's quieter up there," he bellowed.

He lost his balance and swayed slightly, a clue to his intoxication still secondary to the stench of cheap beer coming off him in waves, and his body pressed into mine as his hand hit the wall next to my head.

My heart sped and pounded, an alarm in my chest I wished he could hear.

He leaned back upright, chuckling and shrugging, and held up his beer can as a cop-out white flag.

I'm not sure what set me off that night. It might have been the Top 40 Hits on repeat or the shots

of tequila in my cup. It may have been the moment I noticed everyone in the room was so drunk they weren't even making eye contact. But, realizing I was panicking, I began to count.

I counted the ping-pong balls on the floor and the flags in the room. I counted the dozens of empty, crushed cans on the tables. I squeezed out from in front of the man and began counting my steps. At step twenty-one, he reappeared. Blocking the doorway, he flashed me a silver dollar smile. I mirrored his grin and then firmly gripped the bottom left-hand corner of my mouth, cleanly tearing the placation off my face. I placed it in his hand and turned away.

I felt him take hold of my wrist. Without looking back at him, I let that arm crumble off.



“FROG” | GLAZING | ALEESHA MYRIE

MY WINDOW

By Emma Keppel

Standing by my bed and in my world,

Curtained with flower lace,

It looks out on a memory meadow,

My window.

My window in the morning,

The sunrise glows like my dream,

Poking light through eyelets

Waking my six-year-old captivation.

Bouncing on beds

Was starting the day dangerously,

Mom reaches, Don't fall through the glass, Bunny.

My window in the evening,

Summer light glows and winter light fades,

You did not make your bed this morning,

Polar Bear sits upright.

I make pictures in the sky,

Drawn with branches and leaves,

On the azure canvas made with love.

My window in the night,

Keep lookout for Santa's sleigh and reindeer,

Leave the latch loose for the tooth-fairy,
Ready for her dainty fingers to open.
Moon travels across the pane,
It's here, then there,
Waning, waxing,
I love you too,
Hush, hush,
Quiet,
Sister is still snoring.

Letting in light
To illuminate the senses of my childhood,
My window.

Silence

By Aspen Eichelburger

2018 Horror Story Contest Winner

IT WAS OCTOBER 31st, Halloween. I was house sitting for my parents while they were away for their anniversary. Embarrassingly enough, that was my gift for them - house sitting. I was a broke college student, and they had filled the pantry for me, how could I pass it up? Plus I loved my childhood home, mostly. The only thing I didn't really like was the fact that it was miles from anyone or anything, and it was way too quiet.

Until the doorbell rang.

Like I said before, there weren't neighbors for miles. There certainly shouldn't have been any trick or treaters around. I cautiously bridged the gap between the kitchen and the front door. My hand hovered over the door handle and I put my ear against the old wooden door, listening for something, anything. Breathing, perhaps, or the excited chatter of trick or treaters. The silence that met my ears was deafening. I could feel it. It was tangible.

Suddenly, I was hit with intense, unexplainable fear. It knocked me right off my feet.

As I hit the floor, whimpering, I crawled behind the couch and curled up, trying to steady my breathing. I knew I had locked the door, a precaution I had thought unnecessary out here, but I guess I was wrong. Were there any unlocked windows? Did mom and dad lock the windows? I didn't know. But did it even matter?

I stopped breathing, realizing that the door was opening. A cool breeze wafted through the family room, and the door didn't make a sound. Something...not human stood in the doorway. It was big, and growing. It could barely squeeze through the door, but it did, and it set its eyes directly on me.

I screamed like a banshee, deafeningly loud, until I blacked out.

• • •

I woke up on the floor behind the couch, the door wide open, the wind howling. The tv was on, as was the radio, and my car, which was parked protectively in front of the porch, the radio emitting static out of the open windows. It was so loud I couldn't think. On the floor next to me lay a handwritten letter. It read:

K,

I FOUND YOU BLACKED OUT, WITH IT TOWERING OVER YOU.

I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO ENCOUNTER THAT, BUT YOU DID A GOOD JOB - SCREAMING IS OUR BEST DEFENSE, THEY CAN'T STAND NOISE. IT'S POISON TO THEM. IT ESCAPED, BUT I HAVE MADE IT LOUD ENOUGH FOR YOU HERE THAT IT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO COME BACK. DON'T WORRY, THEY ONLY HUNT ON HALLOWEEN - YOU SHOULDN'T BE BOTHERED AGAIN.

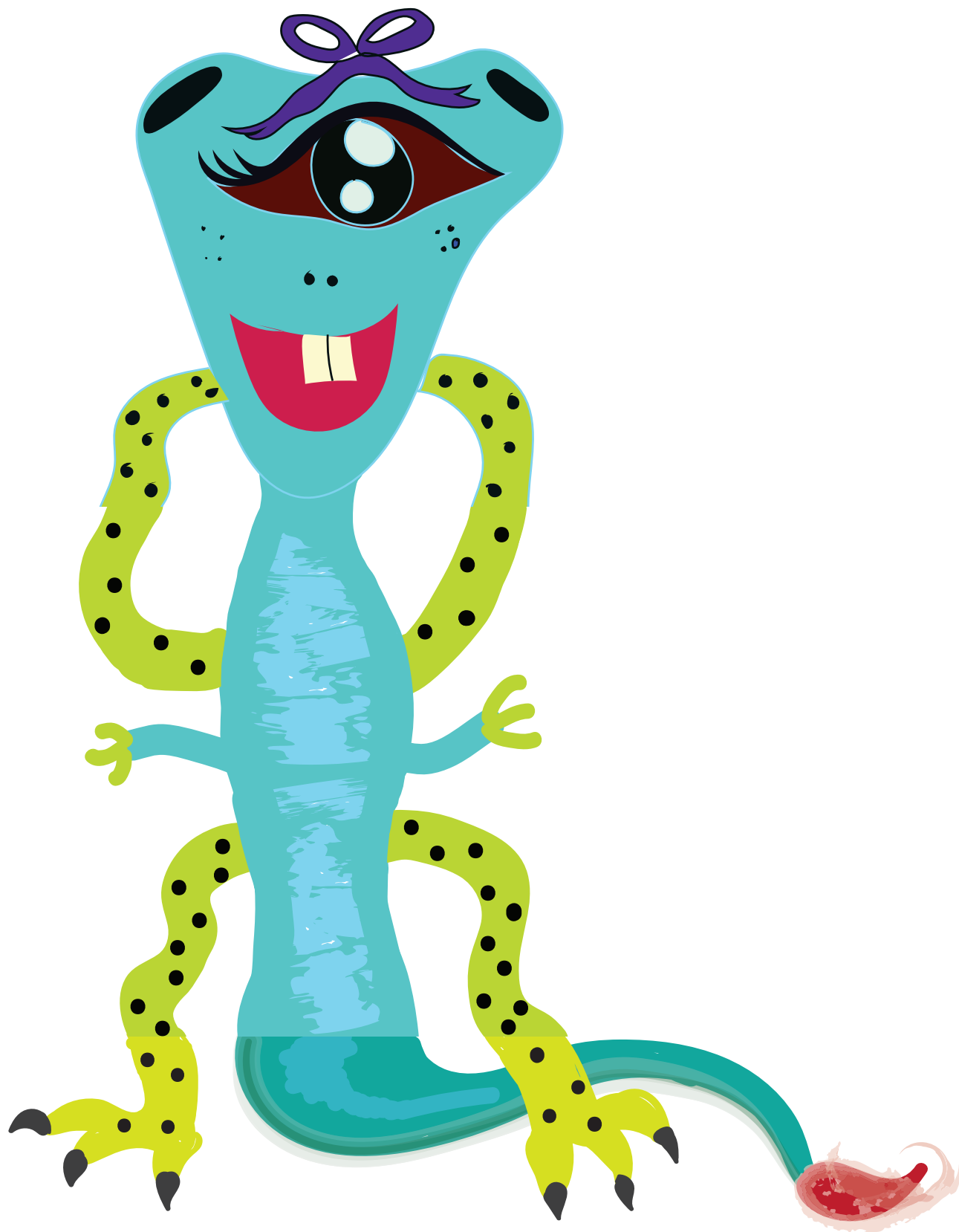
BEST OF LUCK.

• • •

It's been exactly ten years since that night tonight. I'm recording all of this with every single machine (phone, ipod, laptop...) at full volume back home in New York, but there's been a power outage, and the batteries won't last much longer without a charger...

It's coming back tonight. I've been fighting it for ten years now, every Halloween. I've screamed until my vocal cords gave out - I am now legally mute, and screaming is impossible for me. I can't fight it anymore - what exactly it is I don't know, but I think it got the man hunting for it, as the letters stopped coming years ago. I'm next.

Whoever gets this, please, never let it get to you - it feeds off of the silence, is almost one with the silence. Even when you go to bed, with nothing but your fan running, it lurks, waiting. You are not safe. The silence is not safe...noise is our only salvation.



"EXSQUISITE CORPSE" | DIGITAL | ART 180 CLASS COLLABORATION

WELL WISHES

By Johnette Horace

Relatives sending loved ones off to their graves,
Family giving their life's savings, contributing to the demise of their own blood
Promises escaping the lips of the departing as they board the boat,
But now they can only answer the prayers of loved ones from heaven.
I watched hundreds of Africans journey to the promised land
Italy through Libya,
Libya, the black man's grave.
We watch in horror as viral videos of our brothers and sisters being tortured
circulate the media,
Africans, being sold as slaves for a few hundred dollars
Africans, the things we go through in search of solitude
Fleeing struggles only to get entangled by serpents.
Money, the only antidote for the Libyan poison
Evil posing as good, promising safe pasture through the Mediterranean.
But who can stand without sinking in quicksand?
Oh that baby put in an inflatable boat with her mother, headed 200 miles in a
boat that could only travel 12.
Human? How could your conscience let you drown babies?
Poverty is an epidemic that eats at the conscience of those affected.
The bridge they saw in Libya was only a one-way street to grave danger
Captured, handcuffed, treated like dogs and starved,
bodies burned for money they don't have, what a literal hell of a journey.
Crying and hoping to be buried in decent graves,
Warning loved ones not to repeat their mistake,

But the stubborn still choose to ignore the pleas of their dying loved ones.

They can't be stopped, determined to succeed,

All we can say is

well wishes.

THE JOURNEY

By Sofie Couch

“HEY THERE.” I rubbed the back of her hand as she came out of it. “You were out a long time.”

“Huh?” She was still groggy. Re-awakening usually only took about thirty minutes. “How long?”

I looked down at the watch on my wrist, and checked her pulse. It was a little accelerated, but not outside of safe parameters. “Little over an hour.”

“What were you studyin’?” I asked.

The woman on the gurney next to my chair rolled her head to the side. There’s a look they all get at the end of a download. She licked her lips. She would have the munchies, too. That was another common after effect.

“Psychology. What’s that?” She gestured with her chin toward the book that was open in my lap.

I held it up. “*The Odyssey*.”

“Ah. Western Culture.”

“Er, Homer, actually. You’ve read it?” Small talk helped with the re-awakening.

She started to sit up, so I dropped my book on the bed and put a hand on her upper arm. Slowly, she swung her legs over the edge of the gurney, the paper cover crinkling and tearing.

“Here.” I handed her a cup of water, sweaty with ice. There were cookies, too, but that could wait. Re-awakening could take a while and she had been out longer than usual.

She laughed. “Read it?” I downloaded the whole class just two weeks ago. I’d have taken the second part, but they make you wait a month between downloads. That’s bullshit.”

“What?” My voice was edged with concern. “You got a download today? Before your month was up?”

She shrugged. “S no big deal.” She reached for the packet of cookies on the bedside table. I’m a regular.” Cracking into the wrapper, she shoved a whole cookie into her mouth.

“How?”

She narrowed her eyes, sizing me up. Her gaze fell to my book on the bed, and her mouth turned up into a smile. It was one of those smiles you might use with a precocious child. “Well, they recommend that you complete an associates degree in no fewer than twenty months. That’s one three credit course per month. The download takes about an hour and the re-awakening, about thirty minutes. At that rate, it’s no faster than just taking the live class. This way, leaves a lot of down time... unless you double up.”

“The school won’t let you download any more than one course a month.”

She smirked. “They won’t let me,” she pointed to her chest, “take more than one download per month. But my sister,” and again, she pointed at her own chest, “can take one download per month, too. So a person who is in the system as two people could each take one download on an alternating semi-monthly schedule, cutting the time to graduation in half.”

I could see that her enthusiasm and talking so soon was wearing her out. She leaned back on the pillow again, and I handed her a cup of yogurt.

“You can tolerate dairy, can’t you?”

“Sure.” She took the cup from my hand. I noticed a tremor in her hand too.

“How long have you been reading your book?” She tipped her chin toward my dog-eared copy.

“I’m not a fast reader. I’m only about half-way through.”

“Time?”

“About a week. I can only read during breaks.”

My job at the school did not require an advanced degree, but it did require my attention, especially immediately before and after a download. During the download, I was pretty much free – just a warm body in the lab while the information was disseminated.

“Like I said, I’m not a particularly fast reader.”

Her eyelids fluttered. No wonder if this was her second download in two weeks.

She opened her eyes again, like a too sleepy person behind the wheel. “You should schedule a download for yourself. Like I said, we covered *The Odyssey* in Western Culture.”

I smiled patiently. Downloads were expensive. I had one once. You held on to the information only so long as you made connections to that information. I’m a whiz at remembering the students who have come through my lab, but like the information that was downloaded – a semester’s worth of information in as little as an hour – you had to make associations to enhance the neural pathways. It’s like trying to remember a person you’ve just met. It helps if you also learn five things about that person. Those things ensure multiple connections and strengthen the knowing of a thing.

The student faded out again and I let her sleep. It was nearly fifteen minutes before she opened her eyes again.

“What time is it?”

“Gettin’ on four o’clock.”

She looked to her phone. Phones are not allowed in the lab, but this woman was obviously not bothered by rules.

“You should avoid looking at screens and devices for twenty-four hours.”

“Places to go. Things to see and do.”

She sat up again, this time, shoving a packet of cookies in her pocket for the road, then looking around for the bag that came in with her. During the download, all personal items are stored in a bag on a hook at the end of the gurney. She grabbed the canvas bag off of the hook and hoisted it onto her shoulder.

“You should consider just downloading the book next time.”

She looked me over from head to toe. Was that pity on her face? Sure, the more you downloaded, the faster you could gain the degree, then the job, joined by potential higher earnings. I lived paycheck-to-paycheck, but what did I need with faster cars or multiple homes. I had books, an apartment, food. I looked down at my clothes. Scrubs counted.

“Consider it. Download next time.”

I put my book into one of the large pockets on the front of my scrubs.

“I’ll consider it.”

“It really is the only way to remain competitive. You don’t wanna be stuck here, plugging other people up to downloads for the rest of your life. ‘Always the bridesmaid...’.”

“I guess that’s fine... if the destination is your goal.”

There was only a flicker of doubt. “What’s that?”

“The journey. Sometimes, knowledge is the end goal. Don’t forget the journey in pursuit of the destination.”

She left, looking twice over her shoulder. Was that a glimmer of doubt? I opened my book... and waited for my four-thirty “student.”

NECROMANCY

By Alysia Townsley

I have the devil in my pen
demons in my eyes
I stand upon coffins made of stone
and I whisper my thoughts
into the ears of corpses
and try to raise the dead

it takes maybe a touch
lock of hair, bit of blood
a voice ringing in the dark
blue white sparks
and the question remains
can I raise the dead?

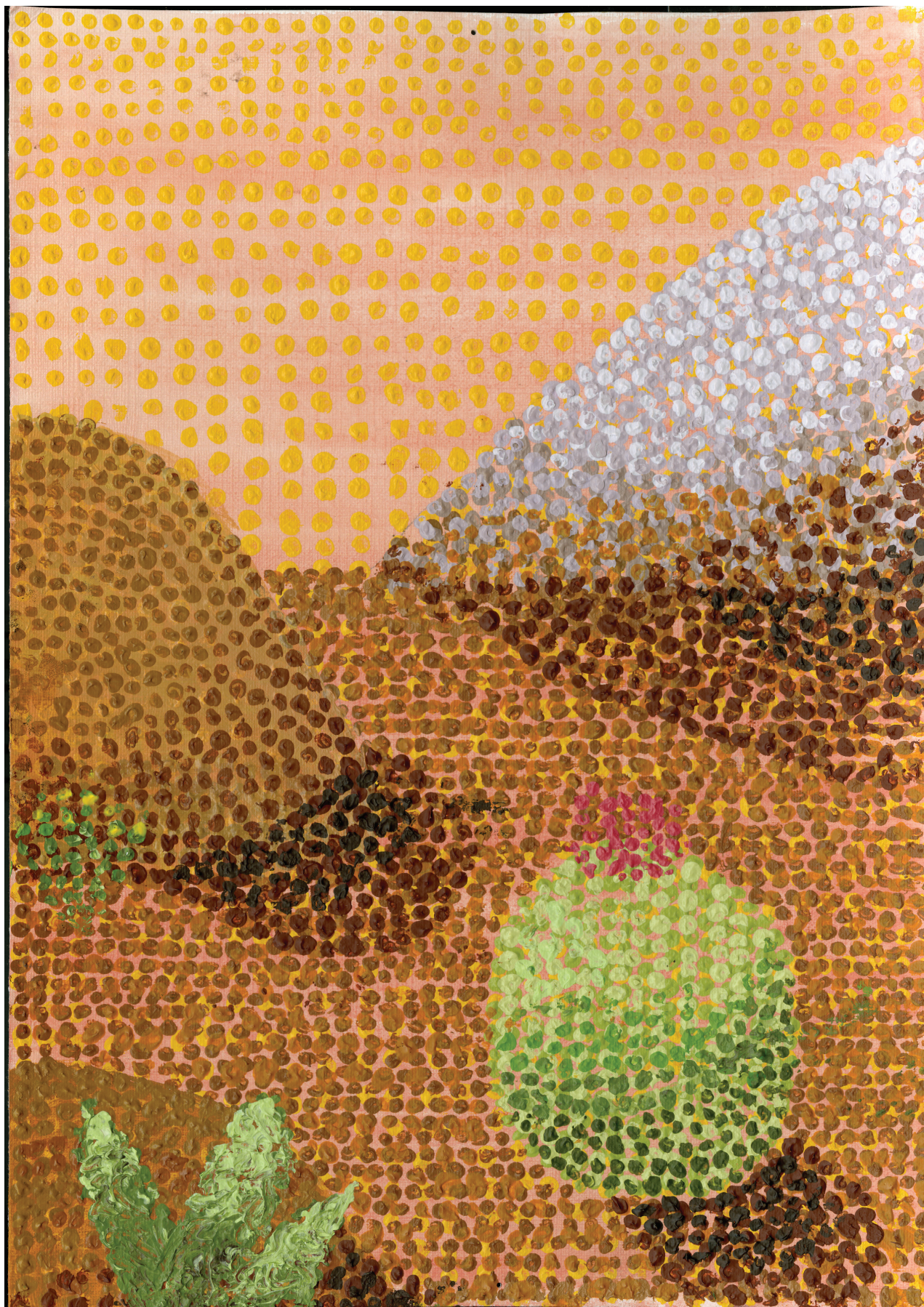
they call me a sorceress
because I can do the things they can't
I can breathe life into stone hearts
carve redemption into sinners
I can make revenge feel like the greatest gift
but there are things even I cannot do

that's the question, isn't it
if we can bring back

that which has passed
and we relinquish morality
to some other place, some other time

something beyond fate

the world becomes stone coffins
and I leave behind whispers
black magic, madness
but the question remains
can I raise the dead
if I am one of them?



POINTILISM | LILLIE MALONE

TANGLED

By Gilbert Somers

I fought relentlessly with the lines;
bright white and crystallized

tethers bound unbreaking
to soul sails,

caught for lift,
left for gain,

writing long lost love
across the sky
in winding patterns
of acrid gold

remembering the ties
to you.

Half a century is a long time to be tangled.



“DIGITAL” | DIGITAL | LOUISA TORRES



The Fall Line

A narrow zone that marks the geological boundary between an upland region and a plain, distinguished by the occurrence of falls and rapids where rivers and streams cross it.