



BLENDED

2022

BLENDED

The Literary Arts Magazine of Olympic College

2022 Olympic College

Cover Art By Claire Caldwell

Layout By Sam Hayden

Managing Editors

Marco Retallick

Kevin Maginnis

Copyeditor

Sonya Richardson

Designer

Sam Hayden

Design Consultant

Peter Bill

Editors-in-Chief

Christina Camarena

Candice Morrow

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MATCHSTICKS - LILLIANNA JENSEN	7
AND SO WE BURN - LESLIE VICTOR	9
MAKE WAVES - LESLIE VICTOR	10
THE SONG OF THE OCEAN - MIRANDA JORGENS	11
FOGGY DAY AT THE BEACH - KYLIE GUENTHER	14
SO? - MARGARITA WIGGINS	14
PAINTING - LILLY HOWTON	15
MR. BEAR - MAI OTSU	17
SQUIRREL - ABRAHAM ENGBRETSON	18
EVERYONE'S WASTE - ROBERTO O'KEEFE	19
MEANINGLESS WORK - MILES STILL	20
CRAB - LORENZO HICKMAN	20
STAN LEE - MAI OTSU	21
PAINTING - HANNA HARRIS	22
UNTITLED - EMILY HENNING	23
SAVANNA - FLYNT WELLINGTON	23
UNTITLED - JESSICA CLEAVER	24
WHERE I AM FROM - ANDRE HENDERSON	25
UNTITLED - LAURA FILLINGHAM	27
NEAPLI GIRL - REBECCA TUMICKI	28
CAN YOU SEE THE STARS FROM SHEOL? - LOGAN KERR	29
REACHING OUT - HANNA HARRIS	30
LUNA - LOGAN KERR	32
UNTITLED - JESSICA CLEAVER	33
KOI DANCE - CLAIRE CALDWELL	34
THE HUNT - EOMON SULLIVAN	35
FLOWERY SENSATION - ALIZE REAUX	37
PERSONAL SURREALISM DRAWING - MADILYN LARSON	38
A BAD/GOOD TRIP - MICHAEL MADDOX	39
UNTITLED - KAYLA SCOTT	41
BABY - MAI OTSU	42
A SMATTERING OF MEMORIES - ERIN EVANS	43
CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES	50
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	52

MATCHSTICKS

We were matchsticks,
Bundled together,
Safe in our box.
We were protected,
Young and fragile.

Perhaps the most concerning problem
With matchsticks in a box,
All it takes is a little friction
And a spark...
Then there is an open flame.

Watching a bonfire
Can be addictive.
Living in a bonfire is terrifying,
Dangerous and deadly.

One match,
One spark.
That is all it takes
To start a fire.

Watch and feel the heat of the flame
Turning the box and the matches
To ash.
You put out the blaze
And you are unrecognizable.

Those closest to you
Can leave you with
The most painful burns,
And we all have
Our fair share.

If you manage to survive the fires,
And find others like you,
And they fit with you,
And you fit with them,
And you all fit together,
You will have a deeper connection than you ever could before
Because we all know what it is to feel your soul burning,
And we can understand each other's pain.

In time,
We can grow into something stronger
And less flammable.
We are sturdier and surer of ourselves.
We are matchsticks no more,
But we still show our bittersweet burns
On our hearts
As reminders of the lessons and growth
Out of adversity.
Out of the ashes.





SONG OF THE OCEAN

She fumbled with the faucet knob one last time, but the tap was determined to stay icy cold. It was a typical gas station bathroom, with water just as cold as the artificial lights illuminating the dinky toilet and the peeling, grey-painted walls. She dried her pruned fingers with thin paper towels that tore apart upon impact. Figures. Neglecting the tap, she allowed the low rumble from the steamy water to fill the insignificant gas station, drowning out their miserable music. A hint of salt lingered in the foggy air. She was close.

There's a certain kind of freedom that comes with driving, it's the only thing that could relieve her of this. . . feeling that had been following her. She must have driven 500 miles that week. Windows open, she set forth on the long, windy road towards Port Townsend, a small coastal town with reliably raging winds.

The moon stared at her and she stared back. These staring contests of theirs were not abnormal. She had a feeling it knew something she didn't want it to know. She had a feeling it glared at her now because it knew how she was feeling and it knew she was fragile and it knew if it stared long enough and hard enough it would find a confession. She was grateful when she turned the corner and it disappeared to her blind spot.

The beach parking lot was abandoned all for her. No one came to the beach in the middle of the night in November. She stepped onto the dark sand and was immediately greeted by those piercing winds, hugging her in their warmth, as if saying hello to an old friend. Comforting. They pushed her closer to the sea, guiding her on the large rocks. She slipped on the seaweed,

still wet from the day's high tide, and caught herself on the barnacles, drawing blood from her tender hands. She didn't flinch, only walked further down the shore to greet the ocean.

Small rocks dug into her bare knees as she knelt down and held her hand out to the rising and falling sea. He laid gentle kisses upon it, cleansing away the blood.

"Thank you," she whispered, touching her fingertips to her tongue, tasting the sweet saltiness of the ocean.

The rocky sand made a soft mattress as she laid upon it, closing her eyes to avoid the pervasive light of the moon. She listened to the sea's serenade and synced her breath to the steady rhythm. The tide crept towards her toes. He got closer with each ripple until her legs were wrapped in a warm blanket of seawater. He lifted her body off the shore, and she drifted upon him, not caring to notice how far she inched from land. He gently rocked her body back and forth, cradled in the arms of the ocean. She could hear him singing his lullaby on the distant shore.

He begged to share her warmth. She was made of soft flesh, flowing with warm blood so different from the scaly, cold bodies of his usual companions. Lovingly, she obliged, surrendering her body to the depths of the ocean. He synced his waves to the rhythm of her heart. The waves crescendoed. Covering her entire body with his gentle hands, he hugged her tighter, exploring every surface the water could reach. He explored her lips and she opened her mouth, permitting him entrance. The rhythm grew stronger. He explored her tongue and her throat and found his way to her lungs - so fragile and delicate. What an honor to be her safe-keeper.

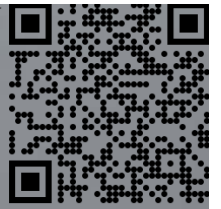
An incoming raincloud blocked the invasive stare of the moon. He celebrated their

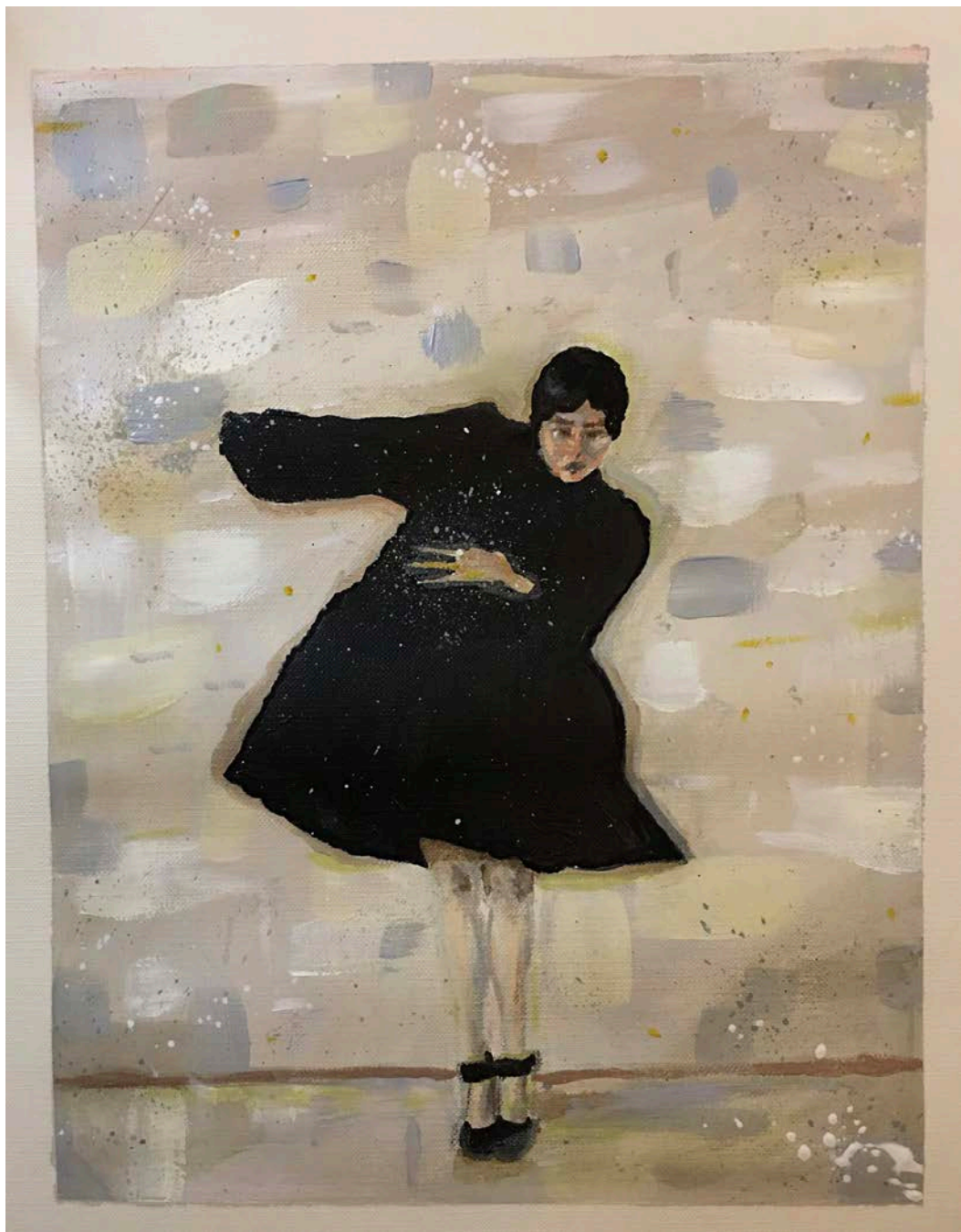
privacy.

They danced together in his currents. She followed his lead closely, allowing him to spin her any way he desired. He cherished the heat radiating from her body, noticing the way it made the waters around him bubble in pleasure. He slowed the rhythm of the waves and tightened his grasp on her gentle curves, preparing for a final slow dance. They swayed, wrapped in each other's arms and embracing the connection they had forged. He planted kisses up and down her body once more, and with each kiss, he vowed he would never let her go, that he would keep her safe in the confines of the ocean's depths forever.

The waves stilled and the clouds remained in the night sky until the morning dawn. The moon had not seen, but she did not need to.

SCAN TO HEAR ORIGINAL MUSIC BY
MARGARITA WIGGINS







THIS IS MY FRIEND
MR. BEAR

ROOAAAR!



OKAY, OKAY...



MR. BEAR ALWAYS HELPS ME



BUT...
HE SOMETIMES TRIES TO
EAT ME

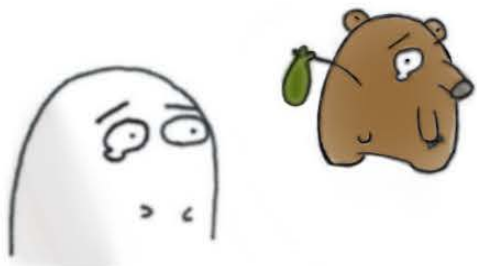


OH...

" IF YOU EAT ME,
HOW ARE WE GOING
TO SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN?



I LIKE HIM VERY MUCH



MR. BEAR DECIDES TO GO TO
THERAPY BECAUSE HE DOESN'T
WANT TO EAT HIS FRIENDS



EVERYONE'S WASTE

To those who are two-faced,
just know that our waste goes to the same treatment place.

Best believe that our stools will not be misplaced
as the citizen's tax dollars go to waste.

The flow of liquids is fast-paced,
tanks, meters, and aeration are the showcase.

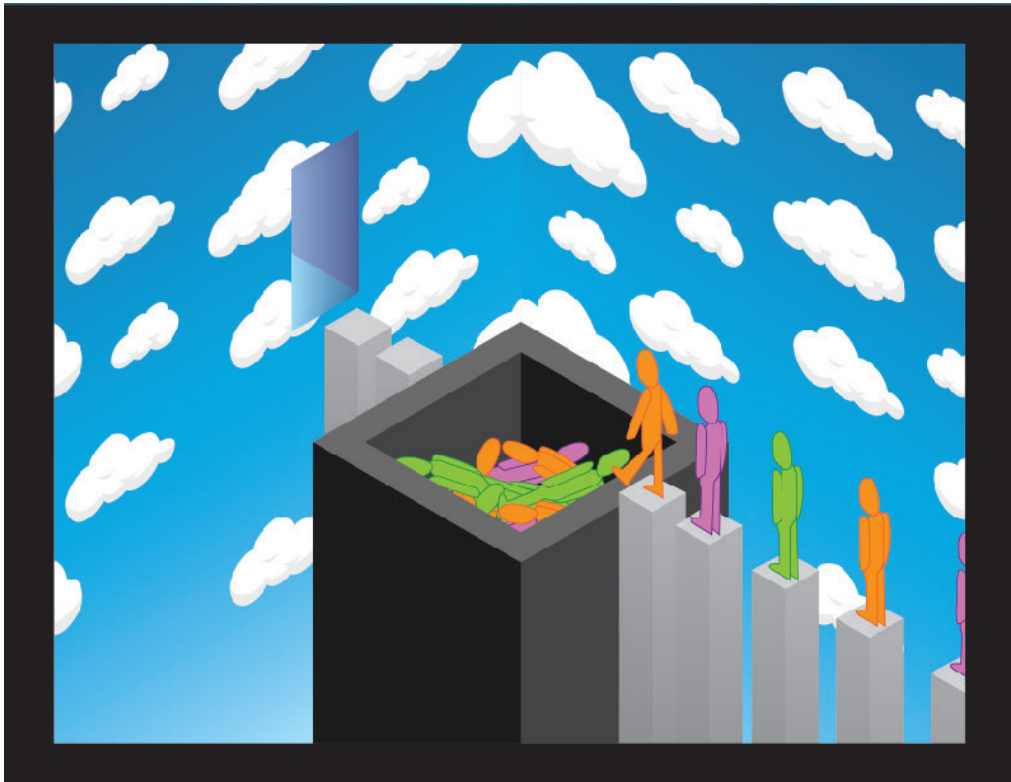
Though differing beliefs we embrace,
our internal biome's bacteria interlace.

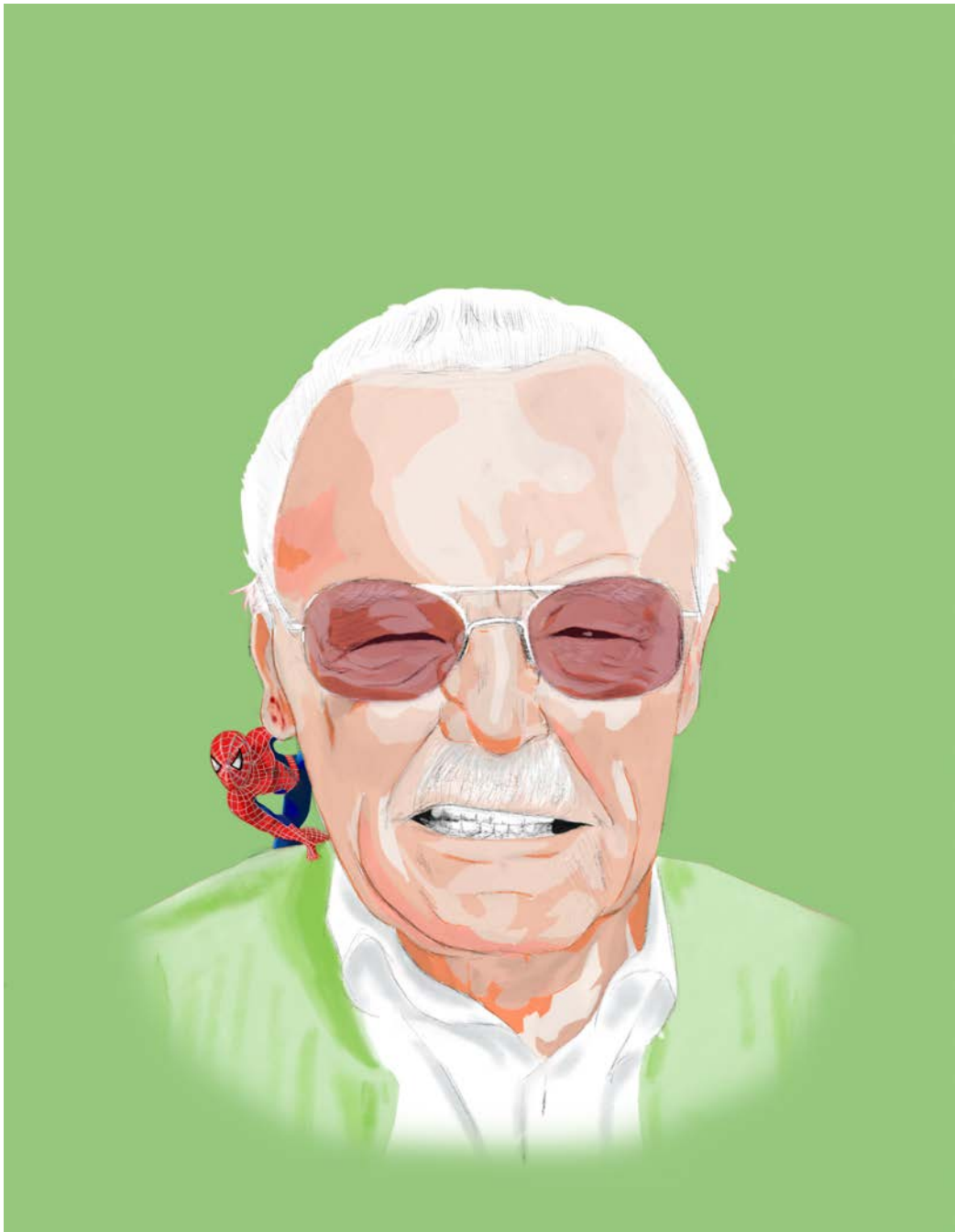
Chemically processed, with little aftertaste,
its a never-ending feat of engineering grace!

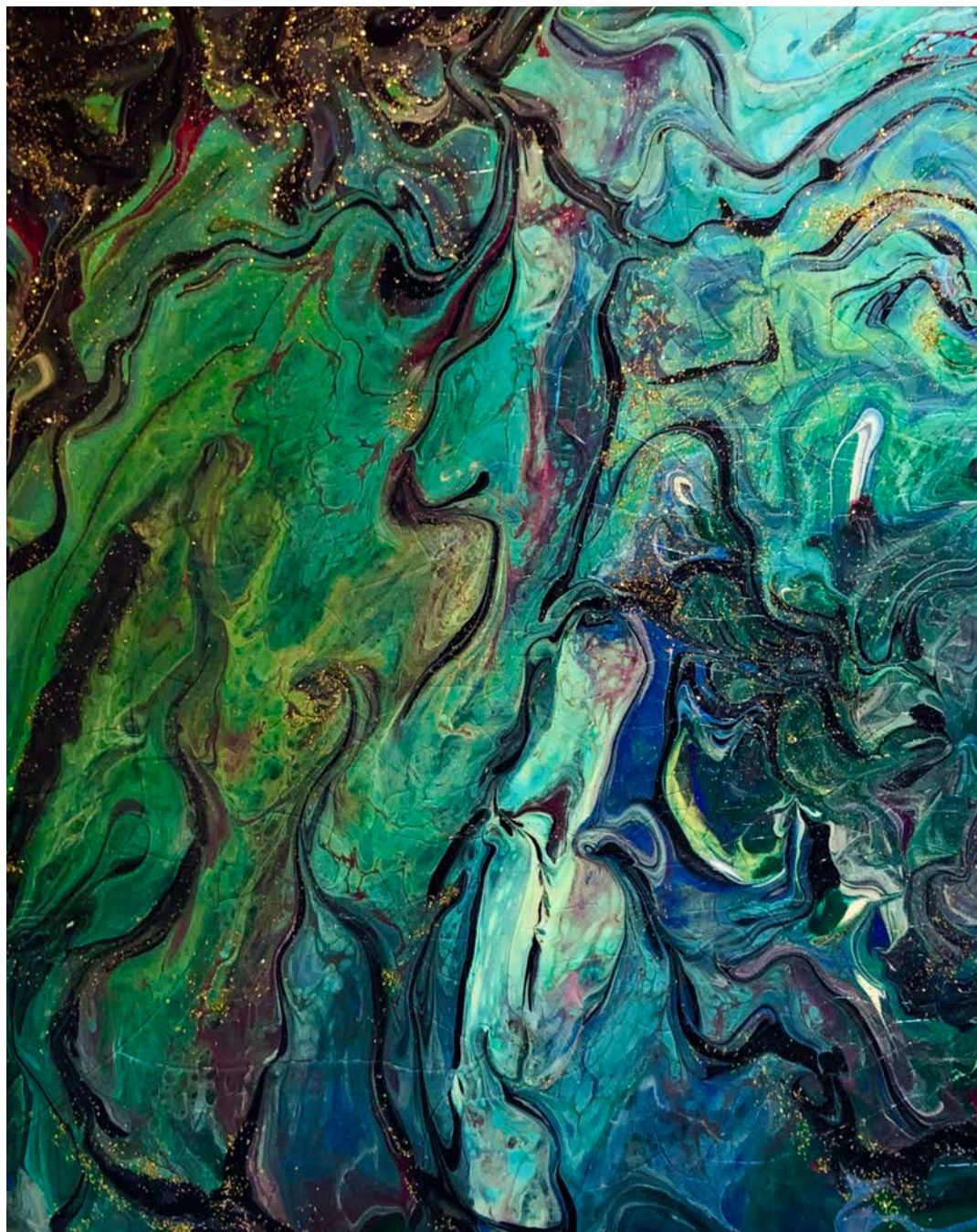
Hooray for the sewage treatment place!

So next time you go, don't do it in haste.

Think of your contributions to the human race.







UNTITLED

this rabbit hole
(the one I'm digging to nowhere)
only goes so deep,
and then it stops far short
of where I am in need.

so i burrow
sideways and for many miles.
anywhere that's not
the deep cut of the truth,
the place from which i bleed.

SAVANNA

Savanna

The cool twilight breeze whispers across the tall
grass.

Vibrations in the stream have the ostrich shaking in
his syrup-tinted Burberry boots.

A crocodile has its eyes aflame with a grim desire,
licking its chops in excitement.

The silk beam of the moon casts a celestial glow
on the scene, only to be tainted by a crimson flow
scattered upon the earth.



WHERE I AM FROM

I am from Midwestern United States.

I was born and raised in St. Louis Missouri- a city on the Mississippi river, historically known as the gateway to the west.

I am from summertime, which was my favorite season in those days.

I am from the luminescent glow of fireflies as children give chase to capture their magic

I am from the deafening sound of a thousand cicadas flicking their wings as the males sing their timbral songs.

I am from humidity that clings to me and glistens on my dark skin on a hot and windless night.

I am from light and darkness.

I am from city streets littered with broken glass and shattered dreams.

I am from neighborhoods lined with vacant lots and empty buildings.

I am from gunshots that ring out in the middle of the day and the middle of the night.

The sad thing about it is, you get used to it.

I am from the American Ghetto; it really doesn't matter which one.

They are all built, shaped, and divided by violence and oppression.

They are all marked by historical trauma and the destruction of community and culture.

I am from darkness and light.

I am from mother, grandmother, and great grandmother who had been given the burden and blessing of raising our families and our communities.

I am from the lessons of their hopes and their fears.

I am from sweet potatoes, collard greens, fried chicken and peach cobbler... Soul Food.

I am from the tunes of Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, and Aretha Franklin to name a few... Soul music.

I am from family get togethers in the park and playing childhood games with my little sister and brother ... and lots of cousins.

We may not have much, but we're all we got and that is enough.

I am from togetherness... Soul healing.

I am from searching for my father who was not in my life and hoping that I can learn to be a man, all on my own.

I am from finding my father only in repeating his same mistakes with my own children.

I was never able to be close to my father, but I now know some of what he must have went through.

I am from intergenerational cycles of struggle and poverty.

I am from drug addiction to recovery.

I am from incarceration to higher education.

I am from light that has always guided me

I am also from darkness within

I am from pain that I've caused as well as endured

I am from better days are coming in

I am from helplessness and brokenness

A place where I had submitted to defeat

It is from this helplessness and brokenness

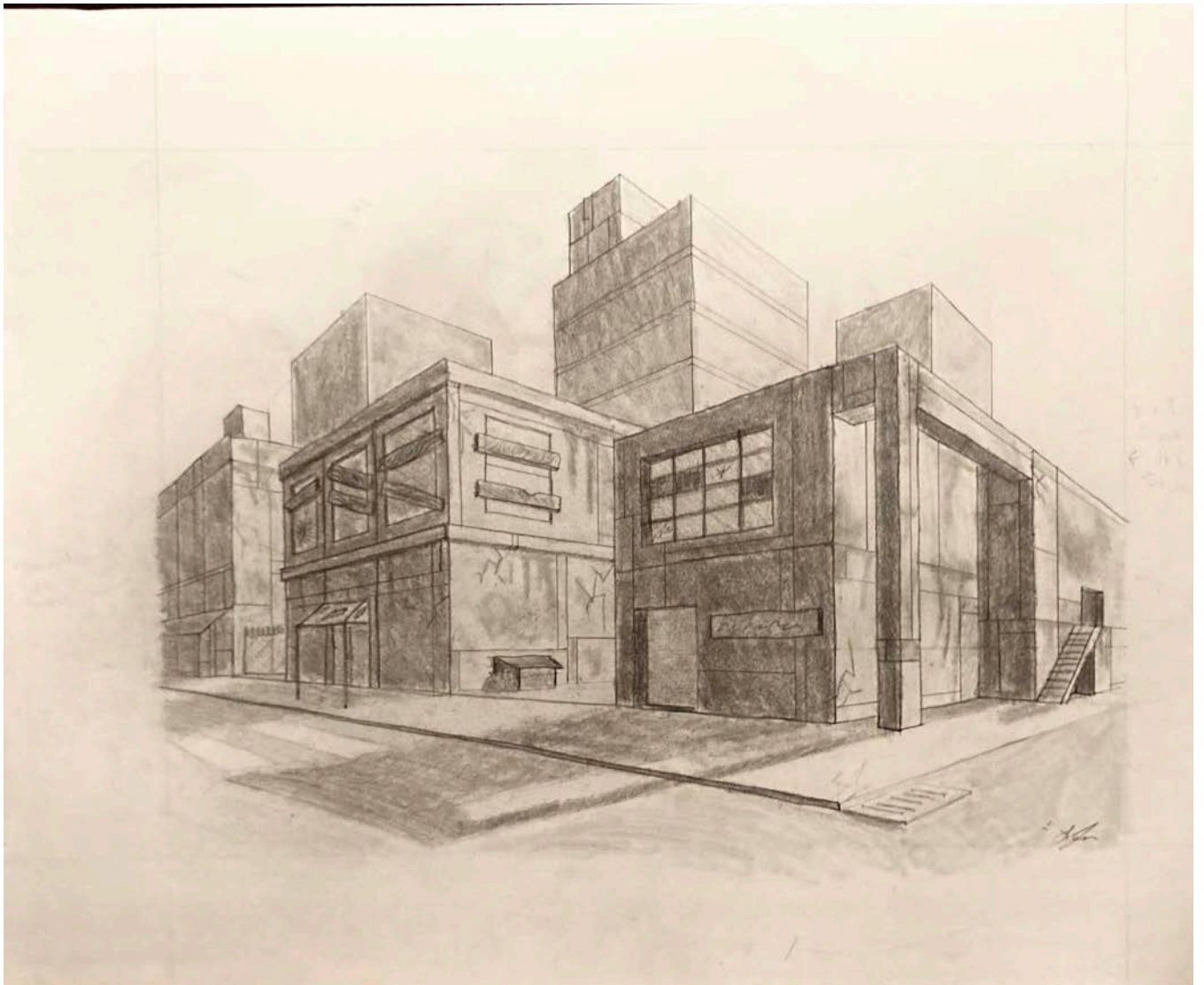
That I prayed and was lifted to my feet

I am from this time I'll do it differently

I am from I'll never hurt you again

I am from a determination to help my children

I am from forgiveness, I am from change, I am a man





CAN YOU SEE THE STARS FROM SHEOL?

from way below,
when radio telescopes no longer hope to touch me,
creaking to life to caress me in stereo,
when they no longer hope to love me, lycanthropes to their moon,
likening themselves and their groping waves
to that which i would rather rest in distress, left in graves
in dunes of not-so-distant deserts trudged through like the back of the universe,
a death like the blackness of the universe,
awakened by an open hand smack,
a supersonic whip crack heard across the expanse,
i shed myself like the tail of a comet
leaving my snakeskin, a bloodred trail, in the sand.

from way above,
when push comes to love,
and you push me to the edge of the town
with a serpent's smile and black leather gloves
wrapped around your special sledge,
cock the hammer back.
is it worth it, to let your manners go?
is it worth it, with your true glamor shown?
the look in my starry eyes panning down from that special throne
the clamor from your radio while you're dishing out your cosmic punishment.

from the passenger side, in a passenger's life,
an arrangement of satellite dishes like halos
you're passing by the main road, out to the wastes
to drop me off, to dump me off.
no witnesses.
i won't pray more if you say so.
i won't pry more if you say that you'll finally release your payload
into my chest, like a madman,
and relieve me, unimpressive, undressed,
no discretion in a shallow depression in the badlands,
to forever stay as bones among the cobras
underneath the radio telescope array.

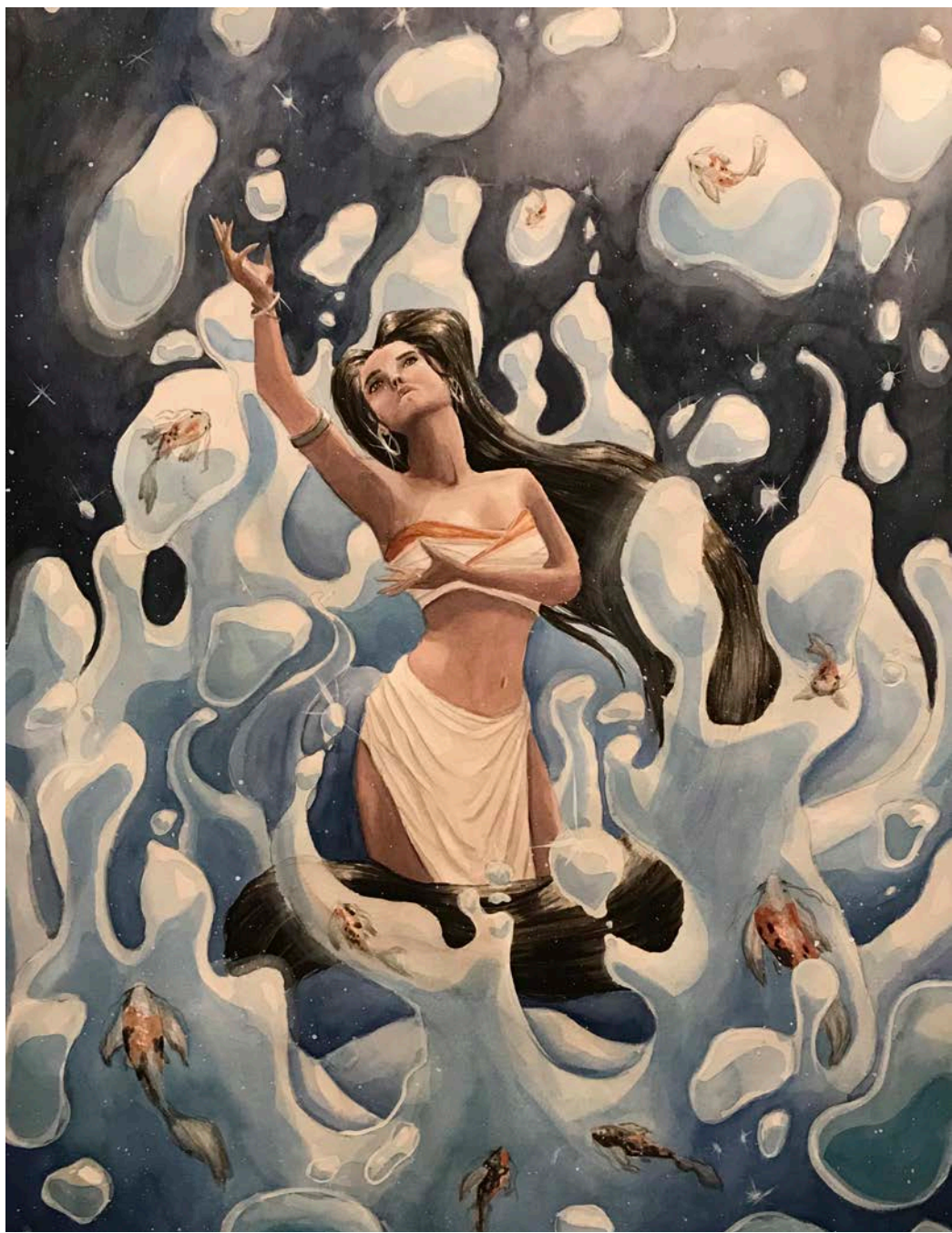




LUNA

shattered glass and fractured streets
the moon, in somber sorrow,
sees from above
she breathes from above
and believes in us,
leaving the trees barren,
the better to be with us.
scattered grass and flattened sheets
she's Luna, solemn sovereign
breathe in the dust
to breed in the dust
and seethe in the dust
freeing her teeth,
feral
to finally feed with us.





THE HUNT

Searching can be tedious
but it's crucial
The right size
You'll know it when you pick it up

The throw

I try throwing
elbow up,
 rock skipping

I quickly abandon
while wildly reckless,
 a dream
 of grandeur

our mission-
 our obsession

we had little ambition

a challenge
well maintained
covers acres,
most of which is,
“adventure”
the appeal

most advanced

we are not,
but that didn't matter in the moment

Our walk-
our impromptu competition
was what we needed

I wanted a simple-
yet safe-way

for a couple hours

we needed to breathe
and needed some time

the further we get from it
meaning,
the uncertainty
and anxiety
of looking back,

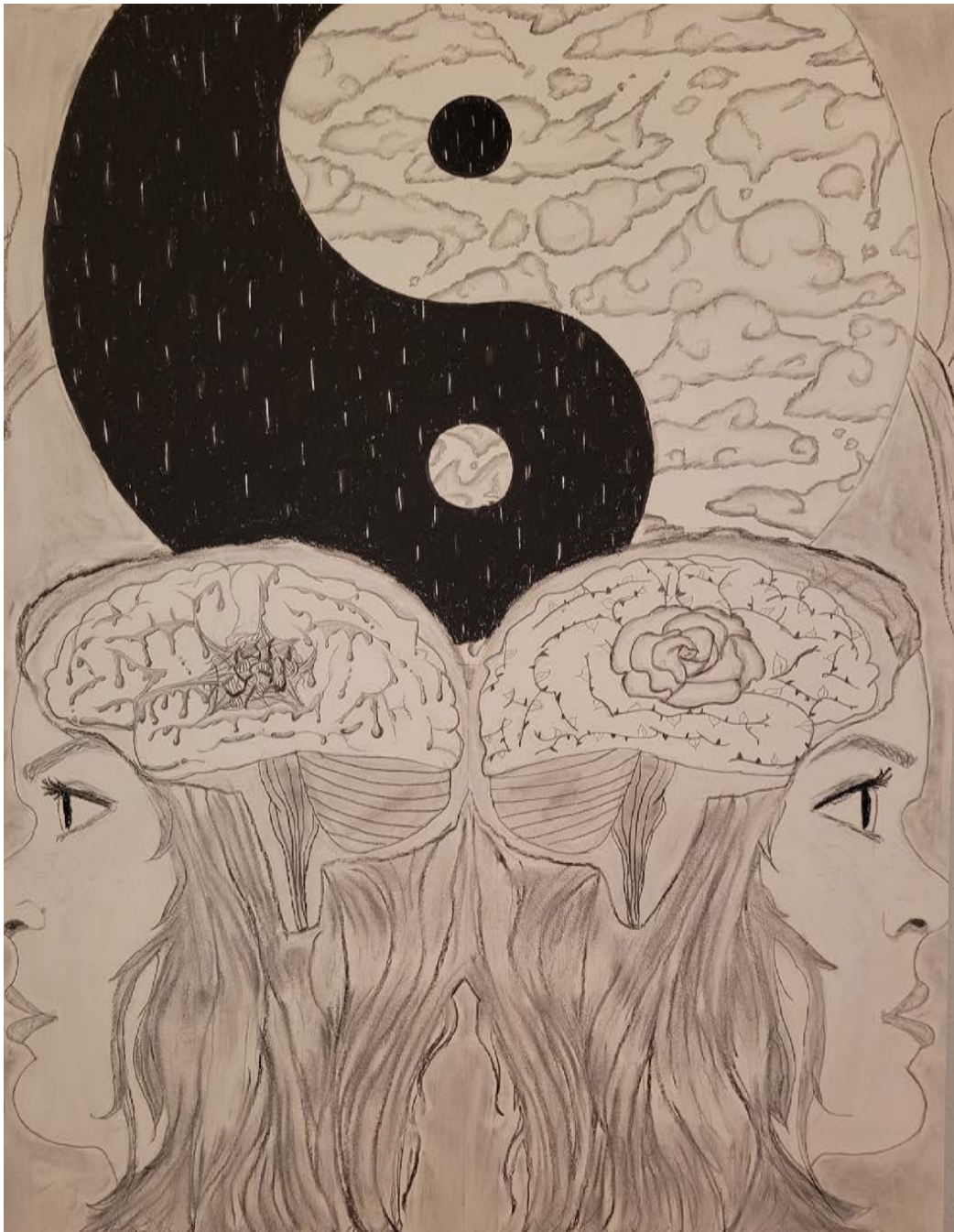
I can say those two,

together,

we're best.

That got me.
Isolation.
fingers firmly crossed-
that we can enjoy again





A BAD/GOOD TRIP

I was shot at, which was bad, but I did not burn up, which was good.

In 2008, I was flying over the Iraqi desert in a Marine Corps CH 46 “frog” helicopter. I and twenty Marines and sailors, in desert-tan uniforms, were on mesh seats and packed side-by-side like Vienna sausages in a can.

The can opened at the back because the loading ramp sloped down to allow a lone Marine sitting on a wooden box to man the M-50 machine gun. Like being in a car with its rear half sawed off, making the retreating highway intimately visible and hearable to the passengers, we—in our open-backed helicopter—were spectators to a vast, tan desert below us and a vast, blue sky over us, while the warm desert wind whooshed around us. The Marine on the ramp was secured from falling into that panorama by a safety strap. His small, black silhouette backlit by the brightness beyond. A ribbon of bullets draped from his gun onto the ramp beside him.

My ears hurt from the rotor scream—it was so goddamned loud. I had earplugs in, and even though I’d also taken underwear from my backpack and stuffed it under my Kevlar helmet and over my ears, the rotor noise was still so, so loud. My ears ringed—a high pitched, from both ears, must-not-be-good-for-you kind of sound that I experienced often in Iraq. Military stuff is noisy: helicopters, jets, generators, Humvees, pistol fire, rifle fire, artillery fire. Tinnitus and hearing loss happen.

Just then—whoomp, whoomp, whoomp, whoomp. The pilot was shooting streamers of chaff in response to the rifle fire we were taking from the ground. My shoulders strained against the shoulder straps and my abdomen strained against my torso as the helicopter dropped suddenly, jerked right, left, and to the right again as the pilot executed evasive maneuvers. Bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, bam chattered the M-50s, fired by the right- and left-window gunners and by the tail gunner. I didn’t smell fear; I smelled my indifference. “Not a thing I can do,” I thought, “strapped in this sausage can . . . I sure hope we don’t burn up.”

I don’t like burns. Burns are black or grey, and they’re dry and dead. A fireman whose operation I’d observed as a premed student had stepped on a high-power electrical wire and it had burned/amputat-

ed both his legs below the knees. The protruding bones looked like dry, white sticks. Not alive at all.

I'm a surgeon. I don't like burns, and I don't like dead.

Blood is different; blood is red and alive. Even if there's lots of it pulsing out you can stop it and replace it. Pump an ashen, near-dead Marine or sailor full of blood and he or she pinks up and lives. Bloodless, cold limbs transform into warm, pulsating, full-of-life arms and legs. Alive is better than dead.

No burns or bleeding on that flight though—just a noisy, bumpy ride across the desert, which was good.

Now, as I write these words during an early morning, while I look at Douglas firs and evergreen huckleberries through my window, and knowing that my wife will soon be waking up and joining me, I realize I'm not justified in calling that helicopter flight across the Iraqi desert a bad/good trip, since I'm here and writing about it. Rather, I'll call it "a good trip . . . with some bullets added."





A SMATTERING OF MEMORIES

Dad sits in his worn out, faded green camp chair on the front porch of my childhood home. It is a summer day, and since we don't have air conditioning, it feels cooler outside than in the house. At least outside in the shade, the air moves with the occasional breeze that disturbs the stagnant hot air. I step out from the doorway to see if he needs some water or wants something to eat. He pats the chair next to him. He doesn't speak, merely gazes at me with his rheumy hazel eyes, and quirks up the corner of his mouth, like he has a secret joke he is silently laughing at.

I have a list of a million things to do—wash dishes, sort laundry, start dinner, pick up my toddler's toys—there wasn't time to sit and take a break. I look at my dad and his 'Mona Lisa smile' and sit.

"Dad," I said.

"Shhh. Just listen," dad mouths.

His tone is full of authority. Though he may look old and feeble, Dad still sounds like my tough-as-shit dad when the occasion calls. I sit and wait, wishing I had the gumption to ignore him and start on my list of tasks. I play with the frayed fibers of the chair, drum my fingers on the armrests, constantly adjust my position in the seat, crossing and uncrossing my legs. I don't have time to try and figure out if he is listening to the neighbor's developing new drama, the twittering birds in the branches of the oak tree overhead, or some ephemeral voice from the Great Beyond only he can hear.

Suddenly, the bay window we sit in front of shakes, causing the reflection of the porch and the tree to tremble on its surface. As the sound of rolling thunder grows louder, I feel the reverberations rising up from the boards of the porch, into my decrepit chair.

I feel my entire body shake in time to the rampaging feet of my three-year-old son. There is a long hallway in our house. It starts at the three bedrooms at the end of the house, shoots straight as an arrow,

splitting the house in two sections. The long hall travels through the living room, passing directly in front of the entranceway, past the dining room and dead ends at the family room on the other end of the house. My toddler loves to run the length of it, stomping his feet as he runs, listening to the echoing of his steps echo through the floor and walls.

I had grown up as an only child; my closest sibling was fourteen years and older. I was the surprise my parents never hoped for. My dad was fifty-six when my mother gave birth to me, so he considered me his last chance to get it right.

Being smart and comfortable in my own skin during my teenage years didn't help me win any friends in school; actually, those traits made public school a living hell. By the time I was seventeen, I couldn't wait until the day I graduated and could escape that small town.

I met a man that summer before my senior year. He was the older brother of one of my few friends and was handsome, dangerous-looking and older. Ten years older. He paid attention to me, praising my intelligence and maturity and responded to my inane attempts at flirtation. The first time I met him, he held the door open for me to climb into the back of the brand new '98 Pontiac Firebird in speeding-ticket red.

"Oh, how sweet! You opened the back door just for me?" I asked with a smirk and giggle.

"It's so I can watch the view," he said grinning back.

I reached into the car and lifted the lever to flip the seat, putting every skill I learned from romance novels into bending just right, praying I didn't trip and end up face first in the lap of my friend. I heard a growl behind me and smiled. What did it matter that he was a felon who had just been released from prison after a ten-year sentence? I could rehabilitate him. He told me so. With me, he wouldn't be an addict anymore, he'd never hurt me, he promised. I believed him.

Halfway through that last year of school, I found out I was pregnant. I'd hoped a baby would save my relationship. I prayed my boyfriend would change. I was terrified. All my dreams, my goals – gone. My parents took it as well as possible. I had just returned after disappearing from home for three days. Mom came out onto the porch as soon as she heard the car door close. I plodded to those steps that would bring me to my executioner. Her mouth was set in a hard line as she stood there staring at me in condemning silence, hands on her hips. My stomach roiled with acid. I swallowed hard, sending up a quick prayer.

“Mom, before you yell at me, I have to tell you something. Please, just listen before you start yelling.”

She took a deep breath, and I watched the muscles of her jaw twitch a couple times before settling into stillness. She took a few steps and sat down on dad's chair.

“I don't know how to say this, so I'm just going to spit it out,” tears filled my eyes and my voice broke.

“I'm pregnant.” I looked down at my hands twisted together on my lap.

“Oh.” There wasn't a word worse in the whole dictionary than that, ‘oh.’

“I couldn't go through with what I was planning. I'm sorry momma.” I looked her in the eye. If I was going to be a mom, I needed to learn how to act like an adult.

“What about adoption?” she asked. Her knuckles where they rested on her knees were white.

I'd considered it, but there was only so much heartbreak I could take. “I can't, mom.”

After that we danced around topics. Words having any connection to babies or pregnancy were dropped from our vocabularies. I knew I had broken their hearts. “Disappointed” was such a pathetically small word in comparison to what they felt. My dad, the hero of each of my stories, didn't speak to me for months.

“I call him Feet,” Dad said with a smile.

I would never have gotten away with running in the house as a child.

“Thump, thump, thump,” he said as he bopped his head back and forth to the rhythm of my son’s resounding steps.

Suddenly, my son came flying out of the house, threw the door wide open and slammed it shut as only a toddler can. Every time he closed doors, I cringed in fear of windows shattering into showers of tinkling glass.

My son ran down the steps and out into the yard as if there was nowhere else that offered such adventure. He grabbed sticks and leaves and acorns, tossing them up and jumping all over the grass, as if he were a rabbit cracked-out on speed. Whoops and hollers and giggles streamed from his grinning face.

I looked over at my dad and watched him take it all in.

Soaking in his grandson’s joy, as if it were the only thing that gave him sustenance. There was a light of joy that emanated from him when he would watch the antics of his grandson. The corners of his age lined eyes, crinkled as he smiled in amusement. He reached over and took my hand. It felt different than it used to.

No longer toughened by hours of manual labor tending the garden, splitting wood, or puttering around with tools, his always tanned skin had a pallor to it now. His hands were now slightly yellow, covered with age spots, bruised from the most minor of bumps. The skin was dry and papery. Thin. These hands were nothing like the strong hands that had taught me how to ride a bike, directed me how to swing an axe, and took my hands so Dad could teach me how to dance while I stood on his feet. They no longer resembled the hands that had tucked me in at night.

My boyfriend often yelled at me about the pregnancy. He didn't care about the baby. He already had three kids with his wife, back in Arizona. He was drunk and coming down off a meth high, and he was furious because I wouldn't shut up.

"This is our baby!" I screamed at him. "Why can't you just love me?"

"Know your role," he said. "Your voice is hurting my ears."

Pathetic crying, sobbing, and pleading followed. I just wanted him to tell me that I hadn't ruined my chances for my future. I wanted to be reassured that I wouldn't be alone, that I hadn't shattered my relationship with my parents and traded it for bruises I hid and lies I told the world and myself.

One day, he got sick of my pleas and demands. In his fury, he threw me at his closed bedroom door. I remember how it felt to have the wind knocked out of me, the panic of not being able to catch my breath and not understanding what was happening. I had just been standing in the midst of the piles of his dirty laundry and dirty dishes he insisted I clean up for him.

Then my back and head were slamming into a door.

I remember standing at the end of the bed, furious that he was staring at the T.V. while a naked woman and three men slid over and around each other, the woman little more than a doll to be passed around between them. In the middle of my tirade, I was lifted off my feet. For a split second I thought that he was finally hearing me. But he slammed me against the unyielding door. My head and back hit with more force than I could have imagined possible, imprinting the metal door handle into skin of my lower back.

The sharp thud of my head hitting the wood reverberated through the wall paneling. Surely, someone heard that and would come to check on me...

My vision darkened for a moment, but that felt secondary to the breath that shoved out of my lungs. Unable to take in another breath, I experienced pure panic. Air that only seconds ago had been so

easily accessible was now refusing to fill my chest. I froze in fear, the terror of not being able to breathe overrode all my thoughts. I hadn't realized that I'd closed my eyes until I opened them when I felt a scratchy, callused hand close around my throat. What had once offered so much pleasure was now turned against me—now an instrument of threat and pain.

I had been pushed and shoved by him before. I'd been grabbed and dragged. This was the first time I had been thrown against an immovable object and forcibly held. I into his face, so close that we were sharing the same air. For the first time in my life, I knew real fear—the kind that twists your guts into knots, the kind that causes your brains to short circuit and think in single words, the kind that decides if you will be a victim or a survivor. There was a living, breathing hatred in his eyes. Anger and a hate so dark it threatened to swallow me up. I believed I was going to die.

I don't remember how; I only remember next that he was on the ground kneeling and holding himself while yelling and cussing at me.

I escaped that dark bedroom and called my dad.

An hour later, I sat in my dad's truck, staring sightlessly out the window, feeling as lonely as I ever had, scared of a future I wasn't ready for. My dad, with whom I hadn't shared more than two words in months, reached across the console and took my hand in his, wrapping mine in his warm and rough, callused touch. His large, solid hands surrounded my trembling fingers and swallowed up my palm. I clung to him like it was my only tether, keeping me from plunging into an abyss of despair. He gently squeezed my hand every few seconds and I felt his thumb sweep gently back and forth over the back of my hand.

That single point of contact spoke what neither of us could. Dad continued to look out the windshield as he drove, continuing to drive and hold my hand in the silent blanket of that truck cab.

"You can do this. I will bend over double backward for you," he said.

I squeezed his hand.

With the arrogance of youth, I had always sworn I would never be like one of those dumb girls who let her boyfriend use her to toughen up his knuckles. I had prided myself on being smarter and better than them. They were weak, spineless fools. I knew better now.

I look at my dad now. I know it's a fleeting moment of clarity for him.

"Dad...are you scared?" I ask. I don't want to be any more specific. I don't want to talk about his approaching death—something that was no longer years away, so far that we could easily joke about it. Now it is coming up on the horizon, looming larger every day.

"No, I've made my peace. I've asked for forgiveness, that's all I can do." His eyes are getting that glassy, wet look. I'm not sure if he is drifting off to that place I can't follow, the one where he no longer knows me or if it is the emotions overtaking him.

"Do you forgive me, Daddy?"

He looks at me. Really looks, and smiles sadly, asking, "For what?"

I muscle myself back into some semblance of calm, refusing to collapse into a snot-dripping, blubbing puddle of tears.

He squeezes my hand.

I gaze at him, letting go the weight on my shoulders, so tired from carrying my burden. The light in his eyes dims, for he is no longer there.

He looks down at our clasped hands and pulls away. I see him fold his hands over his stomach and stare unseeing out into the distance. I want to bawl. I want to scream at the unfairness of it all.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Abreham Engebretson: I am a 2nd-year Computer Science student at Olympic College. My plan is to be accepted into University of Washington next year and pursue my Bachelor's. In my free time, I like to play music and take pictures of cute animals! I thought it would be fun to just submit one of my favorites!

Erin Evans: This is a short non-fiction prose that I worked on in a Creative Writing class at OC. I am working on my AA degree in History while pursuing a career as a historical fiction romance author.

Kylie Guenther: I started photography when I was fourteen years old thanks to my Grandmother. Ever since then, my passion for this art has grown and followed me throughout my high school career. "Walk on the Beach" was taken in Forks, Washington at Kalaloch beach.

Emily Henning: I graduated from Olympic College in 2020 and transferred to The University of Washington Tacoma's School of Social Welfare. I will be graduating this June with my Bachelor's in Social Work and am currently applying to graduate programs to pursue my Master's in Social Work. Writing poetry is my passion.

Lorenzo Hickman: I used to be homeschooled but now I am a Running start student working toward an Associate of Arts degree. I was born in Texas, but I moved to Japan when I was three and then to Washington when I was six and have lived here ever since.

Miranda Jorgens: The idea for "The Song of the Ocean" came to me as I was driving to Port Townsend, WA one night. I was struggling with my mental health at the time, and I found a safe space on the various beaches of the Puget Sound. Growing up on the island town of Ketchikan, Alaska, and now Western Washington, the ocean has always been an important presence in my life. My very first draft started as a nonfiction piece exploring my relationship with depression, school, and the sea - safe to say it has changed dramatically since then. I would like to soon turn the concept for "The Song of the Ocean" into an actual song, as I have spent much of my life studying music and opera. I am set to graduate from Olympic College with my associate's degree in June, and I plan to continue my studies with a major in Anthropology - something I have grown increasingly passionate about.

Madilyn Larsen: This is my second year at OC. I will have my associates and a digital media degree after summer quarter. I am planning to transfer to either University of Washington or Western Washington and major in visual communications design to become a graphic designer.

Mai Otsu: My name is Mai Otsu and I am a recent Olympic college graduate with an Associate's Degree in Biology. I enjoy fishing and drawing, and it has been a part of my life since I was a child. I spend my free time fishing in the lake and drawing comics.

Alize Reaux: My name is Alize Reaux. Art is a gateway into a new realm of possibilities and outcomes, and I will show you mine. I want to bring a unique art style into the world by creating visually pleasing work that carries a different outlook to life; even connects with viewers.

Kayla Scott: Hello, my name is Kayla Scott. From creative solutions to artwork, I have been an imaginative and creative person my whole life. I intend to become a graphic designer and have begun taking college art courses. I have recently started a website to share my art journey with others. It is called kayla-capturesofcreation.wordpress.com.

Rebecca Tumicki: I was brought up in New England and attended the Norwich Art School while in high school. I have a BS in Mathematics from the University of Connecticut and a MA in Geography from San Jose State University. I sell my work locally and continue to expand my offerings.

Leslie Victor: I was born in New York City in 1969. My background is bohemian growing up in a household with a revolving door of artists musicians and creative souls. In this spirit, I am completely self-taught and Protean in my art, working in multiple mediums such as painting, illustration, photography, textile and jewelry crafts. I have lived in Santa Fe NM, San Francisco CA and have been situated in the Pacific Northwest for the past 20 years. My modus operandi is mixed media. Creating work for logos, book covers and Tarot decks using sketch and pen illustrations combined with graphic design in Photoshop and Illustrator. I am inspired by all animals, including humans, and in addition to the aforementioned areas continue to work on several serial concepts, ideas such as light and shadows, a focus on light not image in photography, metaphorical still-life's in oil and acrylic and a series of ink drawings which explores politics through anthropomorphism. I am seeking work as an illustrator so I can be happy.

Flynt Wellington: I grew up reading classic poets such as Poe and Twain. Amongst them, I've always been inspired by authors such as Verne and their creative works, which have granted me a passion for reading and poetry that allows me to test the limits of my creativity.

Margarita Wiggins: When I am not doing homework for my subjects in Early Childhood Education, I play with toddlers and preschoolers during the week. I also teach music and fencing on weekends. I wish to form a band writing and playing our own songs. Care to join me?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Blended would like to thank SGOC for making this publication possible with generous funding and support. We also owe gratitude to Jennifer Pebbles and Shawn Devine for promoting our magazine and events, to Molly Young and Chris Cook for designing our Canvas worksite, to Teresa Mcdermott, Rebecca Seaman, and Scott Sigman for supporting us in hiring processes, to Michael Laughlin for collaborating to engage OC art students, and to Amanda Cain and our amazing librarians for allowing *Blended* to take part in the first annual community reading event. More thanks to Jocelyn Crabbe and Shane Standard for recording the event.

In particular, Candice Morrow and Christina Camarena would like to thank Sam, Marco, and Kevin for being our very first student designer and student editors. You guys rock, and we feel so lucky to get to work with you.





WE SUPPORT LITERARY ARTISTS

ILLUSTRATION INSPIRED BY "SONG OF THE OCEAN"
WRITTEN BY MIRANDA JORGENSEN

This drawing has been created with NightCafe Studio AI, Copyright 2022, ReproSpace

BOOK PUBLISHING, LAYOUT, DESIGN , PRINTING

REPROSPACE

