

Wiregrass

2020 LITERARY AND ARTS JOURNAL



Cover art: **Pathway** - *Rebecca Ferron*

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East Georgia State College, University System of Georgia, Swainsboro, Georgia 30401
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Wiregrass 2020 Literary and Arts Journal

Featuring the writing and artwork of
East Georgia State College students, staff, and faculty.



Editor: Rebecca Ferron
Faculty Advisor: S.D. Lavender

Thanks to Val Czerny, Desmal Purcell, & Alan Brasher

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Cumulus Counselor

Our cousin called her the “matriarch,”
But that simply seems so strange —
She’s mostly just a girl at heart
When you study her close-range.

She hears when I say nothing —
And do nothing but think —
It’s like a magic potion
That no one needs to drink.

When fears attempt to smother —
When lies join in the game —
Such storms driving ‘round my mother —
Wheel past her steady flame.

Just send a roach to taunt her,
Or a snake roaming from its lair,
She’ll rise to the occasion —
Crusading high upon a chair!

I’m like her in so many ways —
And in other ways, not so —
And while I recall much from the past —
As slick insights let go —

I'm ever on that chair with her —
Though I'm never up at dawn.
While she brightens in conversation —
So often, I'm withdrawn.

Her garden of life is buoyant and bold —
My hollow — green with leaves
Of pages filled with past-strewn tales —
Mislaying now in make-believes.

In patience and impatience,
She's upheld and rallied round —
Sometimes above the surface,
And sometimes —underground.

So on we go in difference —
And likeness — by the mile —
Capsizing jokes we're poised to tell —
Gathering what's worthwhile.

Dancing on the seeds of life —
Widening under our toes —
We'll claim each cloud-shape's daydream
On each nimble breeze that blows.

- Val Czerny



Woman and Boy - *Hannah Stanfield*

MYSTERY

Oceans of clouds and streets of endless gold
Promise of everlasting life sounds so sweet
The contradicting thoughts you tend to hold
Makes you consider this fate not to meet
You gather close to the ones you so love
Reading encounters of the great unknown
Skeptical of their meeting up above
You wonder if your thoughts endure alone
Terrified of what you meet after death
Others are content with the thought of it
What will you see when you take your last breath
Are they all scared too, and do not admit?
It's hard to believe what you cannot see
But there is beauty found in mystery

- Abigail English

Starview

We needed some dusk to dawn Doris Day,
For some demon had just killed JFK.
We needed light and music in our heads,
To keep a shadowy future at bay

The back seat of my Chevy was our bed,
Hugging and kissing as the rumors spread.
We ate piping hot, and drank icy cold
And blocked out thoughts of the coming bloodshed

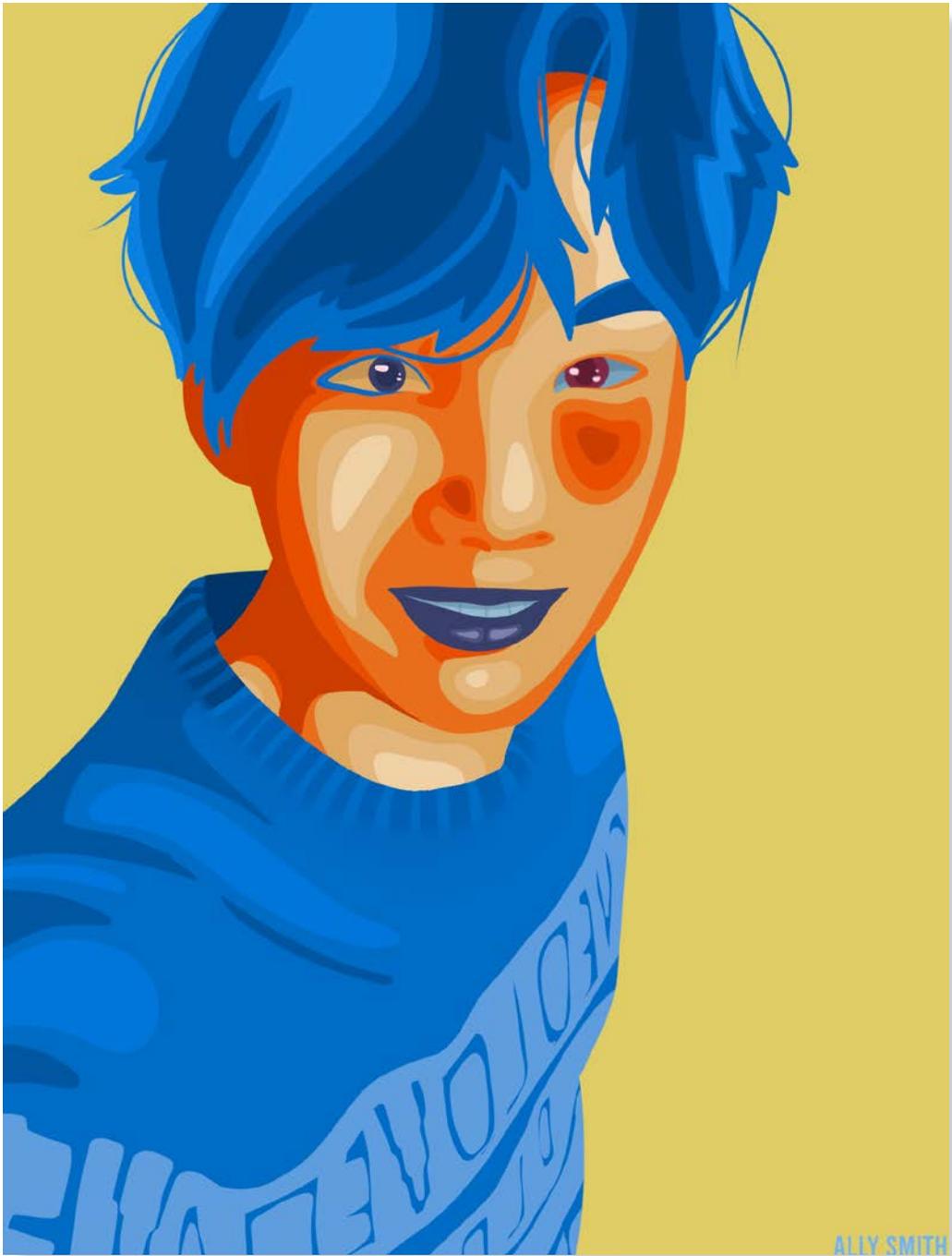
We knew one day the Starview would be sold
But we wouldn't forget the stories told
I see you only as you were, I swear
A flickering beam, never to grow old

And now when this world becomes hard to bear
Seeing you turn at the top of the stair
Reminds me I've had much more than my share
Yes, I have had so much more than my share

- S. D. Lavender



Untitled - *Maria Ramirez*



ALLY SMITH

Min Yoogi - *Alexandra Louis Smith*

Class Reunion

I write the things
 I cannot tell
My star-glazed memory
searching
for true colors beneath
the white-stained lies
 accepted for their beauty
 and the candy apple innocence
 with which we deceive ourselves
 into blissful night graves

waking
 from the somnolent stupor of the near-dead
 blood of dead friends
caked like mud
 about my legs and waist
root toes spread amongst the gore
I flourish

tangled vines breathe
 green warnings
that comers never go
the sea of leaves
 supports only itself
and the rattled serpents beneath

first spring-warmth stirs dormant yearnings
deep within winter bulbs
hungry life presses into frost-numb dirt
thought-dead desire seeps upward exploding into color
deliverance in memory

cannot join love-drunk revelers
cannot resurrect to reinter
must cleanse myself of the blood of the common grave
must love was as is

- Alan Brasher

Irregular Heartbeat

The sterile gleam of scalpel's edge
And a Hippocratic Oath to pledge
Hidden behind the surgeon's mask
A smile that widens with razor's task
To ask he'll say his record boasts
Of serrated flesh the table hosts
He pinches pus from lifeless skin
Waiting to tell the next of kin
Then late at night, he dreams of red
Remove the spleen?, or the heart
instead!

- Eric Wruck

The Bus to Nowhere

Rain drips
not yet ice
but heavy
soaking
clothes stiff
hat brim sags
breath puffs
little clouds
full of water.

Down the empty street comes no
one
mangy, musty old dog,
ribs showing,
more skin than flesh
sits at the end of the bench
looking out
hopeful and sad
at nothing.

Finally it comes
around the corner,
sputtering and choking,
hissing to a stop.
The door,
old and tired,
creaks open:

“Where does this line stop?”

“Does it really matter?”

- *Christian Kraus*

The Mind of My Heart

Porcelain

Perfect Porcelain is easily broken
Anything perfect is carefully crafted, but so delicate
They're looked at with adoring eyes
Stain glass windows and Christmas lights
Perfect
Beautifully made
why do the perfect things break so easily
If it breaks so easy, is it perfect?
Glass cracks, lights burn out, and porcelain breaks
Perfect can't last long
Still, it's something to achieve
It's impossible to achieve
Despite the delicacy
Despite the fragile nature
Despite how easy it is to loose something perfect
I reach and stretch to be perfect
Look at the adoration in people's eyes at perfect porcelain.
Something so easily lost, so easily broken
That's why

- Elizabeth Bailey



PewDiePie - *Hannah Stanfield*

The Lion's Back

Living in a world that seems to be white versus black,
The presence of ignorance is just a symbolism of dignity lacked.

Inner hatred is a reflection of self,
Telling us maybe we should pick up our freedom off the shelf.

Mirrors reveal all cries that show no physical tears,
Of unhealed wounds that worsened through the years.
Is it not morbid to release your anger on to innocent others?
Just to keep you from coming from underneath the covers?

Humble souls are defenseless to void,
So, ask yourself is it with you that you are annoyed?
Meek spirits should never hold back,
And tackle the spirit of void by hopping on the lion's back.

- Asia Jennings



Skin Deep - *Martina Irvin*



The Wood Mother - Armond Boudreaux (script) and Alex Green (art)

The Father on the Lane

As I peer through the frosty window pane
Soft snow falls on the mountain tops nearby.

I see a family entering the lane.
They play with glee; one shouts a joyful cry.
The father builds a snowman with his son;
The mother holds her baby to her chest.
Their lively daughter stumbles whereupon
She finds a white cat in the snow at rest.
How lovely is this scene before my eyes;
Their warmth and love ought to melt the cold snow.

A gentle feeling in me seems to rise;
Its tenderness and sweetness further grow.

But what I view is just a memory;
I am the father on the lane, you see?

- Kristin Smoyer



Anime - Hannah Stanfield

The Night Tommy Channeled Free Bird

The night Tommy channeled Free Bird
I had my hair in the shape of a Unicorn,
The burnt tire smell still was warm from
The Detroit found-object-conceptual-sculptor.
Bryan sat at the table selling pastries
While Anthony took names of new members,
And Mark was poised by the locked doors with a djimbe.
Alan had just done a Merle tune on his turn,
And a tightly compacted colony
Of self-identified "arts" people
Adhered to a social co-culture,
Aside plate glass and street lights,
Few cars passing the remote intown location,
And the bewildered audience now transfixed forever
In a snapshot of memory.
A boom box in his lap,
Tommy's grin and unwavering and unapologetic stare
Enraptured without self-doubt,
Tommy channeled Free Bird,
And we experienced it.
We could hear the beatbox, sure;
But I live to testify
That you may have never known its full meaning
Unless you were there
And received the actual essence from Tommy's face,
The night Tommy channeled Free Bird at open mic.

- *Ronald S. Ellison*

The Horses of the Sea

The Horses of the Sea
Rear
and race to the shore.
The drum of hooves
is the drum of the sea,
the beat of the sea.

The froth on their flanks
is the froth on the sea,
the white sea foam
from the run of the waves.

The salt of their sweat
is the salt of the sea,
the scent of the sea
in the crisp sea air.

White manes move
as the wild horses move,
crest upon crest,
and rank upon rank.

Wave upon wave,
the wild horses rear.
The wild horses move
until the water recedes
and the horses return.

- *Kenneth Homer*



Salty Dusk - *Rebecca Ferron*

Bus Nine

(Ten Minute Play)

Paul, a young, rather naive college student

Useless, transient and wise fool

Slim, a veteran traveler with no particular destination

*Rudy, a middle-aged man who has seen it all,
learned a few hard lessons--- but who often fails to apply them
to anything that would make a difference in his life*

*Driver, a man counting the days until retirement and driving
a late-night bus because nothing better has ever come along.*

NARRATOR: A bus pulls up to a bus stop in a decaying section of San Jose, California, and the doors hiss open for a long line of passengers holding whatever bags or baggage they may possess. One by one they enter, a man wearing a hoodie looking like a faded Bob Marley, a woman carrying more than anyone would expect on a city bus, a man holding a detached rear-view mirror from a car he may or may have not owned, and on and on, a United Nations of young and old, men and women, of every hue, short and tall of every shape—all united in their poverty and all having some acquaintance with each other. Just as the doors close and the bus is about to leave, a young man appears, waves his arms and bangs on the door to get the driver's attention. The door opens.

PAUL: Thanks for waiting. Another minute and I would have been stuck here all night. Do you have change for a five?

DRIVER: No, kid. Exact change only. That's what the sign says.

PAUL: Ok---sorry. I've got some change in my backpack—just a minute.

DRIVER: Don't take too long. I've got a schedule to keep, and the passengers on this cruise aren't going to like it. There's a long line behind you.

PAUL: Sorry. Here it is. Sorry about the wait.

DRIVER: Don't worry about it. You'll fit right in. Seating is available in the lounge.

PAUL: Huh?

DRIVER: Forget it. Sit anywhere.

NARRATOR: Paul walks down the aisle, starts to take a seat but stops when he realizes the seat is wet. Paul takes the last remaining seat by a middle-aged man wearing an elegant fedora with a feather attached to the brim.

PAUL: I thought I was going to have to stand there for a while. I didn't think the bus would be so crowded this time of night.

RUDY: Yeah, some people are just lucky. This is an exclusive bus. Seats are hard to come by.

PAUL: That old beater I've been driving broke down three blocks from here. I called my uncle and he told me about this route. Luckily, I was close enough to get here in time. This is the last bus of the night, and I just about missed it. I guess I'll have to deal with my car tomorrow.

RUDY: Why didn't your uncle just come and get you?

PAUL: Oh, he would have if he could, but he's old and can't really see well enough to drive at night. It's ok. He lives about three blocks from the last stop. I'll get there.

RUDY: So, are you visiting your uncle, or is he just a harbor in the storm?

PAUL: I was driving to see him before my car died. Since I got such a late start, I guess he is what you could call an island – a harbor in the storm. I came up to see him before school starts.

RUDY: College man. What are you studying?

PAUL: I haven't figured out what I want to be yet. But I don't have to decide right away.

RUDY: Ha! I haven't figured that out either. I went to college before my life turned into shit.

PAUL: What did you study?

RUDY: I was a JD—a juris doctor. (*with some importance*)

PAUL: A juris doctor?

RUDY: I was attorney before '08, a tax attorney before the bottom fell out of the economy and the other members of the firm decided they didn't need me anymore. And then I couldn't find a job — at least a job that would pay what I thought I needed, and then — I started drinking, and then my wife left me, and then I started drinking some more. I'm all done with that now, but time has passed me by and I'm too old and too tired and too much water has passed under the bridge for anyone to give me a second look.

PAUL: That's too bad. I mean about the job and all that.

RUDY: Yeah—well shit happens. (*Rudy starts humming [loud enough to be heard] "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?"*)

Once I built a railroad.....

Ta da da ta da da da dada da—Brother can you spare a dime? (*says the last line with special emphasis*)

USELESS: That's a beautiful song. What a beautiful song!

RUDY: Why thank you, Useless. Hey kid, do you know where that song came from?

PAUL: It was written during the Great Depression during the Truman administration.

RUDY: Yeah, kid, during the Truman administration. You want to know something funny? It was written by the same guy who wrote the lyrics for the Wizard of Oz.

PAUL: I liked the flying monkeys in that one. My dad said he used to watch that movie on TV every Halloween, so he bought a DVD and made a sort of family ritual of showing us *The Wizard of Oz* every Halloween.

RUDY: When I first got here, I thought I was going to Oz, but the wise and

wonderful wizard was a fraud just like all of the wise and wonderful wizards I've met. Hey, Slim, what do you think of my song? (*loud enough to be heard across the aisle*)

SLIM: Yeah, I like your song. It could be my song too. It's certainly your song. That song could be the song for half of the people on this bus.

RUDY: What about the other half?

SLIM: The other half are bums or people like Useless. Isn't that right, Useless? (*loudly*)

USELESS: MAGA! MAGA! MAGA! (*loudly like the call of a tropical bird*)

SLIM: You're so right, Useless.

DRIVER: Next stop Fifth Street

NARRATOR: The bus stops. The door opens and closes but nobody gets on or off the bus. (*The characters pause for what seems like a long time.*)

PAUL: Doesn't that guy mind it when people call him Useless?

RUDY: Naw! He's been called Useless as long as I've been riding this bus. I don't think anybody knows his real name. He probably doesn't know his real name

USELESS: Rudy Tudy! Rudy Tudy! (*loudly*)

RUDY: What is it, Useless? (*loudly*)

USELESS: I decree that your song is the official song of the United States of America and that you, Rudy Tudy Tudy, are the official Singer of the House. (*loudly*)

RUDY: That's high praise. I'm honored, Useless. (*loud enough to be heard*)

USELESS: Mission Accomplished! (*loudly & proudly*)

RUDY: Indeed it is. (*loud enough to be overheard*)

PAUL: What's wrong with him?

RUDY: Wrong? Nothing except he's as crazy as a bedbug. Last week he wanted to build a wall.

PAUL: A wall?

RUDY: Yeah a wall ---God knows why. Hey, Slim, why do you think Useless wants to build a wall?

SLIM: Probably to keep bums like us off this bus.

USELESS: You gotta pull yourself up by your own bootstraps! (*Stentorian tone*)

PAUL: He really is crazy, isn't he? (*stage whisper*)

RUDY: He's just following his manifest destiny. That's what he says anyway. We are all following our manifest destiny. That's right. Go west, young man! Go west, young man! So, I listened and went west, and that's how I ended up on this bus. You know hopeless people all go west, hoping for a brighter horizon until they reach the west coast-- until they can't go farther west ----unless they want to get wet.

PAUL: I guess that makes sense. If things aren't working out in one place, it's natural to try looking in a different place.

RUDY: You know what. Success is never a matter of geography. Successful people are successful wherever they land.

DRIVER: Next stop Tenth Street.

NARRATOR: The bus comes to a stop. The doors open and close, and nobody gets on or off the bus.

PAUL: My dad had the same speech about success and geography, but it never seemed to do him any good. Some people just don't get a break. I guess he wanted something better for me.

RUDY: You're right. The American Dream isn't always what it's cracked up to

be. This bus is filled with dreamers of one kind or another. What was Useless like when he had a name? What were any of these people like before their dreams turned sour? Dreams are nice except when they fail, and then they turn ugly.

PAUL: I think I'll hold on to my dreams.

RUDY: That's nice, kid. Good for you. *(turns away from Paul and speaks to Slim)* Slim, what's your dream?

DRIVER: Next stop 15th street. Check your belongings before you leave.

SLIM: My what? *(loudly)*

RUDY: Your dream. What floats your boat? *(loudly)*

SLIM: Right now, I'd settle for a thick juicy steak smothered in onions. *(loud reply)*

RUDY: Is that all?

SLIM: Ok. Throw in a bottle of champagne. *(loud reply)*

RUDY: You're a regular James Bond, aren't you? *(loud reply)*

SLIM: Yeah, I 'm shaken but not stirred. *(loud reply)*

PAUL: What did he mean by that?

RUDY: Oh, it's just a line from an old James Bond film. You know 007.

PAUL: I know that. I've seen those old movies. But what was he talking about?

RUDY: Slim is a veteran. He went to war because he loved his country, but when he came back, he found that his country didn't love him. He's been injured in all sorts of ways but can't get the help he really needs. I guess it's just easier to call him a bum and let it go at that. He's been shaken, but right now he's just numb. I don't think he's stirred by much these days.

PAUL: What's your dream?

RUDY: My dream? I misplaced my dream long ago. I guess my dream now is to survive until tomorrow.

USELESS: MAGA! MAGA! MAGA! (*like a tropical bird call*)

PAUL: Why does he keep saying that?

RUDY: You have to understand that Useless is a political creature. That's all it is politics—at least his own special brand of politics.

USELESS: I hereby abrogate all treaties and declare war on the Eskimo. (*grandly*)

SLIM: Way to go, chief. (*loud approbation*)

DRIVER: Firmament Ave.

PAUL: Why doesn't anybody ever get off this bus?

RUDY: Don't you know?

PAUL: No, I don't get it.

RUDY: We're all Argonauts on a grand adventure. Do you know that story—Jason and the Argonauts?

PAUL: Oh, you mean Jason and the Golden Fleece? I don't see too many heroes here.

RUDY: We're all heroes until we're not.

PAUL: I'm serious. Why doesn't anybody get off this bus? I can understand why people don't get on---it's late. But why don't people get off?

RUDY: Why don't you get off?

PAUL: I'll be getting off at Firmament Avenue.

RUDY: Nobody gets off because you're in hell, and all the sinners don't leave hell. You must be in purgatory because you can still get off. Get off and don't join the

rest of us sinners.

PAUL: This is my stop.

RUDY: Good for you, kid. Get off this bus and don't look back.

NARRATOR: The bus comes to a stop. The door opens, and as Paul gets off the bus, one very young man finds he will never be so young again.

Bus Nine is a real bus, a homeless bus, in a real city. The characters are fictional but their stories are true enough.

- Kenneth Homer

The Eighteenth Annual Emily Pestana-Mason Memorial Poetry Contest



Our poetry judge, Chris Mattingly, holds an M.F.A. in Poetry from Spalding University. He teaches writing, literature, and interdisciplinary courses at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. His book of poems, Scuffletown, is available for checkout from the East Georgia State College

Library. From 2012-2014, Chris served as a Humanities faculty member at EGSC.

The First Place Poem

"Memories of Home" is a powerful reflection on family that impacted me in many ways: its strong rhythm, compelling half-rhymes, vivid sensory imagery, and underlying hints of disease all come together to make poem that makes me feel joyful and sad at the same time. This poet has a real knack for casting images that the reader can see, taste, touch, hear, and smell. And the details of those images always feel personal, real, and authentic. This homage to family works in every way!

FIRST PLACE POEM

Memories of Home

We munched merrily on marvelous macadamia nuts
Nestled in soft sweet disks of deliciousness.
Bumpy bitter grapefruit is what grandma gave us,
Usually.

Croissants with their cavities created delicious delicacies.
Oatmeal was often made better by mixing maple.

We wailed on karaoke nights, singing Shanice.
We sang while simultaneously shimmying our lights at each other,
Always full of innocent youth.
The sun danced sometimes through decorated drapes in the den.
Clueless children,
We witnessed none of your sickly struggle.

Photo ops printed and organized on oval frames
(Or rectangles,
Or squares) stood side by side on the mantle
Securing sweet family moments.
Youths yelled at fuzzy Hershey
While he frantically fetched frisbees
In the yard.
All the while, the woman inside was dying.

Doses of delicate pretty perfume enveloped me
Making me mourn your warm wishes and praise.
You didn't deserve the disease that devastated us
Unexpectedly,
Unfortunately,
With only nine years following forty.

I hope the memories I've made
Are everlasting evidence of
The place I call home.

- *Shadeenah McCleary*

The Second Place Poem... "To Be Dead While Alive" is a haunting poem filled with the tension of pain, confusion, and guilt. The writer Audre Lorde says that what makes us viable makes us vulnerable, but that vulnerability is the source of our greatest strength. I praise this poet's willingness to make public this pain. This poem is a gift that reminds us of what it is to be human.

SECOND PLACE POEM

To Be Dead While Alive

I hear a baby crying,
Like inside of me its dying.
All I feel is pain,
To this act I am now chained.
Subjected to doing what is right,
But right makes me feel as dark and gloomy as a rainy night.
Is this wrong what I have done?
Even though everyone cheered me on?
"It'll be okay," is what they said,
But now just like my unborn baby, I too feel dead.
At seventeen years old, I feel this dread,
As I hear my Mother's grief inside my head.
Will we ever break this systematic societal taboo?
Or, will we continue to choose plan D like a fool?
Mama birthed me even though she didn't know what to do!
Now, in my baby's blood I lay in like a pool.
"Thou shall not murder," is what GOD said,
My own baby's blood I have shed.
This is what it's like to be alive, but feel dead.

- Asia Jennings

The Third Place Poem... "Write me" is a poem in the ars poetica tradition—a poem that is a meditation on the art of poetry. I love the straight lines that also serve as complete thoughts often turning, or answering, an idea in the line before. The result is an intuitive, interlocking form full of surprise. The ultimate surprise revealed in the final line, which doesn't so much close the poem as it opens the poem. In the end, we are left with the suggestion of a question regarding the nature of the act of creation and the revelation that the writer is the written.

THIRD PLACE POEM

Write Me

I write poems about love
A love I've never known
I write sonnets about sadness
I feel in every bone
I write soliloquies that are simply What I can't say out loud
I write spoken word
That will never be heard
Until I'm dead and in the ground I write all these things
Or maybe they write me

- Susannah Walters

Hopelessness

Hope was futile.
But so was loving you.
I had hopes that someday we would meet again.
With hope I had to find me.
But all I met was a stranger.

Hope was merciful.
It never let me forget you.
But all I did was forget me.
Having hope to be forgiven hurt the most.

Hope was temporary.
After losing me, I had lost you.
You were only there like the passing of the seasons.
Hoping for you was saying goodbye to me.

Hopelessness was relief.
With hopelessness I learned that there is a me.
It was welcoming and new.
Searching for nothing had led me to you.
Searching me had given me love.

- Faith Elliott



Hand - *Hannah Stanfield*



Moody Sunrise - *Rebecca Ferron*

A Drop in the Ocean

A change,
A slight shift,
Signals harmony
Or tears a rift.

A single drop in the ocean,
We are,
A certain fish in the sea,
A flake of snow on a mountainside,
One green leaf on a tree.

Yet that drop in the ocean
That slides a certain way,
Causes a ripple,
And that ripple expands and prospers until,
It's a colossal wave.

Oh but a certain fish in the sea,
Instead of left goes right.
A change is made and the school follows him,
Because instead of the dark,
He chose light.

That snowflake shivers from the cold,
And sends a frosty chill,
Causing a shudder in the ice,
And soon an avalanche downhill.

The leaf on a tree,
Alone on its branch,
Slowly withers and dies,
Others follow and flutter to the ground,
As the bare tree stands,
Old and wise.

If a drop in the ocean,
A fish in the sea,
A flake of snow,
And a leaf on a tree,
Can make a difference determining destiny,
Then why,
Oh why,
Can't we?

- Josie Peebles



National Park - *Alexandra Louis Smith*

The Girl with the Long Brown Hair

I never knew who she really was for she kept everything in; however, I knew of her kindness... the girl with the long brown hair.

She was a free-spirited soul; even though we never spoke, letting her express herself was always a sight to see... the girl with the long brown hair.

I never noticed how quickly she changed; from smiley and bubbly to tired and sad... the girl with the long brown hair.

I spoke with her once and she said she was fine but, then she was gone... the girl with the long brown hair

I still see her from time to time when I look in the mirror just for a second, but I know she's there... the girl with the long brown hair.

How those lines under her green eyes became ever so prominent, I never thought I would know, but I do... the girl with the long brown hair.

This girl has been exposed to the world and how cruel it can be after being protected for so long from it... the girl with the long brown hair.

She's broken, and she may never be whole again; however, she won't admit to being beaten because she still has hope... the girl with the long brown hair.

I stare in the mirror looking at those same piercing green eyes, only now realizing they were mine... the girl with the long brown hair.

— *Chelsea Godwin*

The Greatest Lesson

“What’s the greatest lesson a woman should learn? That since day one. She’s already had everything she needs within herself. It’s the world that convinced her she did not.”

-Rupi Kaur

She defended him more times than she should
In her eyes he could do no wrong
Appearing innocent was his hidden talent
But she loved him

Long nights of worry and loneliness
Numerous texts that entertained others
Deception was his hidden talent
But she loved him

Her confidence slowly diminished
Countless outfits tossed in the trash from disapproval
Shaming her was his hidden talent
But she loved him

A thousand tears danced down her face
It took a trillion times for her to realize
Being strong could be her hidden talent
She loved him but she loved herself more

— *Macy Stewart*



Patience is Still - *Martina Irvin*

Broken Pavement

The path you walked on towards your dreams
Broke into pieces along with your goals
You're shattered, torn, and glassy eyed
It's nothing but a Broken Pavement where you dry your tears away

Broken into small pieces of you
Where the edges of your dreams turn black and blue
Crying out in the despair of it all
Watching the pavement crumble before you fall

Words of hatred fired towards you like missiles piercing the sky
You cover your ears to block out the massive explosions of the words
Slowly breaking on the inside
Is the bed of nails where you lie

Praying you will survive the attacks that pull towards you
Hoping that your inner soldier won't die away
Crawling into a black hole that keeps you warm
Even though the road before you starts to crumble

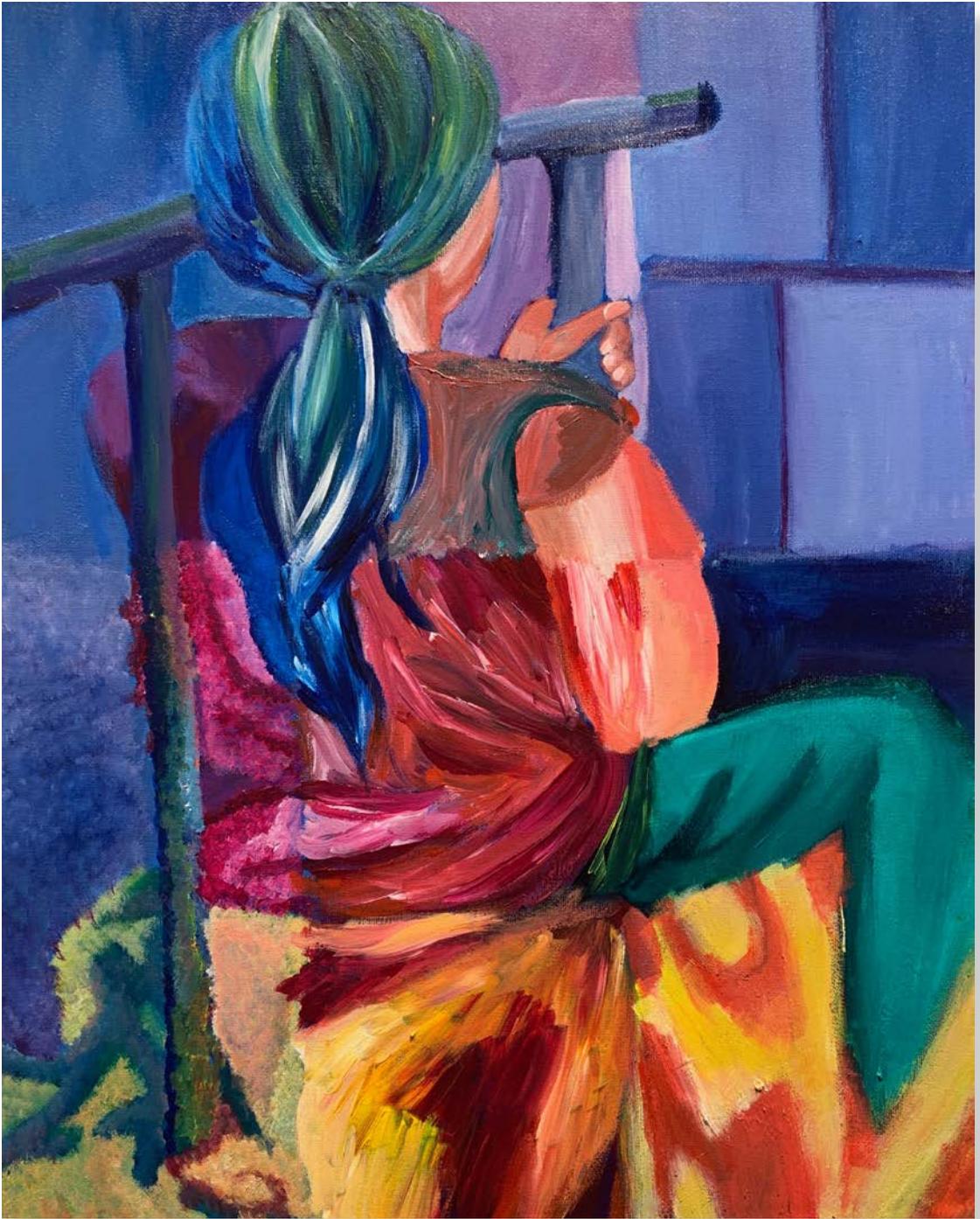
Trying so hard to climb to the top, but you fall again
Second guessing your hopes and plans
Grabbing onto the words of disapproval
Hoping they will burn to ash

Feeling darkness engulf you into a position where you can't see
Holding your breath to push away the despair
While watching the scene of everything tearing away
As your blood runs cold, to where you cannot breathe

Scars opening to pour out the thoughts that became private to your mind
Your body trembles as you cry
Looking at the bullet holes that had been shot at a specific man
The one you loved is now going through a new life span

The path you walked on; towards your dreams
Broke into pieces along with your goals
You're shattered, torn, and glassy eyed
It's nothing but a Broken Pavement; where you dry your tears away

— *Ansley McQuaig*



Still Life - *Janet Sanchez*

Love and Life

How can a sensation be so short yet so cruel?

How can an emotion cut so deep yet feel so worthy?

How can locking eyes with a stranger fondle; while a lover's touch feels so foreign?

It's not every day that I question this debacle, but

*How can **Love** and **Life** feel so perfidious yet so consoling?*

Do we live in an illusion or an illusion lives within us?

Do we chase will-o'-the-wisp or will-o'-the-wisp chases us?

Do we spend an eternity making fakery; or does the fakery take an eternity to make us?

It's not every day that I question this debacle, but

*How can **Love** and **Life** feel so perfidious yet so consoling?*

When all is said and done, will you make more sense?

When all the love flies away, will yours cease to remain?

When all of my existence burns in the fire; will you still feel like ice?

It's not every day that I question this debacle, but

*How can **Love** and **Life** feel so perfidious yet so consoling?*

Why does heartburn feel like an orthodox?

Why does compassion feel like torture?

Why does this bleeding-heart make me feel like a sentimental fool?

It's not every day that I question this debacle, but

*How can **Love** and **Life** feel so perfidious yet so consoling?*

Where are the answers to the questions that live within me?

Where are the implications of such endurances?

Where are you going to run or hide when certainty becomes prevalent?

Every day I had questioned this debacle, but

*My **love**, you make my **life** feel perfidious yet so consoling.*

— Kayla Portillo

The Sound of Wings

"Noli Timere Messorum."

- Sir Terry Pratchett

On a stormy day in November
I was thrown into the waking world
By a thunderclap that split the sky.
As I laid in my bed, heart curiously calm
But my body cold as ice and stiff as stone,
I was seized by the odd urge to take a stroll.

The rain was attempting to turn the air into the sea
While the wind whipped about in a frenzy,
And yet there I stood on my porch
In naught but my sleepwear
About to step into the storm.
All on a whim.

I set out towards the forest to find my favorite resting place.
The downpour doing its best to drown me
While the wind shrieked and howled at my gail,
And yet I continued on my path.
Uncaring of the tempest
Into the tangled wood.
Was it really a whim?

The trees provided no shelter from the storm
For the rain found all the chinks in their armor
While the wind battered at their limbs mercilessly,
And yet the flowers in their shadow remained beautiful.
Regardless of the storm's abuse
Even as they were torn asunder.
We paid the storm no heed.

The dark clouds had stolen the lights for themselves
And the forest seemed to have become a labyrinth this night.
I journeyed in darkness, battered by rain, torn at by wind,
But I knew this path by heart and would not be deterred.
So I strode forth,
Uncaring of the weather I brought with me.

When I reached my destination, I found it remarkably calm
As if the tempest did not dare intrude.
It was a small clearing dotted by fragrant wildflowers
And overlooked by an ancient oak.
It was where I came to escape the world
My place to rest before I came up for air.
I was always alone here,
With no one but my shadow to accompany me,
But it seemed the storm had brought someone else this night.

We had never met before,
But I felt as if I knew her all my life.
Her hair was as dark as the sky
With skin fairer than moonlight.
She was clad all in black
Save for a silver pendant round her neck,
And when she smiled at me
I could not help but smile back.

We sat against the old oak tree for a while
Silent save for the sounds of the storm.
Then she turned to me and said I hadn't woken up at all.
I told her I had realized this myself
Not long after I had set out,
For I felt no chill from the weather
And my heart remained not calm but still.

She smiled at me as she stood,
Stars burning in her space black eyes,
And held out her hand to me.
I smiled back and took her hand in mine.
A thunderclap shook the sky,
But was eclipsed by the sound of her wings.

— *Eric Buck*

The College Pitcher

He rises from his comfy bed
With thoughts of baseball in his head
He puts the butter on the bread
Ready for the day ahead.

He goes to the morning lift
Training to get strong and bold
He throws the ball fast and swift
He is doing good, so he is told

He calmly awaits his first class
Doing everything he can to pass
School seems like a downhill slope
But he uses baseball to heal and cope

Practice is shortly coming around
He puts on his glove and hat
Waiting to hear the beautiful sound
Of a baseball missing the bat

With every throw he gives a grin
A nice big smile above his chin
He goes to bed right around ten
Anxious to do it again and again

— *Chandler Ball*



Untitled - Chandler Ball



Route 280 - Rebecca Ferron



Dreams of Utah - *Rebecca Ferron*

One for the Road

(One Act Comedy)

Cast of Characters

PINO: 35 years old, a bartender

FRANCIS: 45 years old, a barfly

RUTH: 28 years old, a customer

BLIND MAN: 40 years old, blind English Professor

BALLOON VENDOR: 50 years old, a street person

Setting: DEL'S tavern, a small neighborhood bar on Chicago's north side.

Hanging on the wall behind the bar is a large illuminated painting of a beautiful lakeside scene: a tent, smoke curling from a campfire, a canoe ready at the shore. On the other wall are a juke box and a telephone. There's a little hall that leads to the restrooms.

At Rise: FRANCIS, a middle-aged barfly in a beat-up trench coat, is at the bar, gazing at the painting, daydreaming. PINO, the bartender, a slightly younger Hispanic, sits on a stool behind the bar, reading a newspaper. Suddenly FRANCIS rises and shouts.

FRANCIS: Smell that?

PINO: Come on Francis, drink up and go home.

FRANCIS: Hey! I said, do you smell that?

PINO: Smell what?

FRANCIS: That's trout bein' pan fried over a campfire.

PINO: Smells like carp to me.

FRANCIS: Go to hell. Ain't no damn carp in my lake.

PINO: You got to have carp. They're bottom feeders. You need 'em to keep the lake clean.

FRANCIS: You're a bottom feeder. All I know is I got up way before sunrise, paddled my canoe out to the middle of the lake and caught me a mess of trout. No ugly carp. Beautiful rainbow trout. Then I fried 'em up and sat under that

waterfall and had me a breakfast fit for a king. I'm King of the Lake.

PINO: You know, if you wouldn't spend all your time and money in here you might be able to go someplace just like that and do it for real.

FRANCIS: Nah. Wouldn't be the same. One for the road!

PINO: You've been saying that for the last three hours. Why don't you go home and sleep it off?

FRANCIS: One for the road!

PINO: You've had enough.

FRANCIS: I'll be the judge of that.

(PINO pours a glass of beer)

PINO: All right, here. And don't take all night drinkin' it either.

FRANCIS: Beer was meant to be savored, not swilled. I'm one of the few people left on earth that realizes that fact.

(FRANCIS takes a few sips and then rests his head on the bar. During PINO's speech he makes no movement.)

PINO: Ah, never mind. I like having you here. You know why? Because when I look at you I know that no matter how much I mess up in my life, I will never be as bad as you. If mi madre is called to heaven, if a woman breaks my heart or, cuts off my pene--nothing would make me come in here every night and talk like a fool and drink until I pass out. There's only one guy worse than you. You know that? That stinkin' Carl. He comes in wearin' old people diapers so he don't have to get up and go to the can. Sits there and pisses his pants all night long. I should pay you to come in here and drink, cause just lookin' at you makes me feel good about myself.

(The door opens and BALLOON VENDOR, a small Hispanic man, enters carrying four balloons tied to a long stick with string)

BALLOON VENDOR: You wanna buy a balloon?

PINO: What have you got there? Balloons, eh? *(PINO examines the balloons)*
These ain't even got helium in them. You just blew them up with your mouth,
didn't you?

BALLOON VENDOR: Si. Good balloons.

PINO: Now, why do you think anybody would want a balloon?

BALLOON VENDOR: They make you happy?

PINO: No. Listen to me. If you want to be successful vendor, you got to sell
something that people need. I sell liquor because people need it. See that guy
there? He can't live without it.

BALLOON VENDOR *(moving over to FRANCIS)* How about you mister? You
wanna buy a balloon? Mister?

(BALLOON VENDOR taps FRANCIS on the shoulder)

PINO: Don't—

*(When BALLOON VENDOR gets no response he shakes FRANCIS, who jumps up,
bellowing like a bull, wildly swinging his arms, knocking over his beer)*

PINO: Hey!

(Terrified, BALLOON VENDOR runs out the door)

FRANCIS: *(finally calming down and examining his overturned, empty glass)*
Refill.

PINO: *(wiping up the mess)* No.

FRANCIS: Excuse me?

PINO: You're cut off.

FRANCIS: May I ask why?

PINO: I told you about doin' that

FRANCIS: Doin' what?

PINO: Goin' crazy like that.

FRANCIS: Somebody grabbed me.

PINO: That's okay.

FRANCIS: Everybody's always grabbin me and pushin me and poking me, and I'm sick of it and I ain't gonna take it anymore. Now, I would like another beer please.

PINO: No.

FRANCIS: One for the road!!!

PINO: Read my lips. No!

(FRANCIS goes berserk again. PINO grabs a baseball bat and holds it aloft in a threatening manner)

PINO: You're cut off. I'm the bartender and that gives me the power to cut off anyone at any time.

FRANCIS: But I'm your best customer. Hell, I'm your only customer. You'd be lost without me. Now what do you want me to do? You want me to get down and beg? Cause I'll do it. I will get down on my hands and knees and beg.

PINO: Yeah. Do it. That's what I want you to do.

FRANCIS: Forget that. Give me a beer.

PINO: This is the last one. You spill it — too bad.

FRANCIS: That's more like it.

PINO: You wouldn't act this way if Del was here.

FRANCIS: Yeah. I'd kick his ass like I did that one time.

PINO: That's funny. As I recall, *he* kicked *your* ass.

FRANCIS: Well. Somebody kicked somebody's ass. I was there. I saw it all. What's a man got to do to get left alone in this world? (*He watches as PINO goes back to reading his paper*) You liked threatening me with that baseball bat, didn't you? Made you feel like a real man. Except you and me both know you'd never use it.

PINO: Don't bet on it.

FRANCIS: You know what you are? (*PINO ignores him*) I said you know what you are?

PINO: No, Francis. What am I? You know how much I respect your opinion.

FRANCIS: You're a not right person.

PINO: What?

FRANCIS: There's something not right about you. I don't know exactly what it is, but you're missing something.

PINO: You're going to be missing some teeth if you don't watch it.

(*Enter RUTH, an attractive, but frazzled young woman, carrying a suitcase and a balloon*)

PINO: Ha. I see you bought one of his balloons. If you don't mind me asking, what did you pay for it?

RUTH: Fifty cents. I felt bad for the guy.

PINO: What can I get you?

RUTH: Uh ... gin and tonic.

FRANCIS: Good choice.

RUTH: Is that clock right?

PINO: Sure is.

RUTH: I got to catch a bus at eleven. I thought I'd wait in here. There's some scary looking guys over at the station.

PINO: *(serving her the drink)* There you go. You want to run a tab?

RUTH

Yes, please. *(She takes a long drink. FRANCIS watches with interest)*

FRANCIS: Attagirl. So, where you headed?

RUTH: Um ... Detroit.

FRANCIS: The Motor City. Best cars in the world. Ford. Chrysler Chevrolet. Cadillac. Pontiac...

PINO: All right, Francis. You don't got to name all the cars in the world.

FRANCIS: And Motown. Best music in the world. Marvin Gaye, The Supremes. Little Stevie Wonder. All we got here is the blues. I get sick of the blues. You like the blues?

RUTH: Sometimes.

FRANCIS: You coming back?

RUTH: What?

FRANCIS: You just going for a visit or you gonna stay there?

PINO: Francis.

RUTH: I don't know for sure.

PINO (*warning*): Francis.

FRANCIS: What?

(*PINO mouths the words, "Leave her alone"*)

FRANCIS: What?

(*PINO mouths the words again.*)

FRANCIS: WHAT? So how long you say you're gonna be gone?

RUTH: I don't know.

FRANCIS: Wow. Must be nice. (*no answer*) I said it must be nice.

RUTH: What?

FRANCIS: Just pack up a suitcase and go away and not even know for how long. Gee, no wonder you look scared.

RUTH: What are you talking about? I'm not scared. (*FRANCIS laughs*) I'll take another drink. Where's your restrooms?

PINO: Right around the corner.

(*RUTH gets up, then remembers her suitcase.*)

PINO: It's okay. I'll watch it.

FRANCIS: (*to RUTH as she goes around the corner*) We'll have to go bowlin' sometime. (*To PINO*) Mark my words. She's hiding something.

PINO: What are you talking about?

FRANCIS: She's about ready to jump out of her skin. I saw this movie one time where this woman stole money from the bank she worked at and took off. And you know where she kept all the money? In her suitcase.

PINO: You think if she had a bunch of money in her suitcase she'd leave it out here with us?

FRANCIS: Women are a mystery to you, aren't they, Pino?

PINO: What are you talking about?

FRANCIS: I've been married three times.

PINO: So what?

FRANCIS: So I'm going to have me a look.

(He goes for the suitcase and Pino is on him with the baseball bat. He pushes Francis away from the suitcase and Francis goes berserk.)

FRANCIS: Don't touch me.

PINO: You leave that suitcase alone or I'll crack your head open.

FRANCIS: I don't like that violent kind of talk from you, Pino. Finders keepers losers weepers.

PINO: You're the one that's gonna be weepin' in a minute. She's in here ... she's my customer and it's my duty to protect her and her belongings.

FRANCIS: Come on. Tell you what. I'll split it with you fifty-fifty. How about that? You could have your own place. Think about it. Pino's place. Pino's place. Real classy. You could have a hundred ... no a thousand different kinds of beer from all over the world. You could have women dressed up like French maids sashaying all over the place ... and I'd keep my eye on 'em, I'd keep 'em in line. You wouldn't

have to worry about that. And you could have a big old fish tank—a watcha call it—a—aquarium like they got over in the Chinese joint. Only bigger.

PINO: Sit down and drink your beer.

(PINO returns to behind the bar. Francis picks up the suitcase and starts running toward the door.) FRANCIS! *(PINO holds the bat up to the painting.)* I'll punch a hole in it.

FRANCIS: *(halting, terrified)* You wouldn't do that.

PINO: Bring it back.

FRANCIS: It's awful heavy, Pino. She's got something in here. I'm telling you.

PINO: That's her business.

FRANCIS: Can't I just open it a little? Just enough to stick my hand in and feel around? She'll never know. *(waits for an answer, but PINO just waggles the bat at the painting)* All right. All right. You want to be poor all your life that's fine with me. Takin' orders. Kissin' Del's ass every day. That's fine with me. That's fine and dandy with me.

(FRANCIS puts money in the juke box. A Motown song plays. FRANCIS starts doing a very bizarre dance. RUTH emerges from the back and watches with morbid fascination. FRANCIS approaches and beckons her to dance. She shakes her head, and seeing her suitcase by the juke box, tries to get to it, but FRANCIS blocks her way.)

PINO: All right, now. Leave her alone.

(FRANCIS grabs RUTH. She slaps him across the face. FRANCIS, stunned and hurt, pulls the jukebox cord, shutting it off. Then he stumbles back to his seat and stares at the lake scene. RUTH retrieves her suitcase)

RUTH: What the hell's the matter with you? You don't go grabbin' a girl like that. Especially when you don't even know her. What do you expect she's gonna do? Huh? You got a big problem, you know that? You think women were put on this

earth for your amusement don't you? To use and treat like dirt don't you? That's what you think, ain't it? Come on admit it. What's your problem? (to PINO)
What's his problem?

PINO: He can't hear you. He's on vacation.

(RUTH sees that FRANCIS is hypnotized by the painting. She studies the painting herself, and is drawn to it.)

RUTH: What? Oh vacation eh? Oh yeah. That's a nice place. That's a real nice place. They got places like that where I'm going. In Michigan they got places just like that. My dad used to take me fishing. He was a good man. A real man. *(She drinks)* I wish there were more men like my daddy. *(to FRANCIS)* I'm sorry I hit you. It's been a long time since I danced with anybody. I guess I forgot how you can get carried away. Let me buy you a beer. Can I buy you a beer?

PINO: He's had enough. He needs to go home.

RUTH: One more beer. One for the road.

PINO: The lady wants to buy you a beer Francis.

FRANCIS: Okay.

PINO: What do you say to the lady, Francis?

FRANCIS: Thank you.

RUTH: You're welcome.

(PINO draws FRANCIS a beer. RUTH proposes a toast)

RUTH: To my daddy. *(RUTH and FRANCIS clink glasses and drink)*

FRANCIS: What's you gonna do with all that money? You don't need all that money.

RUTH: (*to PINO*) What's he talking about?

FRANCIS : All the money you got in there.

PINO: He thinks you're bank robber.

RUTH: A bank robber? Where'd he get that idea?

PINO: He saw it on TV.

FRANCIS: I've been married three times.

PINO: So what?

FRANCIS: So I know when a woman's hiding something. I know when she put a dent in the fender. I know when she bought a new dress when you told her not to, or when she's catting around ... and when she's robbed a bank and got a suitcase full of money.

RUTH: So you're an expert on women, eh? (*She finishes her drink*) I'll have another one please.

PINO: You sure? (*RUTH stares him down*) Ok. (*He makes her another drink*)

RUTH (*nodding toward FRANCIS*): Quite a character, isn't he?

PINO: He didn't mean nothing. Just ignore him.

RUTH: No. I want to hear what he thinks of women. He's such an expert. Women are all liars, right? Men never lie, do they? Men are so damn noble. You really think I got a bunch of money in there? (*to PINO*) Ha. Look at you. You think I'm a bank robber too?

PINO: I didn't say nothing.

RUTH: You want to see? You want to see my big secret? Want to see what I'm hiding?

FRANCIS: Yeah.

(RUTH opens the suitcase. Frances digs around, finding a clothes iron and clothing. He is disappointed at finding no money, but then he realizes that he has RUTH's nightgown in his hand. He sniffs it as if it were a bouquet of flowers. RUTH grabs it from him)

RUTH: There. Satisfied? *(She throws the nightgown back in the suitcase, then shuts it)* Now can we all get on with our lives? You're right about one thing though. I am running away. Not from the cops though. You want to hear about it? No? Why not? You're obviously starved for entertainment around here. I got married. Why? Who knows. I guess I wanted someone to take care of me. Nothing wrong with that, is there? Everybody wants to be taken care of. Then one night we were coming home from a party. We were both drunk, but I wasn't as drunk as him so I drove. We fought over the keys first, and I won. Then we got into another fight. He says I was flirting with some guy. I wasn't. But he wouldn't listen. Then he brings up the stuff I did before I even met him. He always brought up that stuff after he'd had a few. "You were flirting with that guy," he starts screaming. "What do you think I am, blind?" Then he called me ... well, never mind what he called me. I slapped him and he slapped me back and off the road we went. All I wanted was for somebody to take care of me, but for five years now it's been me takin' care of him. And him cursin' me every day for it.

PINO: That's too bad. So he's crippled?

RUTH : No. Blind. The glass—he got glass in his eyes. You ever been married?

PINO: No.

RUTH: Take it from me—aww, what do I know? Don't listen to me.

PINO: I go my own way.

RUTH: Sounds like a lonely way to live. But you seem like a nice guy. You'll find somebody.

PINO: I've been tending bar for five years now and I ain't seen one happily

married person.

RUTH: My daddy was happily married. (*PINO shrugs*) He was. They were married for forty years and they never had one real fight.

PINO: Maybe you just didn't see it.

RUTH: I would have seen it. Or heard it. You know why they didn't fight? Because they respected each other. They loved each other. Really loved each other. And they forgave each other. When you find the right girl. Don't hold stuff she did in the past against her. Let her start over if she wants to. Everybody deserves a second chance. You know?

PINO: Depends on what she did, I suppose.

RUTH: If you really loved somebody, it wouldn't matter what they did.

PINO: What did you do?

RUTH: That's none of your damn business.

PINO: Maybe you should go wait at the station. You won't have to wait too long.

RUTH: Gimme another drink.

PINO: You're gonna have to ask a lot nicer than that.

RUTH: Sorry. May I please have another drink?

(*PINO serves her*)

RUTH: Sure. He's going to go crazy when he wakes up and I'm gone. They're gonna hear him yelling all over the neighborhood ... breakin' things. I know I should have told him. But it would have been too hard. I never would have been able to leave. I'm a coward. I wrote him a note. Of course he's gonna have to get somebody to read it to him. It's the best I could do. I'm gonna get on that bus and fall asleep and not wake up till I'm far away from here. (*looking at FRANCIS, who*

has passed out) Did he say he was married three times?

PINO: Yeah, but I think it was to the same woman.

RUTH: So you go your own way, eh? Don't take offense or nothing, but are you gay?

PINO: Man, oh, man. No, lady, I'm not. I guess I just didn't come from Leave it to Beaver land like you. Not only that (*He grabs his newspaper*) You ever read about what's goin' on in the world? Here—you see anything about love? Here's a guy killed his whole family. And here—here's a guy stole people's life savings.

RUTH (*taking the paper*): Look, in the back, the announcements. People getting married every day. See how happy they look?

PINO: So what?

(*BLIND MAN enters. He taps around with his cane, knocking over a display of snacks. Pino goes and helps him to a barstool. RUTH gets up, mortified.*)

PINO: What can I get for you?

BLIND MAN: A drink. What the hell do you think I came here for?

PINO: What kind of drink?

BLIND MAN: A drink with alcohol in it, what the hell do you think? Be creative.

PINO: How about a beer?

BLIND MAN: I said a drink. Beer is not a drink. If I have to do your thinking for you man, then we are both in a lot of trouble. Can you make a martini?

PINO: Yeah.

BLIND MAN: Prove it. Come on, come on, hurry it up. I haven't got all night. Are you the manager?

PINO: No, I just work here.

BLIND MAN: Not much longer, you sad excuse for a man. What nationality are you?

PINO: I'm American.

BLIND MAN: You sound like a wetback to me.

PINO: Hey! Watch your mouth. There's no need to get nasty.

BLIND MAN (*mocking*): There's no need to get nasty. There's no need to get nasty. What mental institution did you escape from?

PINO: If you don't like it here, you can go someplace else.

BLIND MAN: I love this place. It's *you* I can't stand. Now get me my drink or I'll have to beat you.

PINO: I'm not serving you.

BLIND MAN (*mocking*): I'm not serving you. I'm not serving you. Talk like a man, you mealy-mouthed moron.

PINO: That's it. Hit the road.

BLIND MAN: Do you have a gun?

PINO: What?

BLIND MAN: WHAT? Don't all you slum dwellers always have guns? Behind the bar. Listen to me ... do you have a gun?

PINO: No.

BLIND MAN: Then here. Feel free to use mine. (*BLIND MAN pulls out a gun and he and PINO wrestle over it.*) Shoot me you loser. Shoot me, you gutless bag

of dung. Save your life! (*PINO takes the gun away and goes to the phone on the wall*) What are you doing?

PINO: I'm calling the cops.

(*He starts dialing but RUTH stops him*)

BLIND MAN: What? You're not man enough to deal with this situation yourself? All you have to do is shoot me. I'm threatening your life. I'm crazy. I'm dangerous. I'm a mad dog. Have you no sense of civic duty. (*He sniffs the air*) Ruthie? I can smell her. Ruthie? (*to PINO*) Is there a lady present?

PINO: No.

BLIND MAN: Are you positive? My olfactory apparatus tells me otherwise. Ruthie? Was there a lady here earlier? With a suitcase?

(*RUTH shakes her head at PINO*)

PINO: Yeah. But she left a long time ago.

BLIND MAN: I see. Put down the phone. It's over. I'll behave.

PINO: I'm still not serving you. (*holds up gun*) And I'm hanging on to this.

BLIND MAN: I don't care. I've had enough. I could drink the town dry and still not have the courage. I thought if provoked someone enough, they'd do it for me. I failed even in that. You're a cool headed young man. I applaud you. (*He fishes in his pocket for a cigarette, but the pack is empty. He crumples it up and throws it. It bounces off FRANCIS' head, not rousing him. BLIND MAN finds a note in his pocket*) Do you have a cigarette?

PINO: No.

BLIND MAN: She left me this note. Can you imagine it? Leaving a note for a blind man. Apparently she wanted me to suffer further humiliation by having to ask a total stranger to read it to me. It's a nice little letter. She writes much better than

she talks, I can tell you that. She's something of a hillbilly after all. No, that's too kind. She's white trash. I am an educator, for God's sake! An English professor! What the devil was I doing with someone like that? But I misjudged her. All this time I thought she was merely stupid. Now I see that she was also cruel. How did she appear to you? Happy?

PINO: She looked happy.

BLIND MAN: Was she with anybody?

(RUTH shakes her head)

PINO: Yeah. She was.

BLIND MAN: A man?

(RUTH waves her hands at PINO, trying to get him to stop)

PINO: Yeah.

BLIND MAN: What did he look like?

PINO: Oh. He was—you know. Tall. Very handsome.

BLIND MAN: Did they leave together?

PINO: Yeah. They did.

BLIND MAN: She's taking him home to meet mother. I called the old witch. She told me her lovely daughter was taking the bus home, but she said nothing about a traveling companion. What's the matter? Doesn't he have a car? Or was he afraid they might get into an argument and crash into a tree and he'd fly through the windshield like a crippled bird and spend the rest of his life in total darkness? I probably just missed them. I'll bet they saw me standing in the station--laughing at me, liquor on their breath--on their way to a new life.

PINO: Yeah---and they were hugging and kissing and grabbing each other.. *(RUTH*

takes FRANCIS' beer and splashes PINO's face) Hey! What the hell--?

BLIND MAN: What's going on? Ruth? I know you're here. Answer me, please. I just want to talk to you. *(He gets up and waves his cane around, trying to find RUTHIE. She dodges it and flattens against the jukebox. BLIND MAN probes with his cane, almost touching her)* You see her don't you? She's beautiful isn't she?

PINO: I don't see nobody.

(BLIND MAN finally gives up and sits back down).

BLIND MAN: She's driven me insane.

PINO: Yeah. They'll do that to you.

BLIND MAN: I never knew how much I loved her until now. And now I'm never going to see her again. And I don't deserve to. I don't blame her for leaving me. I treated her like a dog. I was always insulting her. It just makes no sense. I was always afraid she was going to leave me, so I treated her in such a way that she had no choice but to leave me. What sense does that make? I'm all alone now. No one on this planet cares if I live or die. Oh God! If only I could have one more chance. Just one more chance. I would show her what love really is. Every day for the rest of her life she would know what it's like to be really, truly loved ...

(RUTH walks behind him. BLIND MAN senses her presence and sniffs the air.)

BLIND MAN: Ruthie? Oh, honey. I know you're there. *(To PINO)* Stop her! Don't let her leave.

(BLIND MAN reaches over and grabs FRANCIS. FRANCIS goes berserk and wrestles the blind man to the ground and starts strangling him. Both of them are making horrific sounds.)

RUTH: Get off of him! Leave him alone!

(PINO jumps over the bar with his bat and raises it like he's going to hit FRANCIS, then changes his mind and tries to pull FRANCIS off the BLIND MAN,

but FRANCIS elbows him in the gut and PINO falls back and curls up in the fetal position, the breath knocked out of him. RUTH picks up the bat and konks FRANCIS in the head. Francis lets go, and rolls over clutching his skull. RUTH stands over the BLIND MAN, trying to decide what to do.)

BLIND MAN (*gasping and holding his throat*): Who is that? Your lover? Why didn't you let him kill me? That's what you want isn't it? To be rid of me forever? Well you'll never get rid of me. I'm going to haunt you forever Do you hear me? Every day for the rest of your life you're going to remember what you did to me. RUTHIE! Don't leave. I love you! You harlot! Come on baby, I can't live without you. You tramp! Please! Please! Oh, God. Oh, God why did you do this to me? Why? Why?

(RUTH is gone by this time. PINO rises, holding his gut. He helps BLIND MAN up and onto a barstool, and then does the same for FRANCIS.)

PINO: All right, you two. Get up. (*to BLIND MAN*): You all right?

BLIND MAN: That's a supremely stupid question.

PINO: Yeah. I guess so. Listen, I lied. She wasn't with anybody.

BLIND MAN: She wasn't? Are you sure?

PINO: Yeah. I just made it up.

BLIND MAN: That was very cruel, young man.

PINO: I know.

BLIND MAN: Why?

PINO: The way you were acting. The things you said.

BLIND MAN: I apologize. So she's going to Detroit alone?

PINO: I guess so. Listen, maybe you two will get back together some day. Maybe you both just—you know—need some time apart.

BLIND MAN: Do you really think that's possible?

PINO: Yeah. Anything's possible.

BLIND MAN: That's right. That's right. Let me buy you fellows a drink.

PINO: Sure, what the hell. What do you say, Francis? One for the road?

FRANCIS: Naw. I got church in the morning.

(BLACKOUT)

— *S. D. Lavender*



Old Pembroke Jail - *Rebecca Ferron*



Beauty Closer than it Appears - *Martina Irvin*



Touched by God - *Martina Irvin*

What is?

What is? I cannot know.
I exist, that's all.
I exist—I breathe, obey, repeat,
Sometimes sleep
And this, for most, is what is.

As the sun hits the planet,
I am inside four walls;
As the water flattens the shore
I sip coffee to get by.

As the spider weaves webs,
I produce who knows what,
And what what for?
That, I cannot know.

I cannot know how or when or why;
I just know I don't know.
The only certainty is that uncertainty is there —
The what, the where... here?

Yes, here.
What is ? Now I know, or I think I know
What is... it's fear, fear, oh yes, fear,
It holds me down.

Yes, it's here.
Fear.
I breathe, obey, repeat, and if not for fear,
I could simply breathe.

— *Charlene Ayala*

Shimmer Gaze

As I stare into the dense, forward mirror embroidered with the pearls handed down from my mother and her mother's mother,

At the reflection of a bronze, well-kept woman who glances down out of uncertainty immediately as eye contact is revealed, I remember.

I am reminded of the young dame who once occupied this vanity eons ago.

A maiden descended from maids turned housewife through evolution of dignity

And a journey of realization of how much a curve in the waist or a batting of eyes can decide one's lifeline for love.

You never needed affection and nightly harbored a salty distaste for the approval of fellow adolescents.

No, you were your own kept company despite your untimely, lonesome giggles that uttered overboard from the ships of your lips which crashed into one another within each ambush of a wave of laughter as you strained to hold them at bay, Surrendering and being pulled back and about by your crescent turned eclipse of a hand in a useless attempt to conceal your shipwrecked smile

Which brought about humorous accusations from the lips of foreign oceans where your lunar fingertips wouldn't dare to land.

Thus your countenance conceded further into the depths of solitude, submerging and resurfacing onto "No Man's Land".

Your innocence was brutally battered and slain in its chambers where it laid behind your ribcage,

Silenced

After your realization that this kingdom of the earth was corrupted with a lust for your amber, glazed lips and greed for your partaking in once taboo pagan rituals.

You refused to be one with the majority because you didn't want to get your hands soiled.

You believed that you could be better than the commoners, but you were tainted and told that you weren't the fairest of them all.

You began to believe that your inner enchantress was cursed with the forbidden fruit of the second glance

Which caused you to alter yourself and you became vain for nothing.

You learned this the hard way.

Your denial of this futile accusation led you to be tricked into thinking that in order to be a queen you must straighten your coarse hair and lighten your aura or else your crown would be called bitter and urban, leaving your throne to become broken

Pour soul: you didn't realize you were ugly.

Until they told you that you were.

Until they forced you to be.

You were ahead of your time, baby girl.

You didn't get the memo of the new trend of being a black orchid in the midst of a browning cotton field in southern rurals.

Your faults became self-inflicted black and blue bruises upon your back so that you had no choice but to learn.

You were once a child who simultaneously yearned for attention and the will to want to be alone.

Nonetheless you couldn't be alone, for unwanted thoughts had crept into your mind uninvited so often that your lullaby towards a night's silence was the reasons that the next day's stars would be brighter.

Your ironic trigger-happy cynicism revolved into Russian Roulette as the struggle for sanity became barren, thus unfruitful.

You couldn't go out with a bang, no, you were a coward.

An ultimatum with hell or high water, you swam at your own risk and increased the chance of being cast away into a typhoon of impurity where in your final moments your existence fluttered before your pupils

And you know that you know how this voyage ends.

You've been here before in this body of moisture.

It is revealed unto you in your instance of salvation as you float upon the Jordan, apologizing to the northernmost star for forsaking it's guidance and therefore realizing that you are not weak, but you've had enough.

I know some things are meant to make you stronger, but you became torn at your own expense.

Problems that were not your own begin to quarrel with lonesome because you knew you were needed but weren't told why.

Your essence of virtue orbited into an uncontrollable loathing that was pulled into a soul of forgiveness as a last attempt for self recognition.

Therefore, whatever you choose, go against your gut, for you are compromised.

Your mind tended to play childish tricks on you while your heart saw the greater purpose.

Although, you didn't trust your heart for the belief that it was too weak and too fond of the mistake of becoming familiar with the word "mistake"

Which is why you should cherish your most underestimated organ because I know the price of walking in the midst of the forked roads:

Often wanting one side more than the other and choosing the vice you ought nought.

Let it happen.

Only from this pressure can you be reborn into a cold-cut, glass rock.

Even then, will mankind lust after your stainless epithet and beauty only heard of through the vineyards overexposed roots that tend to alter a man's perception of your god-given value.

Despite that, only some will obtain the means to behold your rarity only to render you hostage as novelty, where you perceive your worth but not your purpose.

For this reason only, you won't look into the mirror as often.

The distant memory of Adam's ale haunts you in your stare as your hands become nautical and know that you truly never made it home.

— *Katelyn Milton*



Wisp and Tide - *Rebecca Ferron*



Southern Orchard - *Rebecca Ferron*

Maybe Just Maybe

Is what we call love is really poison or maybe a mask of a smile hidden behind darkness or maybe a high or a drug that may ease the pain but never goes away maybe it's toxic maybe when you hold me I feel happiness but you really may be taking over my body maybe when you kiss me your controlling my mind or maybe when you touch me your controlling my thoughts maybe when your on my mind your breaking me down on when you so call care your destroying my heart maybe you love so hard because your tearing me apart maybe love is a curse maybe it's an obstacle maybe it's so bad that's why it's hard to fall out of it maybe that's why people go so crazy for this drug they kill for it hurt for it drink for this poison maybe just maybe if it wasn't here we would live easier maybe love is hate maybe smiles are fake maybe it's a feen maybe it's a deadly maybe it's crazy maybe is worse than cocaine I don't know just maybe we're blind in it that we are afraid to see the truth in it love maybe is a curse or a drug or a toxic or a mask or a heartbreak

— *Martina Irvin*

It's not you, it's me

Loving you hurt me.

Loving me hurt you.

Loving you was breathtaking.

Loving me was painful.

Loving you was easy.

Loving me was hard.

Loving you was a priority.

Loving me was at an expense.

Loving you was fast.

Loving me was impossible.

Losing you hurt.

Losing me hurt more.

- Faith Elliott

Goodbye bright light

How could you have been so bright?

What made you lose your sight?

I'm afraid you gave up your fight.

I'm scared that you just might.

How could you have gone into the night?

Was it a scary sight?

I'm afraid you're not alright.

I'm scared I'll lose you in the daylight.

- Faith Elliott



Dry Paradise - *Rebecca Ferron*

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