

**crossed sabres**



**certainty**

**2019**

For His dear  
MOON,  
Un  
by n

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**orbital glow | ELIZA VEGAS**

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# colophon

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# policy

*Crossed Sabres* encourages submissions from all LCHS students and staff. All works showcased in this magazine reflect the opinions of the individual writer/artist and are not necessarily those of the staff, administration, or student body. Selections need to be appropriate for a high school student body and fall within the parameters of the Loudoun County School Board guidelines. All submissions are critiqued anonymously; are edited for spelling, grammar, and clarity; and are subject to approval by school administration.

# letter from the editor

SERENE SINGH

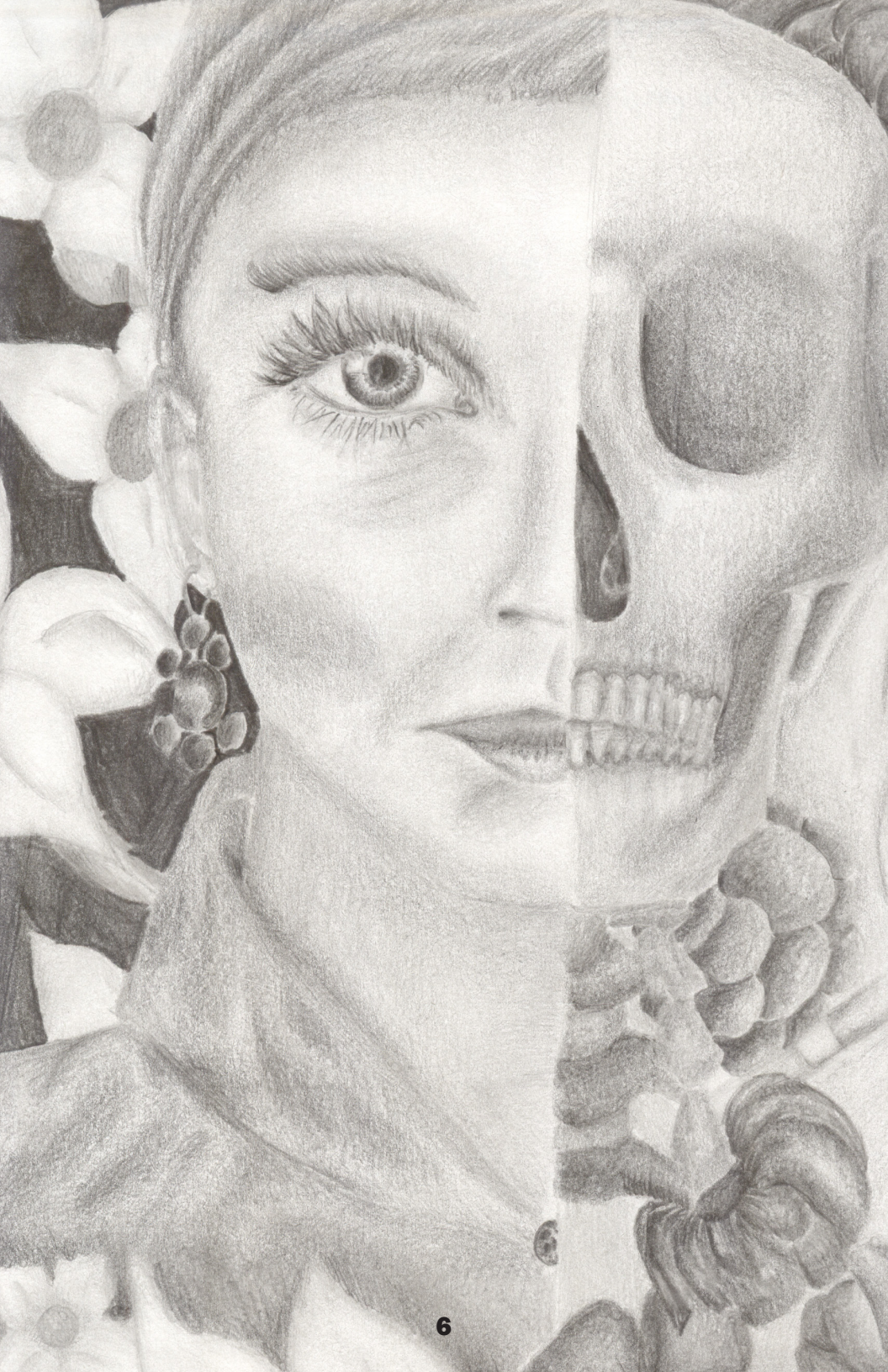
Take a moment to pause, think, relax, and breathe. How are you feeling? Relieved that another year of school is nearly complete? Or panicked that another year of responsibility looms ahead?

What is that feeling that nags at us, that thing keeping us awake at night? The pause that makes us hesitate before turning in a test. *Am I sure that I used the right formula? Did I double-check my math? Does my hair look okay? Are my high school courses preparing me for life in the real world?*

Most great works of literature play with the boundaries of people struggling to remain confident when nothing in the world seems set in stone. This year's submissions resonated with that theme, and the artists and writers of LCHS chose to walk the line between knowing and not knowing. Certainty and uncertainty are two emotions so close that they can often both be felt in a moment of self meditation. No matter how old, skilled, rich, or poor you are, everyone has experienced a flash of uncertainty even when things seem definite.

Our pieces range from "The Summer of the Dead," which celebrates love while fighting off the nagging wonder at whether that love, like the summertime, will end, to "Star/Stuck," which emphasizes how beauty and destruction can exist hand-in-hand. The artwork, too, plays off of feelings of varying certainty. Even our faculty submissions show that uncertainty follows us through all stages of life and is not only a feature of teenage life.

The variability of these emotions is what the writers and artists set out to capture and show to our readers. In the end, we hope to convey some of the same emotion we felt to you. With that, the writers, artists, and editors of this 2019 *Crossed Sabres* literary magazine are pleased to introduce to you, *Uncertainty*. Enjoy.





# femininity

## SUMMER ORLEDGE

It's a slender, discrete,  
Burn-more-than-you-eat  
Type of prison,

A struggle to subvert,  
Impossible to satisfy.

It's all or nothing, you must  
Make yourself smaller to fit  
In every box.

I'll stay in this diamond cage,  
Take my comparisons and set them ablaze,  
And succumb to sleep in a perfumed haze.

Yet there's always room for envy  
In this fuel for the system,  
Enchanted by gold dollar signs,  
And willing hostages of changing time.

# constellations in your eyes

GILLIAN DEEB

One gaze sets alight a flame in your heart.  
I see the constellations in your eyes,  
Your dream to go anywhere but here  
Because here and now is such a terrible place.  
I know you want to escape,  
So you look up at the sky  
And wish upon the stars that fly away into the dark space.  
I know.  
I see them.  
The light brightens the blue in your eyes.  
You close them, not letting the noises of the world get to you.  
You don't open them for awhile.  
Your legs hit your chest and your hands wrap around them.  
The noises get to you.  
I didn't get a chance to get to you in time.





**golden hour | KATHLEEN HOPPENJANS**





# the forgotten corner

**BRIA SLEDJESKI**

When the inevitable has occurred,

Oh woe is me for the betrayal:

I'll go to the forgotten corner

Where no one knows my name.

I'll go to the forgotten corner

Where they are powerless against me.

I'll go to the forgotten corner

Where skies are hot and dry.

I'll go to the forgotten corner

Where colors made are mine alone.

I'll go to the forgotten corner

To build myself up again.

I'll go to the forgotten corner.

Oh, empty dark peace!

I'll go to the forgotten corner

With solitude fit for such a beast.

I'll go to the forgotten corner,

The dust a comfort on the skin.

I'll go to the forgotten corner,

My final piece not lain to rest.

I'll go to the forgotten corner

To bring her home again.

I'll go to the forgotten corner.

**genetic mutation | ALYSSA HUGHES**

# **the summer of the dead**

**DANIELLE STUCKWISCH**

**It was the summer of the dead  
When we became friends.  
It was the late nights  
With no sleep  
Where it began,  
And where I imagined it would end.**

**It was the summer of the dead,  
The lowest of the lows,  
When I first fell  
For a boy with circles under his eyes  
And more to the imagination  
Than what he showed.**

**It was the summer of the dead, too,  
That he first noticed me,  
A girl saturated in sadness  
And a heart full of love.  
But the summer of the dead  
Bled into the autumn of life,**

**Where the flowers finally bloomed  
Big and bright and out of season,  
Like so much of our lives.  
They bloomed so beautiful,  
Not even the dead of winter  
Could crush their spirits again.**



**beauty in bloom | KATHLEEN HOPPENJANS**

# Chaos

**GIANA FERRAILO**

**I'm sitting on my bed  
Barely visible under the mountain  
Of Books and Papers and Assignments,  
But my Chaos is not in my homework.**

**I'm driving my car, fifteen minutes late  
Because my last Thing rang long  
And I'm thinking about the Thing after this,  
Another block in my Calendar too full,  
But my Chaos is not in my schedule.**

**I stand in the midst of all these people,  
My supposed "friends"  
But not one of them looks my way  
And I don't really have to be there  
For them to have a good time.  
Their Voices wash over me,  
But my Chaos is not in my social life.**

**I'm being yelled at for something I didn't do,  
That I can't control,  
In tears over the pain in my parents' Voices,  
But my Chaos is not at home.**

**I stare up at the ceiling  
And let the Voices drown me  
And let the Pit swallow me  
And let my Fears consume me  
I look in the mirror at a girl I don't recognize  
And I'm trembling  
And I'm falling  
And I'm crying**

**I stare at the Words in my journal  
And my ears are Ringing  
And my heart is Racing  
And my lungs are Burning**

**I wait in Silence,  
And the silence is the worst  
Because my Chaos is in my head.**



**inner persona | LAUREN MCCLOSKEY**

# old house

BRIA SLEDJESKI

Leaves stirred on a forest path as two boys walked side by side and silent. One hid his hands from the fall chill in a hoodie pocket, staring angrily, stubbornly, ahead. The other, glancing at him occasionally, rubbed the back of his neck.

“You’re sure you won’t tell me?” he asked.

“No.”

“Jamie—”

“Don’t ‘Jamie’ me, Kieran,” he snapped, and Kieran winced.

“I only want to know—”

“Shut up! Just shut up!” he yelled, still staring ahead, and some birds in a nearby tree took rustling flight. They didn’t stop walking. Even if Kieran wanted to curl up on himself now, he kept his pace. Jamison would snap at the kids at school who bothered him, which was more or less everyone. Not Kieran.

“You don’t have to tell me,” he started, and when Jamison stayed quiet, he continued, “I was only going to say—”

“Look, we’re here now.” He stopped suddenly, and Kieran stumbled a few paces ahead. They stood where the trees broke slightly and gave way to a steep but short hill with dirt stairs carved into the side. Before them stood an old, abandoned house, the door propped open with a rock from their last visit, a brick fence surrounding a now overgrown yard. Jamison took one, two steps at a time, hands still in his pocket and leaping the last four. Kieran followed. The iron gate of the fence at the end of the path was rusted shut with spikes



across the arched top. Jamison stood to the side, by the brick, expectantly.

“Boost me,” he said, and Kieran obliged the smaller boy, making a step with his hands. Jamison pulled himself up till he straddled the brick. He extended a hand to Kieran, and in one pull on both his arms, helped him up. They crunched in the brittle grass, and Jamison regained the slight bounce in his step as the stairs of the porch creaked. He kicked the large rock out of the door frame, disappearing inside. Kieran shook his head, following and letting his eyes adjust to the dim light.

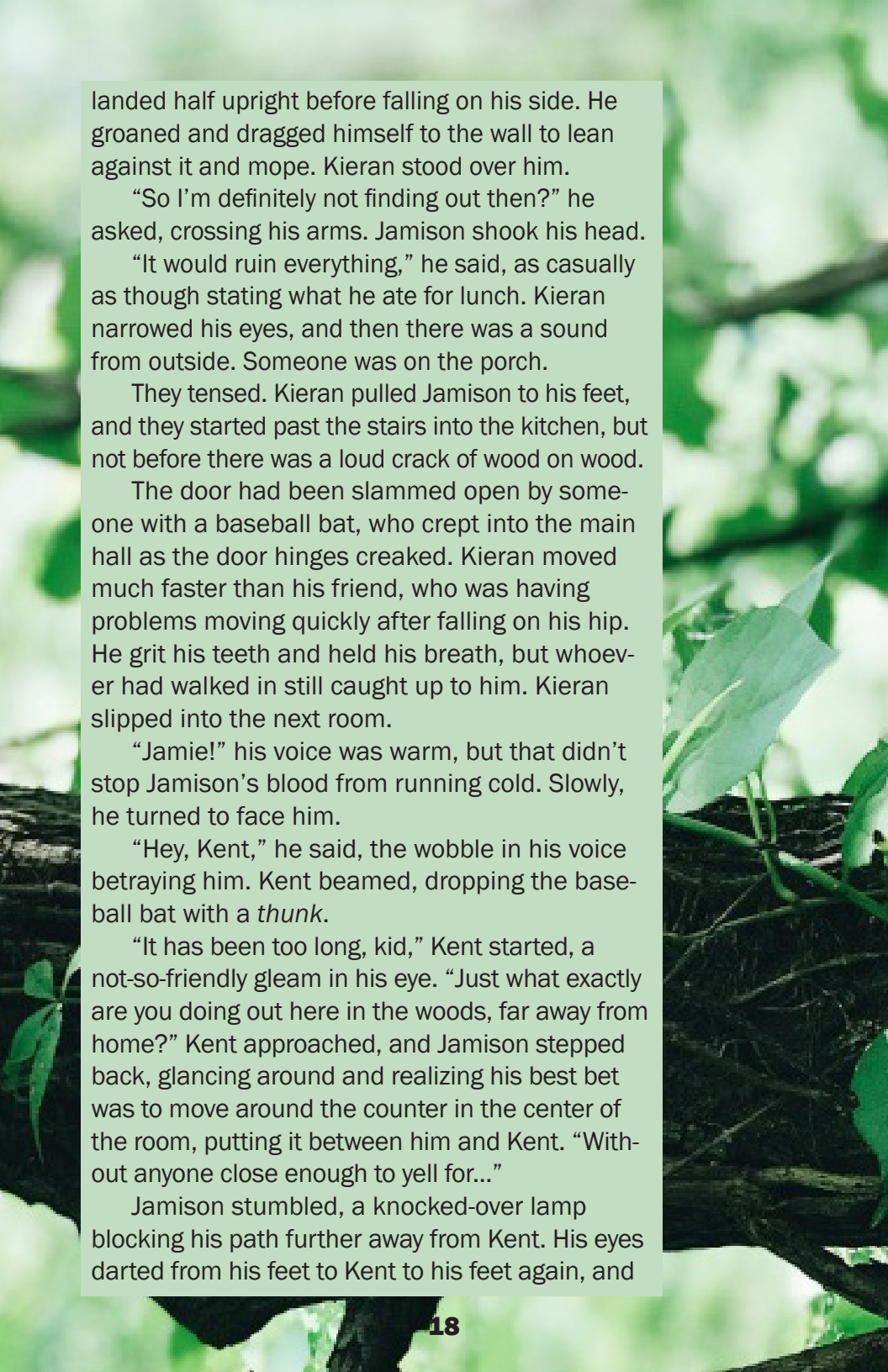
“You’re really not gonna tell me?” he asked. His voice didn’t seem to travel far, absorbed by the old carpet that covered the floors and the staircase Jamison was climbing to the top of.

“No,” he said, lifting a foot onto the banister and testing its give.

“It just seems like something you’re having some issues with, man.” Kieran watched him as he stood, wobbling slightly, but extending his arms outward and watching his feet. He looked down at Kieran.

“You wouldn’t understand,” he said, as though he wasn’t paying attention to the conversation anymore. Kieran rolled his eyes.

“You look ridiculous,” he said, knowing it was a challenge. Jamison stopped the wobbling that came with him scooting his shoes across the rail. Instead he tensed, hopping the short distance across the corner and onto the slanted railing. He looked down, a triumphant gleam in his eye as he let himself slowly slide down, still standing. He took a breath to crow his victory when his shoe caught on a piece missing the grime-covered coating that let him slide. The fear as he jolted was enough for Kieran, who barked a laugh. Jamison



landed half upright before falling on his side. He groaned and dragged himself to the wall to lean against it and mope. Kieran stood over him.

“So I’m definitely not finding out then?” he asked, crossing his arms. Jamison shook his head.

“It would ruin everything,” he said, as casually as though stating what he ate for lunch. Kieran narrowed his eyes, and then there was a sound from outside. Someone was on the porch.

They tensed. Kieran pulled Jamison to his feet, and they started past the stairs into the kitchen, but not before there was a loud crack of wood on wood.

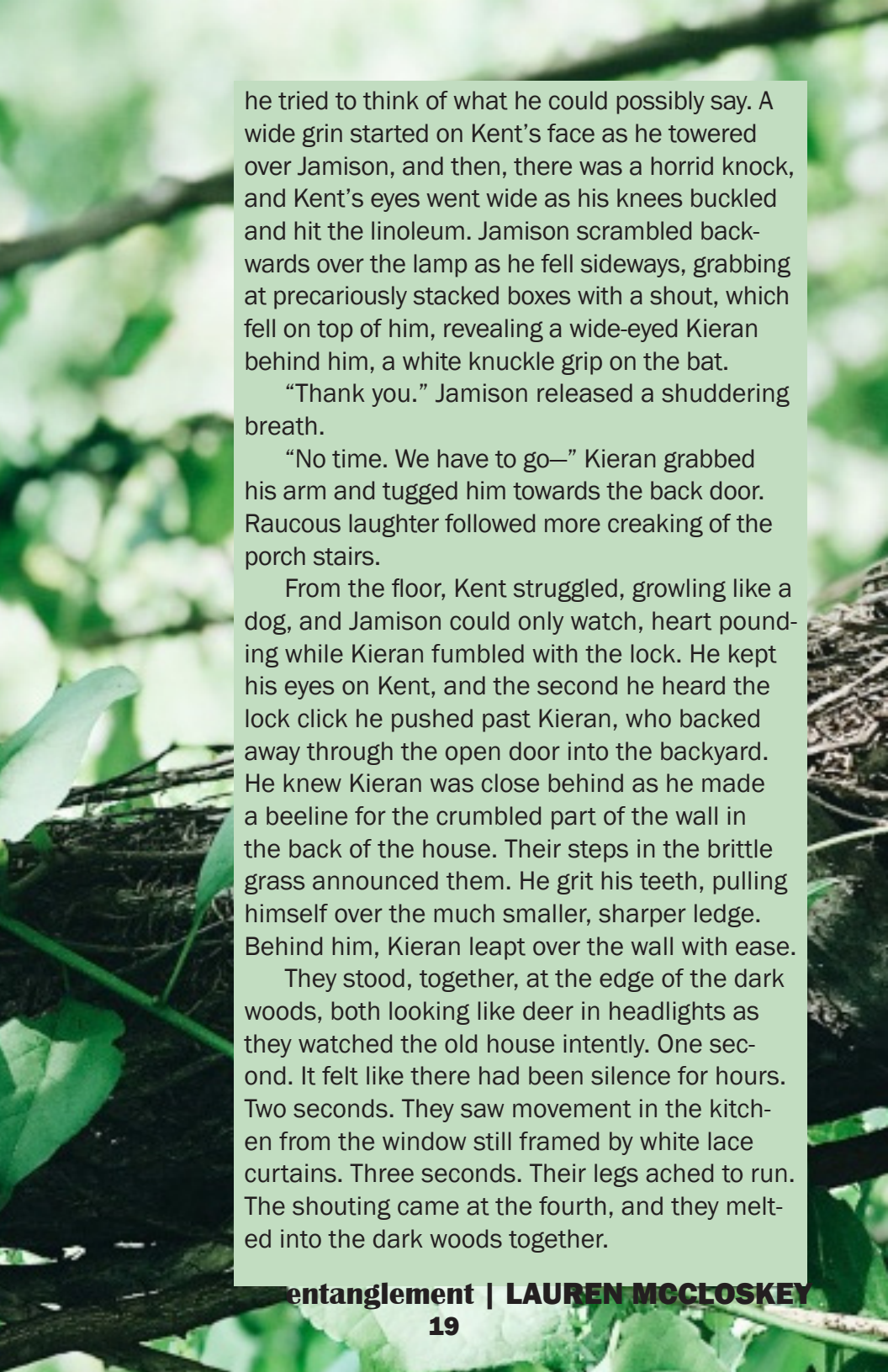
The door had been slammed open by someone with a baseball bat, who crept into the main hall as the door hinges creaked. Kieran moved much faster than his friend, who was having problems moving quickly after falling on his hip. He grit his teeth and held his breath, but whoever had walked in still caught up to him. Kieran slipped into the next room.

“Jamie!” his voice was warm, but that didn’t stop Jamison’s blood from running cold. Slowly, he turned to face him.

“Hey, Kent,” he said, the wobble in his voice betraying him. Kent beamed, dropping the baseball bat with a *thunk*.

“It has been too long, kid,” Kent started, a not-so-friendly gleam in his eye. “Just what exactly are you doing out here in the woods, far away from home?” Kent approached, and Jamison stepped back, glancing around and realizing his best bet was to move around the counter in the center of the room, putting it between him and Kent. “Without anyone close enough to yell for...”

Jamison stumbled, a knocked-over lamp blocking his path further away from Kent. His eyes darted from his feet to Kent to his feet again, and



he tried to think of what he could possibly say. A wide grin started on Kent's face as he towered over Jamison, and then, there was a horrid knock, and Kent's eyes went wide as his knees buckled and hit the linoleum. Jamison scrambled backwards over the lamp as he fell sideways, grabbing at precariously stacked boxes with a shout, which fell on top of him, revealing a wide-eyed Kieran behind him, a white knuckle grip on the bat.

"Thank you." Jamison released a shuddering breath.

"No time. We have to go—" Kieran grabbed his arm and tugged him towards the back door. Raucous laughter followed more creaking of the porch stairs.

From the floor, Kent struggled, growling like a dog, and Jamison could only watch, heart pounding while Kieran fumbled with the lock. He kept his eyes on Kent, and the second he heard the lock click he pushed past Kieran, who backed away through the open door into the backyard. He knew Kieran was close behind as he made a beeline for the crumbled part of the wall in the back of the house. Their steps in the brittle grass announced them. He grit his teeth, pulling himself over the much smaller, sharper ledge. Behind him, Kieran leapt over the wall with ease.

They stood, together, at the edge of the dark woods, both looking like deer in headlights as they watched the old house intently. One second. It felt like there had been silence for hours. Two seconds. They saw movement in the kitchen from the window still framed by white lace curtains. Three seconds. Their legs ached to run. The shouting came at the fourth, and they melted into the dark woods together.





# beyond the margins of self

**LISA FIORILLI**

From first breath, the story yawns,  
sprawling and stretching and animating  
the space within | the grid |  
as scribbles then letters then words  
flow, inking the pale blue lines.

Oh! How the forceful forming of life  
| confining, limiting, restraining |  
imposes a rigid box on a soul in flux.

The pen frosts with suspicion,  
then flourishes with conviction;  
sounds and silences bleed—crossing  
| borders | and blurring haughty edges.

Phantom marks crowd the frame,  
critiquing an impulse here,  
commending the voice there,  
an anthem in revision.

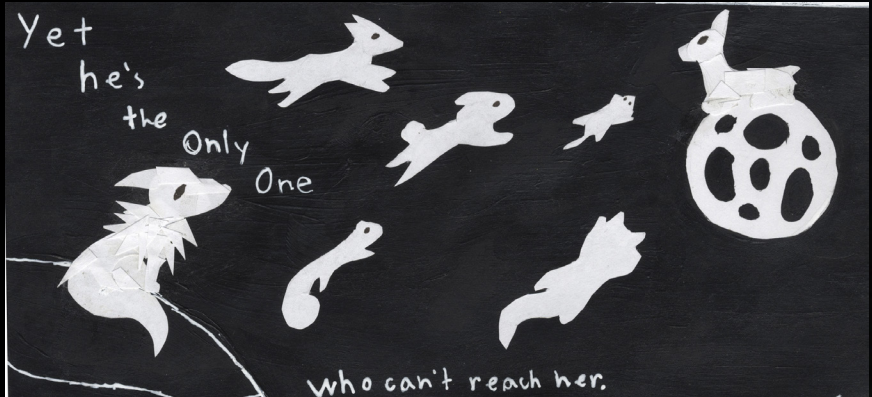
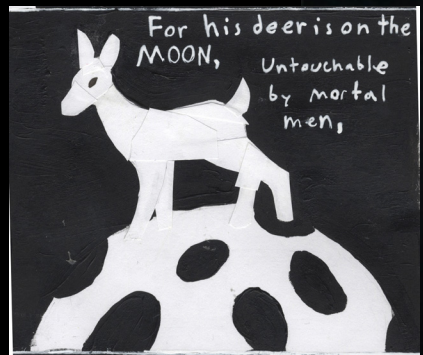
Amid the clamor, an abiding core  
stutters yet strides onward,  
glutting each | page | turned,  
until the yarn unravels,  
the measured breath sighs,  
as words then letters then scribbles

fret the periphery,  
blending the narrative,  
now perused by others,  
beyond the margins of Self.

**Kehinde Wiley | LEAH CULBERT**

# the wolf says "Hello"

CASSANDRA MELSON



# sweet serenity

ISABELLA ALBERT

Her sun-kissed cheeks glow from the shimmer of La Luna.

The sky above is a velvety indigo  
splattered with the hue of the celestial bodies.

The murmur of the waves only remains  
as the rest of the Earth sleeps.

The delightful saline remains motionless,  
above the ground, hovering with the absence of the wind.

Surrounding her deep brown figure are pieces of broken stone  
that cover her body like a cool wintery sheet.

As the tides push in and out,  
they reveal a sparkling row of sea jewels  
that remain untouched.

This is her sweet serenity.

Her sun-kissed cheeks glow from the radiating rays of Apollo.

The sky above, a light blue cloth filled with patches of cream.

Drowned out by her music  
is the songs of the white birds that hover above.

The delightful saline scent is carried by the continuous breeze.

Surrounding her golden body are pieces of crumbled rock,  
that cover her body like a summery blanket.

The whispering of the crashing waves tickle her ears.

As the tide pushes in and out, it reveals a miniscule world  
filled with multicolored creatures.

This is her sweet serenity.

midnight hour | LAUREN MCCLOSKEY

# horrid curse of solidarity

**ANNA JUNGKEIT**

I was happy at some point, maybe, at least I think so. I was aware of the pain, but I tried to ignore it. I tried to make things all right, even though they almost always weren't. I had a significant other, which I refuse to name. We were "together," yet somehow, that made me feel further thrust into the clutches of solidarity, a curse unto those who can't successfully unfurl their innermost passions.

I thought I did, ever thinking of them, pouring out emotion like rain from a cloud. All that came from them was blood from a wound. I thought I had made him change, even just a little bit. I altered my perspective but supposedly, neither tiger could change its stripes.

I showed my best talents, maybe too many. I wanted to spend time, just us, but he always found a reason to be occupied. I wanted to experience what I saw all around me. Two people lost in each other's eyes, yet they knew exactly where they were supposed to be, embracing against all else.

I think I'm ready to try again, I want to, but I don't wish to be rejected a second time. I'm not going to increase my pain while tendrils of shadow still tug at my heart. He was a demon, games of deception, tricks, and lies. If I was a bird, soaring through the sky on the lightest, brightest wings, he weighed me down with a chain of lead, shackles that I was lucky to break free. Maybe he thought he showed love, but I can't forgive him.

Not yet, anyway.



HOTEL  
*Hermosa*



hotel hermosa | LAUREN MCCLOSKEY

# demonstration

**VALERIE EGGER**

“Show them,” my professor says in the corner, invisible,  
Beaming at me like he did when I was a student.  
He nods as I pick up a pen  
And my students look on, eager.

I place my hands on a lump of words,  
But the clay is dry.  
It crumbles to rubble.

I squeeze ideas onto a palate  
And blend them together,  
But the concept turns a dissonant gray.

I knead diction and sound with form,  
But the yeast doesn't take.  
The poem falls flat.

Forty-six eyes watch my attempts,  
Eager to learn how I might save the patient  
From such a terminal diagnosis.

My professor nods encouragement  
Through the decades.  
“Show them,” he says.  
I'll volunteer first to read,  
Like he taught us.

My soul clenches: I am too close to revealing  
I am no Michelangelo  
As I examine the corpse on my page.

“Time's up,” a voice insists.  
It is my voice, playing a game of chicken  
With my pen.

I glance at the scribbles,  
The strikethroughs,  
The mixed metaphors,  
Naked pronouns.  
They leave me exposed.



portrait | **OLIVIA BREDA**

I drop my snake oil, but I read anyway.  
The statue falls, the portrait fades,  
Revealing, underneath, Me.

“A human,” my professor says from his corner.  
“Show them,” he says.  
So I hold up the mess of ink on paper,  
The struggle.

And I read.  
They nod, relaxing,  
And raise hands to share their own struggles.

Around the room, the scribbles and strikethroughs  
Make little crocuses of color  
Against the barren winterscape of the page,  
A disorderly wonder.

My professor nods before disappearing again to memory.  
He knew all along.  
I wanted them to see that I was Michelangelo,  
But they needed to see that I wasn't.



**a racing mind | SIMRAN SINGH**

# star/stuck

**GIANA FERRAIOLO**

“Why do you fear the stars?”

Because from afar they look beautiful

And light up the sky,

But in reality

They are isolated,

Doomed to burn bright

Millions of miles away

from the rest of the universe,

Alone in the dark

Until finally

They burn out

In a great flash of light,


One final blip of brilliance

Until they are gone forever.

Gone without a trace.

And the universe goes on.





“Why do you always run away?”  
Because staying in one place  
Means that something can go wrong,  
And to keep moving on  
Is to stay in control.  
A candlelit dinner  
Can be ruined by a small breeze,  
And a beautiful friendship  
Can be destroyed with a single word.  
But if you don't stay ,  
You can remember things as they were  
Instead of how they came to be.  
But in doing so,  
You end up lonely,  
Isolated like the stars.  
And things do go on  
With or without you.

# stuck together

**MIRA WARREN**

Deep in the enchanted woods of Gelenstia there stands a small town where I lived with my family: my father, my mother, my little sister Lily. But of the many other people in Gelenstia, the only one I care about is my best friend Samantha.

Samantha was a fellow hunter and we had known each other since we were six. She was the only one who put up with my laugh that was too loud, hair that wouldn't sit still and the unladylike habit of climbing.

I hadn't seen her for (three days), so I was sitting in the middle of town playing with my necklace and trying to determine the best way to get access to the old spell books in the library, when I saw a glint of familiar silver in the distance. I shook my head and rubbed my eyes. The hunting party wasn't due for another 48 hours. It couldn't be her. I looked down into the water trying to keep my mind off my best friend.

"Alya." I looked up to see Samantha running towards me, a smile on her round face. I beamed and ran towards her, embracing her in a hug.

"I missed you so much! I thought that you weren't going to be back from your hunting trip for another two days," I said. I held her out, looking her leather armour up and down. Sam had been itching to fight a werefox recently and while I believed in her, their claws are sharp enough to cut right through any armour, delivering a killing blow intently.

"We had so much we couldn't carry it all. Huntmaster said we did good enough and could come home early," she explained.

"What did you catch this time? I bet you got the most out of everyone who went," I bragged. She half-smiled as she pointed to the group of hunters pulling their prey from their pile to show the council.

"You see that grand boar at the middle of the pile? That's mine. I shot it down all by myself with only two arrows." My stomach flinched as I saw her kill, but I simply smiled at her.

HF  
©



**sunrise | HANNAH FONDAW**

We walked toward the pile and I helped Samantha pull out the boar. She smiled proudly as a small group of hunters walked by glaring at Samantha and whispering. I glared right back at them as they moved quickly by.

“Sam, let’s go see Lillian. I know she wants to hear all about your hunt.”

“I bet she does. Still bent on becoming a hunter, then?”

“Yeah, my mom’s still refusing to let her be. She’s getting worn down. I think Lily might actually win this one,” I said, remembering my mother’s defeated look at dinner last night.

“Let’s get going, then. Don’t want to kept my adoring public waiting!” She skipped forward. I rolled my eyes. If you didn’t know better, you’d think Lily was Sam’s sister. They have the same bright blue eyes, but Lily shares my auburn hair, while

Sam has silver hair that sparkles in the sun.

“Hey Sam, give us a kiss!” a boy called from the tree line. If Sam and about two dozen other people hadn’t been there I would have punched him, but Sam simply looped her arm in mine and gave me a smile so bright I thought I was going blind. Some girls whispered from behind us, shooting Sam dirty looks, but she kept a smile plastered on her face. I gave an amused smirk as boys stared at her. Sam had that effect on everyone our age here, boy and girl. A guy got down on his knee mockingly and even though she kept a smile I felt Sam tighten her grip on me and her hand curl into a fist. I pushed the guy over as we passed, getting a laugh from some nearby girls, who then shot me a dirty look. I rolled my eyes, not caring what they thought of me. I had Sam. That’s all I needed. But there was one thing that I still hadn’t told her, and I had decided that today was going to be the day.

I have magic, something that I hadn’t told anyone. Not my parents, my sister, or Sam, but today that was going to change.

“Sam!” Lillian yelled, bounding out of our tree hut. Her face lit up as Sam wrapped her up in a bear hug.

“Hey, kid. I missed you.” She laughed as Lily’s flower crown slipped down her head.

“Sam, can I talk to you upstairs for a minute before you and Lily run off?” I’m crossed my fingers behind my back, hoping Lily would be patient just this once, so I could tell Sam.

“Sure, let’s go,” she said, walking inside with Lily and me in tow. “Lily, will you wait outside of Alya’s room while we talk? Then we can go visit the waterfall like you wanted to.”

“But I want to go see the waterfall with you now,” Lily wined crossing her arms and stomping her foot on the ground.

“Lily, I want to talk to Sam for one minute. Is that so much to ask?” I pull Sam into my room and turn at the door, saying to Lily “give me one minute. Then she is all yours.” I shut the door before she could come up with a complaint.

“Wow, I’ve never seen you so frantic with her. What’s wrong?” Sam crossed my room and sat on my bed.

“I need to tell you something important, and you need to



promise you won't tell anyone what I'm saying because if it got out I could be in big trouble," I said looking at the pleadingly.

"Okay, I promise. Now what's the problem?"

"I have magic. Not like the stuff that people buy from traders. Real raw, uncontrollable kind of stuff. When I get too angry or overwhelmed, it can just burst out of me and destroy everything it touches. I don't even know what it can do to people." I paused to see her shocked face. She was frozen in place. "Don't be scared. I know when I'm about to burst out, and I run deep into the forest, so no one gets hurt."

"You killed that boar. The one I found in the forest it was already dead. I just put arrows in its eyes to make it look like I killed it and then said it was mine. But it was you who killed it." I started to feel the magic boil over and my breath started to get short. I needed to get out of here before someone got hurt. So, I ran without any explanation down the stairs and out of my house. I heard people gasp and duck out of the way as I ran through the market. A voice called after me, but I ignored it. I should have never told Sam about my magic. I should have kept my mouth shut. I could have found some way to get rid of it, but now I'd never get that chance.

I ran past the hunters from before who glared and mocked me. I stepped into a puddle of mud, feeling the cold sticky paste splatter on my pants and boots. I kept running, seeing Sam and Lily behind me in a mirror. Faintly, Sam yelled at me to stop. Other people yelled after, asking what was going on, but I barely heard it over the roaring in my ears. I leaped over a fallen tree into the forest, stumbling and falling, hitting my head on a rock. I heard the crunching of leaves and pulled myself to my feet. I kept running, feeling myself stumble, head throbbing. I caught myself on a tree and stopped leaning against it. I heard foot-steps stopping and Sam's voice before the world went black.

When I woke up, my head still pounded and my arms ached. I looked around to see I was in the infirmary, the sterile white walls beating in from every angle. A gentle tapping on the nearby window caught my attention, and I turned to see Sam's silver hair. I pried the window open, and she slipped in.

“Good you’re awake. I didn’t want to have to write you a letter.”

“What are you talking about, Sam?”

Sam walked to me and sat on the bed, head low, not meeting my eyes.

“Alya, Lily got hurt.”

“What?”

Sam shushed me.

“Keep it down. I’m not supposed to be here. She’s in critical condition and I’m awaiting judgement.”

“Wait, for what?”

“The use of magic on two members of the town.” My eyes went wide.

“What are you talking about?”

“When you hit your head, your magic came out and hurt yourself and Lily, but for some reason it didn’t hurt me. I was trying to wake you up when they found you, and then I saw Lily.” Her voice grew thick and she had to clear her throat. “They asked if I have magic and I said yes.”

“You lied.”

“To save you, and I would do it again.” Her eyes finally met mine.

“I have to tell them. I can’t let you take the blame for this.”

“No, your family needs you, especially if something happens to Lily. You need to be here for your parents.” She had that look in her eyes. She had already made up her mind, and I couldn’t change it no matter what I did or said. She was going to take the blame.

I couldn’t let her.

“How could I live with my sister after what I did? Knowing that you took the blame would kill me. I’m going to tell them I have magic. It’s the only way.” Sam opened her mouth to talk but she froze her eyes fixed on something behind me. I turned around to see my parents standing there.

They had heard everything.

“Samantha Falls, you are hereby charged with use of magic against members of this village. The punishment,” my mom paused she looked at my eyes full of concern and pleading, “is banishment into the forest. You will be sent out

at sunset tomorrow. Go pack a bag from your house.” As Sam ran out the door I saw she was biting back tears.

“How could you do that, mom? It was my fault. I’m the one with magic. Sam doesn’t need to be hurt because of me!” I yelled. “I’m the one who hurt Lily! I need to be punished, not her!”

“That’s enough, Alya. You will get your own punishment later for lying to us, but Samantha sealed her fate. I’m sorry, but I can’t do anything.” I looked at her in shock, tears forming in my eyes, but I could do nothing.

The next day I stood at the in the town square, watching the curtains in Sam’s house. The high magistrate’s head threw shadows at the window as he went over the banishment proceedings with her parents. My blood boiled as people yelled at the house as they passed. People shot me concerned looks, but my scowl chased them off. I cocked my head to the side as I saw Sam’s silver hair slipping into the back door. She must have been out all night probably scouting for a safe place to stay. Tears blurred my vision as I turned toward my house. I walked past my parents sitting on the couch and into my room.

I threw clothes, weapons, food and keepsakes in a bag. Then I opened the window and slipped out. I ran to Sam’s house and slipped in the back door, up the stairs and into her room.

“Come on, we are going now.” I picked up the bag she had lying on her floor already packed. “Grab your stuff. We need to hurry.” She must have seen the determination in my eyes because she grabbed her hunting pack without a word against me. As we hurried to the edge of the forest I realized that I was okay with what happening.

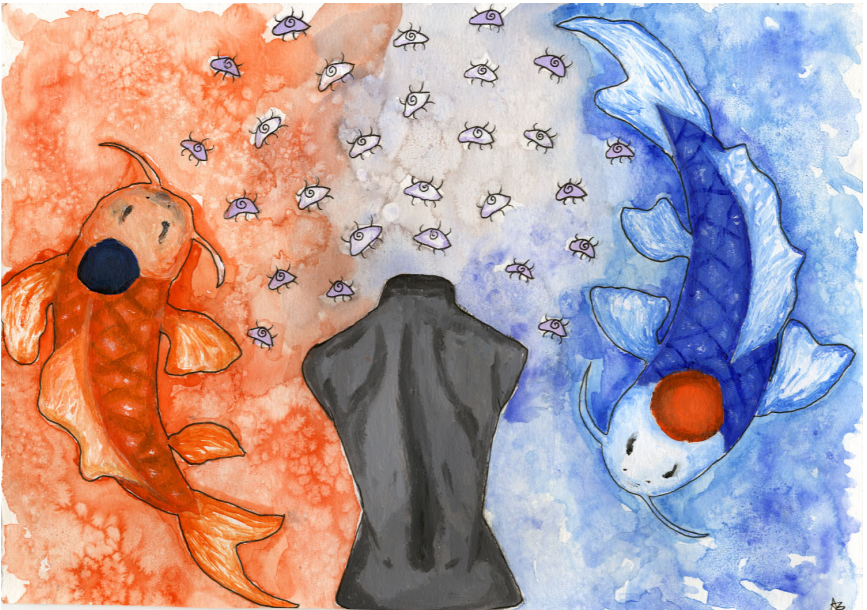
I was abandoning my life here for my best friend because I was going to stick with her no matter what I needed to do. She’s my best friend, and I’m not going to leave her behind. That was a promise. As we crossed into the forest, I knew that we were going to be okay because we had each other and that would be enough.

# embarrassing love poem

## SUMMER ORLEDGE

My love, I have waited so long  
To welcome you into my arms,  
To take the skeleton of a home long-abandoned  
And rebuild it from the ashes  
Lovelier than ever.

I have memorized you. I know  
The silhouette of your neck,  
Every button of your vest,  
Every video, every photograph.



the body of divine choice | ANNE LISE BITTENBENDER



**anger between the serenity | ANNELISE BITTENBENDER**

You taught me to shift the tides and fool my mind  
And left my need to collapse untouched  
(Light of my life, my saving grace).

You are the thaw of February frost,  
The magic, the wonders of everything I forgot.  
I take the charred husk of past love  
And renew it, drained of poison,  
And I will spend many more springs loving you.

# the lady of light

**GILLIAN DEEB**

Laced in roses and gold he stood,  
Thought to be heavenly,  
Known for good.  
Wallowing in the shadows,  
Feeding off the darkness we shed so willingly,  
Did you know you're feeding a monster,  
Or did the feeling of his fires  
Set ablazed your heart?

Laced in thorns and stone she stood  
Towering over the cowards limp after due.  
She says, "look at the mess the monster made,"  
Waking up that girl who doesn't get the privilege  
to remember the night before.

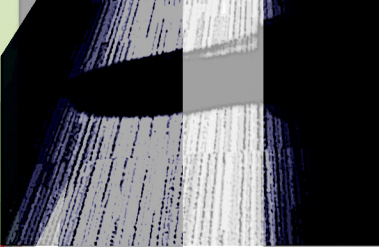
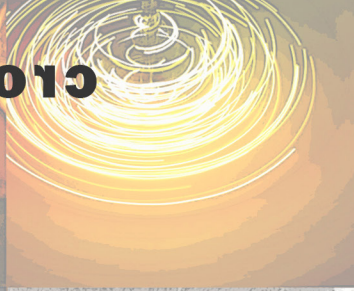
What a mess that monster created  
While the lady of light  
Sheds a tear,  
bringing her fears down with her  
Compelling the girl to not be afraid  
Of boys with bad intentions,  
For she will light the way

Out of the darkness and into the sun.



**Daisies | LAUREN MCCLOSKEY**

crossed spaces



with trees

