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ABOUT  
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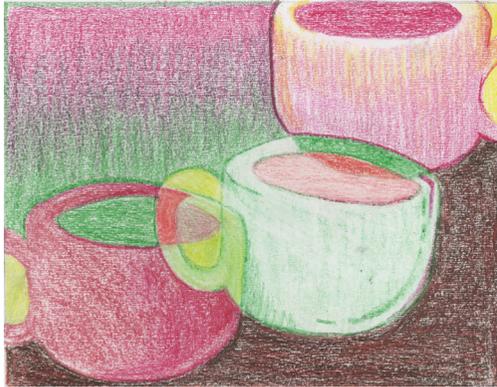


# FALSE MEMORIES

*by Justin Pineda-Pirro*

There are days within days,  
a time between them, maybe  
six before seven  
eleven before ten.  
Grade school teachers  
or sky-scraping women?  
They send their dismissals  
like lipstick kisses stamped  
on a grandson's cheek.  
The sun so bright, little toes race  
from tree to tree, the shade  
the finish line. Red birds  
with mohawks send invites  
atop chain link fences. Once there,  
their invitations disintegrate,  
take off and make planes  
against the concrete, leaving  
little hands to touch peeling scales  
of metal. Grass perceived  
through connected diamonds,  
so green and yet so soft in the breeze.

A breeze not harsh like a gust  
but with gentle, feathered fingers that guide  
you forward. The clock escapes  
each child's loose grip on the first try.  
No fight, no hassle. A robust familiar finger  
points to their little person,  
plucking them from the crowd  
like one final dandelion needed  
to complete a nest.  
That finger joins the rest  
to smooth back messy brown hair, freeing  
a small reflective forehead  
just in time for a mother's beak to swoop in  
and peck it. And at last,  
a gentle whisper, "It's time to go home now."



KEVIN MILLER | “RITUAL 1-3” | CRAYOLA

# SUNFLOWERS

*by Gil Somers*

I thought of you  
often  
but every time I saw  
those little yellow sunflowers  
in Arizona  
smiling at the sun  
I'd think of you again

I wanted to dig one up  
and bring it back home to you  
to plant it in your garden  
so whenever you went outside  
you'd see it

smiling back at you  
and think of me  
and know I was thinking of you

but I couldn't

so I snipped one  
and placed it in these pages

between ink,  
and lead  
and love  
and every morning  
when I woke up  
I'd look at it  
smiling back at me

and I'd know  
I'd see you again soon



MORGAN BELL | *"TILE AND COLOGNE"* | ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

# A BODY UNFURLED

by Seb Harper

The umbrellas rattle in their bin as I drop my walking cane next to them. The sound echoes in my apartment. It vibrates and reverberates between my ears. Shaking my head, I take off my coat and hang it up neatly. As I hang my hat up, I pause to run my hands over the soft velvet. I stand in the entryway, stroking it back and forth. It grounds me. For a time. My breathing becomes even and my eyes close. I linger for longer than I should.

Blood-white tears form on my fingers, dripping marrow on the dark hardwood floor. My body shudders as my eyes shut. When I open them again, the floor is unstained and my hands are untorn.

~~forge~~I never should have learnt that damnable language.

Fighting my own thoughts, I glide and stumble through the empty halls. Grounding myself has become harder. Still I try. Searching the study, I will myself focus on things I know to be real. The green velvet chair that was my grandfather's, the cherry wood desk that was my father's, the embroidered puppy my mother made.

~~just a little~~ helps a bit here

I fall into my grandfather's chair. It cradles me like a mother. It holds me like a vice. Taking a deep breath, I steady my racing heartbeat.

~~ours~~ I will be fine.

I slip into the wet folds of my brain, searching for solace. Like a wounded alley cat, I hide beneath the filthy bins and the rotting waste of my mind. This is my last sanctuary. They have taken my green palace. My red fields. All my cherished memories.

~~can't I should never~~ have yearned for that knowledge

Ever since my lips formed the First Syllable, I have started Knowing. I can understand them now. Entities without voices, without souls, have started speaking to me. Even the bones in my body speak to me. And they hate.

What have I done.      let us out      let us out      let us out      let us out  
let us out      let us out      let us out      let us out  
let us out      let us out

Beneath my skin, the bones itch. Prisoners of flesh and muscle that thirst for freedom. They call out to fungi and wasps, flies and maggots. They beg the decomposers to pick them clean. To consume this flesh and blood.

Flies and wasps and fungi and worms.      white and clean      white and clean  
pick us white and clean      white and clean  
white and clean      white and clean  
white and clean



OUT



KAILYN WORKS | CONTE CRAYON

# BOUTIQUE

*after "My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun"*  
*by William Shakespeare*

*by Kathleen Connolly Rosenberg*

"Boutique," we call it, though it's not akin

To fancy shops of genteel enterprise.

Old books, clothing, CDs' recycle bin;

A Dollar Store has better merchandise.

When I have shopped in elegant boutiques,

Aromatherapy wafts through the air.

Into this dreary place, rainwater leaks

And musty odors linger everywhere.

There's no shop help to aid in your decision

To bring your surplus stuff and let it loose,

And no one glances your way in derision

When you take away what you need to re-use.

"Cluttered," "frayed," "out-worn" belie the pleasure;

To give and to receive, that's the real treasure.



MARGARET SITES | "QUEEN" | DIGITAL

# HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

*by Charlotte Campbell*

I CANNOT REMEMBER A time when my mom and dad were still married. My earliest memories of childhood are when they were already split up between two households, but those memories are still treasured ones. I wanted for nothing, with plenty of spoiling and quality time from both. My mom and I especially were the best of friends. She had boundless energy to keep up with me, since she had me so young. Just me and her, we would go to movies, parks, and restaurants; even just grocery shopping on the weekends was always fun. To this day, she has an uplifting energy, always bringing joy to the little things.

It wasn't too long into our one-on-one time that she met Dennis and my bubble of security popped. Seemingly successful, decent-looking, and stable, my mother was drawn to him after years of dating a handful of other men and ending up nowhere. Dennis was pleasant to the two of us at first. He made sure we ate the finest food and treated my mother well enough to convince her to marry him. However, after they were married and locked in legally, he changed into an entirely different person. Someone who could sap joy from anything, a leech in our lives. I recall him spending most of their beach honeymoon at the hotel gym, instead of having fun by the waves with the rest of the family. I was less happy with my mother and I's one-on-one time since the vibe, now, seemed odd and high stress. My mother was not able to make joy the same way she used to when I was younger; she seemed too sad.

After my little sister, Stacy, was born, Dennis stayed in these awful habits; maybe even became worse. With a lack of fathering from him, there was an unspoken expectation for me to help out with taking care of the baby, which I happily accepted at first. At eight years old, playing with a little newborn and caring for her was actually fun, for a while. I was even the first to get Stacy to belly laugh as an infant. I wore that accomplishment with pride. Dennis would sit in his La-Z Boy while I would bottle feed my infant sister in the living room, or change her diaper, or burp her over my shoulder, or put her down for a nap. He wasn't a father. He was just an ingredient to the birth of my siblings, always inhabiting his chair—unmoving, judging, and watching me every time I would walk from my room to the kitchen for food. Sometimes, I would wait for him to go to bed late at night before I would show my face upstairs. It felt uncomfortable in those early days, those eyes on me. I felt an aura on him, like a dark bubble of poison and hate, and whoever got too close would inhale the foul stench.

My brother, Steven, was born not even a year later. Dennis was far more enthused to have a son than a daughter, treating Steven better than he ever would me or Stacy. Not long after, my mother began to fight back against Dennis. The fights boomed several nights a week between the two, some louder than others. I had a room in the basement, and I could hear it all the way from the third floor when they really got into it. Sometimes I could make out what the fights were

about, but most of the time it was just loud noise that I tried to ignore with a pair of dollar store headphones. I was a small, negligible dinghy that was trying to cut through the angry sea, unnoticed amongst a deadly battle that raged non-stop. One of the last fights was when Stacy almost stuck herself with a steroid needle that Dennis had left in the fridge. Almost overnight, we hastily packed our belongings into trash bags and broken boxes and left to move over the poverty line.

I did not realize until years later just how awful the situation was. With only a few hundred dollars to support the four of us, we managed to find a tiny one-bedroom apartment obviously meant for a single college student. My mom would sleep on a futon in the living room, and Stacy, Steven, and I shared the small bedroom. Stacy was given her own bed since she was the older of the two babies, but I had to share a twin bed with Steven, who was notorious for kicking in his sleep. I didn't get much rest those nights. I would count down the days until I got to see my father on the weekends; at least there I had my own room with a door I could close. I wasn't expected to clean the whole house daily as a way to help out or supervise young children. It wasn't that I resented being with my mother, but I was twelve, far too young for mothering duties and far too old to be sharing a bed with my sibling. All I wanted was a quiet space to be myself and alone, and at Dad's house I was safe to do so.

When going to friends' houses, I was envious of their lives. Their own rooms, high definition televisions, plenty of food in the house, and good relationships with their siblings and parents--

they had everything a kid could dream of. Their parents had money. Money that I could barely dream about having. Hanging out with people who had everything often made me feel like I had nothing, and that I was behind everyone else in my life. My mom didn't have the money to give me the lifestyle my friends had, so I would never ask. From the jealousy of the material goods I didn't have, and the guilt I felt asking for money, I started a habit of shoplifting to get the things that I wanted. I realized that stealing actually wasn't that hard and I would never have to ask for money as long as I didn't get caught. I would be selective about what I would choose to steal and would never hide away anything too expensive so I wouldn't get in any trouble that my mom would find out about. Stress from her child being a delinquent was the last thing I needed to add onto her already overflowing plate. All the while my friends could just simply ask, never fearing that their wants or needs would cause financial stress. Asking Mom for a new pair of jeans was unheard of, knowing she was budgeting her money to be able to pay bills comfortably and get us out of the hole. I would suck my belly into my old ones to keep myself from having to ask her. Bringing up reasons for my mom to be stressed or feel bad was the last thing I wanted to do.

My mom did try to make the gap between us and others seem not so big. Christmases were usually pretty plush, and birthdays were never disappointing. Even Easter Sunday was always a blast during the egg hunt she would put together for us, spending hours hiding the eggs perfectly after cooking us a large breakfast spread. Every year, my mom would make more and more money, but

by the time I was supposed to be going off to college, the floor collapsed from under me. Everyone I knew went off to their respective new towns to go to university, and I was forced to withdraw my enrollment, so I wouldn't put my family into a financial crisis. I was left behind, unemployed and living in my mom's basement, with only my high school diploma and no more future plans. They disappeared along with not being able to continue my education. At least I had my own bedroom now to hide away in and do nothing. I blamed myself for months for not doing enough in school to qualify for any scholarships. Or for not being musically gifted or athletic enough to qualify for any grants. I was not nearly ambitious enough to be deserving of a scholarship meant for someone great. I didn't even have my driver's license to drive myself to my local community college for classes, and my parents didn't have the time in the day to drive me there. A chain retailer was far closer to our house than the college for them to drive me to, so at least I was able to get a job after sitting idle for half a year. Still, I had no friends nearby to go out and spend the money from my new job. So I worked as much as I could just because it was something to do.

Daily, I would see photos of my friends all having a blast at their colleges, and I felt as if they had forgotten about me altogether. I always thought of myself as smart; why was I left behind only because I was worse off financially than those I knew? One friend in particular who had never known a life like mine, whose parents paid out of pocket for both her Bachelor's and Master's degree with money to spare, had gotten into a social work career with no idea what it was like to be a child in an unstable

home environment. She gets to live without taking out a single loan and never knowing how it is to live paycheck to paycheck, and I'm dreading the day when I transfer to a four-year university to finish my bachelor's degree. I don't hate her for having an easier life. She's a very good friend to me, but I find myself comparing our two lives from time to time and wonder how different my life would be now if I had that same chance—with parents that could have just paid for college without even thinking, with parents that were still together and happy to guide me through life.

I had been really looking forward to college since my junior year of high school; not being able to go dampened my excitement for a higher education for years. After a few years at my new job, I had climbed the corporate ladder a few rungs and was told I had potential to go higher. I was told that getting a degree was a waste of time and money, since I could get paid as much as my coworkers without one. But I want to be proud of my education, I want to be able to look over my desk at home and see a hard-earned degree hanging on the wall. These dreams are harder to achieve for those with less financial means, and taking out loans is not an answer to the question. As school is becoming more and more expensive, we as a generation are forced to take out more and more loans. There are college graduates that are both working in their field of study and are working second jobs to pay their bills, one of the largest usually being their student loans. Why is it that after four years of hard work to get a bachelor's degree, are people rewarded with even more hard work to just afford to live a very basic life? Though I don't hate where I ended up in life so far, I got

lucky in comparison to many others that now struggle under the weight of their large debts. I am a full time student now that can afford to only work part-time while I finish up my degree. It sounds like a dream, and it is. My parents still spoil me to this day, helping me whenever they can. They're happy for me to finally be able to go to college; I know my mother was particularly sad that she couldn't send me after high school. She felt as if she had failed me, though there was nothing she could have really done. It's all just a vicious cycle,. Sshe knew how it felt to not be able to go to college fresh out of high school;. To to move out on your own for the first time and really get to be an adult for the first time. One day, I hope one day to achieve both of our dreams of getting a higher education where I am not unshackled fromby the weight of a hefty debt.



YULIN DUDLEY | CERAMIC



DAISY DUDLEY | *"PUFFER PLANT"* | CERAMIC

# WHAT A WONDERFUL TIME TO BE ALIVE

*by Gil Somers*

Do you remember that time  
when we almost died?

When we were trapped in that cave  
with our flashlights dimming?

I was so afraid to tell you  
I was afraid of the dark.

And it felt like the walls were closing in.  
I snagged my pants while crawling through that crevice.

I told myself that I'd never forgive myself  
if I got stuck

and the only thing standing between you and escape  
was my limp and unmoving body.

And even when we finally crawled out  
of the mouth of that awful hole in the earth,

The sun beat down viciously  
and mosquitos sucked at our flesh

and still,  
we were so far from home.

so far from our bed  
where we'd drop the AC

pretending we'd have to huddle for warmth  
in that little cave of our own

where you'd reach over  
and grab my hands in yours.

And bring them both to your chest,  
squeezing the webbing of our fingers together.

And we'd fall asleep smiling  
while I thought to myself

what a wonderful time to be alive.



LUCA SUN | "*CORDUROY BUDDHA*" | MIXED MEDIA

# WE'RE ALL A LITTLE MAD HERE

by *Liliana Heavey*

*\*surnames have been omitted to protect the guilty*

YOU WEREN'T EXPECTING the story to end there were you? I sure hope not. I haven't even told you the new cow's name! For those wondering, it was Trogdor Destroyer of Grass. Anyway, when a vet came to inseminate our new milk cow, they noticed something strange about her.

"Um-" said the vet, "this isn't a cow. It's a hermaphrodite. That means it can't get pregnant or" "Hi! My full chosen name is Liliana Sappho Heavey Anactoria Acorn, and I'm about to tell you about my life."

Did that sound self-centered enough? What if I told you the list of stories you're about to hear

starts with "The Man of No Name," ends with a quote from Alice in Wonderland, and that they all take place on a hippie commune? A little more interesting? I hope so. But before we can get into the fun stuff, does anyone want to know what a commune is?

In short, my commune is an intentional community called Acorn. We share income and housing and run a seed business together. We have a number of hours we work a week, and that work can be fulfilled in almost any way. Whether you are working on the farm, in the office, taking care of kids, or even

scrubbing toilets, the credit you get is the same. If you are contributing to the community, that's all that matters.

Consent is really important here. In a place where one building sometimes houses fifteen people or more, a person's bedroom is their sacred personal space, and "knock before you enter" doesn't need to be on the door to be understood. Unless you have green light (total or absolute) consent from a person, a good example of consent would be something like,

"Hey, can I hug you?"

"Yes, you can. Thanks for asking!" or "No, not right now," in which case that's it. No hard feelings.

Basically, if consent isn't your thing, then community probably isn't either. Sorry.

Most communes hold group consensus meetings to make decisions or decide to accept or reject new members, people who have just visited for a trial period to try on the commune life and see if it fits. We eat meals together, trade work for work with other communities, and complete taxes for everyone who lives with us. My community has been incredibly supportive of me, and I consider them to be my family.

Now that you've got a general idea of what Acorn is like, and maybe you've

even said an “oh how wholesome,” I’m going to take the liberty of disrupting the image in your head with a few of the strangest and scariest stories of my time there and hope it doesn’t completely ruin your picture of farm life.

*Let’s kick it off easy with:*

## 1. THE MAN WITH NO NAME

Our first story begins with a man riding a bike into uncharted waters. This man found Acorn online, emailed us, and when, after a week or so had gotten no reply, biked cross-country with no backup plan to pay a visit. Now almost anyone can visit Acorn, but not without communicating with us first. So when this man arrived, there were few people around, and it was merely by luck that, right away, he ran into the member StarFox. (Did I mention we love fun names?). StarFox heard his plan and didn’t turn him away, but his name was a different story. We already had a member called Mike, and having experienced the chaos that came of housing one too many Mikes, people were fed up with the name. StarFox told the man he could come in, but only if he left that identity at the door. A moment later they were inside and everyone left in confusion at meeting a stranger in their house who apparently had no name at all.

A party was held to give the poor guy a name, but so few people turned up that the decision was basically left to one person with a strong opinion. The man formerly of no name didn’t stay at Acorn for all that long, but to my knowledge he has kept the name Gilgamesh to this day.

That was one of the more lax Acorn stories. If I’m being really honest, those people “left in confusion at the stranger with no name” probably weren’t surprised at all. I could go into why, but let’s just say we meet a lot of characters, and it was much weirder that he biked from California without actually asking us first.

*We have a lot of pretty out-there animal stories, so here are a couple of the quirkiest ones:*

## 2. EXPLODING GOATS AND A PET NAMED COW AND HER HERMAPHRODITE FRIEND.

Welcome to part two, a story from the days when Acorn community still kept cows, pigs, and goats. The first half of this story is very true to its name, so watch out!

A fun fact about goats is that they have no sense of when their stomachs are full. They will just keep eating as long as there’s food, so you have to be careful how much you give them. The person who took care of our goats at the time knew this and always monitored the animals’ food. Of course, everything did not go as planned, and one day one of the goats escaped its enclosure and found its way to the alfalfa. Alfalfa was a favorite treat, but it’s a plant that expands in the stomach. As perhaps you can guess, the result of the animal reaching the unprotected stash wasn’t too pretty. It was StarFox (the same person who met the man once named Mike) who arrived just a little too late. They went running up to the scene in time to see the creature explode. I mean a literal goat explosion.

It was as though the food were a ticking bomb, and StarFox later had to try to explain what seemed impossible.

Hard to believe as it may be, I know this story to be true as I later found another goat in a similar situation but was able to get to it in time. Maybe you believed all that and maybe you didn't, but either way, time to lighten the mood? How about a ridiculous cow story? That "pet named Cow" was in fact a cow whose real name (Pandora) never stuck. Cow wandered onto our farm as a calf, clearly lost and unable to survive alone. StarFox (Welcome back again, StarFox!) took the calf in and bonded with her immediately. Being still so little, Cow lived indoors as a pet until she outgrew that life. She had been bred to be a meat cow, but at this point everyone loved her and had no intention of eating her or, of course, milking a meat cow. Instead we got another cow, this one meant for milking, and kept Cow as an outdoor pet.

This is the moment for a collective face-palm, sigh, and head turn. Once again, we're looking at Cow, but now we're thinking, "Oh the irony. We're about to eat our milk cow and milk our meat cow, aren't we?" That's exactly what we did, and I'm happy to say that at least that part went about as smoothly as could be expected.

### 3. SKETCHY NEIGHBOR MIKE AND HIS CRAZY THIEVING GIRLFRIEND

Directly across the road from Acorn is a place about as sketchy as a little farmhouse can get. At first glance, it looks abandoned. The yard is in complete chaos, looking rather like a junkyard, and

the house isn't much better. The roof is caving slightly. The yard (if you could call it that) is perpetually covered in random things including a large metal cage, unprotected from the elements. It's actually a 24/7 yard sale, but no one would ever know it without talking to the residents of the house. There are usually one or two rusty old cars there, and if you pass by at the right time you might see a black Sedan or even a big white cargo van pulling up or driving away. Those people never stay long.

"Who exactly is it who lives here? They don't sound like good news."

Yeah not so much. The cage alone comes with a list of unpleasant animal-related stories.

We call the owner Neighbor Mike. That man is worrisome enough on his own, but his girlfriend Sharron is the focus of this story. Sharron seemed harmless enough at first. She would come over to Acorn a fair amount, and while people mostly weren't huge fans of her, no one was uncomfortable. That was until she turned up at our friend StarFox's door in the middle of the night, bloody and desperately saying she had to go to the hospital. Poor StarFox, of course, leapt out of bed immediately to drive her forty-five minutes to the nearest hospital. As soon as they reached town however, Sharron insisted that they needed to stop at a gas station. Despite StarFox's protests that she needed help right away, they stopped. Sharron never came back, and Acorners were even less inclined to feel kindly toward her when they heard how StarFox had been used.

If you hadn't guessed yet, this was a setup for a drug ride so Sharron could meet

her dealer. She was banned from returning to the community, but that didn't stop her next move.

A few months after the setup, Sharron went to Acorn at night, but this time without the intention of being seen. She snuck into our office building and attempted to break into the cashbox kept there using a crowbar and hammer. She was, thank goodness, unsuccessful, and made the mistake of leaving her tools lying next to the dented safe to be found the next morning. But this was not quite the last of Sharron's plans. She hadn't gotten our money, but having gotten nice and cozy with the community in the past, she knew where we kept the keys to all our cars, and did not hesitate to take one to the city of Richmond and leave it there to gather dust. We presume she did this for the same reason as the setup. When we discovered what had happened, we contacted Sharron, but it was only through her daughter that we were able to have our car returned. We installed a new and stronger safe, moved our keys, and made it clear that we would notify the authorities if Sharron ever tried to enter our home again.

"All's well that ends well," one could say, but I admit I take care not to engage in conversation if Neighbor Mike and Sharron ever happen to be out when I walk down our road.

Our interactions with these neighbors may be a bit of a look into the darker side of Acorn. The fact is that this "utopian community" isn't all sunshine and quirky rainbows. People filter through Acorn like sand through a gold pan, and we can't always tell who might be dangerous.

People drink and make mistakes, and people lie and avoid responsibility. There was once a woman who went manic to an extent to which we could no longer take care of her. In the early years of Acorn, a man even burned down a building at night housing at least ten people. Miraculously, no one was hurt. These are only the times it's gone too far.

#### 4. "WE'RE ALL A LITTLE MAD HERE. YOU'LL FIT RIGHT IN."

We all know StarFox by now, right? I honestly didn't realize how many stories they would happen to be in, but here we are. We can create plenty of chaos on our own, I promise, but StarFox has certainly been a sort of main character throughout this "journey" if you will.

They've been in the middle of some drama and helped the community with said drama, but what about them as a person?

StarFox was a high functioning alcoholic with several mental health issues. They would have manic episodes and fits of rage. One moment they would be totally checked out, the next incredibly high intensity with a distinct lack of social skills. StarFox had a story of their own. It wasn't a perfect one, but Acorn accepted them all the same. It's true that having members with mental health issues hasn't always worked out for us, but StarFox truly flourished at Acorn. Someone who would struggle in the mainstream world was able to live freely in an accepting community.

The world is full of beautiful people, and some of them need help. For some

people, community turns out to be the help they need, but that can't be true for everyone. It can be easy to focus on the bad and say, "That community sounds like a terrible and dangerous place to live," but the way I like to look at it sees the good. It sees the commune's acceptance of people who need help. Maybe not everyone would think it's worth it, but I would rather live in a world which takes everyone as simply human, no more no less, at the risk of getting hurt, then a world that would rather hurt others who fit outside the lines. We won't judge you.



LEE KASSAY | "SELF PORTRAIT" | CHARCOAL

# RECLAIMED

*by Cole Hammill*

Everything that comes from nature will eventually return.

An old car sits in a field, rotting into the ground.

Not all items stay around forever; one day, I suppose we'll learn.

The engine is seized, valves stuck shut. For a quart of oil it yearns,

But it was left here to rot in the side of this field, no mechanic near.

Not all items stay around forever. One day, I suppose we'll learn.

The fuel tank sits rusted out, absent of any gasoline to burn,

Spark plugs that once fed the engine lightning now sit without a charge.

Parked here on four flat tires, these wheels never again will turn.

The engine sits dormant, rotting away, the pistons cease to churn.

Shining blue paint now reduced to faded brown, caked with moss and dirt.

Everything that comes from nature will eventually return.

The bumper fell off and gives the car a frown, looking stern.

Shattered glass from each of the windows glitters the ground below.

Sinking, rotting into the ground, the car sentenced to decay for eterne.

Everything rusts away eventually, but that shouldn't cause concern.

An old car rots into the ground in a country field.

Everything that comes from nature will eventually return.

Not all items stay around forever. One day, I suppose we'll learn.



HIROMI CALDERON | “ORGANIC SELFIE” | DIGITAL

# OF MINE

*by Carlos Banda Montes*

Of mine,

I,

Close, my eyes. Now, I see, all I need is in Me.

My mind's a tree. The fruit grows heavy and falls to feed.

The floor, dirty. In, I plant my feet. Grounded, still, I reach for the sky.

Don't know why We have to die. Maybe, to make room for the next in line.

I take my time. Straighten my spine. Birch, not. Nor pine. I eased, to set my roots.

My hold's so strong. Only God could pull Me up. My soul, the water. My skin, the cup.

It's muddied, unclear, and cracked, I fear. I seek to cleanse and make concrete. Like clay,

I make with what I take, and like a plant, excrete. Another breath keeps further death.

I said, I take my time. Those in queue, will view, as I prolong the notes of my song.

Though, it's a venture, still. On my last legs. To die, then. And it's nice, darkness.

I'd rather not, go back. I like the black. Gravely, I must face, the starkness.

We go through seasons. Right now, cold. I have fallen. Yet, I'm up.

Enough, I've shed. Made it through and feel I grew stronger.

I lift the blind of my eye and a fresh fruit I find.



HELEN MILLER | "OIL POURER" | CERAMIC