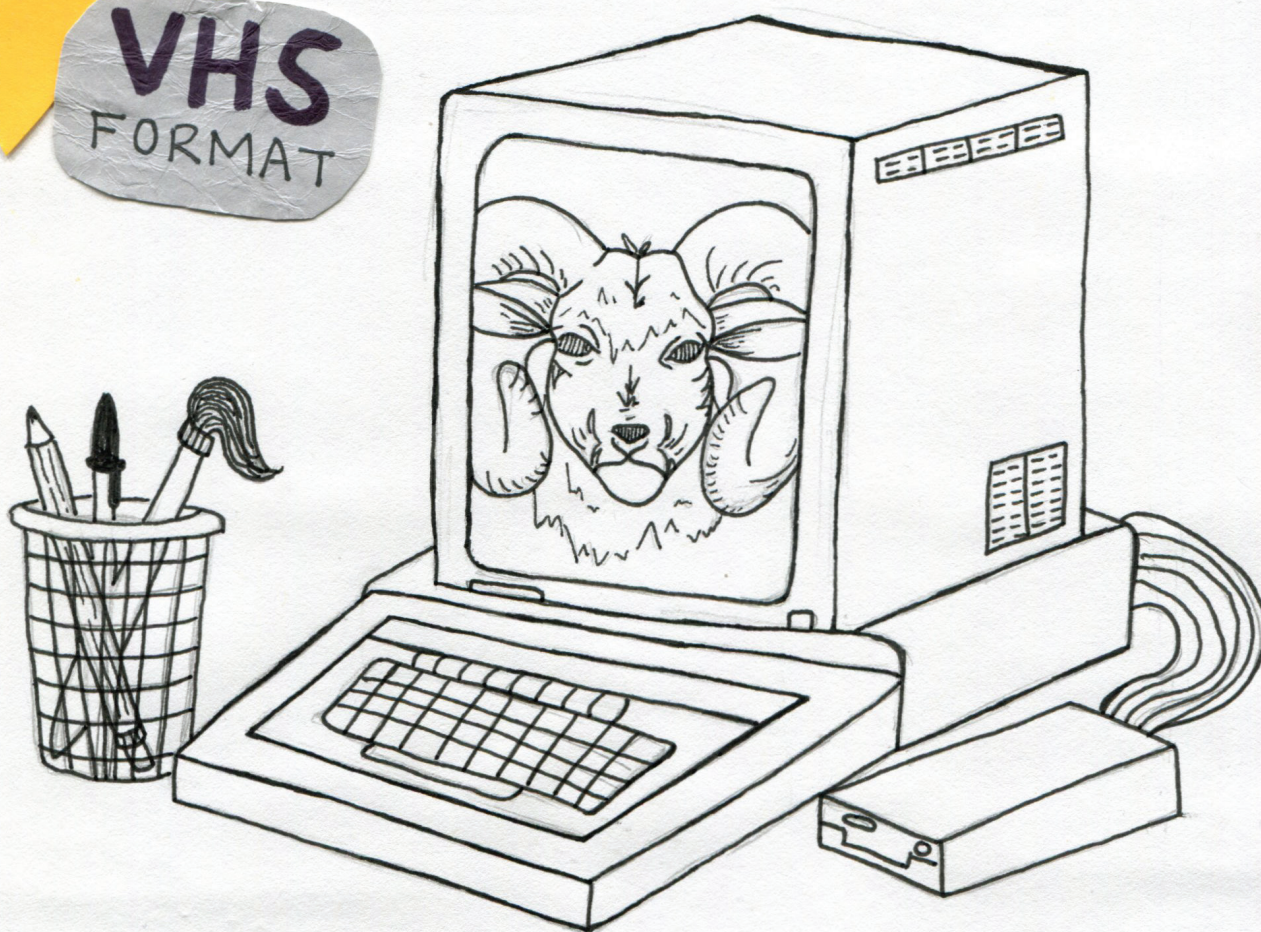


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# Ramifications

Berry College Literary & Arts Magazine

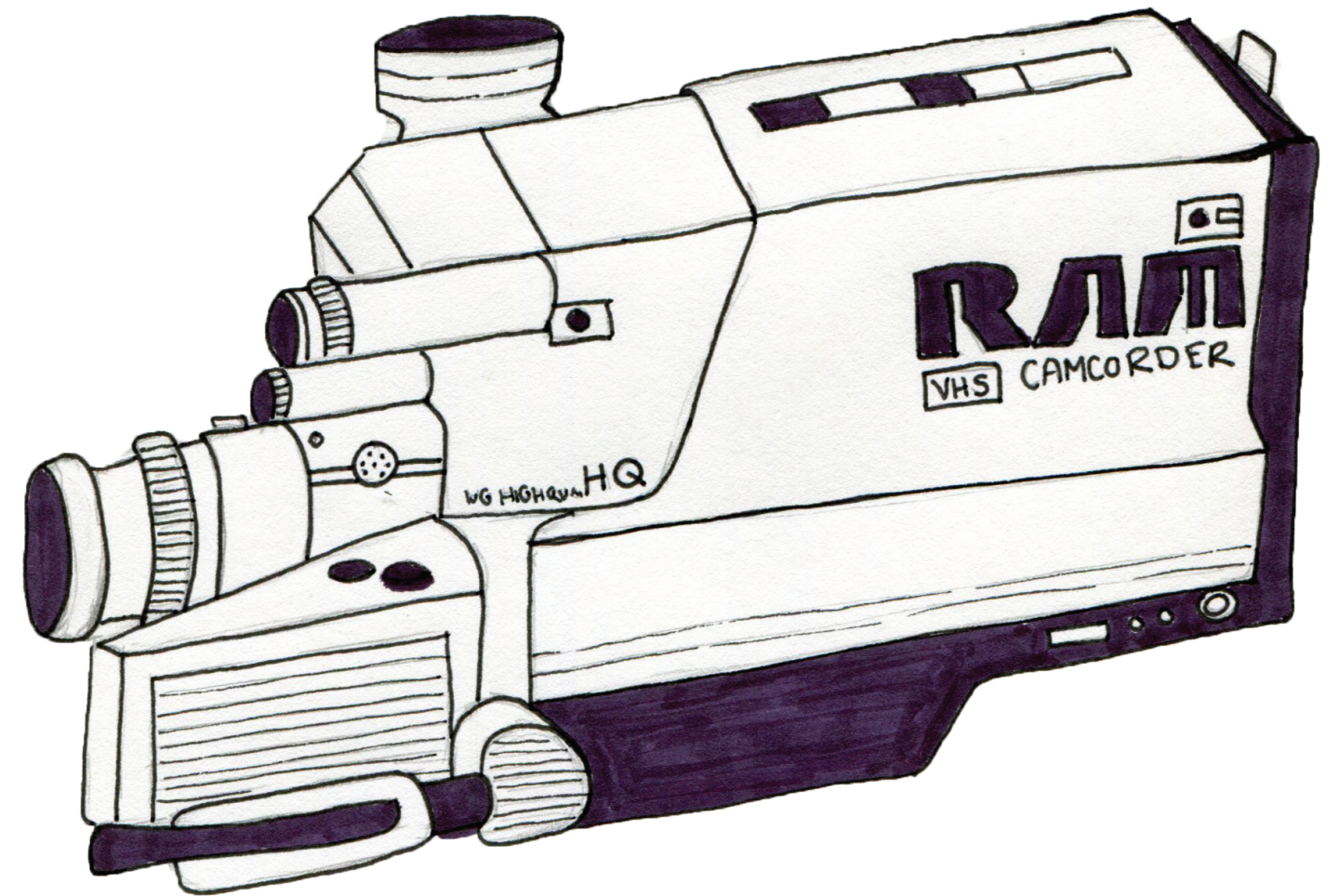
Fall 2023

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# Ramifications



## In the Heat

*Pen Name Pending*

We get hot.  
We get scolding.  
We get sunburn—  
blister bruising.  
We so hot,  
raising hell blows off steam.  
Steamed windows,  
squealing tires,  
and smoke rings—  
easy remedies.  
Sugar in the gas tank.  
Strawberries on the arm.  
We real sweet—  
sour sweet.  
We melt everything to bitter syrup.  
Melted vinyl,  
pressed record.  
Store with three dollar sellers,  
but that's not the best thing there.  
We like music,  
head bang concussion,  
that we can feel in our stomachs.  
Not the only thing either.  
All melty—  
oh,  
he real sweet.

We get hot.  
Cook things on the pavement.  
Worm carcasses on the concrete—  
burnt crisp.  
Brain fry in the heat.  
Maybe that's why  
we blow off steam,  
poor taste decisions.  
Rings singe skin.  
No sunburn on shirtless skaters  
except bruises.  
Bitter bite.  
Damn,  
he was real sweet.



**Director on Film** // *Bailey Casey*

## Tales from the Station #2: Tastes Like Gold

Ava Jarell

The rain picked up and made long streaks on the windshield, streetlights and neon signs reflecting off each droplet like little stars, not that any resident of the city had seen the stars lately. The weather had turned last week and oscillated between overcast and cold rain exclusively. The heater wheezed demurely on the dashboard, marked with the occasional click that worried the driver until he wasn't looking at it, but it kept its occupants warm and secure.

The girl in the passenger seat was asleep, her chest rising and falling three times with every click of the heater.

The boy looked over at her and smiled, turning back to the road and singing along softly with the radio.

Three hoods like mushroom caps bobbed at the pedestrian crossing, the flash of the sign turning the cabin a dull topaz. The boy slowed the car until the music was louder than the engine.

The girl opened her eyes once at the lull, closed them for another few breaths, and opened them again.

Jess was very attractive, she thought. He had that oddball, Soul Asylum, grunge look to him that she absolutely adored. His hair was a mess of waves that hung down past his shoulders, and a lanky frame that he consistently covered with blue jeans and flannel, which really set the look over the top if she was honest. He was interesting and complicated and had opinions, but used them at conjunctions when he asked *her* opinions. He wrote music, but didn't make her listen to it, and liked to drive around at night and listen to the radio with the windows down like she did. Sometimes they would look for a restaurant, sometimes they would talk about the songs, and sometimes she slept, especially when it rained.

"Morning, Nina," he said. She also loved his voice. It was melodic but not whiney, and resonant but not too deep.

"Hi," she smiled at him.

"Cold?"

She shook her head and stretched, pushing her back off the seat with her shoulders. "Where are we?"

"Just off Ponce,"

"Mmmm, doughnuts,"

"Too late,"

"Damn," she said, looking out at the lights. Ancient theaters and shops gave way to rambling houses that eventually fell away into the verdant darkness of Piedmont Park. They were pretty far from her apartment in Fayetteville, and she mentioned as much.

"Is that okay?" he asked, glancing at her from the corner of his eye.

"Fine. If you're okay driving,"

Jess leaned over and kissed the top of her head. Nina smiled.

A sudden pain shot through her abdomen, and she shifted in her seat. He looked over with a creased forehead and tapped the glovebox.

"Take a few of those,"

They were green and oblong. It looked like some kind of crushed leaf inside. They stuck in her mouth, but she rinsed a couple down with a bottle of flat Coke she found in the back seat and sighed. Within minutes her aches were almost gone.

"What witch doctor'd you get those from?" she chuckled.

"Friend of mine from Tech sells them at farmer's markets. He says it's a big secret pharmaceutical companies don't want you to blah blah blah," he snorted.

"Well tell him I'll buy a case. Oh, I love this one!" She leaned forward and turned up the speaker as a jarring guitar lick filled the car. Neither of them had a very strong voice, but neither of them cared. It was one of those songs that could have gone on for twenty more minutes, so when it ended, silence fell.

She looked over at him. In the light, his eyes looked yellow, coins reflecting and warbling as they stopped at a light. It was a freaky illusion that frightened her for a moment, so she turned to look back out the window.

The coins twinkled back in the reflection.

"Are you wearing contacts?" she asked, facing him. The light was green, but his eyes weren't, and he wasn't stepping on the gas. They seemed to glow in their sockets. "Stop it, you're freaking me out."

*Get out.*

"Jess?"

*Run.*

Nina's gut was telling her something, and her gut's gut was telling her to listen. The release of the door handle was

whole and satisfying, like popping the lid off a soda bottle. As she did, a disturbing metamorphosis emerged from the top of Jess' head. Two stalks curved and split from his hair.

How cliché.

She rolled out of the car and banged her shoulder against the curb, cursing it. The rain had slackened up to a drizzle, but the sidewalks remained desolate and quiet, broken only by the whirr of the interstate crossing above them. Jess stared at her for what felt like minutes, before putting the car in park and opening his door.

"Get in the car, Nina,"

Yeah, sure.

Turning on her heel, she hit another unexpected obstacle that took the wind out of her and sent her rolling into the trees. Jess stood at the guardrail, twitching very slightly before jumping the rail and strolling down the hill.

Typical, she thought as she darted into the hardwoods and manicured wildflowers. Perfect guys with shoulder-long hair, pretty faces, good hearts, and exciting minds weren't real. Monsters that roofied girls with organic, farmer's market supplements and majored in English with a concentration in Comparative Literature were very, very real.

She found the lowest branch of an oak beside the lake and tried to springboard off the trunk, but the bark was wet and her sneaker slipped. The second try was a charm as she scrambled up the limbs, scraping her arms and getting damp leaves in her hair.

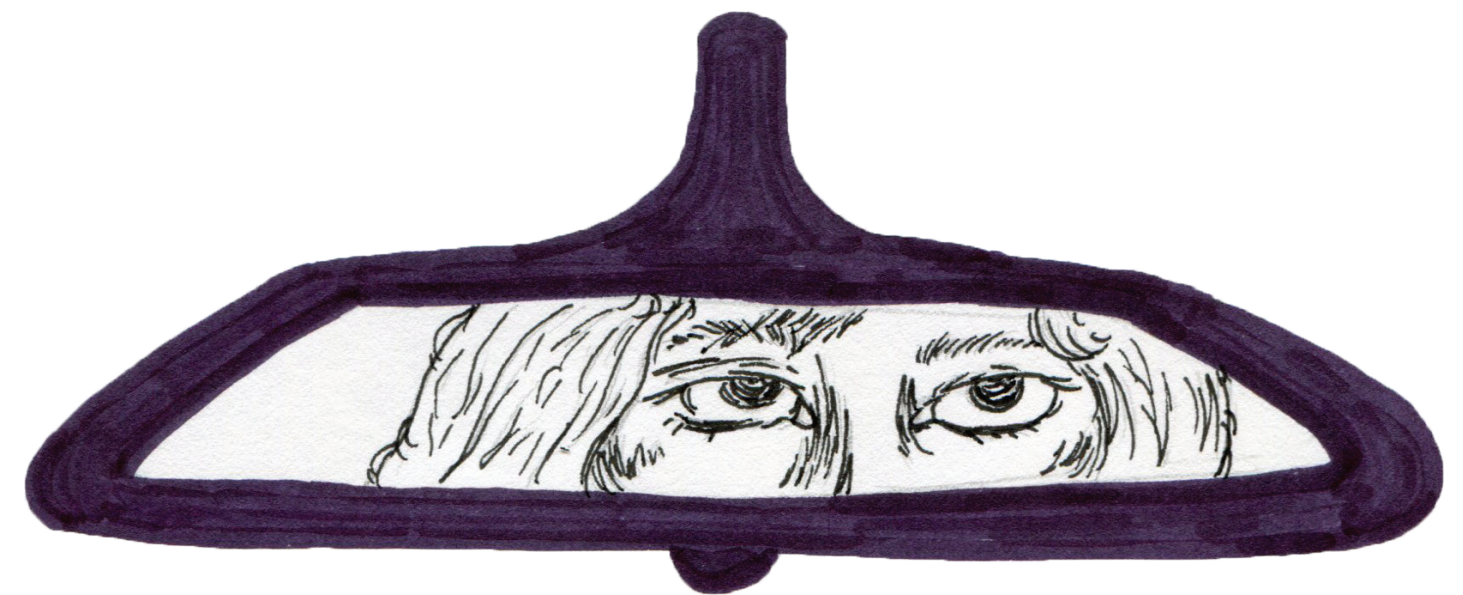
Jess was right below her now, not looking very much like Jess at all. His clothes were the same, but he was covered in coarse, light brown fur. His ears stuck out from his head at perpendicular angles like calla lilies, and his nose was like a chunk of coal.

As she dropped from the tree and onto his shoulders, grappling to knock him down and get back to the car, there was a little part in her brain, a hope, that this was some inconceivable misunderstanding.

There must be some string theory explanation with derivatives and integrals and Greek letters. It was like swiping her hand at a wall and catching the electrons just right as her arm passed through wood and sheetrock—a one-in-a-million shot to allow the universe to tip just so in her favor. In a moment his eyes would turn brown, the antlers would recede, his neck would stop elongating and bending, and they'd go find an all-night malt shop.

Maybe there was an alternate universe where that did happen.

But no one knows.



## Manifest Destiny

*Arielle Fischer*

*Based on the painting "American Progress" by John Gast.*

She refuses to wait at bated breath—  
a tempest howling for a meal.

She is hungry for earth,  
for sky,  
for sea,  
for all this world can give.

She guzzled the crisp water scraping mountainsides;  
gulped murky mud swelling in tidepools.

Violets and daffodils crushed by her gaping maw;  
pine and birch wailed in her grip.

Desert winds inhaled into her lungs, exhaled as smoke.  
Once-towering grasslands softened into pulp and cattle fodder.  
For she eats  
and she eats,  
and she eats.

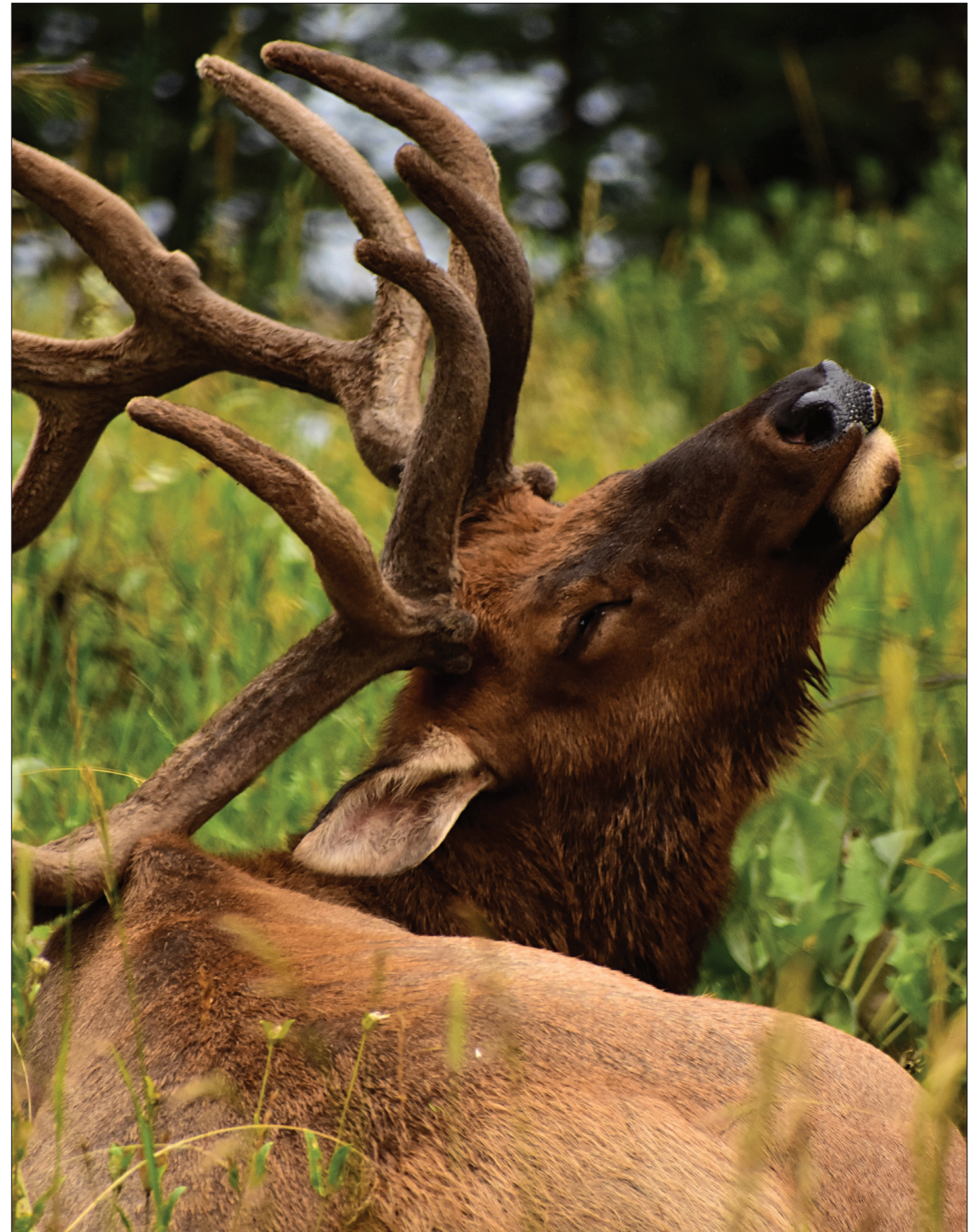
In her wake, she left only promises and pride,  
spoiling red rock with white lies of green.

Finally, she arrives,  
belly full of Gaia and Demeter.  
Lying upon the coast for respite,

a slick, silver tongue laps Pacific salt from her lips.  
Her breath, a perfume of chestnut and sequoia and oak as  
she plucks copper wedged between her gold teeth.

Around her, a world awakens as another crumbles.  
A world of greed and prosper gulping down  
a world of beauty and freedom.  
For she devours,  
and she conquers,  
then, she sings.

*This land is not your land, this land is my land.  
From California to the New York Island.  
From the redwood forest to the gulf stream waters.  
This land was made for only me.*



**The Imperial Bull // Miranda Many**



**Faces** // Cole Alexander

## Wet Whore

*Anonymous*

I'm nothing but.

Slimy hot rain  
sticking clothes to bones while  
slipping down sweaty cracks and crevices  
in since-been stained skin.

I turn and see him barely beneath  
all the grime that's covered his crow's feet  
and made his smile seem a sickly shadow  
of who it used to be.

A wary glance across the street finds a stray dog  
nuzzling through garbage for food,  
the same place we scrounge for dollar bills.

I know the dirt-dappled animal  
looks no different from our own  
tattered skeletons, ribs  
poking out of paper-thin skin,  
his freckles mere fleas on different fur,  
wet whores kicked out of stores,  
wondering what's in store  
for us.

I've learned by now which cars to stop  
and which to let run by.  
The ones with tinted windows  
that scoop you up and let you die  
in hotels somewhere.  
Leave your body for housekeeping to find  
and they never act surprised  
when they walk into a room  
and find a slut face down on the mattress  
with a contusion in a rotting apple-core skull.  
Par for the course in these parts

We've learned that by now, he and I.  
We know which cars to pass us by;  
we know tinted windows mean an endless night,  
a family bumper sticker means a knife  
sticking out of your spine.

He sends me curious dark eyes.  
He's so much more pretty  
than I give him credit for.

It's too dark in the midst of a sultry night  
to see his pupils against the backdrop  
of an ink-drawn sky.

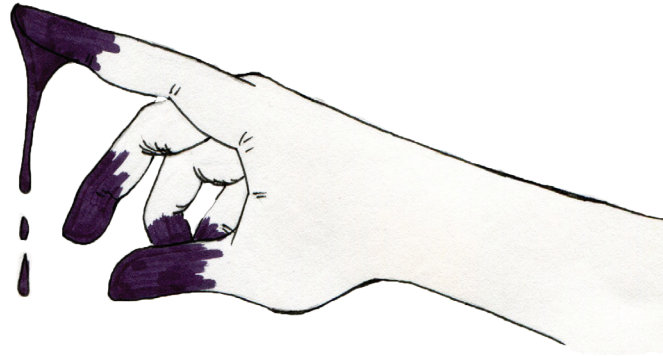
And I hear him say, in a sly  
voice. "Do you want this one?  
Or is it mine?"

Even though we both see the tinted windows  
so I know it's a friendly invitation to die.

## Seeds

*Asa Rankin*

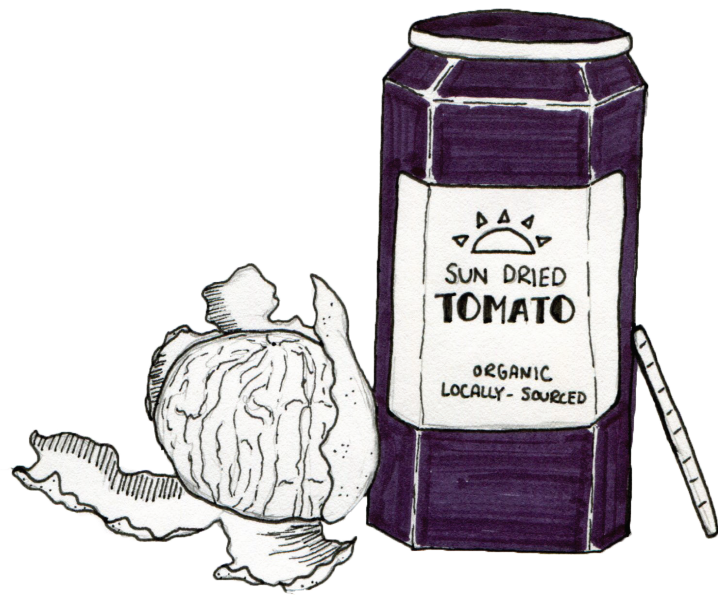
The sticky fingers of summer draw  
New continents on my old globe  
You squint at the small words  
Then smile up at me when you find the place  
You were looking for, and I push  
Our plates of watermelon seeds and peach pits  
Farther back on the table



## Oranges

*Annabelle Norton*

I am walking  
down 4th avenue  
with a jar of sun  
dried tomatoes  
and a red mesh  
bag of nectarines  
so that I may have  
an omelet and  
fruit for dinner.  
It will soon smell  
like wet pavement  
and I think of  
Wendy Cope,  
and how on  
this Friday evening  
I am glad to  
take up a slice  
of space on this  
Orange earth.



as the leaves turn // *Beth Toravez*

## The Worship of Death

*Liam Kadel*

Through a tinted window, slowing down  
to view the roadside tragedy  
Feel your neck turn to rubber  
as the serpent consumes its own tail  
The car in front of you brakes,  
and you multiply calamity

Why do we worship death?  
Whether it be as we scroll on a screen  
or watch coverage of the obscene  
What does it mean?  
What does it mean?

They've made a martyr out of you  
Will they do the same to me?  
In ignorance, some idolize  
a pain they cannot know  
that lies behind watery eyes  
Most can swim in pools  
But for those of us which float adrift  
in the roaring depths of oceans,  
do we sympathize with the diver  
or the water that hinders their motion?

As they drown, why should you choke yourself?  
And paint pictures of suffering divine  
as though your heart were intertwined  
with the blackened heart of death  
Take a moment, take a breath  
Is your greatness truly defined,  
is wisdom truly divined,  
is a cancer truly benign,  
only in the presence of pain?

The sadness does not paint its own portrait  
The madness does not sing its own song  
Relapse  
recover  
recover.



**The Choice is Yours** // *Arielle Fischer*



**Black Bluff's Blur** // *Curry Teems*



Window to the Soul // Katrina Bobson

## Sonnet 1

*Ever Daggers*

Hark! Down the road he rides not far away,  
 His horse's feet compose for me: rumble!  
 Here I lie awaiting his call all day;  
 Oh, how he makes a heart feel so humble!  
 Yet impatient am I, slouched on the sill,  
 How I gaze off so far into the dark,  
 He must come, for it is my dying will;  
 If I must I'll wait 'til the call of lark.  
 As I cling the air I am filled with fright,  
 Oh, how I tremble with bursting terror!  
 He brings a message from the dark of night;  
 How can I write? I'm betrothed in error!  
 But as long as it's sent, I'll see his face,  
 So I shall still write to the lord: "Your Grace."—

## Before I Lived In A World Of Funhouse Mirrors

*Curry Teems*

The new hand soap I bought the other  
 day smells too familiar, like at eight years  
 old—drinking too-sweet tea on the  
 front porch and chatting with  
 old family, right after rolling around  
 in Red Georgia clay with skeeter bites running  
 up and down my legs, arms, toes, and  
 armpits. One glob of the gel soap

brings me back to summer break right  
 before school starts, when I woke to birds  
 chanting a not-so-alarming song and Baba  
 mowing grass every Saturday, when my  
 brother still hated me,  
 when he aimed and shot the BB  
 gun at my face and we trampoline  
 bounced as the rain fell down and  
 bled through our clothes and it smelled

like hot, wet asphalt past our bumpy gravel  
 driveway where that brick hit my head  
 when it was supposed to be  
 flowers from the blooming dogwood  
 tree that lined the gravel like a gate,  
 and the old Tacoma rolled  
 down like the blood in my blonde hair and my  
 Daddy found me lying on a bed of clover and  
 flowers with steaming, bloody tears. The soap smelled

like before I lived in a world of funhouse  
 mirrors and I have to throw it away, because  
 I look at my distorted self in the funky long  
 glass and my body twirls around itself until I  
 no longer see that red-dirt-covered, skeeter-bitten,  
 bloodied-up girl I was. Who knew the fickle reflectors  
 effected smells too? Now I reek

of cheap deodorant and crunchy gel  
 encapsulating my hair, like sticky  
 shaving cream meant to smooth me and clear  
 gel face wash that doesn't get rid of the red  
 stress bumps and that old guitar smell as rusty  
 strings ricochet chords and my dusty blue Vans  
 and sweaty summer Chacos. I smell

like I don't know what I look like anymore,  
 as the shifting glass mocks me  
 into hatred, and I toss the  
 soap in the tiny charcoal trashcan  
 by the sink, but the smell still sits in the  
 soap rings on the counter. I scrub and scrub,  
 since I can't remember who I was  
 before, there's no point in smelling it  
 every day just wishing I could.



Yoru no Ekoda // Mads Muraoka

# Judith

Sam Askew

Walking. It's what she did for most of her free time. Down the sidewalk, down the street, up the stairs, around the corner, or on the grass. Observing. It's another thing she did with her free time. She called herself a people-watcher, but that term carried a strange connotation that she didn't like. She preferred the term observer, but that didn't sound right either. She was a person, and this person liked to look at other people. She didn't talk much, only when spoken to. She never smiled. She never frowned. She just— sat. And watched. And waited for something. Something she didn't know was coming. A coffee, black, in her hand. She couldn't drink it while walking, though. It was too hot. A café, one with outdoor seating, became her destination.

She found it, of course, for Amsterdam had no short supply of cafés. She took a seat with a sigh and slouched in the chair. She had bad posture. She'd been told that her entire life. People walked busily down the sidewalk in front of her, yet she just sat. Watching. People-watching. Nowhere to be and everything to see. Sometimes her eyes would jump

from person to person, catching glimpses of the little things about them that made up their personality in her mind. A man's blue cardigan buttoned up except for the bottom button. The world was colder than he thought when he left wherever he came from. That's why he buttoned his cardigan so haphazardly. A woman with dirty, white shoes. She knew she needed more shoes, but she had broken those in and didn't want to replace them.

Her concentration was broken by a waiter with dreamy eyes. "Can I get you anything, miss?" he asked, smiling the fake kind of smile that all employees smile. She'd seen it a thousand times before.

"No, thank you," she replied, nodding her head and slightly curving her lips into something that she may have thought of as a smile, she couldn't be too sure. He walked away, back into the café.

Amsterdam. A busy city, but not so busy that the people you see are unnoticeable.

It's why she preferred Amsterdam over London. London had way too many people to observe. You would find yourself overstimulated if you sat at an outdoor café in London. People just become objects in cities like that. In Amsterdam, however, there was a perfect amount of people so that the streets weren't crowded. A person here, a person there. However, not a person everywhere. She liked that.

A woman pushing a stroller walked by, the sound of a laughing baby filled the air. A happy sound. The woman was making silly little faces at the baby, and the baby, a perfect audience, was enjoying it greatly. A loving mother, she thought. Wonder where the father is? He ran off, she answered herself. He took majority of the money from their joint bank account and fled to Paris. No, not Paris. Rome, Italy. Yes, Rome. That's where he went. He fornicated with a younger, less kind woman. They had to leave, too. The father hated what his life had become. He didn't want to be a father. And now he wasn't.

An elderly couple, arms intertwined. The man had a wooden cane and a jolly belly. They held each other as they walked ever so slowly down the sidewalk. She appreciated how slow they walked. People often walk too fast, but these two were absorbing every bit of the atmosphere around them. Based on his eyes, he had served in the military. He had killed someone before. And not a day went by that he didn't think of that. She, on the other hand, was a baker. Her hands were gentle as they held onto his arm. You needed gentle hands to be a baker. Yes, a baker and a soldier. They were happy with one another. She brought him much comfort. He needed her. She grounded him.

The waiter came back. "Need anything?"

"No, thank you," she replied.

"What's your name?" he asked. She looked at him. She had never been asked to reveal her name by a waiter.

Waiters and waitresses don't do that.

"Why do you ask?" she said.

"Just wondering."

"Judith," she answered. "And you?"

"Finn," he said.

"Lovely to meet you, I suppose," she said. It was weird that he was talking to her, but she wasn't necessarily opposed to it, either.



"Well, Judith, my shift ends in an hour. Would you like to go for a walk?"

She thought for a moment. A walk? What is he doing? What is his goal here? She had nothing going on, of course, so she could walk with him. Where would they go? Maybe they didn't have to go anywhere. Maybe they would go back to his place or her place. What would they do then? What if he was the one that she was supposed to marry?

Her mother always said that person would be the least likely person to expect. Was this him?

He went back inside and she didn't see him for a while. More people came down the sidewalk. Two teenage boys, each with a school uniform on. They were laughing together. She noticed their shirts untucked and their sleeves rolled up. They thought they owned the world. They thought they knew everything. They also probably thought they were the funniest people on this earth. They were not, though. She was. She chuckled to herself. The one on the left had no mother. His father took great pride in him, though. Well, she supposed he did. The father would take pride in him as long as he did what the father wished. The boy had problems with that, though. His father wanted him to be a doctor, but he wanted to be a pilot. The boy on the right was spoiled. He had both of his parents. They treated him like a king and gave him whatever he wanted. Naturally the two boys were perfect matches. One with everything he wanted and the other with nothing he wanted. They filled each other's gaps.

Her coffee had gone cold by now. She desperately wanted another one. But she wouldn't get one because she was about to walk with Finn. She hated drinking coffee while walking. It always burned her tongue and her lips. She didn't want a burnt tongue and lips especially if she was going to kiss him. Was she going to kiss him? She didn't know. Why was she thinking of kissing him? She didn't know. She tried to focus on what she did know. He was her waiter, and she was going on a walk with him. Was it a date? Who knows? Not her.

The hour ticked by slowly, but it did tick by. He came out and she could finally see what he was wearing underneath his apron: a white buttoned up shirt tucked into dark brown corduroys. He looked spiffy. His face was slightly unshaven, which she found attractive. Boys who shaved always had those red marks on their neck with the bumps. She didn't like that. He approached her table, and she got up. He held his arm out and she clasped it with her hands. They were like that old couple, except they didn't need each other. Not yet at least.

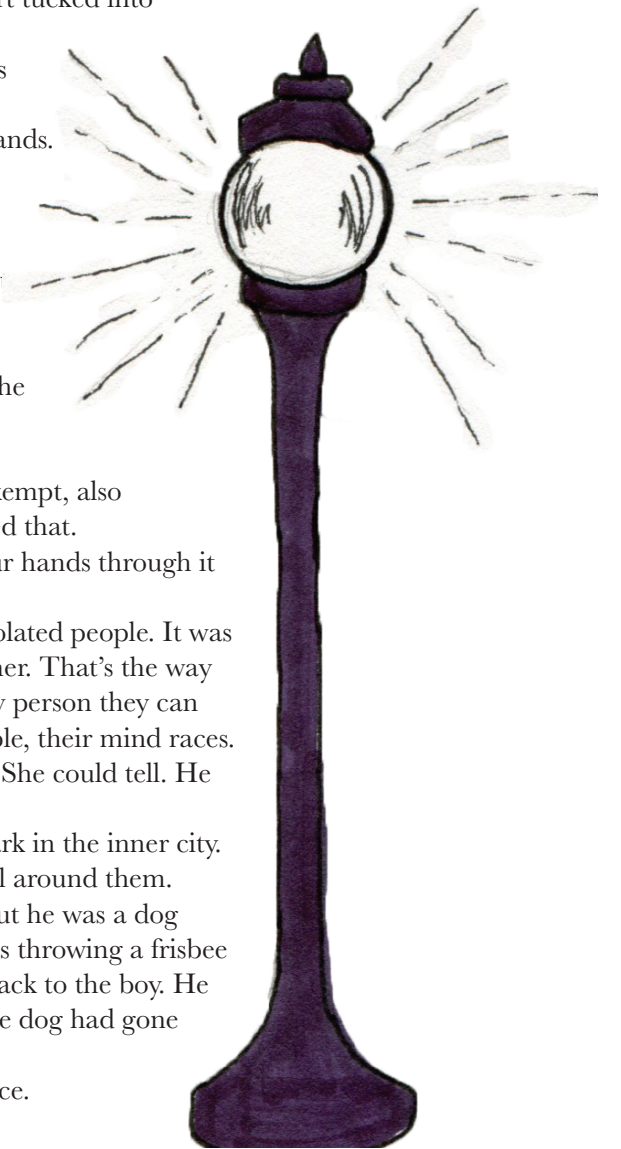
They walked together down the sidewalk. Eventually their legs synced up and their feet touched the ground at the same time. He wasn't looking where he was going but was staring down at her. She was a bit shorter than him, but not much. She was guiding them down the street, dodging holes and bumps in the sidewalk. She didn't say anything, but she could feel him looking at her. What was he looking at? Maybe her hair. Short, messy, boyish. She had thought she would let it grow out, but she hated the way it would get in her face. What about his hair? Brown, unkempt, also boyish. He didn't use any product in his hair, she could tell. And she liked that. Product always makes boys' hair look fake. Plus, you can't really run your hands through it without them feeling sticky afterwards.

Amsterdam was welcoming to people like them. Lost people. Isolated people. It was a city filled with loners and when two loners met they were lonely together. That's the way the world is, sometimes, she thought. No one is ever not lonely. The only person they can really hear all the time is themselves. Even when they're with other people, their mind races. They're often left alone with themselves. She was like that. He was, too. She could tell. He didn't even have to say anything.

They walked in silence for a long time. They reached a small park in the inner city. There was a park bench and they sat down at it. A few people walked all around them. Some of them had dogs. She wasn't a dog person. She preferred cats. But he was a dog person. She could tell that by the way he was looking at them. A boy was throwing a frisbee for his dog to catch. The dog ran and caught it midair then brought it back to the boy. He was wearing a red shirt, stained with wet dirt presumably from where the dog had gone through mud and then jumped up on him.

"Do you live in Amsterdam?" Finn asked her, breaking her trance.

"Yes. I have a small apartment."



“Do you like it here?”

“Yes.”

Their conversation went like that. He would ask a vague question and she would give a vague answer. They weren't clicking. Not in the way that she wanted them to. She didn't even know if she was attracted to him. Sometimes she looked at him and she was attracted, but then other times she wasn't. He hadn't really given her anything to be attracted to. She wondered why he asked her to walk. He was lonely. She was, too. They stopped talking and sat in silence for a while, watching the people and the dogs around them.

She wished it would start raining. It was cloudy, very cloudy. Rain was coming. She thought he would suggest that they find shelter, but he didn't. She was glad of that. The rain would wash away the loneliness, she thought. Either it would do that, or it would only clean it off and make it more prevalent. A drop here, a drop there. He didn't say anything. She didn't, either.

She was biting the sides of her mouth. It was a habit of hers. He noticed.

“Are you nervous?” he asked.

“Why do you ask?”

“Just wondering. I'm sorry if I make you nervous.”

It was rather bold, she thought, for him to think that he was the reason she was nervous. He was. Still, she didn't like being called out like that.

The rain was coming now. Steadily dripping from the clouds above. They were getting wet, but neither of them minded. Now she looked at his hair. It got curly when it was wet. He looked down at her and their eyes met. She could see his entire life in his eyes. They were brown, a deep brown. Sad eyes. She wondered what her eyes looked like to him. Simple eyes, maybe. Not a lot behind them. She dismissed herself and looked away. He reached over and gently grasped her chin and pulled her back facing him.

“Do I make you nervous?” he asked.

“Yes.”

Her heart was fluttering, skipping beats. She thought she was having a heart attack. The nearest hospital was miles away. The ambulance wouldn't get here in time to save her. She would die in a park in the inner city of Amsterdam. No. She wasn't going to die, and she wasn't going to have a heart attack. Her heart was beating so fast that it almost hurt. Her breathing grew shallow. Her eyes darted between his.

“Judith,” he said. “Can I kiss you?”

“Yes.”

He leaned in and their lips locked. His lips were soft, but she could feel his stubble. His hand moved gently to hold her face right along her jawline. Her eyes were open at first, but then she closed them. The rain was coming down now. Here they were, on a park bench, in the rain, locked together in a kiss. The kiss spoke many

languages to her. Languages long forgotten. She had never kissed anyone quite like this. She loved it. He pulled back and stared into her eyes. Their foreheads were touching. Both were smiling. She let out a small chuckle. Not at him, but at the circumstances. They had just met and here they were, kissing.

She didn't mind, though. For he was not a vain man. He was a good man. Her thoughts were racing. Suddenly, her mood changed. He was a good man. Yet she was not good for him. He had a light in his eyes that she knew she would extinguish. She was like a tsunami, squelching any bit of light in her path. He didn't say anything, and she didn't either. They stayed silent, staring at one another. Their smiles dropped and they kissed again. She grabbed both sides of his face and pulled him in. The rain was pouring now. Their clothes were sticking to their skin.

It took a kiss. That's what it took. Now she knew she was attracted to him. And he was attracted to her. Now it wasn't unreasonable to think about their marriage. Would they be destined to fall in love here on this park bench in Amsterdam? She didn't like rushing to conclusions. She liked him. She couldn't, however, shake the feeling of dread. He would love her wholeheartedly, but she couldn't love herself. He would make up for that, though. He would love all the parts of her that she couldn't love herself. No, she thought. That's not good. He shouldn't have to carry that burden. But what if he wanted to? No. She had a face for him. She had a face for everyone. However, the face for herself was not one that she particularly loved. She didn't know how to handle it. She didn't know how to love it. She didn't even know what it

was. Maybe he would be able to help her figure it out. No.

They talked about everything under the sun after their kiss. The kiss broke down the walls between them. It connected them. And that connection would not be undone. As the sun set, the rain didn't stop. They got up, her arms wrapped in his arms and began walking down the street which they had come. The streetlights glistened in the rain and the sidewalks were empty. Stores were closed, yet still had lights on in the window. She watched their reflection as they walked past stores, dresses in the windows, nick-nacks galore. She saw two people. One slightly taller than the other. Arms locked together. In that store window reflection, she saw them grow old together. Sitting on the porch, grandkids running around in the yard. Their whole life well lived together.

And she liked it. She liked him. And he liked her. They liked each other. As they walked, they could hear music. A piano. A singer. They followed the sound around the corner and came to a bar with the door open. No one was inside save for the bartender, the piano player, and the singer. They walked in. It was warm. A fireplace on the far side of the bar warmed the entire room. They each ordered a drink and sat down at a table, a candle between them.

There they talked the night away, laughing together, crying together, living together. At one point, he got up and extended his hand. He was asking her to dance. And she wanted to. She held his hand, and he led her to the middle of the bar. The piano player and the singer began working their magic. They danced slowly, her head leaning on his chest. He kissed the top of her head. In that moment, they were exactly what the other one needed. Someone to hold. Someone to kiss. For a moment, it seemed as if they were the only people on the planet, locked in an embrace, swaying to some forgotten song.

She knew him. He knew her. They knew each other. They had always known each other.





*Silent Watchers // Chloe Spector*

## Doggy

*Emma Buoni*

I am a wild dog that has been spurned and tricked  
enough times to be suspicious of anyone who whistles for me.  
The food they offered was bait to lure me close so  
little boys could throw rocks at the ribs  
that jutted through my chest.  
I starved in every way possible and  
I could not bite them-  
I was too slow to bite in my youth.

Another child offered me food and did not move fast enough to dodge-  
my yellow teeth as they sank into their hand and I tasted blood,  
but my hunger was still not quenched, and I still do not know  
if they held a rock within the pocket of their jacket,  
and that uncertainty keeps the guilt away on cold nights,  
sometimes.

There is something wrong with me,  
where my fur falls out in patches and  
I run in front of cars on the highway to reach  
the other side for reasons I can't explain.  
I was born with no shame and learned it  
painfully in my old, dog-year age  
through pack tactics while cornered in metal kennels.

I am hungry.

But somewhere in my hunger my teeth grew dull from chewing  
on bones of want and scraps of love I found in dark alleyways before  
I could be scared off.  
I seek companionship and crave a gentle hand so badly  
it outweighs my hunger and I  
show my belly and  
sometimes, still, I find more rocks.

But I am more than my teeth. I am more than my hunger.  
I am more than my bruises and wounds, even if some still bleed  
I am callused paws and big dark eyes  
I am fierce and fanged and much too eager to please  
in hopes of something more than a morsel of desire.  
I am feral and desperate, but I am learning to be good.

I am good. Tell me I am good.



Abide With Me // Caroline Lord

## What Kids Are Supposed to Do

Caroline Lord

Kids shouldn't need to carry coffins.  
Their shoulders shouldn't be weighed  
down by such a heavy thing, heavy  
like the weight  
in my chest and how it brought  
me to my knees when I got the call.

Kids shouldn't have to smell the fluorescent  
hospital smells, and shrink  
as the walls press in.  
They shouldn't know the sounds  
of weeping, the kind  
that shakes  
the building and takes hold of men  
like my father, his uncle, who never cries.

It was the kind of weeping I knew  
when I saw him breathing,  
but so far  
gone.  
And we all knew it together,  
cousins, friends, a brother, and sisters  
as we crumbled into pile on the floor and listened  
to the mechanical sounds of what remained of his life.

I still see him, scaling church rafters  
to show off, chasing cars  
from Chick-fil-A Tifton into the highway  
to give someone a missing fruit cup  
like a friendly neighborhood Superman-  
still see him with his cape,  
flying off sofas, living  
in a world where he was the hero,

and this must be the greatest prank he'd ever played-  
because that's what kids do.  
They mess around and tussle and argue and craft insults

so creative, never deeper  
than just a joke and laugh  
like clowns because nothing  
has ever had to be that serious.

He was never that serious,  
with his sarcastic soft smiling,  
nonchalance, on the other end of my phone  
last July, downplaying a copperhead  
bite. He told me not to tell his mama-  
didn't want her to worry.  
And if he could, I'm sure he'd laugh  
about beating us to heaven,  
because to him, even death  
wasn't that deep-  
it just meant flying away.

We were both April babies.  
My mother held me at nine days old, in a hospital  
awaiting  
his birth and I don't remember that day,  
but I'll never forget these days, waiting  
on a clammy floor, watching a mama  
hold the hand of her firstborn boy  
every breath breaking  
into sobs  
because this time  
we waited for death.

And the air was  
suffocating, so we escaped into Tallahassee's  
steaming yellow sky, fishing poles  
over tired shoulders, trespassing  
deep into the cursed hospital grounds, climbing  
fences to get to ponds like ones  
he would've loved to fish in, pretending  
we could ever feel young again,  
and grasping for a piece of him,  
in a world turned  
upside down, to do  
what kids  
are supposed to do.

# Black Girls Are the Backbones of Society

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*Lai'Ayla Flowers*

I face obstacles like no other  
May have never been touched, that much, but your  
words cut deeper than the sharpest item on earth  
Earth: the brown trees, high greens, and the landscapes  
represent me  
We don't have Eve in us for nothing

I may be tired, but work is still much more important  
Wages ain't made for da darker roots  
Time ain't made to be cut through  
I guess I really do have my ancestors in me  
Generational trauma is real

Originality comes from me  
This society knows how to copy and paste  
Make themselves have little waist and big behinds  
But I was bullied for mine  
I was bullied for my

Short Hair

Big Lips

Skin

Nose

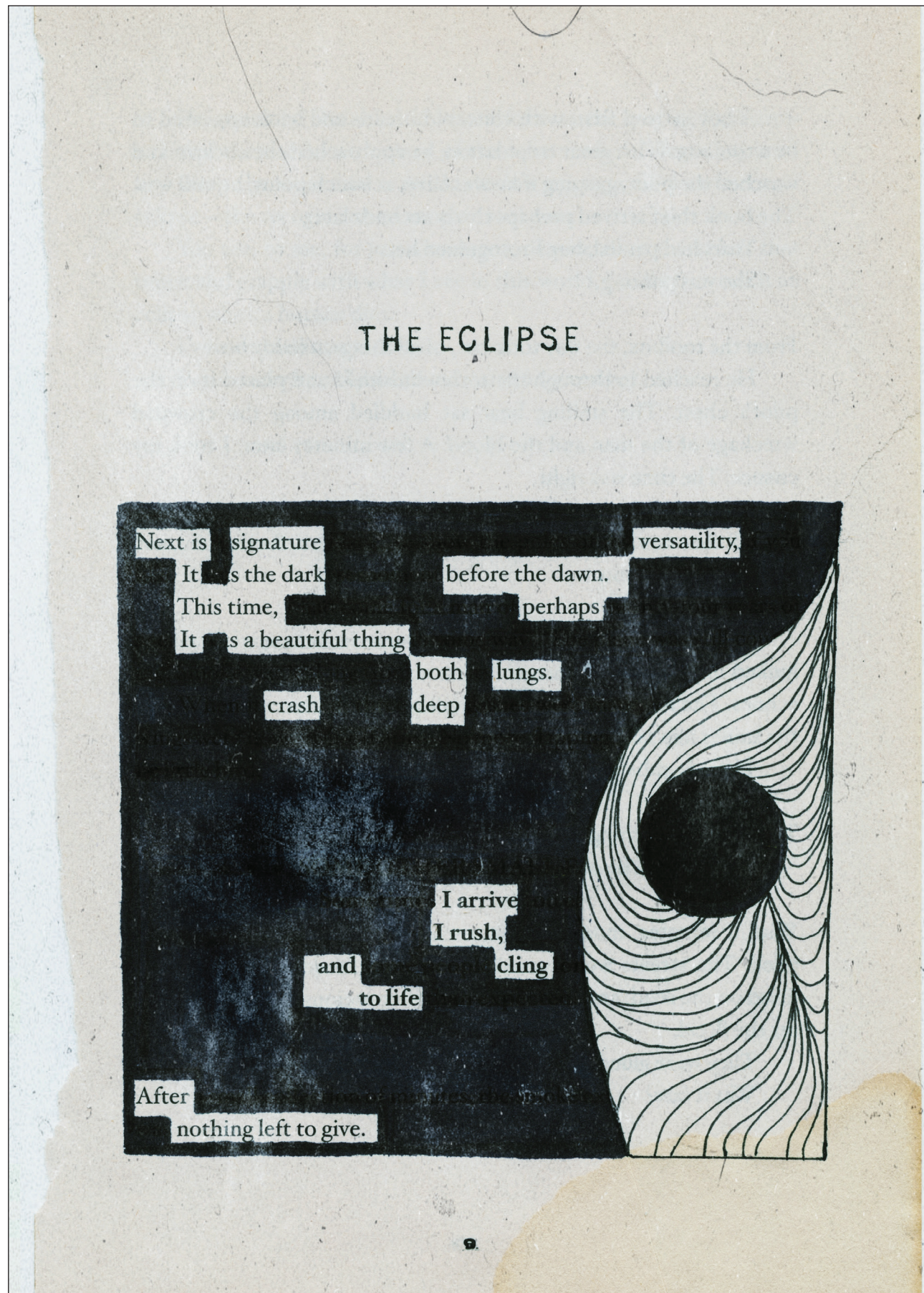
Face (especially the ones without make up)

Clothes (that you copy)

I go deeper into your sea only to drown  
An everlasting feeling that surrounds us all  
I became insecure because you taught me it was okay to  
fall  
But sometimes you forgot to tell me to get up and fly

I was bullied for being me

I go deeper into your sea only to drown  
An everlasting feeling that surrounds us all  
I became insecure because you taught me it was okay to  
fall  
But sometimes you forgot to tell me to get up and fly



Eclipse // Raegan Peluso

## La Noche

Gabriella Puyo Muñoz

Contar las veces que me he perdido en tu mirada es como intentar de contar todas las estrellas en la noche;  
 La noche me recuerda de ti y lo pequeño que somos;  
 Somos polvo debajo este cielo infinito;  
 Infinitas son las estrellas y todo el misterio que nos rodea;  
 Rodean mis pensamientos cuando pienso en ti;  
 En la misma manera que los planetas rodean el sol;  
 Sol, mi luz, mi esperanza, eres viva y llena como la galaxia;  
 La vida nos entregaron como un regalo inesperado;  
 Regálame tu mano, tu fe, tu mirada;  
 Tus ojos me capturaron en un espacio desconocido;  
 Espacio no necesitó porque le das todo sentido.



Y// Addison Howard @addisonhowardphotos

## About Us

Ramifications is an arts and literary magazine. We showcase student talent through our publication and strive to reflect the Berry community through our selections. We have been publishing our magazine for over 50 years, including genres such as poetry, fiction, non-fiction, essays, musical compositions, drama, and all types of visual art.

## Review Process

All submissions are compiled into one anonymous word document and given to staff members to vote on. Staff will vote on a scale of 1 to 5 and submit their scores to the Editor-in-Chief. From there, the Editor-in-Chief tallies the votes and presents them to the staff during a selection meeting. The highest voted pieces are discussed and final selections are made.

## Editor's Note



Nostalgia is a powerful emotion, something that can be borderline overwhelming for so many people. Just a sight, a sound, a smell, a taste, even a touch can send us careening back into the past; to a time we remember with rose-colored glasses. Nostalgia is like a warm blanket on a cold day, comforting us with good memories when things felt brighter and simpler, even if those memories may be tinged with a bit of grief now that they have come and gone.

I find myself leaning into nostalgia more and more these days, as I grow older and hopefully wiser. I look back on my memories like I'm scrolling through a camera roll, wistful for something benign like a movie with friends or a world that felt easier. But I think it's important to remember that those times have passed. We live in the here and now, and though the things in our current lives can be stressful and downright uncomfortable, there's magic and wonder even in the most mundane moments of our present lives, and it's imperative never to forget that.

Thank you to the writers and artists of this edition for their contributions, and for making mine and many others' present moments all the more memorable. Thank you to my staff for making new nostalgic memories with me and an incredible magazine. And thank you, reader, for your time, and attention. I hope you enjoy the Fall 2023 edition of Ramifications!

— *Emma Buoni*

## Meet the Staff

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Art Editor  
*Bailey Casey*



Online Editor  
*Grace Todd*



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Volunteer  
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Staff  
*Adeline Kovach (Not Pictured)*



## Come one, come all!

When a college campus is filled with creative talent, who can you call to show the world what they're capable of? RAMIFICATIONS! Led by nervous leader Emma Buoni, artistic powerhouse Bailey Casey, and tech wizard Grace Todd, this team of magazine makers face the odds, and create a portfolio of literature and art every semester for their peers. In this exciting issue, they face adversity from every corner, and new members of the team are introduced in this exhilarating adventure filled with wonder and beauty! Can they make it?

## YES THEY HAVE!

*Rated BC for Berry College*



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