



Black Rock & Sage

Issue 22, 2023
Idaho State University

Black Rock & Sage is a journal of creative works published annually through the Department of English and Philosophy at Idaho State University (ISU) with assistance from the Art, Music, Theatre, and Dance departments. All artistic contributions, from design to literature to music, have been produced by graduate and undergraduate students in departments from across the university. The magazine is open for submissions year round, and each issue's deadline is February 14. For more information about the journal, see our website at blackrockandsage.org or @brs_isujournal on Instagram.

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Cover: "Paper Town" by Emmie Henderson

Black Rock & Sage

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Sarah Rick

Editor's Note

Black Rock & Sage resides as a treasured corner of community for me within the university. As a dissertating doctoral student, most of my school days are spent writing in a silent office, my only contact with the academic world a few perfunctory emails. *Black Rock & Sage* connects me with other students as we work toward a shared vision. Now that I'm no longer attending classes, I find myself thinking about those who attend ISU in ways that might feel different or non-traditional. Since we are a commuter campus, many of my peers drive, sometimes long distances, for a class or two and then leave to continue life apart. At times, we also feel mythically isolated by interminable winters that push us to burrow into our homes. I'm writing this in early April, and the snow just won't quit.

Adding a campus like ISU's to the often solitary nature of study makes artistic connections that foster individuals being seen, included, and protected all the more important. As free speech and critical thinking in libraries and university classrooms face increasing opposition, *Black Rock & Sage* continues to commit to endeavors that encourage students to share ideas, works, and experiences. *BR&S* strives to create space for systemically silenced voices to be loud.

Much of this year's poetry indeed feels like a collection of underrepresented voices demanding to be heard. Angela Hayden's "Not a Predator! not prey" is a determined indictment of the dominant white narrative in America that consumes and reproduces Korean culture while "always sidestep[ping] past" authentic representation. Madison Straatman's poem demands that we *see* women, that we acknowledge culturally accepted violence against women's

bodies, both physical and otherwise, as well as its generational impact; while the speaker of Christopher Thomas' "ghost(s)" attempts and ultimately fails to reduce gay sexual experience to the series of black and white dichotomies portrayed by straight culture.

The prose in this issue tackles difficult and deeply personal topics in often surprisingly tender ways. Karlin Wurlitzer's "Small gods" considers the grieving process following the death of a parent and how we are irrevocably altered by loss. "It's a Wonderful Life" by E. E. Curtis examines the complicated and often tedious act of caretaking, particularly in a society where the systems designed to help people with disabilities are often broken; and in this year's Prose Prize winner "Feels Like Sinking or Something," Mae Wissert explores hidden faults and the things we often lose in problematic relationships.

I am delighted to present you with the 2023 issue of *Black Rock & Sage*. We are so grateful for the support of Idaho State University and our local community, as well as the collaborative efforts of the Music, Art, Theatre, Dance, and English Departments. This issue exists because of the energetic work of our awesome senior staff—Poetry Editor Tamisha Green, Prose Editor Joshua Lemrick, and new addition, Advertising and Social Media Intern Maxwell Yankovich—as well as our enthusiastic group of assistant editors. This journal exists because of the passion of our incredible faculty advisor, Professor Susan Goslee. What we do is a labor of love—for our region, for the arts, and for words—and we are honored to showcase this outstanding creative work by students from across the university.

BR&S Musical Performances

Jaden Andrews

“Just For a Moment”

Jaden Andrews, piano

Claire Smedley-Dye, vocals

Elsa Ferrin, upright bass

Natalie Cohen, violin

Lydia Ring, viola

Alyssa Mabey, cello

Philip Inman, drums

Recording Engineers: Ryker Reese, Sebastian Doren, and Brenden Napier

Ryan Allay

“Let’s Keep Standing”

Ryan Allay, vocals and guitar

James Breker, bass

Nathan Gregson, drum set

Ben Graham, piano

Sarah Warner, alto saxophone

Ryker Reese, tenor saxophone

Recording Engineers: Dillon Brown, Mason Miller, and Elsa Ferrin

Kedrah Brooks

“The Choice”

Kedrah Brooks, piano

Recording Engineers: Ryker Reese, Ben Graham, and Ezra Abernathy

Kedrah Brooks and Adam Redd

“Whole New Chapter”

Adam Redd, piano

Heath Owens, vocals and guitar

Benjamin Graham, shakers

Claire Smedley-Dye, guitar

Kedrah Brooks, guitar

Jaden Andrews, cajon

Recording Engineers: James Breker, Dillon Brown, and Daniel Griffith

Claire Smedley-Dye

“Too Bad”

Claire Smedley-Dye, vocals

Benjamin Graham, piano

James Breker, upright bass

Recording Engineers: Jaden Andrews, Sebastian Doren, and Kedrah Brooks

Maximo Orr

“Private Lie”

Maximo Orr, vocals

Adam Redd, piano

Ryan Rogers-Bean, bass

Heath Owens, guitar

Dillon Brown, rapper

Philip Inman, drum set

Recording Engineers: Ben Graham, Mason Miller, and Elsa Ferrin

Adam Redd
“Embracing Ebbs”
Adam Redd, piano
James Breker, bass
Caleb Coleman, drums
Jonathan Armstrong, tenor saxophone
Recording Engineers: Ryan Rogers-Bean, Jaden Andrews, and
Daniel Griffith

Kaitlin Sielaff
“What Are Your Dreams Made Of”
Claire Smedley-Dye, vocals
Heath Owens, guitar
Nick Thompson, guitar
Ryan Allay, guitar
Mason Miller, electric bass
Maximo Orr, rock organ
Kaitlin Sielaff, drum set
Recording Engineers: Jayden Simonson, Kedrah Brooks, and
Brenden Napier

Ben Graham
“Forever”
Ben Graham, piano
James Breker, upright bass
Nathan Gregson, drum set
Jonathan Armstrong, tenor saxophone
Recording Engineers: Ezra Abernathy, Ryan Rogers-Bean, and
Jayden Simonson

E. E. Curtis

Round Trip

Come. Fly six hundred eighty-four miles
from (your) white-framed suburban home.

Together, four soundless feet making tracks on fine dry dust,
we will feed ducks who ruffle
feathers coated in dusty snow,
see pairs of blue-sky eyes winking in the sun.

Reverse.
Makeup in small, pink-zippered bag.
Force like gravity on the moon, like grain tossed
up in an arc, I traverse the skies in cramped domed plane.

Turn away, slinging weekender
pack over my shoulder.
Return
back home.

Home, back
home I do not return
slinging weekender pack
as I turn

away. There is no cramped domed plane up
in an arc, no force
like gravity to center me. Makeup
was never packed in small pink bag. Reverse

of all our plans. There are no winking blue eyes to see,
no dust coated snowy feathers
of ducks we
feed together.

Instead, a message from you from
(your) home in Colorado. *Don't come.*

Small gods

A wise man once said that if you find a stick that won't break and the right place to prop it up on, you can move the whole world with just one push. He was a math guy—one must take a math man's view of the world with a grain of salt—but it's still an odd thing to claim. If some strong guy grabbed a stick and took a squat, could he just ... *push*? What would he stand on? Where would the world move *to*, *if* he could lift it? I think he'd have to be some kind of god to do so. Not the big G kind, just ... *a* god. The kind that can stand at the edge of the world and see where he could move it. He'd look out at the land with his stick and his tools, like some kind of map man, and he'd chart out where he'd have to push to shift the world *just so*.

I think, of all the gods there may or may not be, that would have to be one of the worst ones to end up as. He's got to *do it*, of course, the world moves all the time. Ask a man how it feels to fall in love, and he'll tell you it's like the earth shifts. A great win makes the whole world turn to look. A mom gives birth, and in the beat of a single, golf-ball-sized heart, her one life splits in two. But there's more to it than that. A birth, a death; a win, a loss; one is made whole, one is cracked in half. There are two sides to each coin. (The math men say this is true, too; they don't just claim it, they make *laws* on it.)

So, there's what makes his job so hard. When you pray to his shrine at the edge of the earth, does the god that Moves the World have to move it just for you? When he looks up from his map, and grabs his stick, does he think of where all the rest

of us will end up? Where *do* the rest of us end up? I still don't know. The dust has yet to settle.

• • •

Be back soon. Be good. Love you.—Dad

• • •

Pops has a large gray couch with three plush seats. Still, he sits on the arm of it, his back hunched, his legs stuck out like a doll propped up on a stand. "Why don't you sit on the seat?" I've asked, at least ten times. He just shakes his head and grins. The arm is his spot. I know that, but it still makes no sense. His wife has passed on—Ma, that's who sat on the seat next to him—and past that were his kids: my dad, who moved out years back, and my aunt, who did the same with her wife. Still, there sits Pops, perched on the arm.

The large gray couch sits in The Cave on the first floor of his house. We call it The Cave since it's so big and dark; Pops says it runs up the bill to turn the lights on, plus the large glass door in the back lets the sun shine through, so in his eyes, there's no need. The whole thing makes him look like some sort of bat on the ledge of a rock. Dad once joked that we should get him one of those things for your back, the kind that hangs you from your feet, to drive home the look. And Pops, odd man that he is, did not look all that put off by that.

When I go to see him, he spots me at the door and holds up his mug of tea, as if to say, "Hi! Come on in!" There's a mug on the stand next to the couch for me, and I grab it and breathe in the scent while I take a sip.

“How are you?” I ask.

He shrugs. “Good. My back hurts.”

I raise a brow at him.

“Well,” he adds. “*All* my joints hurt. It’s cold, and I’m old. They’re *meant* to do that.”

I eye the couch and its three plush seats, and then turn back to watch him hunched on the arm, hands braced on his knees. He shakes his head and grins once more. That’s his *spot*. When his world got moved, I guess that’s where he wound up. It’s a moot point to fight it, I know, so I take my seat at the foot of the couch, curl my hands round the mug, and watch his show with him.

• • •

The note is still pinned to the fridge. I don’t know what to do with it.

• • •

There’s a cat on the wall on the way home from work. He sits, feet and tail tucked like a train on a rail, and stares at me as I walk past. His fur is gray-brown like dry leaves in the fall. His eyes are gold in a way that seems too grand, like he’s some god just out on his break. The god of Warm Spots on a Brick Wall. He should be proud of his work.

“Hi,” I say. “I’m just on my way home.”

He only blinks. (I don’t know what I thought he would do. Smite me? Let me pass?)

“Nice day, huh?”

He blinks once more.

“Well, I’ve got to go. See you.”

I take a few steps, pause, turn back. “You did well,” I add. I point to the wall. “It looks ... warm.” It’s worth a try to get a god on your side.

• • •

When I was young, back when dad first got sick, we moved his bed to The Cave. There was more room there than in our house, plus Pops was there to take care of me. Dad would sit on the couch—in *his* spot, of course—and read all day long. He *loved* to read, that man. A book nut through and through. Each day, I’d come home from school to a new word of the day, some long, tongue-tied thing that he’d say with a grin. From then on, he’d throw them in when he talked, and wink when he did. Dad was an odd man, too. He must have gotten it from Pops.

There were some days he was too weak to get out of bed. On those days, I’d get to stay home, too. He was so thin then, and he wore a dark blue robe that was way too big on him. The nurse that came in and out of the house said it was meant to be loose so they could check on the tubes in his arms. All I knew was that I could fit in the folds of it. I’d lay next to him, and he’d wrap me up and tuck my head in the crook of his arm while he read. For hours and hours, my whole world would just be the specks of light that shone through the old, worn blue.

His voice was too soft to read out loud on those days, but he’d still breathe out the big words like they were made to be prayed with. When I said them back, he’d squeeze me as

tight as he could. So, just as you'd think would be the case for a god of Big Long Words, *I love you* was not in dad's realm. He did not say it. He felt no need. To him, *I love you* was some sort of prize to be won, like a booth game on the dock at the beach. You hit a ball just so, a bell rings, and there you go. Here's your prize! You are loved! Tell your friends and come back soon! No, the god of Big Long Words loved like he breathed. He loved in all the ways you don't see, but you miss when they're not there. That's why, the first time I saw the note, I knew.

• • •

"Look," I say, as I stop by the wall on my way home from work. The god of Warm Spots on a Brick Wall blinks at me. I dig through my bag and pull out a small, wrapped package. "Fish sticks," I explain. "We had them for lunch. I saved you some. Not that gods need to eat, I guess. But you might like to try."

The small god does not move. Not when I reach out, not when I place the small bit of fish in front of him, and not when I step back and watch. Then ... he sniffs, licks, and takes a bite.

"Good, huh?"

He hardly glances up 'til the fish stick is gone. Then he stares at me, asks for more.

I grin. "I knew you'd like it. Here."

I place the rest of the package in front of him, and he wastes no time on it. I need to go, so I wave. He pays me no mind, but his tail does tap the wall as he eats. I smile on the way home. Love might be a shrine to a god on his break.

• • •

It's dark out. The lights on the street are dim; a few stars shine through the clouds. The streets are bare, flat, smooth. *You find a stick and a good place to stand, and you can move the whole world.* I hold the note in my fist. This does *not* feel like a god's work. This feels like a man did it, just a man, just to see if he could.

"Well, there you go," I spit at the sky. "You *can* move the world. You did."

The sky blinks back, the stars are dull, the world is still. I throw the note as hard as I can. It hits the street with a *CLACK*, rolls a few times, and lands in a bush. There's a lump in my throat as I plead to a god—or a man—that does not hear me, "Now move it back."

• • •

When I come through the door, Pops does not see me. He's faced the wrong way. I walk through the hall, and I can see his ears perk up, but he still stares out at the yard through the glass door. "How are you?" I ask.

There's a pause. "I think I ought to trim the trees soon," is all he says.

Oh, right. The trees. In his youth—or so I'm told—Pops put two pear seeds in the ground. By the grace of some god, both grew to be trees, and now they stand tall and lush in the back of his yard, right next to the warm brick wall. *Pears*. Of all the fruit he could have tried, pears were the one that stuck. Did I say yet that Pops is an odd man? The god of Pears gifts

him fruit quite a lot. *Too* much, I'd say, now that he's old and slow. He tries to trim back the trees so that they don't bud as much, but when it's cold out, his back hurts too much to get up there and chop them down.

"I could give it a shot," I try.

"No, no," he says at once, and waves me away.

This is not the first time I've tried, so I can't say I'm shocked. I'm not quite sure what it is. He might not want me to kill his trees. He has, in fact, cut them *just* so for years. I've just picked the pears up off the ground, I don't have the skills for this big job. My best guess, though, is that deep down, he just wants this *one thing* to stay his. His world has moved so much, in what seems like all the wrong ways. He's prayed to all the gods he knows, and all he gets is *pears*.

• • •

Three hours post-note, Dad comes through the door, head low, eyes dull. "It came back" is all he says. His words feel choked and short. Four days post-note, his bed is back in The Cave. He tries to read, but he can't hold his arms up for too long. I read aloud for him, but the words don't feel the same on my tongue. Two weeks post-note, he spills a mug of tea. It runs down the stand next to his bed, soaks through all his books. Pops and I stare at the stack as the words bleed out. One month post-note, he's too sick to stay at home. I tape cards that say *Get Well Soon* to the wall of his room. He glares at them, so I take them down the next day.

One month and five days post-note, he takes his last breath. He's dressed in a worn blue robe, with me and Pops

at his side. His last words are *take care*. I don't cry, not at first. The dad I knew, the god of Big Long Words, has long been dead. My world had cracked in half when I first saw the note, and though I've yet to get back on my feet, I've mourned all that I can. But I do cry when I turn to Pops and see the tears on his face. I hold him and feel his sobs on my chest, and that's when the world drops off once more. You *should* lose your dad, at some point. You *might* lose faith in your god. But you're not meant to lose your son.

• • •

The god of Warm Spots on a Brick Wall rises to his feet when I get close. He does a great big stretch, and yawns right at me. I don't speak cat—or god—but I think I know what it means. “Yes, yes, here you go,” I say, as I reach for the fish sticks in my bag.

This time, he stares at me with bright gold while I make his shrine.

I step back, watch him dig in, and tilt my head. “You know, I think more folks should spend their faith on small gods like you.”

The god does not look at me, but his ears are perked, so I take it as a sign to go on.

“I prayed to a god that died right in front of me. We're eight months post-note, and I still can't use the words he took with him.” Though I guess he was just a man, too. It was my fault: I made him too much of my own world, so when we all got moved, he fell too far. (What was I meant to do? He was my *dad*. Love grows a man to a god.)

“You won't hurt me like that,” I tell the god of Warm Spots

on a Brick Wall. “You can’t turn the world on its head. Best you can do is ... what? Scratch me?”

The small god blinks at me. I see, for the first time, that the gray of his fur lies more on his face than on the rest of him. It’s turned white in a few spots near his nose. But that’s the thing: small gods give small gifts. They aren’t meant to last.

“I think I’ll pray to you for a while if that’s cool. I don’t have much to ask for, and I know you’re on your break, but ... well.” I point to the pile of fish sticks. “We both could stand to gain a few things.” I turn to leave, take a few steps, pause, turn back. “Oh, and if you know the god that Moves the World, tell him that me and Pops would like a few words.”

• • •

Be back soon. Be good. Love you.—Dad

When your dad dies, folks ask you how you are. *All. The. Damn. Time.* It’s the one thing he left me the words for. “I’m good,” I say, and they give me sad smiles back.

• • •

Pops is not in the house when I get there. I kick off my shoes by the door, and no mug of tea is there to greet me. “Pops?” Not a sound. The Cave is dark (what’s new), but not a soul in sight. The couch has a dent on the arm where no one sits. “Pops?” His room is dark. His bed is bare. There’s no note on the fridge. The door to the yard is closed, through the glass I can see ... *Oh, thank god*, I breathe.

The pear trees cast shade on the grass, and right in the gap where the sun hits, an old straw chair is pressed to the brick wall. Pops is laid there, legs stuck out like a doll, head on the back of the chair. His arms are wide, palms out, like he holds the sun in his hands. His face is turned to the sky, eyes closed. "Pops," I call through the door.

He cracks one eye, grins. "Hey, there! Care to join? It's nice out."

"You're too old to scare me like that," I say, but I go out and join him.

"Well, my bad," he laughs. I find a spot in the grass at his feet. It is warm out here.

"How are you?" I ask, for the tenth time.

"Good," he says, for the tenth time.

I turn to look at him, for the tenth time. "No joint pains?"

"Not right now." The way he's sprawled out makes it look like he's in pain, but I guess when you're that old, you look like that all the time. If I look closely, the curl of his hands is soft. His back is curved, not hunched. His face is calm, the line of his jaw is light. He's ... not *healed*, not yet, but *good*. He is, for once, good. It must be the warmth. The sun hits the brick wall, and heat seems to come off it in waves. He basks in it, lets it seep through his skin, feels it deep in his bones. From my spot at his feet, I smile, close my eyes, and turn my face to the sun. I think of gold eyes and fur like dry leaves. *Thank you*, I breathe. Love, I think, might be a god on your side.

• • •

It's dark out, but there are no clouds this time, and the stars fill the sky. What do you do when your god dies? Do you leave a spot on the couch for it? Do you let its fruit fall to the

ground? Will you leave fish sticks on the brick wall where it sat? Do you use the words he once loved, or do you leave them all with him? They don't give you a guide for this sort of thing. All I have is a creased note pinned to the fridge—*Be back soon. Be good. Love you.*

Be back soon. Well, we can't all go three for three.

Be good. I am good, I think. I don't want to move the world back to where it was, at least. It's a start. I still don't know if it was a god or a man that tipped me and Pops on our heads, but if the world moved to turn some other guy right side up, I'll let him be. On this side of the world, we'll find our way with our small gods, and we'll make do.

Love you. I've tried to find love in the cracks that formed when the world got pushed. *He* would have, I'm sure. With ease. He loved us in all the big ways that we don't see, and all the small ways we've yet to—wait. I squint and tilt my head up. If I look closely, the night sky is a dark, dark blue. The stars are specks of light that shine through it, like holes in an old, worn robe. *Oh*, I breathe. It could be that gods *don't* die. Not if you don't let them. Not if you love them back.

"Hi Dad," I say, though my voice cracks. "I miss you. I hope you're well." The sky blinks back; the wind blows like a breath. Love is a robe that keeps you warm. "You told me and Pops to take care, and we've done our best. We try to stay warm, it's good for his joints." Love is a mug of tea left out just for you. "I think—" I pause. Love is a word of the day. "I think we'll be *okay*."

Christopher Thomas

ghost(s)

Our paths crossed through screens
and brief interludes brought
(com)passionate rage,
igniting senses,
messages of
heart palpitations, wild trepidations.

Divorcing
ourselves from all that seemed right-
along you appeared,
(un)restrained in vain,
masculine, bravado.

I stumble
into apparitions,
of you and I.

Trapped between thresholds of glass,
ellipsis (un)seen,
 physicality swapped,
 for curated,
 picture-perfect anatomy.

(Un)reconciled distances,
faint diaphanous imprints faded on
my skin,
traces of gossamer tendrils
where you had been,
the moment our bodies met,
(un)leashed in lustful, (un)couth,
perversion.

So we'd say:

kink was our way,
(re)integrating each new specter predicating
silent,
secret lives,
built-in vacant worlds, we realized,

reflections of shame
in what we do
and how we met
and who we want to be.

Denied any (for)giving,
abandoning
ourselves to the ones
who are looking(?)-
to survive.

Mirrored, haunted (dis)integration,
we convinced
ourselves
otherwise,
seeking affection
in one another's lies.

Reveries of
having and holding,
sickness and health,
(in)distinct from
speculative,
addictive,
(trans)actions for:
more stimulation,
shattering undulations,

breaking into bodies
 and your bed.
 Our bed,
 or so
 your shadow said,
 dimming flashes of light.
 Dopamine hits and withdrawals,
 hollowed out recompenses
 (de)void of love,
 filling our darkening,
 growing chasm.
 Each notification
 and reply,
 echoing hapless,
 (in)sufficient,
 (com)passion.
 Luminous supposition,
 our phantasms faded to black
 reflections of years
 bound in a single thread,
 separately living
 vestiges of what we
 had never
 been.
 Vanishing, we went,
 our last words left (UN)READ

Emmie Henderson

Paper Town



Abrielle Gray

Scenic



West Jensen

The Coronation of West



Hailey Nelson

Zac



Yidan Guo

Immigrant Woman Series-Myself



Pastel

31

Kyla Childers

Grant Cabbage



Krista Smylie

Disgust



Charcoal, Pen, Colored Pencil, and Oil Pastel

Elyssa Seamons

Mitchell



Emily King

Thinking About Nothing



Aymee Wólanski

A Study of the Face #3



Courtney Reynolds

Needle Felted Galaxy #1



Black Felt, Wool, and Kool-Aid Dye

Beauyn Nichols

Duality A



Anastasia Christensen

Mackie and Daisy



Samantha Gipson

Birthday Girl



Miranda Sutherland

Snowflake



Sarah Marshall

The Leaf



Aymee Wólanski

A Study of the Face #2



Oil

43

Abrielle Gray

Streets of New York



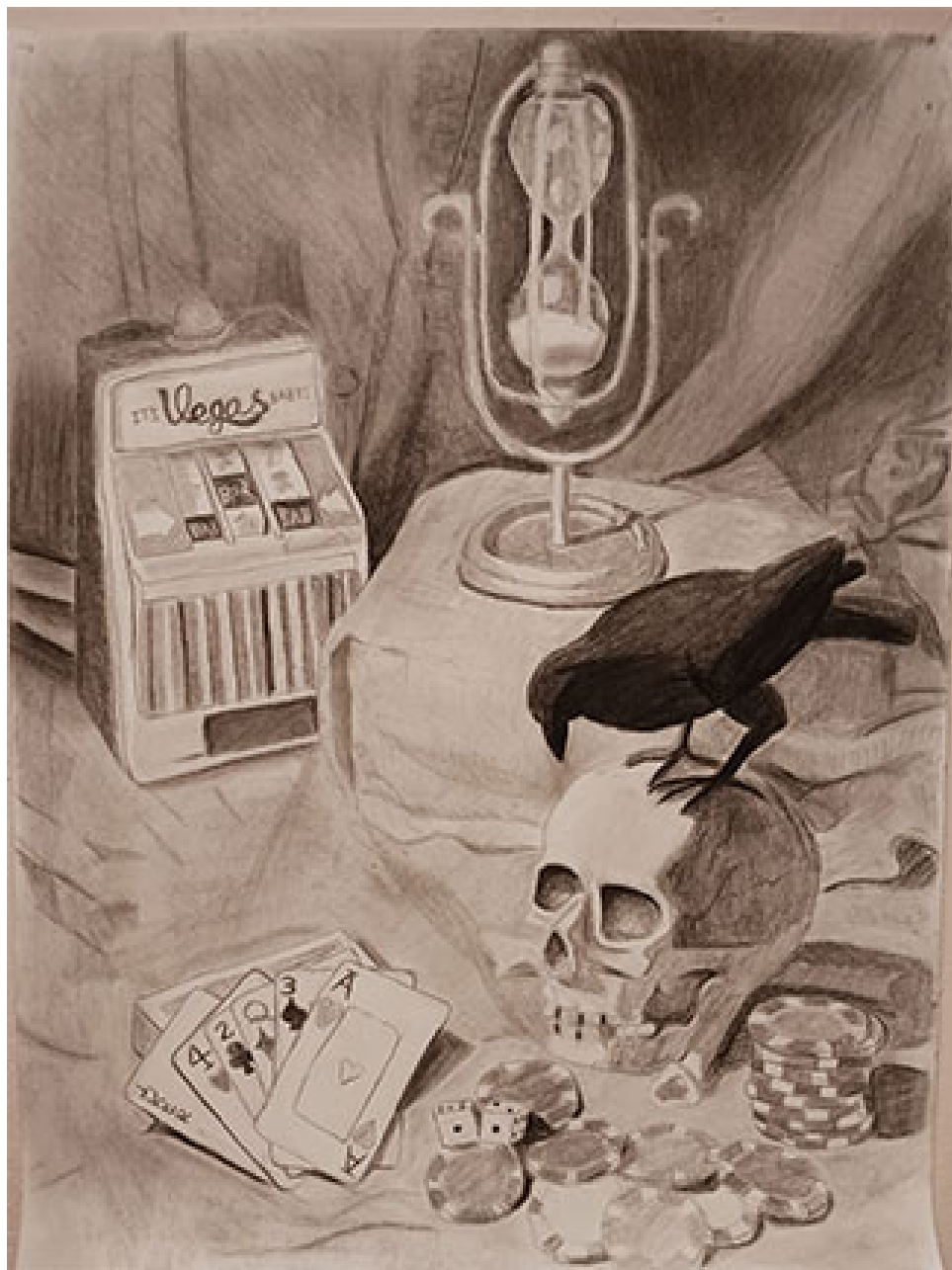
Emily King

Resting in the World



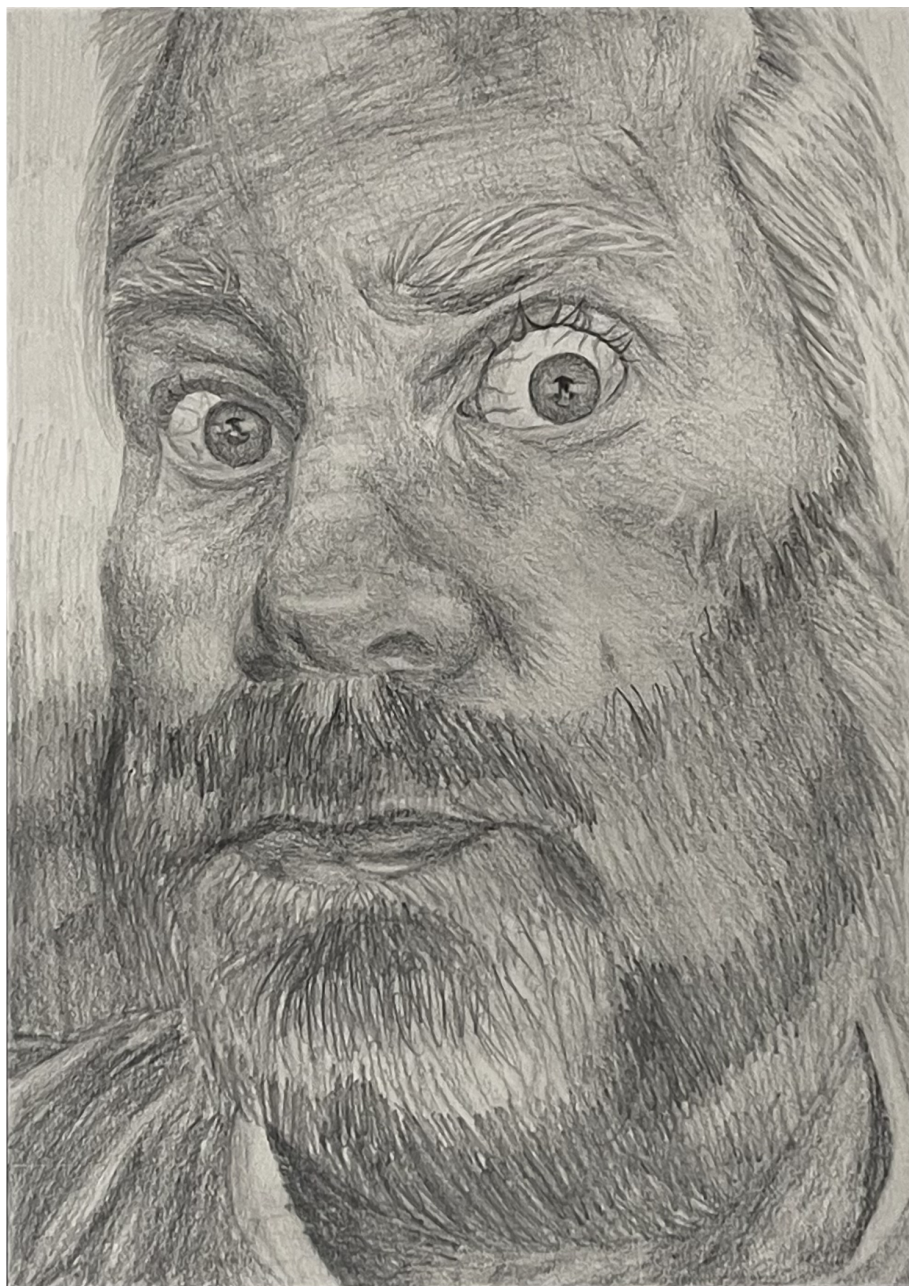
Juan Morrison

Death by Vices



Eros Auman

Father Portrait

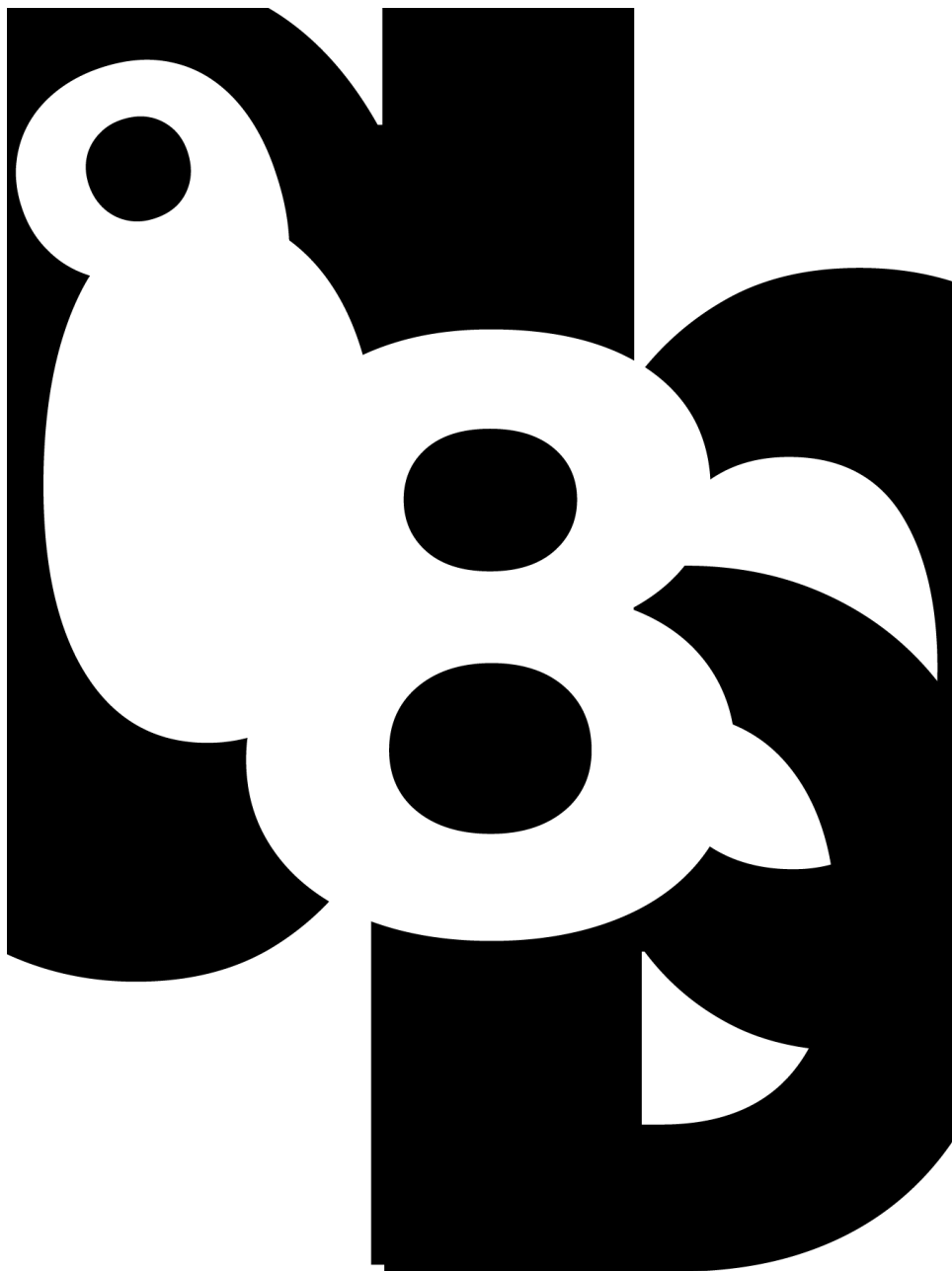


Graphite

47

Heather Johnson

Sans Serif



Sarah Marshall

She



West Jensen

Obligated



Angela Hayden

Not a predator! not prey

In these restaurants that get close to home but always sidestep past
Wood splinters, crackles held under the flame of incense
You.

Incessantly deny my right to see the tapestry of chestnut harvesting
come to life on the blank
Wall
Flinching from the split check and phantoms of averted eyes
You.

Of the salted spit of our dead sea
With vinaigrette words that sting my nose
More than my hearty, garlicky *eomuk*
Laced with *gochujang*
Could your ski-sloped, freckle-peppered one
You.

To whom I was green, pale, and tin
Foiled your plans to kill the crane
And wastefully eat only the wings
You.

Took a scalpel to the threads of my lab coat
Plucking them like the strings of your piano lover
In whose hand you placed an orange and white pill and acetone
And said you'd send your love to John
You.

Who, in curlers nightgown and broom in hand
Swat the songbirds off the roof
And proceed to preen, squawking about cherry trees
You.

Who spun yourself in honey and charged into the wasp nest
A shadow craving to be carved by the knife of your cult leader
To be made in the image of legally blonde
You.

With the silver-plated, glossiered glass hands
Blocked the kitchen scissors
From shearing the gossamer corn silk
Lest you look like the farm boy
... It's tea time
You.

Who thought correlation was causing
Me to swoon for your pyrite
Greened to the color of jade
So you.

Begged the emperor's son to glance at your receipts
Talking of your "shared allegiance"
Asking him to shoot the tiger and his friend the *gumiho*, the
princess
You.

Whose egocentric, ethnocentric insensitivity

Makes me seconds away from shooting the 2nd
... I have a piece of tape for Big Mouse
You.

May not listen to the *ajumma's saengil chukahae* song
May not drown out the Destiny I hum for Estella
May not tiptoe out of the *gisaeng's* bed chamber in the candle
light
You.

Will not break the ring-bearer's chain nor me
Will not take away our language
Because you.

Will never understand *jeong*.

You, dearest.
Managed to be racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic,
transphobic, fatphobic,
All in one Amazon prime package
Provoked a war to colonize Everything-That's-Not-You

But still, I'm here.

E. E. Curtis

It's a Wonderful Life

"I'm getting a runner's cramp just sitting here," he says to no one in particular, because he is alone in his room, shivering. Heavy metal blasts on the radio in the next room over.

The trailer has been updated with newer windows, and the city helps pay for the heat so he can at least keep from completely freezing his bony ass off. He does this by hunkering down over the heater vent and covering himself with a Tree of Life blanket. He makes a hot air balloon of warmth over himself in sixty second bursts. Then the heat rattles off for a few minutes and he's left waiting, feeling colder than before.

She takes her pills, then sleeps in her chunky four-poster bed from after dinner till three in the morning when she wakes up, shuffles to the living room couch, and turns on the cable. She will fall asleep there, slumped over, at some point around six in the morning and wake up when he makes breakfast, usually around eight.

This morning she wants banana pancakes. Yesterday it was bacon and eggs. He slices the bananas directly over the bubbling batter on the griddle. In the kitchen, the public radio station plays Gregorian chants. They get a good variety with public radio. Sometimes piano and violin, sometimes jazz, sometimes droning voices reciting the news in perfunctory or impassioned tones just right for working on a puzzle. He sprinkles on chocolate chips. The delicately veined, robust cherry-popsicle-red bougainvillea in the window is free of dust. Knickknacks on the shelves have a few years' worth.

She hangs the dishcloth on the kitchen faucet after washing up the dishes, her signal that she'll be in the shower, so don't use the hot water. They maintain loose standards of modesty. If one of them has to go when the other is in the shower, they do. There's only one toilet. He doesn't believe in holding it, and she can't.

This is their routine. Add in some smokes, some dope. Add in Barb, who drops by at random times most afternoons. Add in Matt, who drops by in the evenings after his shift at the railroad where last week that lady threw herself on the tracks. Matt goes first to the fridge and scrounges. He opens containers and sniffs. He has a glass of milk. He puts all the food back. He does this while dinner cooks: tonight, macaroni noodles with canned tomatoes. The secret ingredient is celery salt. Then, just as noodles are al dente and ready to eat, Matt leaves for his trailer across the lot.

He stretches on the floor between hot air bursts. Kneeling, he reaches his arms out in front of him and stretches back like a cat. Above him, Buddha on a blanket smiles down. In the softened leather armchair near his head, Indian Chief on a blanket stares.

"I need to get going," he says. Outside there are three turkeys, a handful of hens, some ducks who need to be fed. He raised them from the shell and they seem to still know him: Tiny Dragon, who was his particular buddy, his very own pirate bird-on-his-shoulder until he got too big to perch there. Pete, an asshole who pecks at him if he gets too close.

He waits three more bursts, four. He loses count. He stretches on the floor to loosen his back. He hears her going to her room. The idea of taking a shower seems like too much

work. "Going slow today," he says.

The need to smoke finally gets him up. He slides on sandals holding the dirty imprint of his feet and goes out to the porch. His breath leaves puffs in the air like cigarette smoke.

Tuesday is shot day. They load up into the car and he drives her to the clinic where he waits in the truck until she's done. When she starts running low on pills, he starts calling the pharmacy. He goes in person hoping that will help. He goes in again, then again. She gets more and more agitated until he has them, usually three days late. On Sundays they clean house. She likes to do the bathroom. On random days he goes to town to shop, usually determined by who has run out of food: the dogs, the birds, the people. He keeps the pantry stocked with cereals no one is allowed to eat when they are kids. He keeps bacon in the fridge most times then forgets about it until it goes rancid. He forgets that they have a whole cow in the freezer out on the front porch.

She only leaves the house to go to the clinic, so he buys all her clothes. It's a good day when everything he buys fits her. He spends her money on things she needs and wants: *Friends* slippers because she likes *Friends*, coffee, copycat thin mints from the dollar store. She walks every day on an old treadmill on the porch. He keeps it running, fixes it up when it lags from all the dust.

When his dad died, he couldn't take any time away. When he gets sick it's alright in the winter, when her family doesn't come around. But in the summer her sisters get mad at him for not working. They start coming around the house they grew up in, trying to do his chores. They overwater plants

until they die. A month worth of animal feed is gone in a week. Then they leave in a flurry of accusations, and the two of them can get on with their routine.

At some point she comes out, joins him on the porch to smoke. One of the dogs brings a broken frisbee to him, tail wagging. A rooster crows.

Madison Straatman

I See Women; Scars from Other Things

I see women with scars on their hands,
on their fingers where grease popped,
on their palms where hot pans seared,
on their hands where a *casserole-dish-for-the-family-next-*
door-because-that's-what-good-neighbors-do burned,

on their hands from other things.

Grandma's hands burned nearly to the
bone when a dinner pan caught fire.
It took months to heal:
the skin bubbled, peeled away, grew back
pink as her sabbath day lipstick and too
tender to touch.
I don't remember ever holding her hand.

I see women with scars on their body,
on their shoulders from rough lovers,
on their breasts from rough suckling babes,
on their bellies, stretched and marked by a growing *child-to-*
be, a child-now-born, a nip-and-tuck-it-all-away,

on their bodies from other things.

Aunt wouldn't let us hug her
after her second son was born.
Her cesarean scar hurt too much.

The doctors cut that boy out of her
and gave him to my mother
because his nearly died
to get him out.

I see women with scars on their souls,
on the heart from past lovers, present lovers, no lovers,
on the tongue from *don't-say-it-don't-you-dare-say-a-word*,
on the mind from thoughts ... and thoughts ... and
thoughts ...,

on their souls from other things.

Her. Blade-thin cuts split open her hip bones,
not the wrists, not the legs—
not anywhere anyone could see.
Once she stopped digging her fingers into the open wounds,
they healed over, nearly faded.
She's better, now.
I promise.

Aiden McLeish

Silk Bonnet Ct.

High School Creative Writing Contest Winner

I stared silently at the street sign. It was blackened on one end by what I had always assumed was a lightning strike long ago. The warm spring rain fell quickly, but not so heavy that I took cover from it. I let it hit me as I turned slowly on my bicycle and listened to the pattering on the pavement. Las Vegas was hot by nature, but early spring allowed for comfortable hoodie weather. As the clouds softly pummeled the city and my thoughts wandered away, I left reality and joined the mute world of my mind.

The young asphalt only stretched eight or so houses down until it reached a large turning loop, which was made so that the road wasn't a dead end. For a place usually so filled with energy, the gray ceiling reflected the state of the houses it covered. As I traveled from the mouth of the street toward the middle, I met up with Garrett, who had been quietly doing laps as I was. We didn't acknowledge each other except for a wave, despite our years of close friendship. While I lived closer to the entrance of the neighborhood, he lived on the opposite end, near the loop, but it was still a short distance thanks to our bikes. We would ride this circle often as we waited for the others to come out (even if they never did).

As the streetlights beamed gently overhead, I drifted slowly, letting the bike take its own direction. My legs moved on their own, allowing my head to safely float into the skies. The cookie-cutter houses seemed unreal, although somehow simultaneously unique. I had known their white and tan stucco so long that I could pick out small things about each that no

one else could. Everyone was comfortable. Happy. Each house boasted multiple bedrooms and bathrooms, a pool, and a small, nice yard. Throughout all four seasons, the street we lived on was decorated with various colors of chalk drawings and small orange cones. It had been this way for years, and for as long as I could remember, we rode up and down this road ritually. Nothing, not time nor weather, could budge our lifestyle out of place.

Garrett and I parked our bikes outside of Kaitlyn and Keaton's house, which was near the middle of the street. They opened their garage door, revealing Keegan and Alex inside with them. Kaitlyn, Garrett, and I were the eldest, and Keaton, Alex, and Keegan were our respective younger siblings. I watched Kaitlyn run through the rain over to where Garrett and I had stopped in the road.

"What's the plan?" I asked the two. The three of us typically figured out what the group would do, and the younger ones just followed our lead.

"I don't really care," responded Garrett. His tan skin, good face, and athletic body, topped with a mop of dark brown hair, made him a very eligible bachelor and a formidable force during tag, but he was still a year younger than I, and seemed to look up to me anyway. He and Kaitlyn looked to me to decide. It seemed like this happened a lot. Kaitlyn was actually two weeks older than I was, but anyone who didn't know that would guess that I was older. Her pretty face and nimble body, formed by her weekly dance classes, was covered in a hoodie, that didn't let her look a day over twelve, let alone her actual age of thirteen.

I came up with a couple of suggestions. "We could just

ride around for a while or play hide and seek.”

“I think we should do hide and seek,” Kaitlyn suggested firmly.

“Yeah, I want to get out of the rain,” said Garrett. Still, we knew we couldn’t avoid the rain. The water had already dampened our clothes.

I nodded. Hide and seek it was. Garrett and I parked our bikes on the sidewalk in front of Kaitlyn and Keaton’s house, where we typically stayed as their parents didn’t want them to go far. As I followed Kaitlyn to rally the other three, who were huddled around a tub of Legos, I couldn’t help the nagging questions in the back of my mind. *Do I tell them? Or should I wait? Do I at least tell her? I mean, it’s only a possibility. It probably won’t even happen.*

“Come on guys, we’re playing hide and seek!” I yelled. The six of us gathered in a circle and each put one foot out in front of us.

“Bubblegum, bubblegum, in a dish; how many pieces do you wish?” Kaitlyn recited the ceremonial song to select the seeker and settled on Alex, the youngest of us at age nine. She responded with “three pieces,” landing on her brother’s foot. Garrett was visibly upset, which was reasonable. Nobody wanted to be the seeker.

Garrett headed inside the garage to cover his eyes and count (we had him face a wall to prevent cheating), and the rest of us found places to hide. I chose a spot well-known to us all, but not commonly used, which was behind a square bush up against a nearby house. Odds were that this spot would not be checked first, so I was in the clear and wouldn’t have to seek next round. Kaitlyn, unbeknownst to me, had followed

me over and chosen an adjacent bush where we could both see and talk to each other without being found immediately.

“You look upset,” she said. She typically noticed these kinds of things, especially because I wasn’t good at hiding them.

“Nah, I’m just thinking.” I brushed it off, but I was on the fence of whether to say anything more. She was going to learn about it eventually anyway, so why did it matter if I said something now?

The sound of nearby footsteps cut our thoughts. I wasn’t expecting this spot to be checked so early, so I guessed I would have to be seeker next round. A beam of light found its way through the thick branches of the bushes we hid behind and we knew it was over. The soft crunching of small rocks and leaves moved closer and closer, until it stopped. At this point neither Kaitlyn nor I were breathing, for being caught was worse than death.

The neighbor’s dog across the street suddenly began barking viciously, which typically meant someone passed in its view. Garrett, who was just on the other side of Kaitlyn’s bush, turned and ran to find whoever had fallen victim to the dog’s gaze. That was close. I let go of my breath, quickly realizing how badly I needed air in my lungs.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” she insisted.

I hesitated, then sighed. “Can I tell you something?”

“Yeah, what is it?”

“I think we’re moving soon... like, to another state. I don’t know when exactly, or if we are at all. But it’s kind of weighing me down.”

She was silent for a moment.

She wasn't given the chance to respond as Garrett came hurtling toward our bushes once again. This ended the game, which was a relatively quick one as we were the only two left still hiding. We stepped out into the street, and I stared into the night sky. The clouds hadn't cleared, but the rain had reduced to a light drizzle that fell softly on my face. I knew Keegan and I would have to go home soon, or our mom would worry. I wasn't concerned, though. We had time.

Kaitlyn had stayed next to me while the others sped back toward the garage to begin the game again. Garrett looked back at the two of us but decided not to interfere. I had told him first, anyway. She didn't say anything, but rather moved toward me and hugged me. I was a bit surprised, but sure didn't mind it. She let go and we quietly moved over to the group, who were getting ready to start another round. Because Keegan was caught first, he was automatically chosen as the next seeker.

Once again, the tradition of counting and running was enacted, and once again, nothing felt real. I ran to a bush, not realizing in my absence of mind that it was the same one as before. I was alone this time as Kaitlyn and Garrett wanted to find different spots to secure their success. I let my head rest on the rough wall of the neighbor's house, and I waited.

I began to worry less, and less, and less, about leaving that place. I felt the hole in my heart begin to grow bigger as Silk Bonnet Ct. distanced itself from me, and I knew that distance would soon become more physical. I didn't need to worry, though. I had time.

The rain continued to fall. The leaves of the tall trees rustled with the occasional breeze. I could feel it in the

peace as I waited to be found again and as I waited for the future to take its hold on me. Still, the warmth that emanated from the pavement and the air. The terrible itchiness from the neighbor's lawn that we rolled around in anyway. The scratching of knees on asphalt whenever we fell off our bikes. Foam Nerf darts. Plastic lightsabers. Even the chlorine water of a pool in my eyes. None of it changed.

Ford Swetnam Poetry Prize Winner

“Defibrillation” swings and sings in form and vision, much like its own “folk melody on strings.” Each compact line delivers a melange of metaphysical delights: gossiping butterflies, kissing worms, peer-reviewing birds. At every turn, this unmuzzled composition delivers sonic pleasure, letting the newly awakened reader hear, as if for the first time, about “fuzzy birds” and the “frazzle dazzle” of human sensation, such notions and emotions only freshly apprehended in the poem’s unique musical terms. A taut testament to native Idahoan Ezra Pound’s imagist dicta--1. fear abstraction, 2. use only necessary words, and 3. poetry should be more than prose cut up into stanzas—“Defibrillation” carves out a personal array of sensations, both in tone and shape, from human experience and presents them to the reader in a way that awakens without overwhelming, dazzles without blinding, and includes without isolating. Energetic, Kinetic, Glorious. Read, and the heart flips back to life!

Matthew James Babcock is Professor of English at BYU-Idaho in Rexburg. He has authored *Four Tales of Troubled Love* (fiction), *Heterodoxologies* (nonfiction), *Points of Reference* (poetry), *Strange Terrain* (poetry), *Hidden Motion* (poetry), and *Private Fire: The Ecopoetry and Prose of Robert Francis* (criticism). His awards include the Juxtaprose Poetry Prize, a Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Award, the AML Poetry Award, the Next Generation Indie Book Award for Short Fiction, and Winner of Press 53’s Open Awards Anthology Prize for his novella, “He Wanted to be a Cartoonist for *The New Yorker*.” In 2022, he was Arthur Dolsen Visiting Writer at Idaho State University. He was born in San Francisco and lives with his family in Idaho.

Timur Brainard

Defibrillation

When gas is heated,
Focused,
Gathered,
Huddled,
It becomes plasma.

I,
In my stomach,
The butterflies gossip,
Burn and boil,
Into vapours of electricity and light.
They shake and vibrate,
Sing a folk melody of strings,
Tremolo a soft chorus of voices,
They've focused,
They've connected,
I feel warmth and compassion,
Anodizing my keys.

I,
In my arms,
The worms kiss,
Chemically combine and burst,
Into an adrenaline higher than methamphetamine.
They dance and duet,
Tap a waltz to applause,
Drum a pulse of skipped beats,

They've linked,
They've gathered,
I hear knots in my biceps,
Locking the stage into place.

I,
In my hair,
The birds write,
Sticking and poking,
Tattoos and fired neurons.
They perfume and nuzzle,
Inscribe sage and lavender,
Prose a purple on the page,
They've huddled,
They've peer-reviewed,
I smell eucalyptus in my hair,
Telling them I'm here.

This feeling,
My brain cannot comprehend.
So,
Let the butterflies flap—
Let the can of worms wiggle,
Let the fuzzy birds shake,
Feel the burn,
The high,
The frazzle dazzle,
Feel it all come together,
Feel the passion of plasma—
In my static'd hair, arms, and heart.

Mae Ellen-Marie Wissert

Feels Like Sinking or Something

BR&S Prose Prize Winner

We tried on cheap sunglasses, and he bought us each a pair. I looked best in big plastic cat eyes, and he was handsome in smaller round wire frames. We looked at traditional Mexican saddle blankets, except how traditional can they be if they're made in China? So, we bought Chinese Mexican saddle blankets.

Outside of the shop, I changed into my swimsuit in the front seat of the Cadillac with the door open.

People can see you, he said.

No one's paying attention, I said, not caring if people were paying attention. He stood in front of the open door and made a barrier with a Chinese Mexican saddle blanket anyways.

We drove parallel to the lake's edge through white sand and a bee flew in the window and landed on his shorts. He yelled *there's a bee on my dick*, but I couldn't give it the attention that it deserved because he was about to run into a mound of white sand. Can you imagine if he crashed his Caddy into a mound of white sand because there was a bee on his dick? What would his father say? His father would say *son, you need to pay more attention*, and he would yell *but there was a bee on my dick*.

I said *Patrick* and gasped and pointed and he swerved in time to miss the mound and the bee flew away.

We blew up the paddleboard with the pump, which annoyed him because it took so long.

We put sunscreen on each other's bodies. He rubs sunscreen on my ass, spansks and squeezes it, and thrusts into me a little, but tells me that he disagrees with how cheeky the suit is, probably because of the other beachgoers. He lifts the

interwoven straps on my back to smooth lotion underneath them. His back is so much bigger than mine. It takes more sunscreen.

Bear Lake, Idaho. Or Utah, depending on whose side you're on. The Caribbean of the West, they call it. Californians are moving in and building their big modern houses with grand concrete driveways made to look like stone, like we're in Spain or something. They look odd amidst the old cabins.

But the water is so blue. Abundant microscopic calcium carbonate suspended. Fault subsidence began over 250,000 years ago and continues today, the eastern side slowly sinking deeper.

I wonder if anything hides in the faults, I say.

Probably mermaids, he says, sarcastically.

We paddle out and take turns trying to stand on the board but neither of us has the core strength. We fall in and splash.

If I could say there's any pattern in my life, it's people I love losing sunglasses in large bodies of water. My dad lost the pair that constituted his tan line in the clear but deep waters of Lake Tahoe on a family vacation while we were body surfing. My sister's favorite pair of Ray-Bans were ripped from her face by waves at the Green Sand Beach on the North Pacific in Hawaii. And Patrick's new pair fall off in the neon water of the lake when he stumbles off the paddleboard.

Every time we look for them. Every time they are lost forever.

Forever in the faults and trenches like mafia-disposed bodies, like creatures of legend, like fish surviving in the coldest and darkest parts of the seas.

He's pissed about losing them, but he's pissed about everything. So, I swim back to shore, and he stays out there

floating, back facing me, legs on either side of the board. As he floats and I swim, I see a shimmering fish in the clear shallow. I turn around and shout to him that I see a fish, but he doesn't hear me or doesn't care.

I think if I was really wild, I could stab it, and we would have dinner. But I am not trained in the art of impaling fish, nor do I own a spear, nor do I need to own one because this is 2022 and have you seen the selection of fish at WinCo? They import Ahi Tuna from the coasts of Ecuador.

I lie on my stomach on a Chinese Mexican saddle blanket. The sun heats my back and I imagine crisscrossed tan lines.

If I was a fish, I would stay out of the shallow. I would swim into the deep faults and trenches. What do you think I would find down there? Maybe barrels with corpses dressed in attire from the 1980s. Fluorescent windbreakers and Nike tennis shoes: young men caught in the middle of laundering deals gone wrong. *Badda-bing*. Maybe monsters, like Tahoe Tessie or Bear Lake's own Isabella. Gelatinous snailfish.

I don't know about all of that. It sort of sounds like myth to me. But I'd probably find shitloads of sunglasses. Or something.

ISU Land Acknowledgment

The land on which Idaho State University's Pocatello campus sits is within the original Fort Hall Reservation boundaries and is the traditional and ancestral home of the Shoshone and Bannock peoples. We acknowledge the Fort Hall Shoshone and Bannock peoples, their elders past and present, their future generations, and all Indigenous peoples, including those upon whose land the University is located. We offer gratitude for the land itself and the original caretakers of it.

As a public research university, it is our ongoing commitment and responsibility to teach accurate histories of the regional Indigenous people and of our institutional relationship with them. It is our commitment to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and to ISU's citizens that we will collaborate on future educational discourse and activities in our communities.

Colophon

Issue 22, 2023 of *Black Rock & Sage* is set in Dutch 766 BT type at Idaho State University using Adobe InDesign. *BR&S*'s cover and footer font is Futura Medium. The journal is printed on 80 lb Cream Tradebook by Bookmobile in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Contributors

Ryan Allay—Ryan chose “Allay” as his artist name, and is from Capecoast, Ghana. His music has tenets of afro-soul, afro-jazz, and R&B, with influences from reggae to afro-beat and everything in between. His aim is to allay fears, calm souls, and feed listeners with intricate yet relatable art. He is a commercial music major and studies sax with Dr. Shandra Helman, plays in ISU’s Wind Ensemble, and studies voice with Dr. Scott Anderson.

Jaden Andrews studies in the commercial music program with Professor Jon Armstrong and Dr. Thom Hasenpflug. His song “Just for a Moment” was inspired by the jazz ballads of crooners like Chet Baker and Frank Sinatra. It is a song about falling in love with strangers and is for anybody who considers themselves a tragic romantic. Jaden has also studied horn with Professor Michael Helman and plays in ISU’s Wind Ensemble.

Eros Auman is a nonbinary mixed-media artist in Pocatello, Idaho. They prefer sculpture work but are most well known for their graphite and charcoal realism work. He is currently a sophomore for a fine arts degree at Idaho State University experimenting in mediums.

Timur Brainard is an aspiring do-nothing, writer, editor, martial artist, philanthropist, revolutionary, and recreational smeller. Born from two parents and loving of all, Timur believes in the endless power of compassion, getting his name auto-corrected, and the beauty in even ... less conventional things.

Kedrah Brooks and **Adam Redd** are commercial music students studying with Professor Jon Armstrong. They both write music and thought it would be fun to write a song together before Kedrah leaves for her mission. They also study piano with Dr. Kori Bond and participate in ISU's choral ensembles.

Kyla Childers is currently a junior at ISU studying business. In her free time, she loves to play the piano and create her pottery she has dubbed "personality pots." Additionally, she loves the outdoors and regularly finds inspiration in nature.

Anastasia Christensen is a sophomore in the digital media program. They enjoy artistic hobbies like painting, writing, and playing the piano. In their spare time, they can be found hunched over their laptop, furiously working on their latest story idea and not getting nearly enough sleep.

E.E. Curtis writes poetry, short fiction, and creative non-fiction. For work, she shares stories and promotes opportunities that help people find and live their best lives. She is a full-time graduate student, a mother raising four kids, a creator, and a nature-lover seeking balance and peace.

Samantha Gipson is a full-time psychology student and part-time visual arts hobbyist, utilizing digital artwork as an outlet for self-expression and storytelling in her spare time. She particularly enjoys topics related to mental health, religion, and the internet.

Ben Graham is a commercial music major with an emphasis in jazz piano. He started playing piano at age six, received jazz lessons throughout high school, and is currently receiving classical instruction from piano professor Dr. Kori Bond. He is also receiving jazz lessons from Director of Jazz Studies, Professor Jon Armstrong and is the current pianist for ISU's Big Band and keyboardist for ClaireVoyance.

Abrielle Gray is an artist based in Pocatello, Idaho. While she works with many media like drawing and embroidery, she primarily makes paintings digitally or with oil, acrylic, or watercolor paints. As an Idaho-based artist, nature frequently influences her work, thoughts, and philosophies on life. Gray is currently an undergraduate student at Idaho State University where she is getting her BFA in Art.

From 2013 to 2019, **Yidan Guo** was a Visiting Professor and guest artist at Southern Utah University in Cedar City, UT. Prior to this, she served as a faculty member with the School of Art at Renmin University in Beijing, China. Yidan has had several solo exhibitions in the United States and in China. Yidan holds a Bachelor of arts degree from China Central Academy of Fine Arts, a Master's Degree in philosophy of Aesthetics from Renmin University in Beijing, China. Currently, Yidan is an MFA candidate in the Department of Art at Idaho State University.

Angela Hayden is an undergraduate majoring in chemistry. Their hobbies are camping, roller skating, and watching movies. Hayden wants to become an organic chemist and pursue research in pharmaceuticals. They have written and published poetry since they were in high school.

Emmie Henderson is a mixed-media artist based in Shelley, Idaho. Although known for her hyper-realistic graphite work, Emmie is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts to experiment with different materials to expand her horizons.

Emily King is an undergraduate in the digital fine arts program at Idaho State University. She would like to do storyboarding for video games or illustrating for books or tv shows and is currently enjoying the process of learning. Her many passions include art, video games, figure skating, and DnD.

West Jensen is a queer artist, currently studying for his BFA in Art at ISU. His work seeks to examine the intersection of his transness, his role as a parent, and his Catholic upbringing as a means of increasing queer representation in art.

Heather Johnson is a senior in the visual communications major, with a passion for typography, layouts, and ensuring readability. Heather is excited to explore what life has in store for her, without homework.

Sarah Marshall is an eclectic artist from the Intermountain West. She uses surrealistic elements and fantasy to produce her art. Sarah works in a variety of mediums including painting, photography, film, metal, and woodturning.

Aiden McLeish is a high school junior from Bear Lake, Idaho. He enjoys burning time outdoors on the sandy beaches of Bear Lake, as well as playing golf on a warm summer day. In the winter, he spends his days weight-lifting and skiing to pass the time until the snow melts.

Juan Morrison is an artist from Chubbuck, Idaho who believes that the greatest art is the kind that transcends the pen and paper and touches our lives. He aims to discover the stories behind others' art and tell new stories with his own. His influences include various forms of media, both past and present, with a particular fondness for the rubber hose style of animation used in the 1930s.

For **Hailey Nelson**, people and their many relationships have always been fascinating. This painting is based in photography and then developed through paint into an expressive, color-motivated portrait. She hopes to capture the essence of each person in the moment the photo was taken.

Beauyn Nichols is a fine arts major who has been surrounded by art his entire life, having been raised by an artist and a stagehand. Throughout his life, he has tried his hand at several art forms, including drawing, painting, and ceramics before settling on metalwork as his chosen focus with the occasional piece in the form of a charcoal and/or chalk drawing or fiber media.

Maximo Orr has been attending ISU for three years. He's always had a passion for music and has been writing music for some time. Several of his vocal arrangements and compositions have been performed, including some more recent commercial pieces. Max is pursuing a bachelor's in music education and studies voice with Professor Kathleen Lane. He has been an active participant in ISU's choirs, where he is frequently recruited to sing solos for spirituals and other styles.

Adam Redd is a composer/pianist of many genres, most notably contemporary jazz. His piece “Embracing Ebbs” is a simple, relaxed composition with a B section that hits hard with a sudden mood shift. This composition will go on Adam’s capstone album as part of a bachelor’s in commercial music. He also loves playing classical piano works, songwriting, composing, and learning about recording and production. He sings in ISU’s choirs and has been the pianist for ISU’s Big Band.

Courtney Reynolds is an undergraduate currently seeking to finish her Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of University Studies. She grew up in Pocatello, Idaho. She enjoys exploring many different art mediums and is inspired by animals and nature, or just things she finds comical.

Elyssa Seamons is a multimedia artist born and raised in Idaho. She currently lives in Pocatello, Idaho while attending Idaho State University. She is pursuing her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Art. She enjoys many media and has found school to be very rewarding in her search for new media areas. Her artwork mostly utilizes watercolor, but she also creates ceramics, fiber media, and uses other paint media. She mainly focuses on the magic of the natural world around us and has always had a deep connection to nature and reflects her emotions through her artwork. Through color, content, and theme, she is able to portray a feeling of wonder in her artwork that is shared with the viewer.

Kaitlin Sielaff is a percussionist pursuing a bachelor’s in music education and studies with Dr. Thom Hasenpflug. Her song “What are Your Dreams Made Of?” is about living your dreams

no matter what the circumstance is and not backing down or being too afraid of the societal rules for what you should or shouldn't be. It is also about finding yourself, allowing yourself to be young at heart, and having the courage to pursue your dreams and be yourself.

Claire Smedley-Dye is a senior in the commercial music program at Idaho State University and performs locally with her band, ClaireVoyance. She is also graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in voice under the direction of Professor Kathleen Lane and has been a featured participant in ISU's choirs. Claire has been in demand as a soloist in many styles, such as starring in the opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and *David* by Stephen Melillo. She has performed with ISU's Wind Ensemble and ISU's Big Band.

Krista Smylie is an emerging artist currently attending Idaho State University and resides in Idaho Falls. Her work primarily explores dreams and fantasy by utilizing the digital space. She creates illustrations, animations, and paintings as a form of self-expression. Juried into the 2022 Annual Undergraduate Art Exhibition at Idaho State University, she aims to accomplish more as her artistic journey continues.

Madison Straatman was born and raised in Idaho. The eldest of four, she grew up working on her family's farm, raising cattle. Before enrolling at ISU, she taught at her local preschool and worked at her local library. She's always been a bookworm, which led to writing as a hobby.

Miranda Sutherland is a metalsmith who is originally from Boise, Idaho but currently resides in Pocatello, Idaho with her husband and two cats. Miranda specializes in making unique jewelry that can withstand the test of time. She is now a junior at Idaho State University and is pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Influences that can be seen within Miranda's work are architecture and Nepalese culture.

Christopher Thomas is a senior writing student with a penchant for overthinking. A self-described auto-didact, Christopher loves learning new things and hearing others' perspectives. At most, he's an alien amongst the humans but is willing to socialize through food and conversation. He's always down to get weird (in a good way).

Mae Ellen-Marie Wissert is a student at Idaho State University in Pocatello, Idaho. Her work has been published in *Black Rock & Sage*, *West Trade Review*, *SHARE Literary Journal*, and *Children, Churches, & Daddies*.

Aymee Wolanski is a photographer and painter. She lives in Pocatello, Idaho but grew up all over the southeastern United States. Aymee is currently working on a Bachelor of Arts in Art at Idaho State University. She works mostly with oil paint and graphite but also creates ceramic art from time to time. Her portrait work is influenced by artists like Jenny Saville and Juliette Belmonte.

Karlin Wurlitzer is a student at Idaho State University. In her free time, she enjoys eating, sleeping, working out, and using words with more than one syllable.



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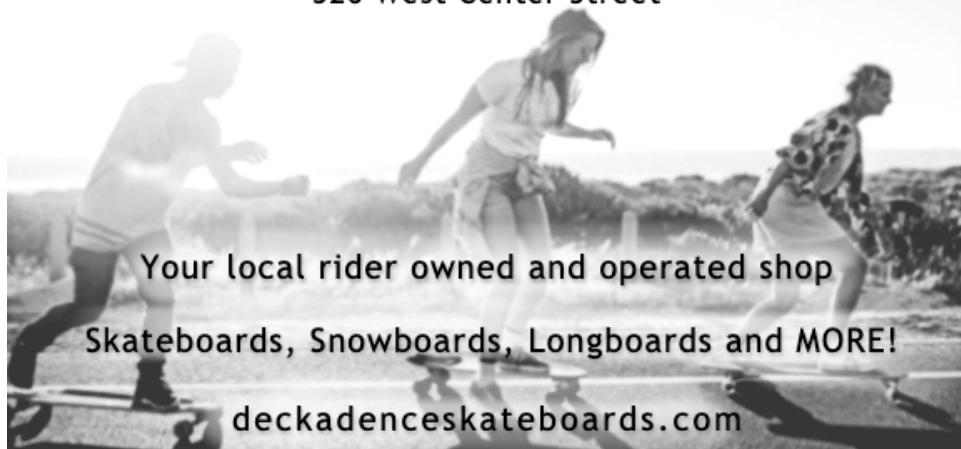


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