

JOHN WOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE 2024 FINE ARTS PUBLICATION

# THE EMERALD

JWCC STUDENT ART EXHIBIT

CREATIVE WRITING WORKS



BEST IN SHOW

*Reverie Nomura*

by: Jack Marchand

*Mixed Media Sculpture 2023*

## Remember Whose You Are

by: Heidi Dimmitt

It was one o'clock on Monday, June 28, 2021, a moment that will stay locked in my mind for as long as I have air in my lungs. This single moment I had prepared 15 years for: ever since I can remember, my son Kemper was a zealot when it came to the United States Army. From the moment my three-year-old little boy put on an Army uniform at Halloween and proceeded to stand at full salute during the entire costume contest, I knew the Army would be his destiny. He did everything for the purpose of being an American Soldier. Now, he was 18 years old, and his Dad, sister, and I had driven him to the recruiter's office to send him 788 miles away from home to attend basic training. Upon arrival, I opened the car door; the temperature was a cool 77 degrees, and the sky was as blue as a fresh spring day with billowing clouds. I looked up and felt the warm sun as it shined on my face. I had made up my mind; today, I would put my strength to the test. I was strong – Army Mom strong.

I knew the boy who was leaving – I was responsible for everything about him until this point. But now, I was turning over responsibility to him, and I didn't know who he would be when he returned. A million thoughts whirled through my head: Would he love the Army, or would he hate it? Would he be safe, or would the United States enter into another conflict, putting my only son's life on the front line? Would he be a soldier who makes a successful career out of the Army or come home after going to war and struggling with PTSD? What if he returns home at some point, having lost a body part, or worse yet, comes home lying in state, cloaked in red, white, and blue stars and stripes?

This boy of mine was a scrapper. He had become a black belt in Taekwondo by middle school because he had trained hard and meticulously. Kemper was headstrong, and even though he had tested as a gifted student in the public school, he was always in trouble. But not in trouble for being bad; he was always in trouble for testing the limits or challenging a teacher based on her own words. He definitely had a soft heart, but if he felt sure enough about anything, be it right or wrong, there was no holding him back. He would never give up on something or someone he believed in. This was my boy, the son I had prayed for for most of my life.

He looked like me and was stubborn like me. I remembered asking Kemper his junior year of high school what his fallback plan was if he could not get into the Army. He was matter-of-fact and didn't miss a beat telling me, "I don't have a fallback plan, Mom. I'm going to the Army."

So here we stood, Mother and Child, facing each other for our final goodbye while the passenger van he was ready to board sat idling. The driver dropped his head and quietly found his seat behind the steering wheel; he had seen this scenario too many times.

I took Kemper's face in my hands and gazed at him the same way I had done many years before while rocking him to sleep. I looked into his big blue eyes, beyond his curly blonde hair that had once resembled corn silks. But this time, there were no dimples at the ends of his smile.

He was as serious as I was. This was the moment... and as stoic and controlled as I could muster, I sputtered out stony words that I hoped would carry him on his journey. "We love you and are so proud of you. Talk to Jesus, and always remember whose you are. Kemper, you remember if Grandpa can do it, so can you." There it was. The words that reminded us both of the strength my Grandpa (his great-grandpa) had when he was 19 years old and enlisted in the Army/Air Corps during WWII. Resilient strength had kept his great-grandpa alive despite his B-17 Flying Fortress getting shot out of the sky, forcing his crew to parachute out of a plane as bullets tore through the sky. Kemper was reminded of the mental strength it had taken to be shot at, beaten by his adversaries, and held captive for nine months while starving in a German prison camp. It was Christian faith his great-grandpa had possessed that would carry him home to share a 55-year marriage with his high school sweetheart, raise two children, five granddaughters, and eleven great-grandchildren over 100 years of life. Kemper, my son, the fourth generation of a miraculous American soldier, was following in some very large footsteps.

Holding his composure, Kemper replied, "I love you too," and "I know, Mom." Then, in a blink of an eye, Kemper had boarded the vehicle and fastened his seatbelt. Within a few minutes of the door slamming shut, the white van that carried my precious cargo got smaller and smaller against the black highway, until it had disappeared in the distance.

I had done it... I had been tough enough not to let him see me cry! But as time and distance grew greater, the tears welled up. Once he was completely out of sight, I sobbed. I wept so hard I wanted to throw up. My baby boy had left me. And he wasn't coming back a frivolous teenage boy; he was coming back a man... a selfless man willing to forfeit his own precious life for millions of Americans who will never know his name.

As we started the drive home with one less family member, I looked up and laughed as I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror of the sun visor. Staring back at me was a middle-aged woman who had struggled that morning; thin on one side and full on the other, she had completely missed her lip lines with her dark scarlet lipstick. That is when I realized my son and I had juxtaposed success. Kemper had taken his first steps in beginning his adult life, and I had let go of his hand.

# Mortja

by: Kylie Neisen Graphite on Paper 2023



## *Briny Deep Thickets*

by: Abigail Santi

I never understood the patterns of before, but now I know more about the after  
I know that not everything stays green for all four seasons  
I know that brown and green is much prettier than blue and green  
I know why I have always felt so drawn to the woods instead of the ocean...  
...Because the ocean is unpredictable.  
Deep down there is nothing but darkness  
And up above, the waves are strong and harmful.  
But a tree left alone for an entire lifetime  
Is much more beautiful than  
Rocks and a shipwreck.  
There is no darkness.  
No waves that consume you.  
There are trees,  
Trees that listen  
That protect one from the harsh sun,  
That keeps one safe while stranded.  
And how the trees play along with the wind  
Being silly and keeping its secrets.  
They...listen.  
I have run through woods  
The silence being so loud  
And comforting  
I have swum in an ocean  
Its waves swallowing me whole  
Pulling me down under the sand.  
But Cara Mia, how I love it.

# Butterflies

by: Ava Jacobsen *Gouache & Acrylic on Paper 2024*



## Prose and Cons

by: Raymond Soudavanh

As a child growing up, I was enamored by tales of heroes. Tales that have stood the tests of time: Tales that spoke of heroes with the courage to leap into the flames of dragons, tales of heroes with rippling muscles, tales of heroes with gallant features who stand tall and have pretty faces-

As a child growing up, I had really unrealistic standards. There was no sense of representation in these stories for me. I'm not courageous and strong; I wasn't tempered in the heat of battle, nor did I have the features of a Gracian god. I was nothing like the heroes told in the stories.

So, I decided to record the stories of the heroes of my generation instead. Nobody will hear *my* tale, but they'll hear *my tales* be told. Or so I thought-

"Bard. Lighten the mood." A gorilla of a man barked, tossing a coin in my direction.

I sigh. I tweak the pegs on my fiddle, loosening and tightening the strings. Then I absolutely tighten my buttocks. A fight was marinating and getting juicier by the second. And I'm the accompaniment. Again.

"Hurry it up." The Gorilla threatens. The Gorilla inches his face closer to mine, but his breath reaches me first. My spectacles fog from the perspiration, and his breath has hints of hops and spice. Mead.

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Mead makes sense. We had stopped by the local tavern in a town we were passing through. It marked a popular respite for the working folk and adventurers alike. Inside, the air was arid and stagnant. The tavern's walls were lined with poorly lit torches and lanterns. Hopes of seeing anything was like looking into the night sky and searching for a god's revelation among the stars. I have no faith, only stories to share and figureheads to idolize.

Upon entry, one could see the bar snuggled into the right corner of the establishment. The bar ran parallel to the back wall, with enough space between for barmaids to run food and drink in and out of the doors nestled in the back. Between the entrance and the bar was a sea of circular tables and chairs of varying fashions. Each table had groups: Cliques of various job classifications, parties, knights, and off-duty guardsmen. This tumor of a gathering hub also came with an odor, free of charge. This free service offered the wondrous scent of sustenance, onions that had been sweated to release their aroma mingled with other spices like the sickeningly sweet anise and some sort of pepper; alcohol, fermented beverages of varying kinds: There were scents of honey, fruit, malts, and hops; suffocating perfumes to mask the final identifiable component; straight-up body odor. In hindsight, the smell of perfume could be pleasant to some- it wasn't appetizing to me, though.

As the "Party of the Hero" attempted to slink in, heads began to turn. Eyes locked onto us, and our presence was cemented. The clinks and clanks of the Hero's armor reverberated onto the floor as he puffed out his chest and walked to an empty table. An empty table in the middle of the establishment. The Hero began to saunter and swagger, realizing the attention was on him. *An Exhibitionist.*

The Witch followed, shifting her stave from an upright position to holding it perpendicular to her body, a form of social distancing.

"Why are we here?" The Witch hissed through gritted teeth.

"Because his Grace likes his drink," The Monk whispered.

*An Alcoholic, too.*

"I know that- just why here?"

We shuffled in a single file line to the wooden table. I began to anxiously shift the weight of my baggage from shoulder to shoulder.

The Paladin, who brought up the rear, noticed and whispered into my ear. "We... have history with this place."

I nodded my head.

No shit. The whole place's atmosphere died as soon as we had touched the doors.

I slithered into my seat, sandwiched between the Paladin and the Witch. Upon looking up, my eyes met the Hero's own. *Even his eyes looked like they were marbled from a statue.*

"So, Bard. Why join us on this adventure? Why risk your life? What do you hope to achieve from riding on our coattails? Money? Glory? Perhaps a lover?" The Hero spoke, yet also sang the words. He accented the beginning of each sentence. *He was mocking me.*

I tapped my finger impatiently. Then slowed the tempo until it became steady. I reached my opposite hand underneath the table and snapped twice. The snaps were like magically revving an engine. The first was to get the magic started. The second was because habits die hard. With the magic flowing, I began enveloping my words. Much like filtering my speech with the persona of a well-intentioned friend or a foreboding foe.

"Well, your Grace / my intentions are simple. / But words are quite boring / so would you perhaps like a sample? / I believe... the strength of this party is quite ample. / That strength many a foe cannot handle. / But tales of your plights / fall out of the sight / of many a folk and child.

### CONTINUED

So... your Grace / if you give me some space / I can help you save face. / After each battle / I have a journal within my saddle / I can rattle off deets, no matter how tattered / How the aforementioned strength left the enemy battered." I paused. "Or something like tha-"

I was cut off by a fist slamming onto the table.

"Have fun tryna inspire the masses with this fool," a voice said from behind me. Nodding to the Hero. The figure's right arm hovered above my shoulder. Connected to the arm was the fist that had interrupted me. The figure's left hand held a tankard I could barely perceive out of the corner of my eye.

It was an embrace of sorts. A sort of nonconsensual embrace where I was trapped between two logs for arms.

The Hero tensed: Reaching for his scabbard. *An Irrational Fool.*

"Say that again," the Hero threatened through gritted teeth.

"Have. Fun. Tr-"

The Hero lunged across the table, simultaneously smashing the figure in the head with the hilt of his blade. It would have been graceful had I not been caught within the altercation. The Hero's armored chassis of a body knocked my own to the floor. My belongings and body sprawled out across the wood panels.

Several other figures stood up in response to the display.

The Paladin grabbed me by the ankles, yanking me closer to the protection of the party.

All parties related to the tantrum of the Hero stood up, much like parents to a child gone awry.

I dragged myself up into a chair and caught my breath.

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"Bard. Lighten the mood." The Gorilla, who must have been the tavern's owner, tossed a silver coin in my direction. It hit the floor with a ting, breaking up the silence that pervaded the tavern. I sigh and reach for my belongings. Upon retrieval of my instrument, I began tuning. Magic could be used so that the instrument always played within tune, but I was manually tuning the tool because the fight that was brewing didn't seem appetizing. I shifted the pegs, loosening and tightening the strings as needed. Then I clenched my sphincter and snapped twice. The first snap was for the magic to flow. The second was for my nerves- Fighting had never been my forte.

"Hurry it up," the Gorilla said, mere inches away from my face. His breath fogging my spectacles and clogging my senses at the same time.

I raised my fiddle in one hand with the bow in the other. I gently rested the bow upon one of the four strings... and let the bow stroke the string with the movement of my arm. Friction caught the string, and the instrument began to resonate and reverberate with sound. Now that the Vessel for my magic had begun to wake up, I began applying more and more pressure onto the string via the bow.

I felt myself grinning...

I usually try to keep myself peaceful most of the time, but fighting was part of the job. I hated fighting, but it was going to happen sometime. Right? Right.

I felt the edges of my cheeks rise until I was no longer grinning, but smirking and baring my teeth. I was smiling. I was smiling... because, despite my hate for fighting, the crescendo of the music gets my adrenaline running.

I gave a long drawl on the string, and at the climax of the note, the fight began.

The Party of the "Hero" all stood and entered a formation around me.

I was supposed to calm everyone down, but the party had seemed to reach a silent agreement that *they* were going to swing first.

The Witch clutched her stave and traced a sort of circle in the air above her. Then she began chanting a sort of spell.

I caught on and began long legato strokes of the bow. Accompanying her magic with my own; consequently, increasing her cast time.

A sort of hazy, blue mist appeared around the Hero's Party. The Witch chanted and grasped her stave in both of her hands. Bringing the stave, so it ran parallel to her now upright figure, she began raising the stave so it pointed towards the sky; then, she brought it down with a solid thump. The Witch repeated this action several times, and I began swaying my body instinctively with the syncopated thumps on the ground. The mist began to slither through the air, whipping the direction of its 'head' with each thump of the stave. And with each stroke of the bow, the 'body' of the mist would bend. Outward. Inward. Coiling unto itself. With each bend, the 'head' would inch forward, toward, and around The Hero's Party. The 'tail' left a sort of residue or pigmentation in the air as it dragged behind its counterparts.

### CONTINUED

As the Witch chanted, other tables of rowdy patrons stood up. Some reached for their weaponry. Others scooped up their silverware/eating utensils and brandished their newly found tools of battle.

As the growing tide of combatants approached, the Monk stood up on one leg, entering a martial arts position of sorts. Whilst standing on the one leg, the Monk brought the knee of the other leg close to her chest. At the very same time, raising both arms and bending at the wrists. Like a noblewoman expecting the back of her hand to be kissed.

In one swift motion, the Monk brought her hands close to her chest. Then spiked her left hand down. And shot her right hand up. Then traced hemispheres with each arm until her left hand now rested above her right hand at her chest. Then... the Monk jutted her dormant leg out behind her until it gently rested onto the ground. The Monk's form began to change as she shifted her center of mass, and consequently, her weight to both legs.

Obviously, I had noticed and began to shift the music to support the Monk's actions. There was no magic at play here, only pure physical prowess. The Monk was running through a kata: A sort of choreographed fight designed to teach the practitioner movement, application, and diligence.

*A choreograph. The Monk moved with an elegance of a ballerina.*

I was beginning to catch the tempo of this improvisation.

The airy residue left from the Witch's spell began to twitch in the air. A vacuum sucked the wispy around the members of the party, the residue began to culminate and solidify around the bodies of each member. Forming a sort of barrier or armor that was seemingly a perfect fit, no matter the size of the body.

One of the combatants from the tide of approaching bodies swung an ax at the Monk, but the barrier reacted to the attempt with a deepened hue of blue. As the strike connected, the hue resonated and surged with a sense of supernatural physics. The strike deflected, and the aggressor's balance was knocked backward.

The Monk's response was just as swift. A flurry of blows echoed out with the rhythm of triplets: Bee bop-bop, bee bop-bop.

The Paladin followed up the response with lengthy sweeps with his spear. Bodies smacked the floor. It was *almost* a percussive performance of concussive advances.

The Paladin was an absolute tank. Clad in hardened leather and metal plates with shoulders larger than the gods. A shield that could probably double as a make-shift shelter for orphans perched upon his back. Within his hands was a polearm of sorts: The body of the weapon was solid metal adorned with jewels and ornaments pertaining to the Paladin's faith. The tip of the polearm was a honed pike and a sharpened ax-like shape fashioned below it.

While no common man could likely overcome this mountain of a man, the Paladin focused not on aggression, but instead on defense. The only time the Paladin would attack was when the tavern's clientele would approach the Monk, but that was only swatting with the ornamented side of the weapon. The majority of the time, the Paladin preferred to throw his own body in the way of harm to block attacks onto the Monk or the Hero.

*The Hero.*

I shifted my attention to the Hero. My knowledge of magic wasn't as extensive as the Witch's, but it beat this Idiot's understanding: The Hero sat, keeled over. Attempting to unsheathe his blade from the scabbard.

*The Idiot fully intended to harm the people he swore to protect. Over a slight to his persona.*

The blade was sealed within his scabbard with the blue mist from the Witch's spell prior.

*"Witch! You... Witch."* The Hero hissed and rolled over the back of the Paladin. Right into the sea of patrons.

Bodies amassed to the area where the Hero had landed. If my performance had a mosh pit, it'd be centralized here. Despite being an idiot, the Hero was no pushover. The Hero swept feet with his sheathed blade, struck below the belt, spat on foes, and threw whatever liquid or projectile was available, all to get the upper hand.

*Dishonorable.*

When the fight died down, the tavern was littered with unconscious bodies, tables uplifted, and chairs shattered.

Yet we stood victorious. I scooped up the silver and tossed it back to the Gorilla. When our eyes made contact, I could only shrug. He had to clean this mess.

I had to make a story of the *Mess*.

It was now my job to turn this dishonorable, drunk, exhibitionistic mess into an appetizing story.

'The Hero fought for his values (winning), knew what he wanted (booze), and did it all for the masses (attention).'

The Gorilla and I both had jobs to do: It just seems like mine became PR.

Poetry of a fraud.

Prose out of a con.



# *Not Retaliation, but Revenge*

by: Dawsyn Perry-Broekemeier *Oil on Canvas Paper 2024*



## *Natural Disaster*

by: Brea Cozen

I'm your stereotypical girl with daddy issues  
But I've made it this far, ain't gonna cry  
So save your sympathy,  
Because I'm not gonna need it tonight

Can't miss what you never had  
When it's the only life you've known  
Physically, he lived in the house  
But everything else was non-existent

No love or affection  
Devoid of all emotion  
But hate and anger  
Were always there

Simmering till it boiled over  
Triggered by the drop of a pen  
It didn't matter where you hid  
Cause the only thing you could hear was him

Booming loud like thunder  
House shaking like an earthquake  
Only difference was the lights didn't go out  
With this natural disaster

## 1984 Reimagined

by: Nicole O'Rourke

"We are the dead," he said.

"We are the dead," echoed Julia dutifully.

"But do we have to be?" Julia looked at him curiously.

"What do you mean?"

Winston looked thoughtful and began to gaze intently at the woman below as he spoke. Her simple existence held him captive. The thought of living life without Big Brother's eyes following him everywhere started a fire within his soul.

"What if we decided to leave the ministry? Do you think there are enough people who are tired of the way life is currently? What about the proles? Do you think that they would join an uprising against the government?" His heart was beating wildly in his chest. He felt younger suddenly.

Julia looked at him like he was losing his mind. "Have you snapped? It is hard enough to meet up with you; how do you suppose a group of us can meet secretly? The proles do not care who is in power if they are left alone." Julia shook her head, "But, truthfully, as exciting as it is to sneak around, it would be nice to be able to live as I like, in the open."

Winston paced the small room. He was deep in thought. "Mr. Charrington may help us. He allows us to use this room. I think he would be sympathetic. We already have O'Brien. We have to be selective, of course. Mr. Charrington also may be able to connect us with proles that may be more intelligent than originally thought, that would be willing to join the fray." Julia sighed as he wrapped his arms around her supple waist and whispered in her ear, "Think of the freedom we could have. We are already dead if we continue to walk this path; why not resist it."

"Okay," Julia said, "you're right. We're dead, anyway. Why not go out with a bang?" She smiled and turned in his arms. She looked into his eyes, seeing the fire shining there. She kissed him passionately and then pulled away. "We have a lot of work to do," she said as she reached for her clothing. He groaned, "Mmmm, I suppose you are correct." Winston frowned. He already knew he had signed his own death warrant but now... Now he had Julia involved and possibly others. He thought to himself, can my conscience carry their deaths as well?

Julia left first, and Winston left about 15 minutes later. Winston headed down to Mr. Charrington. He was going to ask him how well he knew the proles. Winston had no idea how he was going to come right out and ask Mr. Charrington if he was willing to risk his life for freedom. Mr. Charrington already had an affinity for the antique items he kept in his shop, and Winston felt his life had grown worse under Party rule.

"Mr. Charrington, may I have a moment of your time?"

Mr. Charrington looked up from the book he was reading and smiled. "Why, of course, Mr. Smith. What is it that you need?"

Winston took a deep breath and looked around the shop, trying to make sure no one else was in there. "I appreciate all that you have done to grant me privacy. I am curious as to why you decided to help me."

Mr. Charrington squinted his eyes and looked Winston up and down. Mr. Charrington sighed, "I am an old man. I remember what life was like prior to the Party. I did everything I was supposed to, just protect my wife from harm. Since her death, I have longed for life. I saw a glimmer of that life in your eyes."

Winston was shocked into silence for a moment, "I didn't realize it was noticeable. I have an idea; would you be willing to hear me out?"

Mr. Charrington took off his spectacles and rubbed his temple. "I knew this time would come. I have lived my life. What is it you would like me to do?"

Winston and Mr. Charrington sat down and began to create plans. Mr. Charrington knew of a few proles he could reach out to that would be able to network with others. He also said that they could continue to use his shop to meet. They set a date to meet in two weeks. "Be careful who you trust. It only takes one of the thought police to discover what is happening to cost us our lives."

### CONTINUED

"Thank you, Mr. Charrington. I will be as careful as I can be." Winston walked out of the front of the store. The night air was cold, and all the lights had been turned off. Winston walked briskly back to his flat, feeling lighter but heavier at the same time. His thoughts were on his friends that he had recently acquired, something he had not had since childhood. He felt that he was on the right path, but what would be the cost and would they pay the price if necessary? Winston arrived and limped up the stairs; the smell of cabbage once again wafted through the air, making him wrinkle his nose. Tomorrow will be a difficult day.

Winston barely slept as his mind raced through different scenarios. He brushed his teeth and headed into the ministry. He started working on the pile of papers he was to change and began to feel rage. Winston thought to himself, 'Calm down; I have to act as if everything is normal.' He took a couple of deep breaths as the two minutes of hate began. He made his way into a chair and glanced around. He was looking for a sign, a frown, someone not as enthusiastic as the others to give him a sign that they may be willing to join them. He went through the motions and acted accordingly, feeling ashamed that he continued with this farce but knowing it was the only way he could continue to live. This was going to be harder than he first thought. He knew he would meet Julia in three days and hoped to speak with O'Brien, but with the amount of work on his desk, Winston had to keep his head down and be the good worker bee he was.

After work on the third day, he went straight to his flat like he always did. He waited until 7 pm and left with his coat in his arms. He made it to the store and was greeted by Julia and Mr. Charrington. Julia was pale and seemed anxious. "Is something wrong?" Winston asked outright.

"Yes," Julia replied breathlessly. "I have been suspicious of O'Brien. I did not want to alarm you until I had the facts, though. He is working with Big Brother. I followed him the other night after work. Something about how eagerly he was willing to have us over and give us the book, did not sit right with me. He went into the Ministry of Love. I stuck to the shadows and followed until he entered. He works as a spy for the thought police."

Winston was in shock. He took a handkerchief out of his coat and wiped the sweat that was starting to bead on his forehead. "Well, I am glad I could not get him alone to tell him about the meeting. Who can we trust?" Winston was discouraged.

Julia placed her hand on his thigh. "We will figure that out. In the meantime, Mr. Charrington has some news that may put a smile on your face," she grinned and placed a soft kiss on Winston's cheek.

Mr. Charrington cleared his throat. "I have talked to some of the proles. They are becoming tired of living in poverty and want a change. We will have about 50 people here in ten days. I know it doesn't seem like a lot, but it does not take a lot to start a chain reaction."

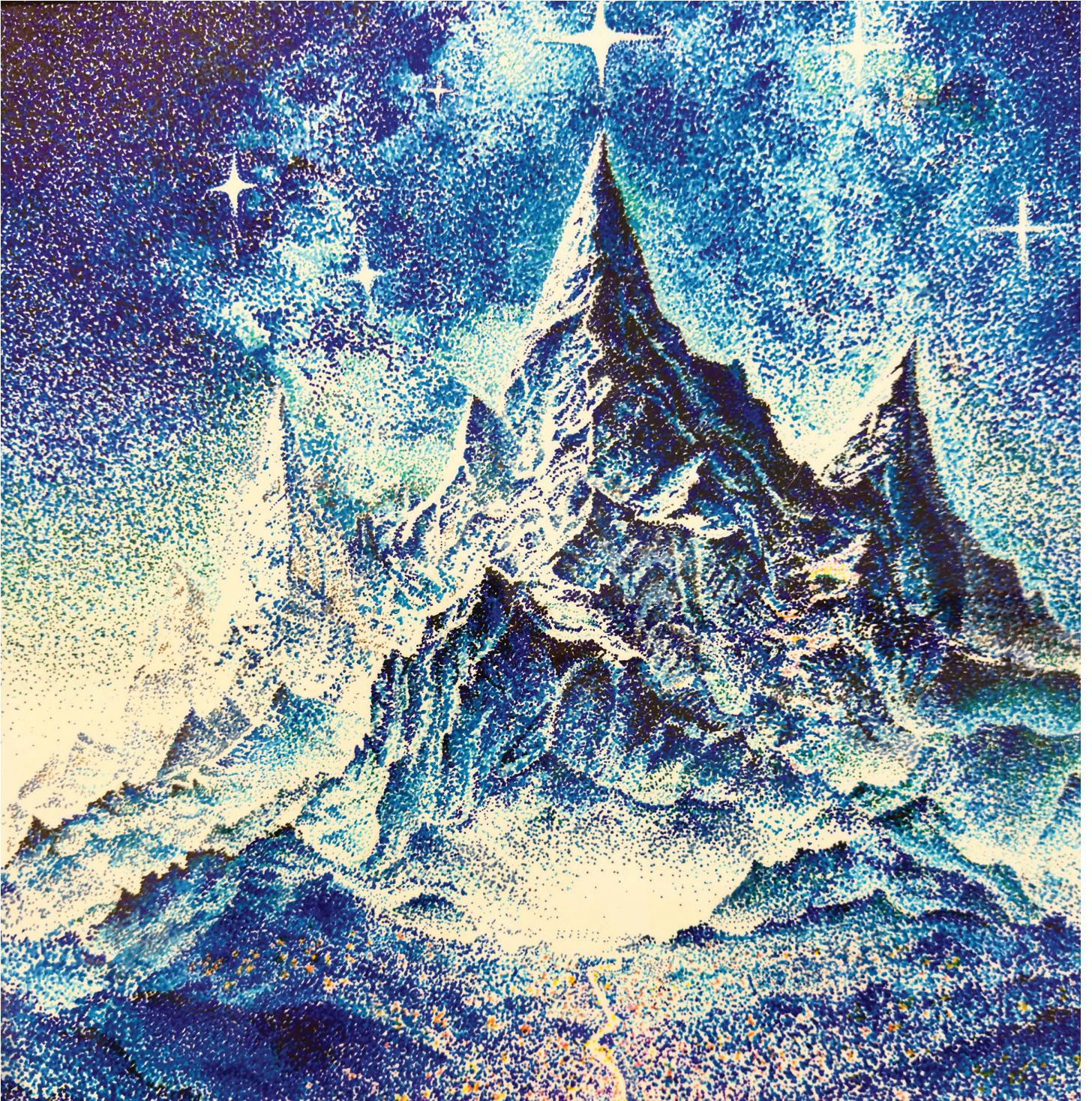
Winston was impressed. In only three days, they had people who were willing to come together. "That is great, but what are we going to do about O'Brien?"

Julia responded, "I have a plan. What I need you to do for now is to act like everything is normal." Winston nodded. Mr. Charrington went over details of how they were going to get so many people discreetly into the building. Winston leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. He couldn't believe this was actually going to happen. He was going to lead a revolt. Who would have thought a dull man as himself would have the courage to make a stand?

"GET UP!" Winston feels a sharp pain in his ribs. He spits blood as he coughs. His vision is blurry at first as he comes to, and he sees O'Brien standing over him. Winston is dehydrated and starved. His lips are cracked, and his mouth feels like cotton. "Get up; it's time for you to see what room 101 is all about." He looks around and realizes he is in the high, windowless cell he was brought into after being caught with Julia. Winston wipes the blood from his lips. It was all a hallucination. Winston coughs again. What can be worse than having hope snatched from your hands?

# *Assembly of the Stars*

by: Maryn Kasza *Marker on Paper 2024*



## *Ramblings on Valentine's Day*

by: Nicole O'Rourke

My heart  
Is consumed by the fire  
My heart  
Is ravaged with desire  
My heart  
Is paralyzed by fear  
My heart  
Has lost those it has held dear  
My heart  
Is as solid as a stronghold  
My heart  
Can be destroyed by what it is told  
Your words are like arrows engulfed with flames that torch my heart as it shreds as easily as tissue paper  
My heart is ruled by emotion and paralyzes reason.  
Your eyes look like love, but your words leak poison into my soul  
And yet  
My heart will be kind and compassionate and swell with joy like a child  
My heart will hope for rest and renewed strength  
My heart will sing praises and rejoice in the good things of life  
It will never be completely crushed  
You will never have that power.  
It will heal, at first, with tape and bandages, but then will be stitched back together with sinews of dreams and love.  
It may be bruised and battered.  
It may have been held by hands that are filthy and unworthy to hold the pureness it offered.  
But it is still beating  
It is surviving  
And it will thrive, Oh! Will it thrive!  
My heart  
Will love with fierceness  
My heart  
Will not be broken  
My heart  
Will remain soft  
My heart  
Will cover those around me in peace  
My heart will wrap those in need in its tenderness  
My heart  
Will survive

## Strawberry Blonde

by: Abigail Santi

Flower scent filled the air. Her long strawberry blonde locks covered the lilac field she was lying on. She looked up at the clouds resembling different objects. The sun was shining brightly on her soft, glowing skin. It seemed to be only imaginary. As if it were from a fairy tale which she believed to be true.

The evening came too fast, she thought, thinking of how astonishing nature was and only seeing it completely when the sun rises to the second it sets. Yet, somehow, the moonlight made life more appealing to her. She wondered why she liked the night just as much as the day. She wondered why the moon seemed to vanish within hours. All she ever did was wonder.

Her name was Verity. At the time, she was only a teen. Some would assume she was twenty because of her appearance. The girl was about 5'6, and her eyes held her age beyond her years. Verity was a free spirit. She collected flowers, rocks, and bugs. She loved animals and often saved them. Many believed she was a witch. She was nothing of the sort.

"Auntie, I was wondering if I could stay out past sunset. Only for a few minutes," Verity asked.

"Verity, you know very well you can't do that. The spirits roam the land just after nightfall. You must remember," her Aunt responded.

"I'm aware, Auntie, but I've never seen the lilac fields under the moonlight. It's a full moon tonight. There won't be another for some time now. It'll be my only chance. The books says-" Verity was interrupted by her cousin.

"Have you gone mad? The books are here to tell us not to go into the night. Stop asking my mom relentless questions." Reed had just walked into the room. He'd been listening from the beginning.

"Verity, I know things are difficult now that your mother isn't here. But you can't go into the night. That's how I lost your mom, and I can't lose you too," her Aunt insisted.

Verity thought differently. She didn't believe that the spirits roamed the night. The stories have been told but never documented. She believed her mother was sent away. That night, she packed some things and left the following morning at daybreak. The sun had risen, and dew was left on the petals of the lilac field. She didn't want to leave, but she needed to show the townspeople they'd been misguided all these years. Verity set off. She didn't know how long she'd be gone, and she didn't care.

When nightfall began, Verity trembled. She thought that maybe the townspeople had been correct, and that was why the books said not to go into the night. She found her way to a tree. It was hallowed and big enough for Verity to hide in. So, she did. The wind hissed and mocked her. Fog began to sneak behind her. She wanted to run back home, but that was miles back. She knew she was done for.

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Verity woke up in a stranger's home. She thought it had just been a dream, but mud and leaves were left on her. She heard someone or something in the next room. She was scared again. Verity huddled under the blankets she was given while unconscious. She heard a familiar voice. It was her mother.

# *Lust*

by: Kylie Bradshaw *Ceramic Earthenware 2023*





## HONORABLE MENTIONS - POETRY

### *Panic*

by: Brea Cozen

Hands	Solitude
Shaking	Isolated
Trembling	Deserted
Quivering	Alone
Won't stop	I'm all alone
Won't stop	No
Won't stop moving	One
	In
Panic	Sight
Tight	
Heavy Weight	So overwhelming
Pressing	
Down	A flicker
Down	Dim
Down	Small
	Faint
Breathing	Yet there
Faster	
Shallow	A voice
Thin	A touch
In	Grounding
Out	Gentle
In	Guiding
Out	Hope?
Don't forget to breathe in	
Don't forget to let it out	"Breathe in"
	"Breathe out"
Sweating	
Sweltering	
Clothes sticky	
Uncomfortable	
Chills down my spine	
Hot	
Cold	
Hot	
Cold	
Don't know what I'm feeling	
Mind spiraling	
Twisting	
Racing	
Floating	
Thoughts keep	
Going	
Going	
Going	
Gone	

### *Rage*

by: Brea Cozen

There's a raging fire living inside of me  
Fueled by my anger and bitterness  
Most of the time,  
The flame is barely a flicker  
Sometimes only the smoke is visible

But with one word, it can grow and spread like  
wildfire  
Fumes poisoning and flames destroying anything  
in their way  
Often only calming when the wind sings

I'm trying to control the fire so it doesn't affect the  
city next to me

But it's hard

Especially when all I want to do is burn the forest  
until nothing but ashes remain

But if I were to do that,  
Then it would get to the point where nothing  
could calm the flames  
Not even when the wind sings

But I don't know how to tame the flames  
Other than to let the wind sing its tune

I must find other ways to calm this fire inside me

For I fear if I do not,  
Then this fire will consume me  
Leaving nothing behind  
Except a never-ending flame  
And a bitter heart

## *Colors of a Sunset*

by: Amber Everitt

I could never really say-  
Which one made my smile wide; bright  
The yellow as it starts to rise,  
Orange descending into the night...

I gave my heart beneath the sun-  
I felt its warm embrace-then burned.  
Tick Tock Tick Tock, The Clock so slow...  
Waiting before the cool returned

And in the darkness, there was peace.  
Peace when the orange and pink did fade.  
I gave my soul beneath the sun-  
Did I make an unfair trade?

He watched my skin peel from my bones.  
I think he called it beautiful.  
And told me that I'm not alone.  
He told me that I'm suitable-

The sun's in love with a liar-  
They're in cahoots against me.  
And all I can see is red- it's rising.  
All I see...Bleak...Eternity.

Now I remember dancing some.  
It was yellow, warm, and kind.  
Yellow was my favorite home.  
In the yellow I lost my mind.

I should have worn the sunscreen-  
Yes, I should have protected me.  
I should have stood beneath the sun-  
And turned back when my skin did scream...

So, no- the rising isn't well.  
It's just beautiful in violence.  
So, I will sit amid the dusk-  
And still... revel in the silence.

I like the cool among my skin-  
It settles within my bones.  
And he can scream and pout and cry-  
Because it's now-I'm not alone.

You see, I found love in the dusk.  
I found peace at the very end.  
I found the beauty in goodbye-  
For I can be my own best friend.

So, I will love me- love me right.  
I will dance and smile-bring me peace,  
And only cry a little while-  
Mourning a love that's now deceased.

Yes, And I can find the beauty-  
In orange, yellow, red-you bet!  
I can find the beauty forever-  
In the colors of a sunset.

# I-70

Bre McCoy *Digital Art 2023*



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