

# RAMIFICATIONS

*Berry College Art and Literary Magazine*



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# RAMIFICATIONS

ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE



## *Cri du Cœur*

*Shannon Rainey*

Every great Romantic poet contemplated the sublime,  
wishing to capture  
that which is uncapturable: beauty and terror  
to inspire great admiration, to inspire faith  
in a Creator. Wordsworth wrote  
“it takes its origin from emotion recollected  
in tranquility.” Shelley and Byron focused on the terror  
and ecstasy in nature. Coleridge considered only a few things  
sublime—  
the boundless sea and sky are two.  
To him, sublime meant infinity.  
I define it differently.  
It is not craggy ice-covered granite peaks, or endless fields  
of aster and gentian and bellflower  
or thunderous rivers that tumble and roar  
down mountainsides, or birds singing aubades  
with the rising sun, or the roiling green of a raging sea.  
It is the alpenglow that warms your cheeks,  
your ephemeral smile and rainwashed skin,  
your bitter chocolate eyes that make me melt  
like a spontaneous Easter snow. It’s...  
époustouffant, the evergreen fog  
settling on the hills around us, leaving us  
marooned in our own supernal world.  
It is the terror, the dread of having your spirit parted  
from mine, la douleur exquisite of wanting.  
I believe in God when I am with you.

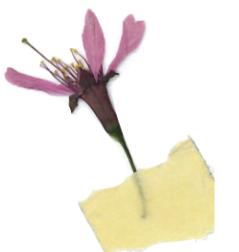


*Wildflower Rhapsody // Alexandra Saputo*

## *Inversion*

*Emily Mather*

I thought of turning the world upside  
down today. Sketched Argentina  
and South Africa as peaks, stretching upward  
into a paper ocean. Turned a tree on its head,  
watched it shower the sky with fruits  
and leaves. Walked on my hands, felt rain  
beneath my palms. Opened  
the door to you and said  
Come in. You are welcome here.



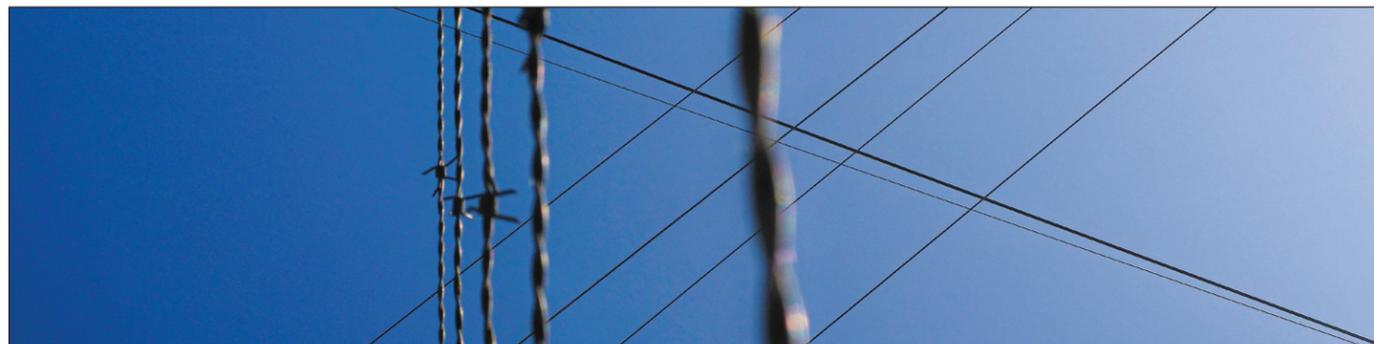
# Walk To Tennessee

Jack Heerema

If wandering eyes are drawn to silver  
this feeling in my fingers is just courtesy  
When I wander in libraries  
Past aisles of books to teach some full-blown empathy  
I think of houses built on stone  
And mausoleums filled with bones  
Tied in ribbons and in bows  
Wearing shoes I bought on loan  
To walk to Tennessee

Passing under Broadway lights  
With all my human rights laid out in front of me  
The aviator strikes a match  
And coffin makers fix the patch at the coffin factory  
The pistol in my hand  
Makes my legs feel more like sand  
A flame that is no longer fanned  
A one-man family band  
Who walks to Tennessee

Skipping rope between two friends  
I watch their hands both twist and bend until they frighten me  
And playing cards with a like-mind  
Who will gladly take the time to be my enemy  
I turn the pistol to the sky  
Catch the coffin maker's eye  
The bows have all become untied  
The book has just one word inside  
And it reads Tennessee.



Intersections // Ben Allee



Overgrown // Madison Morris

## Strangers on a Subway

Timothy W.T. Belin

The subway careens to a stop and more bodies shove their way in, pushing Marcus further from the sliding doors. After a long and disappointing day, he does not feel the strength to resist the human wave rushing in, but his stop is coming up and he worries he might not make it through the crowd on time.

“Excuse me,” he says timidly, trying to get the attention of the large man pinning him against the wall. “I need to get off soon.”

If the man hears him, he fails to show it.

“Sorry,” Marcus insists, moving one leg as if to walk into space that is not yet available.

Again, no response. Maybe when the doors open again, Marcus thinks, steeling himself for that moment. Seconds later, the conductor’s voice warbles something over the com system, unintelligible over the sound of the car’s progression on the metal tracks and the deafening hum of voices. But when the old metal doors creak open, Marcus flies into action, pushing all his weight against those around him in the hope they allow him through.

“Hey, watch it!” someone yells, while another shoves back. Marcus is thrown sideways, catches himself on a pole, spins around some more, and emerges into the station.

“Smells like piss,” he mumbles, wrinkling his nose. Then he looks up at the overhanging sign, and his face falls. He got off at the wrong stop.

\*\*\*

Clint is sitting on the cold stone floor, a worn blanket on his lap and a flipped fedora by his side, when he sees the young man emerge from the subway. Roughly college-aged, the newcomer’s hair is a mess, he’s wearing an ill-fitting suit with sneakers that do not match it, and he appears out of breath, as if he ran five miles just to get out the subway door.

Most importantly, he seems utterly lost. At that moment, Clint knows he has found a mark.

“My wallet!” Clint yells out as if in panic, his eyes focused on the newcomer’s back.

As expected, the man instinctively reaches for his back pocket to reassure himself his own wallet is still there. Too easy. And then the man starts in Clint’s direction, walking over to check the decaying map painted on the wall he’s sitting against.

Clint keeps a low profile, stretching his hat out to oblivious passers-by, as the man traces his finger against the map and mutters under his breath. As the minutes drag on, Clint eventually looks up and sees the worry etched all over the young man’s face. As concern expands across the man’s juvenile features, Clint remembers his own formative years and feels a tinge of sympathy for the stranger.

“Where’d you need to go?” he asks against his better judgment.

The young man twitches and glances down, apparently startled to hear someone address him.

“34th street,” he says hesitantly. “But I can’t find it anywhere, and I don’t know where I went wrong.”

Clint nods, looking up at the map as if he needs to study it too. In truth, Clint has spent so much time in the stations and riding the cars that he knows all the stops and all the lines, but he cannot admit that. The man has already looked at him too long, and now Clint needs to make sure he doesn’t do anything that would make him memorable. He has to blend in, be just another random face in a sea of people, or the young man might be able to describe him to the cops later on.

“You’re going to want to take the orange line,” he says after a lengthy consultation. “Up the stairs, take a right, and a second about 50 feet down. There’s a sign. Go west, three stops and you get off, take the white line north one stop and then walk a block further north.”

The man nods enthusiastically, repeating the directions to himself. “Thanks,” he says with a warm smile. Then he pulls out his wallet, drops a bill into Clint’s hat, and strides off towards the large staircase.

Clint eyes him as he walks up two-steps at a time, careful not to follow too quickly. Once he is satisfied the distance is appropriate, he gets to his feet, wraps his blanket around his shoulders and grabs his hat, pulling out the lone bill as he places it on his head. However, just before he slides it in his pocket with the other scrunched up one-dollar bills and loose change he has gotten that day, Clint unfolds it and sees, to his surprise, that the young man gave him a twenty. No one ever gives that much, not even the pompous businessmen with money bursting out of their self-important pockets. It’s almost enough to make Clint give up on his plans.

Almost, but not quite.

\*\*\*

At the top of the stairs, Marcus takes a right, repeating the beggar’s directions to himself.

“Orange line, three stops, white line north, one stop, one block north,” he whispers.

He walks down the crowded corridor, looking for the promised sign and dodging hurried travellers as they rush by. But when he sees it, he realises his mantra has left out a key detail. Did the beggar tell him to go west or east? Marcus cannot remember. He looks around him and feels his breathing accelerate. Men in expensive suits and women in high heels all waltz by without hesitation, their eyes set in front of them and faces closed off to his vain attempts to get their attention. It’s getting late and Marcus is once more lost in an unfamiliar city. This time he senses the tears coming to his eyes as a panic attack slowly creeps up on him.

He is about to turn around and head back to the map when a man bumps into him and he loses his balance. As he staggers, he already sees himself falling victim to the stampede of businesspeople, but catches himself against the wall. As he looks up to see who shoved him over, he spots a familiar fedora floating above a tattered blanket.

“Hey!” he calls out, but the fedora keeps on moving.

“Did you say West or East?” he yells, his voice sliding into an embarrassingly high pitch by the end of the question.

The fedora slows down, stops. Marcus regains some hope, only for the hat to move forward once more, stop again. The masses keep on washing by and Marcus feels as if the seconds are stretching into hours as he watches that lonely fedora, unmoving amidst the troubled sea of heads. And then it turns around, and Marcus lets out a breath he hadn’t realised he had been holding.

Marcus watches the beggar approach, hat screwed down over his head and blanket firmly wrapped around his shoulders, emerging from the crowd like a divine intervention.

“You want to go West,” the man says when he is finally within speaking distance.

He wraps his arm around Marcus’s back as if for good measure, using his other arm to indicate the corridor he needs to take. Suddenly, Marcus feels a pressure against the seat of his pants and jumps, hand flying to his back pocket. The beggar releases him and looks him over.

“You okay?” he asks, one eyebrow raised.

“Yeah, all good,” Marcus says, his face heating up. “I thought someone had stolen my wallet, but I was wrong.”

An expression Marcus cannot quite discern comes over the other man’s face, but just as soon it is gone. Marcus is about to go when he speaks up again.

“You don’t take the subway much, do you?” the beggar asks.

Marcus takes a second before replying. “No, not really,” he admits.

An awkward silence follows, as the beggar stays where he is as if expecting Marcus to say more. Marcus simply stares at his shoes.

“You need help?” the other man finally asks, and without waiting for a reply he grabs Marcus by the arm and leads him through the crowd of travellers, parting them like the Red Sea.

Once the two are on the platform, the rush of noise ebbs away and the beggar speaks up once more.

“I’m taking the same line, if you want to stick with me,” he says, sitting down on a vacant metal bench.

Marcus hesitates, then joins him, staring at the empty tracks as he struggles to think of something to say.

“Thanks for saving me,” he finally mutters, immediately hating himself for the choice of words.

“No worries,” the man replies. “We’re all new at some point, we gotta help each other out.”

Marcus smiles and takes his first real look at the man beside him. Up close, Marcus notices that he is younger than he would have thought, in his early thirties at most, though hardships have aged his face considerably. His hair is shaved down the side, with unruly, curly tufts peeking out from beneath the fedora, and a cocky grin lights up his features as his bright green eyes stare at the wall opposite him. Something about that smile comforts Marcus, but he quickly turns his gaze away when the man’s eyes slide towards him. The man looks him over, and neither say a word as they wait for the subway to arrive.

\*\*\*

As a shiny silver car screeches to a halt, Clint gets up and walks to the door farthest back, knowing it will have the fewest passengers. He steps in, breathing in the smell of weed as he finds a worn-out plastic seat, and looks up to see if the

young man followed him. He did, but he is standing by the exit, gripping the nearest pole as if a fierce wind might try to suck him out of the door any minute. Clint chuckles to himself. There is something oddly comical about that boy.

"I'm not gonna bite, you know?" he says, indicating the seat across from him.

The young man hesitates, glancing between the seat and the door as if judging the time it would take him to escape. Finally, he sits.

"I'm Landon," Clint lies, curious about the other's reaction.

"Marcus."

Clint already knows this, having glanced inside his wallet earlier, but he wanted to test the young man's honesty. There's a naïveté in him that Clint finds endearing. Despite the scare with his wallet, Marcus appears trusting, though excessively shy. Clint envies that innocence, wondering when he last felt the same. And there is something about the young man's awkwardness, the way he cannot bring himself to meet Clint's eyes, that he likes, too. Clint finds his boyishness cute, and he wonders if that is why he returned the wallet. *No*, he reminds himself. *I needed to do that or he would have known it was me who took it. I'll get it back later.* But some part of him does not want to steal this man's wallet. Some part of him he had forgotten existed tells him to leave him alone, to find someone else to rob. But his mind quickly rationalises those thoughts away and reminds him what will happen if he does not meet his quota for the day.

"So what brings you to the city?" Clint asks, deciding conversation will help him quiet his doubts.

"Job interview," Marcus responds, making it obvious by the way he says it that things did not go well.

"You like it here?"

"Not really, but I need the job."

Marcus seems to want to say more, so Clint keeps quiet, waiting for him to continue.

"I think I hate it actually," he finally says, and Clint can see on his face how liberating those few words were to him. "Everything about this day has been shit. Every alley stinks of piss, all the stores want to rip you off, I can't find my way through the fucking subway system, and everyone I've spoken to's been a stuck-up prick."

Marcus suddenly stops, and Clint can see his cheeks turn red. "Shit, sorry, I didn't mean you," he stammers.

Clint laughs. "Don't worry about it," he says. "I think this city sucks too. I'd leave in a heartbeat if I got the chance."

"Then why don't you?" Marcus asks, matching Clint's gaze for the first time.

Clint sees the kindness in the eyes looking back at him and immediately regrets his words. There is something disarming about the boy, and he needs to stop before he slips up. Emotions only get in the way.

"Family shit," he says, his tone making it clear that the conversation is over.

Marcus looks away once more, as if embarrassed he asked, and for once Clint decides not to prompt him further, aware he is already on a slippery slope. Instead, he turns his body around and stretches across several seats. Out of the corner of his eye, he is vaguely aware that Marcus is furtively glancing at him, but he decides to ignore it. He chooses rather to close his eyes for a moment and wrestle with his inner thoughts.

When the conductor announces their stop, Clint swings himself back upright and sees Marcus' gaze scramble away as he does so.

"This is where we get off," Clint says.

Marcus nods, keeping his eyes fixed on the door. When he gets up, Clint goes to stand beside him. A quick look down confirms that the wallet is still in the same pocket, and Clint knows what he has to do. As the doors slide open, he stands back to let Marcus out first, then moves swiftly, as if misjudging Marcus's own intentions, brushing against him as he does so. His fingers, practiced with years of work, deftly pluck the black leather pouch from where it was nestled and transfer it to his own coat. If Marcus noticed anything, he does not show it, simply looking up at the station sign.

"White line is that way," Clint says, indicating a tunnel on their left. "North one stop, and then walk one block."

Marcus thanks him, meeting his gaze one last time, and at that moment Clint sees that well of kindness hidden behind those deep brown eyes once more. But this time it seems to be mixed with something else, something like sadness. No, not sadness, pity. And then Clint wants to be mad, wants to shove the young man's pity down his throat, wants to pull out his wallet and taunt the ridiculous boy in the too-big suit. Who is this kid to know anything about his situation? Who is he to judge him? But, somehow, he feels none of this, just a dull ache as the eyes drift downwards once more and a final thanks exits Marcus' lips. Clint merely stands in silence and watches his timid steps take him away, almost wishing he would feel for his wallet, realise it is gone, and come back to get it. Clint wants to call out, to admit everything, but he stays mute, and soon Marcus has disappeared around the nearest bend.

Clint remains where he is, unmoving, until the next subway comes along. This one smells like bleach, probably to cover a much nastier smell he does not wish to consider. Clint finds a seat once more at the rear, where he can look out

onto the darkened tracks as they speed away behind him. Only once he has passed a few stops does he finally decide to check on his bounty.

As Clint pries open the wallet, it quickly becomes obvious to him that something is wrong. Where credit cards and IDs should have been, there are only empty flaps of leather. The wallet has been emptied, he realises, understanding the look of pity Marcus gave him at their parting. Anger, shame, and despair overcome Clint, and he wants to toss the wallet across the nearly-empty car he sits in, but, before he can bring himself to do so, something else catches his attention. Sticking out of one of the empty slots is a thin piece of paper. It's a receipt, and on the back are scribbled a few words in a barely legible handwriting.

*it seemed like you needed this more than me  
thanks for your help today  
Marcus*

Clint reads the words several times before their meaning sets in. Then, hesitantly, he slides a finger into the wallet's main compartment and feels the rough edges of a number of bills. Tens and twenties, a half-dozen of them. Clint simply places the wallet back into his pocket.

He cries all the way to the terminus.



*Walk The Line // Jessica Griesbach*

## For Her Children

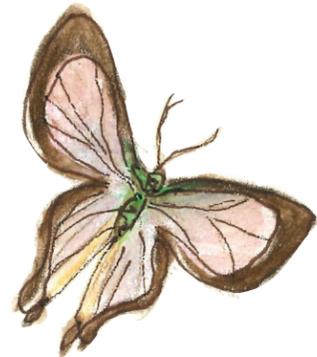
Kiera Dankesreiter

The wind moved the sand  
Into the image of the ribs of Mother Gaia  
As She was staring down with one full eye  
Disapprovingly upon the congregation  
Of miscellaneous adolescents;  
Who stole cigars from their father's dresser drawers  
And smuggled matches  
From the altars of their respective denominations.

And when they smoked  
Their burnt offerings to heaven  
For the pleasure of Yahweh himself  
The crabs crawled and gossiped of their sin.  
God overheard and turned a blind eye; however,  
The Goddess saw all and shook Her head  
Causing the tides to roll up to their ankles  
So that the frigid sea would startle them  
Into Obedience.

So when they dropped their butts into the waves  
And ran for the cover of the home  
risen closer to Heaven  
Than the average abode  
The Goddess took their wrongdoings  
willingly into her mouth  
And swallowed them  
To protect her children  
From the repercussions of their actions  
And the wrath of their Father.

Despite this they giggled  
As the water that punished them dried  
And the salt rings around their ankles  
Peeled off one by one  
And cleansed the home of heaven  
Warding the house of the misdemeanors  
Left on the shores of the sea.



## Sparrow Parable

Noah Hill Isherwood

What of the sparrows?

What of them?  
said I.

Which of the sparrows  
is worthy of sky?  
Worthy of space,  
of freedom and wings....  
Which of the sparrows  
merits these things?

Well all of them.  
and I gestured about.

Precisely, he said.  
All, and none.

## God

Brayden Kimbrough

I sat by the words of a laconic God  
His scripture like stickers on decoupage  
He broke all my fingers, contorted my words  
And plucked every feather from heavenly birds

It's a tall history riddled with ivory fixtures  
Why are our teeth bloody in all of these pictures?  
God is a heart in the eye of De Soto  
God eats my eyes with rye and risotto

I saw God outside a hotel in New Orleans  
Smoking cigars with bartenders and whores  
He flipped me the bird and then stepped in a cab  
He wiped tears from his eyes with a Burberry rag

God is the hands of defeated workers  
The blood and the knife and the screaming of murder  
God is a place where calm heads lay to die  
God is my bedroom on a Saturday night



## Meadows

Alexandra Saputo

My balcony is drenched in light.  
Gold and amber and rose  
Seeps into the sky.  
Morning's easy air tastes of heaven.

Its incense wanders over  
Untamed earth  
Through sun kissed meadows  
Of honeycomb, emerald,  
and jasper.

I find myself among the wildflowers  
and their nepenthean perfume.  
Could life be so sweet?

I gather gaiety in bushels,  
My basket blooming with  
Chrysanthemums and primrose in  
Xanthic hues,  
Wine dark carnations and mourning brides

Composing bouquets of botanical wildings  
From the lavender and anemones, the butterfly  
Weeds abandoned to Nature —  
Lost within her resplendent chaos.

I take my darlings home.  
They bring their sunshine with them.

The scent of nectar  
Spills into the kitchen from glass mason jars  
Perched upon the windowsill  
As I watch the alchemy of life unfold:

Pale white roots emerging from green stems,  
The hungry, yearning fibers stretching  
To the edge of their foreign ecosystem.

I tuck them in hand painted pots  
Packed with Mahogany earth  
And place them on the balcony.  
They flourish in the elixir of light and warmth,  
and my spirit grows bright.

Perhaps I will start a garden.

But a thief swept through the darkness  
and stripped summer from the air.  
A bitter chill seeped into the bones of the evening,  
My Happiness choked by dawn.

How foolish I was  
to think  
I could be loved.



## A Great Chapter Story

D. Zárate

Every great story has a beginning, middle and end; not necessarily in that order.

*We* are all a great story

Chapter 221: The world, too tired of supporting the man's seedlings, starts to give up.

It is not too late, but it is too close to the end. The damage is done; It's unrepairable

Its water veins are dried; its green lungs are burnt... Their destiny is assured.

Chapter 11: The man, too little to understand, starts exploring, starts to live.

He discovers he's not the only one here, he has to share in order to survive... or does he?

Chapter 40: He, now all settled starts to understand the world, the nature, the wilderness.

Starts to live together, one on one with his surroundings.

Chapter 95: The man meets a woman; he has a plan and he's sure it going to work.

They finally get together. They start dreaming about their future, their children, their home... their lives forever meant to be remembered.

Every great story has a beginning, middle and end; not necessarily in that order.

*We*, are all great stories.

Our lives are not all written as chapter books. I know.

There are hours not meant to be bound;

like those nights when we scribbled too much in the margins so we can't see the page numbers on our arms and forget, or the days when I have to remind myself the wetness of my lips just to feel something new.

We are all stubborn, even with our legs broken we chase perfection.

Chapter 175: Humans govern everything. Their intelligence transformed the world into the opposite as the man once thought. He will be sorely disappointed with this bloodline: nature is disappearing, and they don't care.

Chapter 5: A few wild humans have been put in the planet.

Their destiny will depend on their own decisions. Will they survive? Or will the perish?

Chapter 102: The man, too old to walk and to tired to argue, watches his life work being torn apart... by his own seeds.

"I guess nothing is forever" he thinks while a single tear flows down to the Earth he once owned.

Every great story has a beginning, middle and end; not necessarily in that order.

*We* are all great stories.

I am the result of the man and the woman:

If I hold our arms to the sky I can see their veins in my arms, flowing freely.

If I look to the forest, I can see their life, but I guess as them... it is gone by now.

If I hear the rivers, I can still hear them: "Get up, boy. You are better than this."

Chapter 303: Once upon a time there was a man and a woman. They are not here anymore, but you can see their seeds' leftovers on the world.

Prologue: Once upon a time a man a woman met. After their first kiss, a seed from her neck blossomed, it fell to ground and driven by the wind... a new era started.





*Il Duomo // Addison Howard*

## *The Penny-Pocketer*

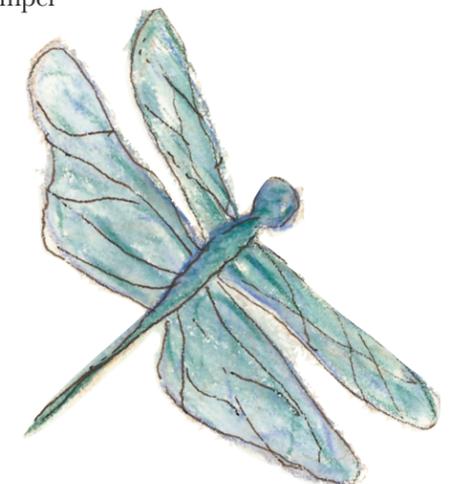
*Mya Sedwick*

Through murky depths  
Slowly drifting  
Tarnishing  
Losing luster and light  
But mostly  
Losing hope  
And a bit of magic  
As it sinks  
Further and further  
From the sunlit surface

No one thinks about  
Where their wishes go  
After they make them  
They simply walk away  
Feeling lighter than before  
Unaware of the weight  
Just unloaded onto  
The penny pocketer

Collector of wishes  
Keeper of secrets  
Well-bottom dweller  
Held down  
By broken promises  
Love unrequited  
Faith faded  
Dreams altogether forgotten

There's a soft 'clink'  
As he trudges along  
The dreams  
Tucked neatly away  
In the pocket of his denim jumper



Violet

*Viola reichenbachiana*  
February ~ faithfulness



Daisy

*Bellis perennis*  
April ~ innocence



Daffodil

*Narcissus poeticus*  
March ~ unrequited love



Lily-of-the-Valley

*Convallaria majalis*  
May ~ happiness



Shannon Rainey

# The Sun, The Moon, and All the Stars

Alexa Halpern

## Day 1: Cassiopeia

*The story of a beautiful woman.*

She didn't know what pushed her to do this—to sneak out of her bedroom window at an ungodly hour of the night—but she couldn't stop it now. She was already climbing the rickety ladder that was barely supported on the brick wall of the apartment. It was too late to turn back.

By the time she reached the roof, she was shocked to find someone else was already there. A boy with brown hair so dark that it looked black. A sharp jawline and hunched shoulders. His knees were drawn up to his chest, and a cigarette hung loosely between his fingertips.

She froze immediately at the sight. No one was ever here this late at night, so why now? Just as she took a step backward to scurry back to her room, the roof creaked underneath her.

The boy whipped his head towards her with his eyes wide, large as saucers. He looked like a deer caught in the headlights. Maybe an owl.

At the sight of her, the muscles in his shoulders relaxed. He exhaled, thin fog escaping from his thin lips. “Oh. I thought you were the landlord.”

She raised an eyebrow. “He’s a little heavy to come up here, don’t you think? He’d probably break the ladder.”

The boy grinned. “Yeah, you’re probably right.” He scooted over a few inches and patted the roof next to him. “Wanna come sit? I mean, you’re already up here.” Not knowing what else to do, she complied. She walked slowly, tilting her feet at just the right angle to prevent herself from falling off the building. However, the boy didn't seem to mind her slow movements. After she sat down, he stuck out his hand. “I’m Aiden,” he said. “I live on the fourth floor.”

She accepted the handshake. His skin was warm, much warmer than she knew hers was. His palms were calloused, and his fingers were rough. But his touch was gentle, so she didn't mind. He felt real—a real, living person.

“Selena,” she said. He gave her a smile, bright as the moon above them. She returned it, although hers was close-lipped and tight.

“So what brings you out here?” Aiden asked. He leaned back slightly, propping his body weight up on the heels of his palms.

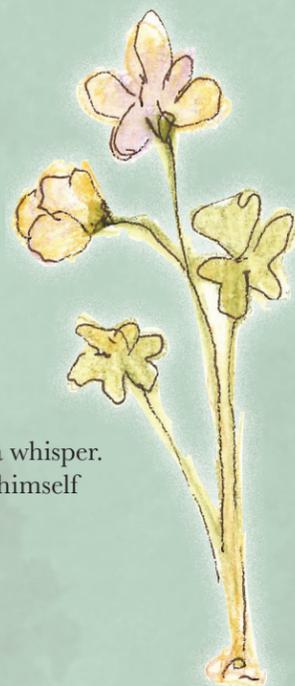
“I like to come out here sometimes,” she answered. “I love to look at the stars.”

He wrinkled his nose. “The stars? I’m more of a sunrise-kinda guy myself.”

“Is that so?” she asked. Her tight smile became a smirk unwillingly. “Then why, pray tell, are you out here at three in the morning when there’s no sun to be found?”

“It was time for a change,” he answered. His voice was breathy, barely louder than a whisper. His honey-brown eyes reflected the constellations above them, and she could see him losing himself in the sky.

The last thing she remembered was how beautiful he looked under the stars.



## Day 42: Cygnus

*The story of an unselfish friend.*

“Come on! At least once!”

“No! I’m not doing it!”

“Why not?”

“Because I need my sleep.”

“So that’s why you’re up at four in the morning on a school night?”

Selena grinned. “Got me.”

Aiden’s eyes softened as he looked towards her. “Please? I always see the stars for you. You should come out and see the sunrise with me.”

She sighed dramatically, flipping her hair with enough force to make Aiden chuckle from beside her. “Alright, fine,” she said. She poked his ribcage with her index finger. “But if I’m a sleep-deprived mess, you can’t get mad at me.”

“You can’t be tired in the morning if you don’t fall asleep,” he joked. “The sun will be up in two or three more hours. Just stay up with me until then.”

Selena stared at him with the same wide eyes he gave on the first night they met. By now, that felt so long ago.

She agreed. She sat with him for hours, waiting for the sun to blossom up from the horizon, just as it did every morning. Although Aiden tried to distract her with conversations of every topic he could think of, his soft voice was too soothing. She fought to keep her burning eyes open and to force away the sleep from her bones.

But she had to stay awake. Aiden always stayed up with her, long into the night, even though he was a morning person. He always sat with her as she laughed, or ranted, or cried. He was always there for her; she needed to do this for him too.

Just as his voice was about to lull her to sleep, Selena heard a soft gasp. “Look!”

“Hmm?” She rubbed her eyes and tried to focus on the blur of colors coming from the edge of the horizon. “Already?”

His honey-brown eyes crinkled with laughter. “I knew you clocked out,” he joked. A snarky quip was on the tip of her tongue, but the words died away as the sun stretched its rays into view.

It was more beautiful than anything she could ever imagine. It was like stepping into a painting, like she was hovering in the warmth of a fire. The colors melted and swirled together—marmalade orange with liquid gold. The blues of the night faded into purple, then pink, then the fiery colors in the center. It was ethereal.

She looked towards Aiden, but he didn't turn to meet her gaze. Still focused on the beauty of the sunrise, he stared straight out into the horizon, a look of awe painted on his face. His eyes reflected the sun's rays, which turned his irises into pools of rich amber.

Selena smiled. She didn't mind sitting out with him if this was the sight she was blessed with each morning.



**Day 118: Orion**

*The story of a man who was stung for his actions.*

It was hard to determine where it went wrong. After months of meetings on the rooftops, Selena had begun to feel the fluttering sensation every night when they met up and every morning when they separated. She grew to love the routine. She would drag him out of the apartment at night to look at the constellations; he would drag her out of her sleep at dawn to look at the sunrise. That was how their relationship worked, and she couldn't be happier.

Until one day, he didn't show up.

She waited for hours for Aiden to come, but he never did. When she climbed back down the rusted ladder after daybreak, there was a deep pit in her gut. The butterflies in her stomach had transformed into a heavy stone that rested there uncomfortably. She didn't know what to do.

One day had turned to two, then three, then four. Soon, a week had passed since Aiden had last shown up to the roof. Selena still found herself there, just as she always had, but she hated the odd, lingering feeling of solitude. She hadn't felt it when she first started going to the roof, but after spending so long with someone only to have them leave, she couldn't be too surprised.

It took three weeks for him to come back. When she heard his heavy footsteps on the shingles of the roof, she didn't bother turning around to greet him.

"Selena?"

She didn't answer. She didn't turn around. She just stared straight ahead at the constellations in the sky. Maybe if she ignored him long enough, he'd leave.

"Selena, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you." She didn't answer. Aiden sighed and took a seat next to her. She stiffened slightly at the action, but she tried her hardest to ignore him. "I should have told you."

"Where have you been?" she snapped. "Why haven't you showed up these last few weeks? Was this just some sort of game to you? A temporary distraction?"

He winced at her words. "No, no, I promise it isn't. I just..." He sighed and ran his fingers through his hair. Each chocolate brown lock was messy, as though he'd done it several times before arriving. "They're fighting again," Aiden said. "My parents, I mean." His chin was propped up on his fist. It was then that Selena saw the bruises dotting his knuckles. Another bruise under his jaw. She didn't know if she should say anything. "I spent a little while with my aunt to get away from them. I'm so sorry."

"You could've told me," Selena said. Her voice was soft, gentler than it was before. Guilt nagged at her chest. "I would've understood."

"I didn't know."

They sat in silence for several moments before Selena dipped her head down to face her lap. "My parents argue a lot too," she admitted. "I don't think they'll be together much longer."

Aiden nodded. He understood. He always understood her.

**Day 276: Andromeda**

*The story of a rescue.*

She didn't expect to spend her night clutching Aiden's side after catching him in the act. She didn't expect to see his toes touching the perimeter of the roof, so close to the edge that the thinnest gust of wind would knock him off the side.

His head was on her chest, and she rubbed circles into his back. His muscles felt firm under her fingertips, and his scent made her lightheaded.

She asked him why. He showed her the texts.

The divorce. The threat of being kicked out. The fear of his father. He couldn't do it anymore.

So she held him, engulfing his body in all the love she could muster, as if it would protect him from the rest of the world.

Their nightly meetings were always spent trying to ignore reality. This night was no different.

**Day 408: Ursa**

*The story of a lover's death.*

She always wondered if she too might end up in the sky one day. Maybe she would turn into a star, shining brightly for all to see and guiding everyone who looked her way. Maybe she and Aiden would become a constellation together. Two star-crossed lovers forever etched into the sky.

It was both romantic and terrifying.

At almost a year into their nightly meetings, Selena realized that would never happen.

Aiden stopped meeting again. This time, she knew it was indefinitely. After all, you couldn't watch the stars with someone who was dead.

The funeral was just as bleak as she'd imagined, and she knew he would hate it. It was a closed casket event. No one wanted to see his body, mangled and bloody after launching himself off the side of the roof.

She had seen his body before anyone else.

When she had gone out to see the stars, just as she always did, she let her feet dangle off the side of the roof. She'd seen him when she looked down.

Months had passed since the funeral, but it didn't get any easier to watch the stars alone. She imagined that he was there beside her, his ghost resting his head on her shoulder as a cigarette hung loosely between pale, transparent fingers. She wondered if his eyes were still honey-brown, even in the afterlife.

As she stared up into the sky and saw the constellation Lyra above her, she didn't know whether to laugh or cry at the irony. A lover taken away by Hades himself. She knew how Orpheus felt now and wondered if she'd act the same way.

Not knowing what else to do with herself, she sat on the roof, watching the night sky fade to the sunrise that Aiden loved so much and wondering if he loved her the same way he did the sky.



Sunset at Berry // Amy Solana

## Peaches and Stones

Grace Giska

Life  
Is a pretty word  
Such a sweet taste  
On your rosy pink lips  
Trickling down your chin  
Dripping into the fluorescent landscape  
Rocks nothing but pebbles under your feet



Stones that grate my feet and tear at my skin  
Flawed and scared next to yours  
The sun sets heavy and red here  
Bracing winds stitch life  
Into each aching breath  
Pins and needles  
reminding me  
the ground  
is hard  
and  
bare



## Lampyridae

Sara Freeman

Step 1: Get a jar. With a lid.  
Step 2: Follow the lights in the sky. The fireflies are easy to catch. If not, ask your mom. She can do anything.  
Step 3: Once you've got one in your hand, carefully lower it into the glass. Twist the lid on tightly and watch it glow.  
Step 4: Untwist the lid and let them go. The fireflies will die behind the glass.

That list is in my mother's handwriting. That's the woman everyone else knows. That's the woman the new girl has just found in an old box of my childhood stuff.

"Your mom sounds great!" she laughs. "I used to love catching fireflies too. Isn't it crazy that we all grew up doing that?"  
"Not really," I snapped as I grabbed the box back. "Doesn't even make any sense anyway. They're not interesting. And they're weak. Look how they're dying out."

Of course it does make sense. We've mythologized them. They bring wonder and joy and longing. They carry the light within them, and we'll take anything that makes us forget the dark. But I just don't want to keep this conversation going right now. And it worked--she's left the room.

The thing is, my mom *was* great at one point, and I'm afraid my lies about her contribute to that golden narrative. But she started to change when I started to change, when it became clear that my features were setting into hers, that she couldn't just hide the mirrors anymore. I know this because I am this. Our shared inheritance is self-loathing. That's not something she could understand. The last time I went home, the time my mother died, we spent the whole night screaming into each other's faces. I told her she'd burn in hell. She told me I'd already done that to her. I stormed outside and stared at the empty sky, wishing the night stars could blind me right then, wishing I never had to look at the sky again. I didn't go back in the whole night.

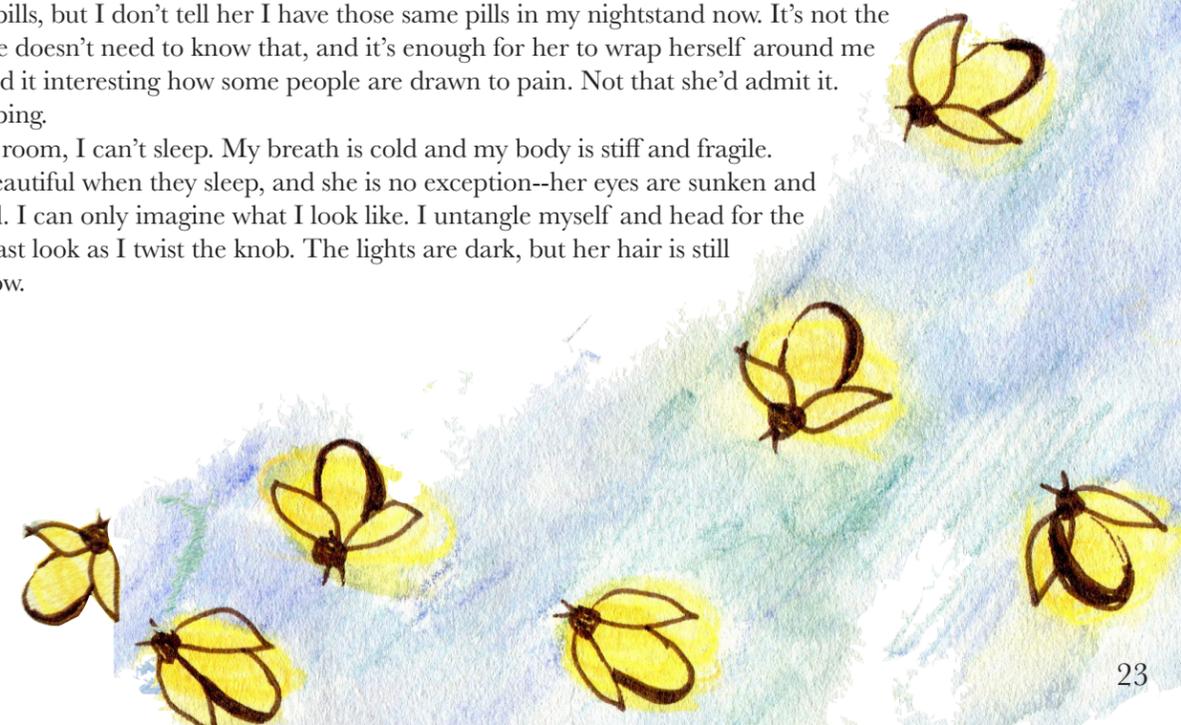
That's just not something she could understand.

---

I'm looking at her and for a moment I love her. The sun is glinting through her hair as she chatters about her family. Her lips are soft and parted with every breath. I imagine them breathing into mine. Sometimes I want to slice open her belly to see where the light comes from.

"When can I meet your mother?" she says abruptly. I don't smile quick enough to lie, and she refuses to leave this time. So I throw her a piece of truth. I tell her about walking in at dawn to find my mother on the couch. I tell her about the lights flashing all around my house. I tell her my mother was declared dead on the spot. I don't tell her about the fight. I tell her about the pills, but I don't tell her I have those same pills in my nightstand now. It's not the whole truth, but she doesn't need to know that, and it's enough for her to wrap herself around me in tears. I always find it interesting how some people are drawn to pain. Not that she'd admit it. She thinks she's helping.

Back in my room, I can't sleep. My breath is cold and my body is stiff and fragile. People are never beautiful when they sleep, and she is no exception--her eyes are sunken and her lips are cracked. I can only imagine what I look like. I untangle myself and head for the door, stealing one last look as I twist the knob. The lights are dark, but her hair is still glinting on my pillow.





*Lacerate // Dori Van Skike*

## *Drivin' and Cryin'*

*Marie Echols*

But that's life, isn't it? One year  
your days are spent driving  
alone, collecting old songs like lightning  
bugs in a jar 'cause they give you something  
to hold onto, and you need something  
to hold onto since you don't have  
someone. And you must be stuck on the wrong  
station, 'cause life's been more like a Hank song  
than the harmonies of Johnny and June,  
but that doesn't stop you from wondering what that ring  
of fire feels like. So you blare them out the windows  
thinking that'll do the trick, hurricane of hair held down  
by a ball cap while those Wayfarers hide your eyes  
'cause you're crying again. You were always crying  
those days 'cause Guy Clark once had the nerve  
to say he had a tattoo with her name  
right through his soul, and now "I love you"  
were the only cuss words the world was afraid to say.

But the times they are a-changin', and if you could  
just go back and tell yourself what's right  
up the road, those days would've had a different tune.  
You wouldn't have hurt so much,  
wouldn't have questioned so much,  
wouldn't have burned so much  
gas, 'cause you'd know before too long, he'd be ruining  
all those old songs with that harmony that can't help  
but make you think, Lord, they'll never sound as good  
after him. But there is no after  
anymore, 'cause this love thing isn't just three minutes, three  
chords and the truth, turn the station off when you pull on in  
the drive. It's everything changing except for the crying,  
'cause you're so happy you can't help but cry for the girl  
that thought her life would be a Hank song until she died.



*Ongtupqa*

*Jacqueline Lea*

Where your dusted tissue  
stretches over the ridges  
of your nose, elbows, knobby knees,  
the bones now poke through.  
Your skin is pulled so taut  
your bones chip away  
under the chiseling wind.  
What man tries  
to do—slice open your crusted  
drapery of dermis, shave away  
your needled follicles, and peek  
into your bowels—  
the elements have already begun.

And yet your secrets  
are not so easily excised:  
you buttressed cliffs of chalky  
red crags and petrified  
coyotes to stand guard  
outside the crumbling crevices,  
ferocious with their twisting  
arms and razored spines.  
Every pebble is a gelded tear  
as you protect the threshold that is  
your body.



*Rebecca Weaver*

*Reverence // Rebecca Weaver*

## Circle

Annabelle Norton

The time you held me in your arms,  
Fingertips touching, wet garments scattered  
And damp hair matted,  
We were the scent of saltwater  
And your grandmother's tequila.  
I was the owl you found broken  
On the side of the road or the mite-ridden cat  
That we rescued from the lakeshore,  
Brought into your bed so I didn't die alone.  
I wait for you like a dog in traffic,  
Your speeding tickets between my teeth.  
We drink orange juice and water from an empty vodka bottle.  
You gave yourself tattoos, Saturn and the moon.  
They turned out misshapen circles  
But I like them.  
I touched you through the water, your shoulders sheltered  
From the wind. It's an hour and fifteen for fifteen  
Minutes of Valentine's Day.  
You drove to find me, or did you just want to drive?  
I keep your suede journal on my dashboard, your feelings  
For me are locked in your glove compartment.  
You and I are passing through each other,  
And you are leaving me behind.  
You pray to a poster of Stevie Nicks  
And I would buy you a prayer  
Candle if we make it to your Gemini spring.  
So, I'll buy expensive coffee and pretend  
To write something profound about you.  
This poem is about you.  
This time it means something, you said. Or  
It didn't mean anything before.  
I couldn't pin you down on paper  
Anymore than I could preserve a butterfly.  
Pining for the moon,  
I'd give it to you in return  
For a moment of your time.  
You are water sliding between Phoebe's  
fingers. Two girls in short skirts roller skating,  
Hold my hand so we can only fall together.



## first date

Kayla Slack

you ask me to take you to forever  
yet look surprised  
when i take you to a graveyard

"i expected a sunset," you say  
"there's the perfect view  
from right here," i reply

fingers outstretched,  
the sun on the horizon  
as the moon readies herself

for another nightshift,  
"keeping them company  
is my forever," i say

and you ask, "who?"  
i look around, see  
the wilting flowers

laying on graves,  
spirits of young children  
playing around their markers

giggling now, forever,  
the way they should've  
when they were alive

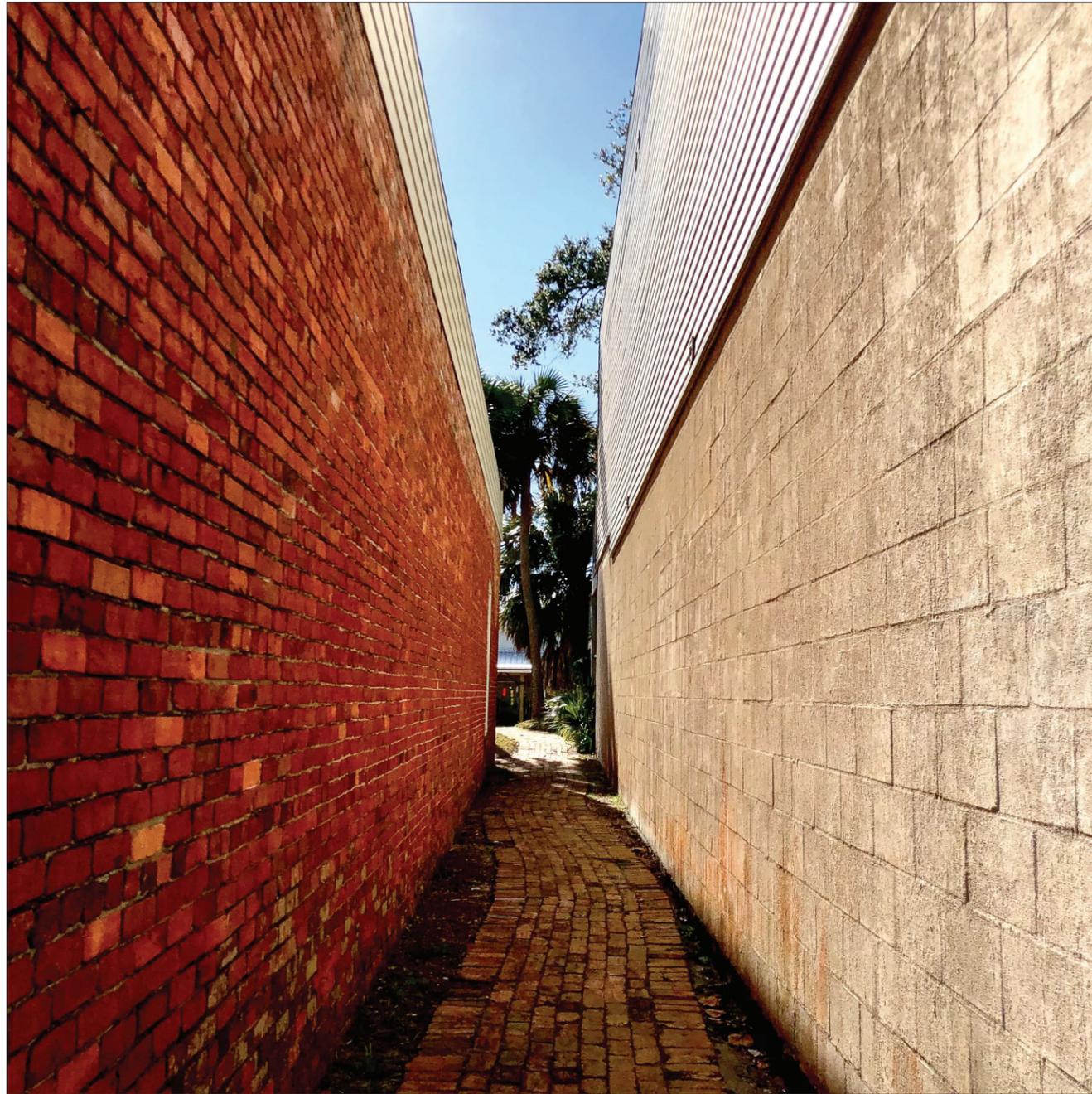
i see the tree, remembering  
all the stories i've told  
and heard when i would

sleep on the branches,  
hug its trunk, whisper  
"thank you" for keeping

everyone company when  
i cannot be around,  
this tree will outlive me

but i will always return here,  
watching, singing with the moon  
and waving to lonely spirits





*Brick Polarity // Noah Hill Isherwood*

## Rowaway

*Sam Perry*

Searching the stars for a sign to look for  
 Wandering paths of the dead  
 Wearing the road the untold walked before  
 Who now live as shapes in our heads  
 Rowaway rowaway rowaway now  
 Back to the sea where you formed  
 Rowaway rowaway rowaway now  
 Don't fear the fire or storm

Listening deep to the sounds of the past  
 Timbre of chirps in the night  
 Tools that the ancestors gave me I grasp  
 Prepared now to dig or take flight  
 Rowaway rowaway rowaway now  
 Follow the stream in the sky  
 Rowaway rowaway rowaway now  
 The stream runs between the divide

Fish see the starlight embedded in waves  
 We see as if from a well  
 Great as the fish are the lives that we make  
 Greater, the stories we tell  
 Rowaway rowaway rowaway now  
 Walk when the river is low  
 Rowaway rowaway rowaway now  
 Wherever you're going you'll go

All of the darkness, all of the light  
 Time out of time folds us in  
 A star in the sky for each ancestor's life  
 With one voice they beckon *Begin*  
*Rowaway rowaway rowaway now*  
*Feel, listen, hear*  
*Rowaway rowaway rowaway now*  
*Away from all falsehood and fear*  
*Rowaway rowaway rowaway now*  
*Seek peace be kind and make good*  
*Rowaway rowaway rowaway now*  
*Tend talents and fire and wood*  
*Rowaway rowaway rowaway now*  
*Stand tall breathe deep and be true*  
*Rowaway rowaway rowaway now*  
*All of us will row with you*



*Listen here: <https://ramifications.berry.edu>*

## About Us

Ramifications is a 32-page 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-IN-CHIEF'S NOTE



It's been strange for me to be able to chart my time as editor based on the chaos in the world. I began in January 2020, just months before the pandemic struck and changed our lives forever. And now, as we begin to move back towards something we could call "normal," my time here comes to a close. With graduation rapidly approaching, I must now prepare to say goodbye to *Ramifications* and the staff who have been by my side through the journey of these past years. I am incredibly proud to hand the editor-in-chief role over to Asa Daniels, who has been working with us since his first semester at Berry, and I am excited to see what he and Kayla Slack (as online editor and special edition editor) will do next year. I am so thankful for this team who built the magazine and for the Berry community and our chapter of Sigma Tau Delta who submitted the work to fill it. I will miss you all.

*Shannon Rainey*

## Meet the Staff



Art Editor  
*Abigail Stallings*



Staff  
*Sam Perry*



Staff  
*Kiera Dankesreiter \**



Volunteer  
*Asa Daniels*



Volunteer  
*Annabelle Norton*



Volunteer  
*Kayla Slack*

Online Editor  
*Michaela Stansberry \**

Staff  
*Emma Nicole Kenney \**

\* Members of Sigma Tau Delta

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