

KLIO

Penn State's Creative Arts Journal
Volume 4, 2019



OUR MISSION



Klio is the Muse of history and poetry, called upon by early Greek writers and artists for inspiration and creative guidance. The Greek verb *kleô*, meaning to celebrate, comes from her name. Here at ***Klio***, we celebrate both written and visual expressions of creativity.

Klio is the online sister to Penn State's creative arts journal, *Kalliope*.

Klio seeks to showcase the work of students and keep a community record of creative arts from all PSU campuses. We strive to provide an inclusive community to celebrate the creative and linguistic talents of emerging Penn State artists and writers. Any and all forms are encouraged, as we pride ourselves on being a multimedia publication that represents diversity in art, perspective, and culture.

Klio is a platform for all Penn State students.

We are Penn State. We are ***Klio***.

Cover art: "Alien" by Kaitlyn Innerst
Klio Logo by Sarah Nields

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Dear Klio Readers,

As we near the conclusion of the fall semester, the *Klio* staff would like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who made this year's edition of *Klio* possible. From our contributors to our interview subjects to our readers, without you, none of this would have been possible. We now are pleased to release our project we have been building over the last few months.

Our main goal this semester was to do our best to feature the work of the finest writers and artists Penn State has to offer. We also aimed to build on the past success of *Klio*, while adding our own mark to the site as well. Throughout this semester, we did a lot to improve *Klio*, such as updating our mission statement and changing the guidelines to making submitting pieces easier. A new initiative we worked to introduce this year was a podcasting page. Our goal was to create a central place for poetry podcasts as well as create our own audio content. I hosted a **podcast with Penn State English professor Toby Thompson**, and my hope is that the next staff of *Klio* continues to build on the podcast initiative.

Last year, *Klio* introduced a music page with a "Music We Love" **playlist on Spotify**. After seeing the success *Klio* had last year with music, we wanted to grow and expand on that initiative this year. This allowed us to continue to spotlight Penn State musicians on *Klio*.

Outside of music and podcasting, we added to our online collection of fiction, nonfiction, art, and poetry to spotlight those respective writers and artists at Penn State.

The *Klio* fiction section features nine phenomenal stories, which combine many intriguing themes and storylines. One of the stories featured in the *Klio* fiction section is **"Starlit Realization" by Theresa Morris**, which talks about a young girl taking a chance with a boy she likes. All nine pieces reflect on our mission to feature and enhance the best work of the writers at Penn State.

Klio's 2019 nonfiction slate is light, but all three pieces present unique storylines that all of our readers are sure to find extremely engaging. For instance, **"Movies and Me" by Hannah Singletary** features a compelling story on a writer's relationship with movies, as well as amusements and events such as Dragon Con.

Our poetry section features a large collection of intriguing poems that offer a range of voices and themes. Over the 14 poems you'll find in *Klio*, many feature raw emotions, trying times, love, and so much more. This collection showcases Penn State students' ability to demonstrate their feelings and ways of seeing the world in finely crafted poetry pieces.

Klio 2019 offers a variety of different types of art, from photography, paintings, digital art and more, that our readers are sure to find extremely intriguing. Several artists contributed multiple artworks to this year's edition, including photographer Kaitlyn Innerst, whose photographs include "Alien" (featured on our *Klio 2019* cover), as well **"The French Dancer"** and **"Birdcage."**

This year, *Klio* also got the opportunity to feature an intriguing multimedia project (something we are always interested in showcasing) in the form of a tremendous **short film by Michael Switzer entitled "Wet Crimson."** This is something we feel our readers will be sure to enjoy, and we hope it plants a seed for additional multi-media submissions in future semesters!

Throughout the fall semester, our *Klio* staff also contributed a bunch of blog posts that featured everything surrounding the creative arts at Penn State—not only writers and their various forms of written expression, but also photography and performance poetry, theater and dance, traditional Chinese music and modern electronic dance music. Our nonfiction editor **caught up with faculty member Elizabeth Kadeksky** on the other side of the world in India as she pursues her latest book with the help of a Fulbright Fellowship. In addition to that, we also interviewed and took a look back at some of the work from a **prior Kalliope writer, Kayleb Rae Candrilli**, who recently won a Whiting Award for their most recent book of poetry. We believe *Klio* goes beyond the website and celebrates a community of writers and artists at Penn State, something that our blog spotlights have really tried to capture.

As editor-in-chief, I am extremely pleased and honored to have worked alongside a cooperative team with a tremendous work ethic. We all started the semester as strangers and didn't know how *Klio 2019* would turn out, but we formed a bond working together to achieve a common goal. We were all able to find a common synergy and focus on our collective mission to bring our readers the best content from all the fantastic writers and artists Penn State has to offer.

Thanks for reading!

Jake Starr
Editor-in-Chief
Klio 2019

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MUSIC

Follow the link embedded in each name to read about and hear the music of each of these artists:

- [Chris Eichlin](#)
- [Ryan Patrick Barry](#)
- [Intermission Improv](#)
- [Mitch Dobbs](#)
- [Kristen Nodell](#)

All contributions to Klio 2019 are by Penn State University Park students, with the exception of “The Interest of Traveling Alone,” by Jess Chang, who attends Penn State Brandywine.

FICTION

Starlit Realization, by Theresa Morris

Stargazing wasn't an interest for Lance. All you did was look at some lights in the sky and be amazed by them for two seconds. His longtime friend Melody, on the other hand, loved watching stars and invited him to her apartment despite his disinterest.

She tugged his arm. "C'mon! It's gonna be fun!" she said.

"Nuh uh." Not even her cute pout would make him give in to her pleas. *No! No! She is NOT cute!*

"There will be food." she said. Now she had his attention. "But you need to come to the roof to eat it."

"Dammit." Yet he couldn't pass up food so he resigned. "Okay whatever you win."

Melody pumped her fists with a resounding "Yes!"

The apartment roof gave an inclusive view of the city below. The nighttime neon lights illuminated the tiny city below while the sky was unscathed by the blaring lights.

Lance felt a nudge on his side, breaking him out of his trance. "Are ya just gonna gawk or ya gonna eat?"

He walked over to see an assortment of desserts from cheesecake to cupcakes. When she said there would be food he thought actual food like ribs. His disappointed look dissipated when the smell of chocolate hit him. Melody teasingly held up a chocolate cupcake. "You know you want it." Just as he reached for the cupcake, however, Melody yanked it away from him.

"What's that for?"

She patted the space next to her and handed him a binoculars. "Stargazing is our top priority."

He obliged to her request only if it meant getting to the main course. “Take it away.” She closed the distance between them, being uncomfortably close to him. *Her hair smells like blueberries. No, stop! You’re being weird!*

Melody gasped. “See that Andromeda constellation.” She leaned further into him, pointing to the sky. Ignoring her warmth and the pounding heartbeat in his ears, he focused on the assortment of stars. “It looks like a person who just slipped on a banana.” he said. She chuckled. Maybe stargazing wasn’t boring if it meant seeing her like this.

They gorged on sweets and laughed about the odd constellation shapes into the late hours of the night. “Thanks for coming here.” said Melody, reaching for Lance’s hand and holding it gently.

Lance gave her a befuddled look.

A blush crept up on her face. “We’ve been friends and all for a while but I… want to be more than that… with you.” She looked up to see Lance’s shocked expression. *Did I break him? Was I too forward? Oh no! What if he doesn’t feel the same way?!*

She tried to backtrack her statement. “Uh… I mean-”

“I like you too, Melody.”

Her eyes widened. “Really?”

He nervously scratched the back of his neck. “Yeah. Stargazing isn’t half bad when you’re happy.”

Melody clung to his arm and leaned on his shoulder, smiling.

“Let’s stargaze again.”

“Fine by me.”

Him, by Robin Roney

I close my eyes as he kisses my cheek. *The first time we met, his eyes were magnetic.* One kiss after another, he slowly moves down my face, and I lift my chin up as he gets to my neck. My heart beats faster and my hands begin to tremble. *He always said it was love at first sight. Ever since he saw me in the food court at The Maine Mall.* My arms slowly move outwards and I can feel the cool satin sheets intertwine with my fingers. He kisses the right side of my neck. I flinch, turn my head to the left and slowly open my eyes. My breathing tightens as he slowly starts to pull my bra strap down my shoulder and starts kissing down my neck to my collar bone. His soft lips are so gentle on my skin. I reach my left arm up slowly.

SMASH.

Heart beating fast, his body falls hard onto me as the glass from the lamp shatters over top of us. Pieces scatter across the room. Reach into the back right pocket of his jeans, grab the small key, slide out from under him, and fall out of the bed onto the glass-covered floor, barely feeling the cuts. I stand up, stumble, and run to the big dark door that stands out against the white walls. Push the key forcefully into the lock, twist it, then yank the door open. As I prepare myself to run away, I turn around to give him one last look to make sure he's knocked out. His long brown hair lays over top of his strong pale face.

My cold bare feet slam onto the hard floor with every step I take down the dark hall, and my breathing is tight. Everything seems to be moving so slow as my eyes adjust to the darkness, and I feel around the room. I bump into a table and run my hand over it. My hands graze over something sharp. It feels like the scalpel he used to cut me with when he first brought me here. I know the feeling of it all too well. *If you love me, why do you feel the need to cut my body?* I continue to feel around the room, and finally find the door. I pull my bra strap up, turn the doorknob, and use the force of my body to push it open.

The bright sunlight bounces off the white blanket of snow covering every inch of the forest in front of me, and I swear the cool winter air freezes me in my place. I look down at my bra, underwear, and bare feet, and then back up at the pine trees that are so white you couldn't even tell they were

supposed to be green. *I'll freeze if I don't grab a jacket. Fuck. There's no time!* I start to run. Looking back at the small brown cabin, it stands out so much in the white snow. *How long was I stuck here for?* My breathing gets harder and faster the more I run, and all I feel is the cold touching every inch of my body.

All I can think about is the last time it was snowing like this, my two little brothers were building snowmen outside with me, their soft innocent giggles surrounding the air. Mom was making hot cocoa in the kitchen, dad was watching some game on ESPN...

A soft smile comes across my almost numb face at the thought of being able to see my family again. It goes away almost instantly as I try to maneuver my way through the forest. I turn right after running for what feels like forever, then left at the one pine tree that has the smallest shade of green popping out, and I continue running straight forward from there. I hear the crunch of snow as I take each step. My entire body is numb at this point, and I catch myself on the trunk of a tree, breathing so hard that all I can see in front of me is a small cloud forming. My breaths are so loud that the pure silence of the forest is disrupted and I hunch over.

I won't survive if I stay out here. I don't know where I am, and I don't even know if there is anyone out here to help me. Maybe I should just go back. I turn around and instantly feel a sharp pain in my stomach. I look down and see the scalpel, then up at him. His bright blue eyes pop with the stream of blood running down the side of his face. I fall to the ground. *My brothers smile and run around. Little 'I love you's' emerge from their small mouths. I love you guys too.*

Brodie Bear, by Katy Shero

Red maple trees that lined the quaint neighborhood swayed in the breeze. It was a particularly crisp day, but nothing too out of the ordinary for a Northeastern September afternoon. Except for the unordinary yard sale the burgundy bungalow on the corner was having. Yard sale days were Sundays. The first of every month. But today was Saturday, and dainty, fair faced Elly, who stood on the front porch with her accompanying boxes, didn't seem to mind.

There were boxes upon bins and containers packed to their brims. It seemed like Elly missed last yard sale day. And the cheap folding tables that she set up in her front lawn looked like they hadn't been replaced in a mere decade. They were coated in scuff marks and scratches, resembling the items atop of them.

The items Elly was selling included:

- A fine china dinner set (Rarely used. Her husband hated guests.)
- A toolkit (Also rarely used. The bungalow was beyond repair. The bathroom sink still hadn't been fixed.)
- A box of cassettes (He made them for her)
- Wooden picture frames (*Why would I need these anymore?* She asked herself. They were cracked anyway.)
- A blue baby carriage with matching baby shoes and a blanket

All things she was anxiously waiting to get rid of. She couldn't bear the sight of them anymore.

Thinking about the items kept her up every night. It was hard for her, especially after her husband walked out last July. The Fourth of July. On her birthday. She couldn't help she had another miscarriage. And if she could've put the house up for sale, she would've done that too.

Elly waited all day for someone to stop by. She counted all the passing silver Chevrolets, hoping one would be her husband coming home to tell her he was sorry. And she eyeballed all the people on the

sidewalk, praying one would draw their attention toward the big, red spray painted “EVERYTHING MUST GO” cardboard sign.

She managed to exchange glances with a few passing pedestrians, but most of them turned the other direction or pretended they were on their phone after seeing Elly’s sunken eyes and unkempt appearance. She hadn’t brushed her blonde strands in a few weeks, and her bony figure was camouflaged in the maternity clothes she wore. She figured she’d still wear them even though they were tattered, faded, and she was far from pregnant. And the olive colored cardigan and gray sweatpants she wore looked like they belonged in the yard sale too.

The sun began to set, and so did Elly’s spirit. She told herself she’d try again tomorrow, and maybe the day after that. She didn’t have the energy to pack up the items, so she went inside to grab blankets to throw over them instead. As she trudged up her porch stairs with her back facing the world, she heard a pair of footsteps and a soft murmur behind her.

“Hello.”

It was a man. He stood about six feet high and Elly guessed he was probably in his mid- forties. He carried a tan satchel, stuffed with other items it looked like he had gotten from other yard sales. He had a lot of wrinkles for his age. He looked like he worried a lot. And his sunken eyes resembled Elly’s. He seemed lonely like her too.

“Are you done selling for today?” he asked Elly.

Elly wanted to be done, but she knew she couldn’t turn down her only customer. She put on a faint smile and replied, “About to be. But you can take a look.”

The man rummaged through the bins.

He gravitated only toward the ones with stuffed animals. Elly had a lot of those for sale. She had expected they’d be put to good use, but they were never able to. She resented them all equally.

“So are you shopping for anyone in particular? You seem real interested in the stuffies,” Elly asked the man.

“My daughter likes them.” His reply was so muffled, she could barely hear him.

“Awh, that’s sweet. How old is your daughter?”

Elly was desperate to talk to the man. He was reserved, but she appreciated the interaction anyway. She couldn’t remember the last time she had actually spoken with another human being since last July. It had been a while since she left her house.

He muttered “seven” and continued to hunt through the boxes.

“How much do you want for this one?” the man asked, holding a sewn together teddy bear.

“Eh, probably like 50 cents,” Elly replied, without bothering to look at the yellow-buttoned one eyed, red-stitched backward eared, dark-brown matted furred bear.

He pulled out his wallet, and she froze as she saw what he was actually holding.

Brodie? She thought to herself. *I didn't mean to put him in there.*

Brodie was Elly's special bear. He wasn't just a teddy picked from the store included with the bargain boxes of heart shaped chocolates. Well, he was. Then he wasn't. Elly's husband had given her Brodie. On the fourth of July. On her birthday.

But on Christmas Eve, the day Elly always referred to as "the worst fight ever", he ripped Brodie. It was probably over something Elly said, but she couldn't remember. What she did remember was that it was the night of her second miscarriage. She had spent the entire evening locked in the bathroom, hovering over the toilet bowl. Her husband cursed at her from downstairs and out of frustration, he had destroyed the tiny bear saved for their son. The son that never came.

The next day her husband sewed Brodie back together with the scraps of unfinished projects he found around the house. He borrowed some of Elly's red thread to fix the ears he had ripped off, and he found a yellow button in between the cushions of the torn, leather basement couch to use as an eye. Brodie became the ugliest bear Elly had ever seen. But for her, he was good as new. Damaged, but fixed. It reminded Elly of their relationship.

Elly hesitated before confessing that the bear wasn't for sale.

"I'm so sorry. He must've been in there by mistake."

The man look disheartened. Like a kid in a candy store. When they don't get what they want. And his sunken eyes capsized even more. He held onto the bear tighter.

"Are you sure this bear isn't for sale? My daughter would have loved it."

Of course Brodie isn't for sale, Elly thought.

"I'm sorry sir; he's not for sale. Like I said, it was a mistake," Elly replied. She refused to let go of Brodie. Brodie was an extension of her husband, and she knew her husband wouldn't be too happy when he returned home to Brodie sold.

The man dropped the bear to the ground and turned away. He looked defeated and didn't speak another word to Elly before walking back toward the sidewalk.

"Hey, why do you want that bear anyway? He's so ugly. I have so many other stuffies you could buy. I'll give you a bundle discount!" Elly yelled to him. He was almost across the street now, and his figure was fading into a tiny speck of nothing as he walked further and further away from her.

Her insides sunk. She felt terrible rejecting her only customer of the day, so she yelled again across the street to the tiny speck of nothing.

"HEY! You can have the bear! \$1.00!"

The tiny speck resembled a human figure once again.

Elly knew she wasn't giving Brodie to the man. But she needed a way to lure him back over, so she could convince him to buy another stuffed animal instead.

As the man reached for his wallet to pull out a dollar bill, a polaroid of him with a small girl holding a plush puppy slipped out and fell to the ground. The girl had wide hazel eyes, cheeks of freckles, and brown locks. She looked so happy in the polaroid, and so did the man. Seeing the man's smile in the picture was offsetting to Elly.

"You dropped this. Is this your daughter?" Elly asked the man as she handed him the polaroid.

"Yes." His sunken eyes lit up. "That was my daughter. About two-ish years ago I'd say. She always loved stuffed animals. Black lab puppies were her favorite. Bears too."

"I go out every Saturday and try to find her favorites. She always liked ugly animals. The broken ones, like the bear you're selling me. She would've adopted him in a heartbeat, afraid no one else would. She always insisted ugly animals deserve loving homes just as much as the cute ones."

Elly was surprised how open the man became when she brought up his daughter. He spoke so highly of her, but his eyes were filled with a deep sadness and gut wrenching pain.

But Elly was still hesitant to give up Brodie. He was her bear. *Her special bear.* The man could always find another ugly stuffed animal. Elly had a lot of those.

"Well, you should come back with your daughter. Let her pick out an ugly stuffed animal; I have a lot of them," Elly replied.

The man's eyes glazed over. His bottom lip quivered a bit before responding.

"My daughter passed away. Last spring. That's why I go out every weekend to find her favorites. She can't anymore. I put them on her gravesite, so she'll never have to worry that I forgot about her. And all of the animals she would've adopted."

"Oh, I'm sorry," was all Elly could manage to get out.

She felt guilty. It was selfish to hold onto Brodie now. She had been holding onto him for so long because it felt like her husband, but she knew he wasn't coming back. As much as she lied to herself every morning that he'd be lying next to her, as much as she convinced herself everyday that they were just "on a break" and he'd stop being cruel and come home soon, as much as she envisioned her dangling Brodie over the son-that-never-came's crib as she giggled with her newborn, as much as she was living vicariously through delusions, they didn't mask the reality that the bed had been empty for months. And the crib were never to be filled. All of this would stay that way; she didn't have the option to choose.

However, she did have the choice to give the man Brodie. Someone who would put him to good use. She never was able to. Elly knew it'd be best if she didn't hold onto Brodie any longer. Maybe it would be good for her too. She surrendered a piece of herself.

"The loss of a child is the worst loss in the world. I know the feeling," Elly said to the man.

“You can have him for free. Don’t worry about it.”

He smiled and thanked her. Elly handed him the bear, and he turned toward the sidewalk.

He walked further and further away, and once again, he faded into the horizon as a tiny speck of nothing.

Elly smiled to herself. It didn’t really matter to her anymore that she didn’t sell anything all day. *There’s always tomorrow*, she thought.

As she was packing up the boxes, she looked down. Something must’ve fallen from the man’s satchel. She picked it up and realized it was the polaroid of him and his daughter.

Thank you for the bear. Though you never had a child of your own, you made my daughter really happy. She’s watching over you, and she told me you would’ve been a great mother. Keep this photo.

John,

it read on the back.

Not That You'd Notice, *by Katy Shero*

apple.

water.

gum.

gum.

water.

french toast sticks (1 ½).

water.

done.

mom made breakfast for dinner, so of course i had to include that. it's okay— it's my cheat day.

i'm closer to my goal than before. just a few more; ana said i can manage.

it's what oliver would've wanted.

but what do i want?

childish to ask; i know the answer.

i want to see oliver undressed. undone, lying in my bed, half tangled in my tattered sheets. ivory, floral linen with some dark stains from him. i always thought the pattern was too feminine. it didn't matter. he liked them. i wouldn't pick them; i hate florals. they're from years ago.

i want to see his smile. his lips. pressed together in that mushy, upward curl. it's warming; it makes my insides kindle, mimicking when his insides are inside of mine. i love when he makes his face at me. the face after he finishes. and when his eyes dart from the gap between the bed and the wall, to the gap between my thighs.

what i actually want is to talk to him. i never know how.

i'm close to being like he would've wanted. thin as a rail. confident while undressed. able to make his smile wider and his finish quicker.

able to feel my collarbones when i stroke my fingertips along my neckline. smooth and rigid at the same time. irresistible. more prominent each passing day i look in the mirror and feel them. closer to feeling his hands feel them. and feeling the curvature of my spine with his hands. this time, different than before, because he'll feel the bone. he'll be tracing it. getting caught up in it. i'll be feeling his hands feel my body. caught up in him caught up in me. and my body— a body he wants.

so close for him to say he loves me and he means it. oliver might even love me more than ana loves me. but ana always reminds me that no one could love me more. even on the days i'm bad and eat what i shouldn't.

"i love you kaelie," oliver will say when he sees the way i look.

on saturday, he's going to our friend's birthday dinner. i rsvped too. it's been months since i've seen him. years. i forget. i lost track. it feels like forever. i've been avoiding him, because ana said so. she said i was too disgusting, and if i ever wanted to be a priority to him, i'd have to look like one. but ana finally told me i looked okay. okay enough to go to the birthday dinner.

i'm anxious.

i look good.

he's going to regret leaving me.

"Oliver," I say, pushing up my sleeves, hoping he'll notice my delicate wrists.

It's Madison's birthday dinner, and I'm early. So is Oliver. It's just us waiting for the rest of the party to arrive.

I give him a hug. I don't think he wanted that.

“Long time, no see! How have you been?” I put on a facade. I’m happy now like this. Ana said the more ribs that protrude, the better. I can count three on each side under my dress.

Our eyes lock for a minute. Initially, he gives me a puzzled look, but his eyes transition to dead ones once he remembers who I am. He doesn’t even notice my fading frame.

“I’ve been fine. Yourself?” Oliver asks.

I expected a shocked reaction from him. Rather, he’s short.

Ana says I’ve got to show him how well I’m doing. If only I felt as good as I looked.

“I’ve been doing well. Taking care of myself... hitting the gym... ya know,” I reply.

I toy with the tiny ruby pendant that rests against my blush v-neck. I’ve had the pendant for as long as I can remember; my mother gave it to me. I think it’s ugly and I hate jewelery, but I wear it. It’s his birthstone. He likes it.

As I consciously caress the chain of my pendant, I pop my collar bones out to tease him.

He gives me that familiar simile. The one where his lips press together after he finishes. Only this time it’s less genuine, and strikingly cold. Yet, it doesn’t fail to ignite my insides.

His attention then shifts to the patron who walks in. It’s his best friend, who’s also invited to the dinner. Oliver notices and leaves.

That’s when I pull him back in.

“Tell me Oliver, how are you *actually* doing? It’s been awhile. You have to be something other than fine. You always said we’d be friends.”

He hesitates.

“Actually, I’m doing great. Got an apartment...a dog.. oh, and engaged! You remember my friend Raquel, right? One night last summer we met up for drinks, and then it just kinda turned into a relationship. She’s great though; I really love her.”

His eyes light up at the last sentence. Mine sink.

My insides sink too. My stomach hurts, but not like hunger pains. Those are bad. I would know. This is worse.

I love you, I say.

I didn’t mean to do that. Oh shit, it slipped.

“I’m happy for you.” That’s what I actually said. Equally painful.

Please don't leave me. I can keep trying until I'm what you want. I didn't say that either.

"I'm glad things are going well."

I said that.

We didn't talk for the rest of dinner. The guests showed up, and we sat on opposite ends of the table.

Then I drove away and tried to never think about him again.

I missed out on my mom's french toast sticks. Those were always my favorite. The only aroma that could drag me out of bed in the morning. Now, it made me nauseous.

I missed out on my mom's french toast sticks. I missed out on a lot because of him.

Our Pumpkin, by Sam Landmesser

I decided to buy him a pumpkin because it would be something living that we could both share and shape. Well, I wanted to believe that fuzzy feeling rather than dwell on the mutilation. Because I believe that the mutilation inspired me too. I wanted to run my fingers through its guts. I wanted to explore the cool secrets of the mush and seeds, disturbing them slowly and methodically to the rhythm of my own jubilant whim. They are mine now. I have forced open the head with a blade. The treasure is now mine. It is mine in a way that few things ever will be.

He can never be mine. At least not in this way. Please, don't think that I'm insane. I would never want to possess him that way. I love him. Differently, and yet, I still want to experience him in the way I can experience a pumpkin, by cracking it open, invading it, and making it mine.

The wild part of me longs for the smooth inner shell of the gutted pumpkin. With the seeds gone, how can I guarantee that it will remain mine? Now, I feel the need to urinate in this pumpkin. Please hear me out. I know you'll understand.

I think back to a child who guiltlessly wriggles a finger up his nose, only to, moments later, greedily grasp at his mother's hand. Yes, I want that. The child has no sick satisfaction in her dirtiness. She has a blissful oblivion from stigma. I want to share in the pumpkin's oblivion. Just as I felt the secret of the pumpkin's seeds squirm through my fingers. The only uneasiness was inside myself. I want to alleviate my body from my repugnant liquids: a restriction on my mind, a restriction of my higher self, a restriction on something I don't want to understand, but at least I'll pretend. By giving this pumpkin an unwanted piece of myself, I am forcing it to love and accept me. To hold and carry me in its newly Christened womb. The pumpkin does not know, does not *mind*. My body fills the pumpkin's head with my own fluids, but I am drawn further away from what the pumpkin initially meant and am buried further into the chasms of myself.

Never mind. Did I not mention a young child before? What is purer than a child's love? A child loves with a ferocity dependent on his ignorance. An ignorance and apathy towards the things which

I have later learned to detest. A child does not abhor his boogers, her pee, her poop. If anything, she is proud of these things. They prove her health. Oh, the strength of a body which has fought the bacterial battle and won!

Yes, I want to urinate in the pumpkin while simultaneously living the ignorance of the pumpkin. I want to become the pumpkin, claim the pumpkin. Now I will give the pumpkin something it can never be rid of. I will mutilate its chemical interior, strip it once more of something belonging to itself so that I may at last consume.

Never could I consume a person in this way. Could I? I would not. My love of people must be more balanced than this all-consuming obsession and greed.

Maybe this pumpkin could be mine. Maybe this I will own in a way that I never could with “any other else”. I glance at it, straining the corners of my eyes. I turn on my plastic heels. The pumpkin is not right. Of course! It is not right because it is the pumpkin! *Not mine at all*, I thought. And I thought some more. Right. The pumpkin will only be mine when it is me. And if the pumpkin is me, then it must no longer be the pumpkin. That seemed sensible. I could only have become part of the pumpkin for it to still sit before me, outwardly unchanged. How could I stare at something that was supposedly mine? How could it be mine if I did not possess it in every way? True belonging meant consistent belonging. Would this still be my pumpkin a year from now once it withered and rot? I would have to discard it. Relinquish it from the assigned role as mine since it had betrayed itself. It had only played a part. When it failed to convince me of its sameness, it automatically ceased to be mine. I scream that it never really was.

Can anything be yours across the temporality of yourself except yourself?

Therefore, I had to do it. First, the pumpkin was in my hands. Then, its pieces were on the ground. My fists smashed through the pieces. My knees knocked and nodded against the plastic floor. My flat-bottom shoes quashed and slid through the semi-solid organic goo. Everything smeared about in a divine painting of chaos. This is what the Abrahamic God must have felt when she sent the flood. I wanted to dive underwater and see the dancing, purple-faced sinners as their lungs gorged and their bloated faces swell[ed] with the waves of the crashing wrath of the God, or any and all beings claiming power and CONTROL.

No. No matter. The pumpkin. No longer a pumpkin. The organic smear. All known to me now. Omnipotent. What a jubilant goo! How much I love it. I am filled with awe for the mysteries which are now mine.

The door opens. He is home.

“Gosh, what a long day.” A pause.

“Pumpkin,” I reply.

But don't worry. Of course he was not.

Flaky, by *Hannah Singletary*

“I’ve got my outfit all picked out. I’m wearing the green velvet pants with the buttons on the sides. I think he’ll like them. And then I’m just going to wear a plain white sweater and those cute red flats with the bows on them. I hope he likes it.” I can feel myself grinning just thinking about it.

“Oh my God, yes,” Caroline pauses to twirl her hair around her finger, “but what if you look like a Christmas tree?”

“No, no, the colors are fall colors. The shoes are like a dark red. What if he does though? You think so? You think I’ll look like a Christmas tree?”

“Okay, no, you’re right.” She sees the mild panic in my eyes. “Hey, Liam really likes you, you know. He’ll love whatever you’re wearing.”

“I know, but we haven’t eaten, like, dinner together. That’s like a whole new level.”

“Yeah, but he said he wanted to go. You asked him, and he said ‘yes.’”

“You’re right, you’re right. I’m just nervous after last weekend. That was the first time we slept together.”

Caroline gives me a little wink. “Then he definitely likes you.”

I blush a little. “Okay, okay, you’re right. I have to get ready; I’ll see you later.”

Caroline reaches for the old door knob and walks out. The moment she's gone, I can't help myself. I literally jump up and down in circles around my tiny, living room floor. Thank God my roommates aren't home. I even let out a little squeal. Liam likes me. Me. He likes me.

I grab my Kylie Jenner Burgundy palette from my desk and dust the gold and brown shadow on my lids before swiping on some mascara. I plug in my flat iron and stare down at the little red light as if I could will it to heat up faster. The sooner it turns green, the sooner I can straighten my hair, the sooner I can get dressed, the sooner I can leave.

My heart is racing a little as I put the final touches on my outfit and analyze every possible inch of my appearance in the mirror. I most certainly do not look like a Christmas tree.

"i'm ready whenever. i'm excited :)" I send the text and grab my key.

"omg hey sorry. i've honestly been so busy today with homework and stuff and kinda forgot to text you i can't make dinner. another time maybe? we could even hang later tonight if you want. i'm having some people over."

I can feel the embarrassment spread out through my body. I stare down at the little text for a while. Of course he didn't really like me. I knew Caroline was wrong. I stand in my bedroom. I'm not even looking at the text, but it's still playing again and again in my head. This is the fifth time in two weeks. And this is different. This is real. This is dinner. But I guess it didn't really matter, did it?

Oh, calm down, I tell myself, *It's really not that serious.*

"yeah sure. that's so fine." I hit send.

"great. see you tonight." I drop my phone on my bed and change into leggings and a sweatshirt.

"hey. you're coming out to my apartment tonight right. come whenever." I see the text from Erin. Perfect. She lives right by Liam. I can just text him when I'm there because I'll be close. It'll be so casual. I'm already nearby, so I can just swing by when everybody leaves Erin's.

"yeah. be there soon." I check my phone. It's 10:27; Liam hasn't texted me since 6:04. It's fine. He said he was busy. He probably had a long week. I grab a jacket and head over to Erin's.

It's 1:33 in the morning, and I still haven't texted him. My phone's almost dead from the amount of times I've clicked it on and off in case I've somehow missed Liam's text. Just in case he texts me first. *It's fine*, I tell myself, *I can just text him like I planned.*

"hey. i'm actually so close to your house right now. did you still want me to come over? i could literally be over in like ten mins."

Most people have left at this point, and I can see Erin staring at me. She wants me to leave. I know she does. Come on, Liam. I type out a text to Caroline. I want to tell her about him flaking. I want to tell her how much it's bothering me, which is so dumb. Everybody flakes. I've flaked. I still flake. I stop myself though. Liam's one of her best friends too. What if she tells him how upset I am? What if he thinks I'm crazy? What if he thinks I like him too much? That would be even worse than if he just thinks I'm crazy. That would mean he would know I'm attached. He can't know that. Not yet.

Erin's whispering to one of her roommates. *Fuck*, I have to leave. I smile and give Erin a hug to say goodbye. I've clearly overstayed my welcome, and she makes it clear in the way she flattens her mouth into a line as she tells me she'll see me soon.

I check my phone and sigh. I sat around for nothing. There's no notifications from Liam. Just a text from Caroline.

"how's it goin' babe!!!! i wanna know everything."

Liam didn't even tell her he cancelled. That's how little he cares. Or maybe that's how much he didn't think it was a big deal. Maybe that's just who he is.

The fall wind whips the leaves up around the sidewalk, and I pull the jacket tighter. I silently scold myself for wearing this stupidly tiny tank top in this weather. The jacket itself is more for fashion than actual warmth purposes. The hairs on my arms stand up even with the sleeves covering them. I can feel a few tears prick the backs of my eyelids, and my teeth start to chatter a little.

Liam had been my friend. If he didn't really like me, why'd he have to go and kiss me? He kissed me first. I didn't kiss him. He said he liked me first. I didn't say anything.

The tears begin to fall, but the wind dries them immediately. I'm running home at this point. I look absolutely pathetic. I'm running home alone on a Friday night dressed absolutely ridiculously. I'm not even wearing a bra, and my nipples are completely visible through the thin fabric. *Fuck this.*

I'm out of breath by the time I reach my apartment building. I check my phone. It reads 2:03. I can barely punch in the code to my building. I take one step inside. The moment I feel the hot air rush through me, I burst into tears. I let the snot run and let the watery mascara burn my eyes. I slept with him. I fucking slept with him. I slept with him, and he can't even be bothered to text me back. I burst through my front door and collapse onto the stained couch. The pale green of the couch is usually such a sickening color, but tonight, I've never wanted to sink into it more. I accidentally suck in some stray strands of hair stuck to the cushion and cough a splutter, snot-filled cough.

I hear a chime from my phone and snort.

Of course.

"hey sorry. honestly i'm so trashed but you still can come but like i might not even be awake when you get here lol."

"okay." I don't have the energy to type anything else.

He doesn't even reply.

He hasn't even replied as I'm walking home from the gym the next day. I replay yesterday in my head. I'm so worked up I could scream.

I remember last weekend. We were laying in his bed. The covers were pulled up around us and his hand was interlaced in mine. He already knew about my parents, but I never really told him how much it fucked me up. I told him about how I wanted to drop out of school. I told him how my mom disappeared one night over summer break and didn't come back for four days. I told him how I never found out where she went but that I knew not to call the police. She had texted my brother and I the next morning she was fine and would be back soon. I told him how I was scared anyway.

"Sorry about last night :/ We can def hang later if you want to come by." That's it? No apology? Nothing? Do I want to "come by?" I almost have to laugh.

"i still haven't heard about last night!!! tell me tell me tell me!!!"

“he flaked and then he flaked again. and that’s what happened.” I can feel the anger in the text.

“(i’m so sorry what a dick move.” Yeah, I already know.

“yeah oh well. what can ya do i guess. just wish i didn’t sleep with him. it’s dumb but i just thought he was different.”
How cliché can I be?

She replies with a sad face, and I roll my eyes a little.

“he’s just having a bad week! i’m sure everything’s fine. come out with me tonight.”

“maybe but what if liam is there?”

“good. make him jealous.”

Make him jealous? By doing what? I cringe a little at the idea.

I stand in front of my mirror. My black jeans are tight. My black tank top is cut low. The heels on my black boots are high.

I reach for my phone. I see the three notifications I have yet to reply to. Liam asking me if I’m coming tonight, Caroline telling me she told Liam I’m coming, and Caroline telling me Liam is excited to see me. My heart is racing a little reading them again.

“Katie, you look hot.” My roommate looks up at me from her computer.

I pull my shirt down towards the waistband of my jeans. It keeps riding up. “Really?”

“Yes. Go have fun.” I give myself one more once-over in the mirror. I’m wearing another tiny shirt. The temperature outside is 42 degrees. I can already feel the regret pulling me back to my bedroom as I step out into the cold.

“Are you excited?” Caroline pokes me in the back playfully.

I just shrug. “Honestly, not really.”

“Hey, he’s excited. That’s a good thing,” she pauses and looks to her left, “oooooh, he sees you. Have fun.” Caroline’s gone before I can follow behind her.

And then I see him too. I see him seeing me. I lick my lips in anticipation. They’re so dry. Why are they so dry? They’re burning as I bite them. Hard. I think I might’ve just made them bleed. Fuck. I wrap my arms around myself self-consciously.

He’s walking toward me. And that’s when I notice it. I’m not excited to see him. I’m so mad. I want to slap him across his face and leave my big, red handprint right on his cheek.

“Hey, you look really good.” He smiles at me. “Glad you could make it. You want to come over later?” Later? It’s literally midnight.

I avoid eye contact. My feet are shifting back and forth. “Um, maybe. I’m kind of tired.”

“Oh, come on. You’re not really mad about yesterday, right? It’s not a big deal. Some other time.”

“Yeah, sure. Some other time.” I look down at my fingernails. The skin around them has started to bleed from how badly I’m picking at them.

“So then, yes? You want to come over later?” He reaches out to grab onto my waist.

His fingers are slithering around my body. I shiver a little and pull away. He tries again and, this time, takes a few steps closer. He leans down until his mouth is level with my ear. “I’ve been waiting to see you all night. Especially after last weekend. I could literally take you home right now.”

“You literally could’ve seen me yesterday.” I pull away from him. I have to pull my shirt down again. It’s riding up again.

“Come on, Katie. It’s not that deep. I was busy.”

“I’m busy too.” I see Caroline somewhere behind Liam’s shoulder. She winks at me and waves.

“Actually, I have to go. Sorry.”

“Are you serious? You’re crazy. It’s not that deep.”

“Um, yeah. Sorry.” I see Caroline giving me a confused look, but I just ignore it. Fuck, I wish I had a different jacket.

“Hey, where are you going? What about Liam?” Caroline looks a little pissed off.

“Um, Liam’s kind of an asshole. I’m just going to go home. You can stay though. I don’t really care.” There’s a few tears in my eyes as I say it out loud.

“Well, okay. He likes you though. He’s just, you know, a little hard to get to sometimes.”

“Right. Well, I have to go. I’ll see you.”

I wipe my eyes a little with my ice-cold hand. The same stupid jacket I have on again really isn’t doing anything. I can feel their eyes following me as I walk out. I feel a kind of satisfaction through the sadness; I’m flaky now.

Insanity, by Hannah Singletary

hey just wanted to see how you were doing? It's been awhile

I hit send. The text is casual. Easy. Nonchalant. No way it could be misinterpreted. Just casually checking up on an old friend. I'm confident he'll reply. I wait for it to finish sending. Come on. The text changes from blue to green. Hm. Maybe he got a new phone? Maybe he got a new number? He should've texted me then. Wouldn't he let me know if he had a whole new number? Wouldn't he want to keep in touch?

Maybe I should check up on him just to see how he's doing.

hey is this is this the right number? it's kimmy i'm not sure if my last text sent so I just wanted to be sure, we should catch up soon!

There's no way Will could take that the wrong way. You never did know with him though.

I get in the car.

I drive down those familiar back roads to the suburbs of town. The lamplights are low, and the two-lane highway in front of me seems to stretch on forever. I know where I'm going though. Of course I know.

I wonder if Will's house still has the same gray brick, the same scratched-up floors his labrador, Molly, destroyed. I wonder if he even still has Molly. Sarah's allergic. I had warned Will about Sarah. Sarah's allergic to dogs, dairy, gluten. Will and I loved to get ice cream. We baked chocolate chip cookies and blueberry scones all the time. Sarah can't do any of those things.

"Kimmy, it's not your place anymore, okay?" Will had said.

As I pull up to the familiar ranch style house, my heart beats faster. I smile. It feels like home. It was home. Until Sarah.

I remember I can't actually park near the house; I finally settle for the curb one street over.

I walk along the familiar sidewalk Will and I used to walk Molly on every night after dinner. Just before the sun went down. Molly loved to sniff the red rose bushes in front of the two-story, pink, brick house. I notice the roses aren't even in front of the house anymore.

hey i'm in the area. thought i could stop by for a little if youre home

I did lie, but it's for the better. I didn't want to scare him. I remember the last time.

Sarah had opened the door. Ugh, Sarah.

"Um, Will?" She sounded so afraid.

"Yeah, I'll be right there. If it's the Girl Scouts, I want Thin Mints."

Thin Mints? With me, he always liked the peanut butter ones. He didn't even like mint.

Sarah just stared at me.

"Hi. I just wanted to come by and say hi." I tried to smile convincingly, but Sarah seemed to be inching closer and closer behind the door. What was she so scared of?

"Is everything okay?" Will's voice was so close.

I tried to quit fidgeting. I picked at a hangnail around my thumb and bit my lip.

"Kimmy?" My name on his lips was like a dream. "Kimmy, what the fuck are you doing here?"

Sarah reached into the pocket of her jeans and pulled out her phone. I watched her disappear somewhere behind the doorway. I couldn't even see the inside of the house. Why wouldn't Will just let me in?

"Please. Just go home. I don't want to have to call the cops again. You can't be here."

"Come on. I don't even know why you did that last time. I just wanted to say hi. I didn't know she'd be here though." I pointed to Sarah.

I tried to open the door a little more. Will wouldn't budge. He closed the door entirely behind him.

"You need to get the fuck out of here."

"Why won't you even let me inside? What did I even do?"

"Are you kidding? You're fucking crazy." Will looked as if he wanted to reach out for me. He balled his fists at side instead.

I felt tears well up in my eyes. I'd heard that from everyone. I'd never heard it from Will. Will believed me; Will knew me. I wasn't crazy. I wasn't crazy. I wasn't.

"I'm not crazy" I stared at the sidewalk.

"The last time you were here, you threw fucking rocks through our windows. Sarah still has the fucking scars where you fucking bit her."

"She was yelling at me. What was I supposed to do? She was telling me I was crazy." I looked up at him. "I'm not crazy."

"Yeah, you're right. You're fucking insane."

I lunged at him. "I'm not crazy." I was screaming. I couldn't even see through the tears. I saw the bloody nose before I realized what I had done.

“Will? Will? Are you okay? I didn’t mean to. I’m so sorry. Please, please. You can’t call the police. I’ll get in trouble. I’m not supposed to be here.”

He just stared at me with a look of terror on his face.

My knuckles hurt.

I heard the sound of sirens screaming in the distance. Will was out here with me. Who called them? Sarah. Of course she did.

My palms are sweating a bit. I really, really don’t want it to go how it did last time. The police had just been so rude. They didn’t even let me explain.

I put on a smile and knock. It feels like a happy knock. Nice and happy and confident and casual.

A woman opens the door.

“Hi, is Will home?”

“Will?”

“William Casey? He lives here.” I’m confused. Did Will move without telling me? Why would he do that?

“Oh, right. The old owner? Yeah, he moved.” She pauses. “Between you and me? Apparently, he had no choice. He had this crazy ex-girlfriend who kept coming around. He literally had to file a restraining order and everything.”

I laugh. “People sure are crazy.”

Whiteout Conditions, *by Josh Schildknecht*

The wind will not stop. Gusts of snow swirl before me, stinging my face. Through half closed eyes, I glance down at the void of air under my feet. *Ob shit ob shit ob shit*, the sour taste of panic rises in my throat. I begin to hyperventilate and I can feel every muscle in my body stiffen. All that is holding me to the mountainside, all that is holding me to the world, are a few thin spikes stuck half an inch into a smear of frozen water. Below is thirty-six hundred feet of air, and I am balanced on a house of cards. My head spins as I imagine myself plummeting like a ragdoll into the abyss.

Come on snap out of it. The last thing I need right now is to freak myself out. The blizzard continues to rage on around me. There's no way that I can climb down in these conditions. It would take way too long and I don't think my fingers can last much longer.

I wipe the frost from my goggles with a stiff mitten and scan the wall above me. About 25 feet up there appears to be a small ledge. It might just be big enough to pitch my bivy to wait out this storm. It doesn't seem like I have any other options.

I swing my right axe into the ice, *CHINK*. Sounds solid. I tug to see if it will hold, but the numbness in my hand makes it impossible to tell. I decide to trust it and shift my weight to the right side. Left axe, solid. I shift my weight to the left. Next, my right foot. I kick the ice trying to get the tip of my crampon to bite, *CRRRAACK*. A block of ice the size of a refrigerator separates at the toe of my boot. I watch in terror as the chunk slams into the wall below me, shattering into a thousand crystals. The remnants quickly wash away into the whiteout. *Jesus Christ*.

I take a deep breath to bring myself back together. Again, with the right foot. This time I look around carefully before committing to the kick. I feel the tip of my crampon stick. Solid. I shift my weight on my right side. I fall into a hypnotic rhythm — swing, swing; kick, kick; swing, swing; kick, kick. Before long, I'm peeking over the lip of the ledge.

I hoist myself up and over the edge. Through the veil of the whiteout I can make out a faint orange glow in what looks like a shallow cavity in the side of the mountain. *Wh- What the ... There's no way.* Hesitantly, I walk towards the ghostly illumination.

The walls of the den shield me from the wrath of the storm. Inside is a shriveled man with a squirrely grey beard, staring deeply into a small fire. He is crouched over the flames, with his arms wrapped around his knees. His clothes are tattered and seedy, showing the deterioration of age, almost as much as his face. Heavy bags weigh down his lifeless yellow eyes, coated with an empty gloss.

“What a wild storm,” I stammer, “You’ve got the right idea starting a fire.”

No response.

“I thought I was the only one crazy enough to be out here in this weather.”

Nothing.

“How the hell did you even start a fire anyways? There’s no damn trees up here.”

The senile old man continues to stare into the fire.

Feeling slightly irritated, I walk up beside the old man. I lean down to his level and put my ear to his mouth. I want to check to make sure he’s breathing, maybe the poor bastard froze to death. I feel a faint breath and a chill shoots down my spine. The hair on my neck stands on edge.

“You can’t hide in the mountains forever.”

I jolt backwards and land flat on my back. Startled by his voice, I struggle to mutter a response.

“S-So you can hear me?” I mumble.

“Running away will not solve your problems.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

Silence.

“Hey, old man! Hello?”

The reflection of embers dance about his bitter, yellow eyes. My gaze shifts to a sizable scar set within the dark circle under his right eye. The bolt-shaped mark looks just like the one that I got as a child when I fell on the corner of the dining room table.

Mountains make poor receptacles for dreams,” he says as he rotates his body to face me. “If you stay out here you will end up like me.”

I notice a beam of light reflect off of the pendent on his neck. Attached to black twine is a pressed silver disc, with a pattern of holes punched through. If it wasn't so dull and rusty, it would look just like my pendant of the Orion constellation.

The old man starts to hobble towards me. He places his hands on my chest and pushes me over the ledge. As I spiral downwards, the last thing I saw were his glossy yellow eyes from above.

I drift in and out of consciousness as I lay motionless on the ledge. Drifts of snow pile up around me as my body rapidly shuts down. The cold is so painful, I don't think I can endure it for much longer.

There is no cavity in the mountain. No old man with a fire. I am completely and utterly alone. The onset of hypothermia is irreversible now. Death is upon me. Beyond shame, I cradle my head in my arms and embark on an orgy of self-pity. Shivering convulsively, I whimper frozen tears.

With all of the energy I have left, I let out a hysterical cry, “I don't want to die! I don't want to die!”

Can't Buy a Second of Time, by Terrance McCrystal

Nothing but complete disappointment ran across my mind the afternoon when the knowledge of my father's cancer first came to me. There it was, a doctor's note on the kitchen table opened with the words *cancer treatment options*. My heart practically sank to the floor. I stood there and thought to myself, *How could he have kept this from me?* As I stood there confused and overwhelmed he arrived home early for work on the perfect day. Immediately he could see the genuine concern on my face.

I asked, "Dad what is this?" as the paper slapped on the counter.

"Son," as he looked into my eyes with complete sorrow and remorse, "I have lung cancer."

Hearing him actually say it for the first time really resonated with me. Memories of my childhood began playing in my head. Suddenly, I could see my father pushing me on the swings and taking me to baseball games. I thought to myself, *has our journey together come to an end?* A small part of me genuinely wanted to believe the cancer pamphlet was a misunderstanding.

The next thing out of my mouth was, "What are your plans for treatment?"

A minute that felt like a day passed as nothing was said. My mind began spinning at a million miles a minute going through every possible outcome of the words that will utter out of his mouth.

"I don't plan on getting treatment," my father casually explained as he grabbed a beer out of the fridge and handed it to me.

To think that one measly beer will help me forget the pure anguish and frustration after hearing him say those words.

"What do you mean you're not getting treatment?" I passive-aggressively yelled.

He walked away and turned on the television, something he has always done in times of distress. I followed and turned it right off.

“You need to talk to me, why are you just giving up with no means of hope.” My father went back into the kitchen picked up the letter that still makes me queasy just looking at.

“I looked into some of these cancer treatment facilities and because I have no health insurance the out of pocket payment program is completely out of the question,” he stated in a stern but truthful manner.

I began to frantically beg my dad into hearing reason, “Dad, we can get you the help and healthcare you need please don’t give up.”

He wouldn’t budge his mind was already made up.

My father sincerely explained, “I don’t want to further put you in debt when I’m gone. I also want to enjoy my last few months in peace with no doctors pricking my every vein, no constant nausea, or body fatigue. I want to live my last few days surrounded by my family, not some hospital prolonging the inevitable.”

“How can you just give up?” I passive aggressively yelled.

“I’m not giving up son. I’m accepting the truth,”

“The truth of what? That you’re a coward?” I reluctantly stated.

“No, the truth of my inevitable death,” my father calmly explained.

Seeing that this conversation is going nowhere in the right direction, I gathered my things and took a drive.

As I drove down my favorite road, the crisp cool air allowed me to take a full deep breath. The beautiful green, red and orange leaves all created a magnificent autumn tunnel to keep my mind off things. Once the joy ride came to a conclusion, my mind immediately went back to how I can afford this procedure for my father. As a twenty-two-year-old fresh out of college even if I worked three jobs I couldn’t come up with the money in time before the cancer completely took over. My mind then transitioned into some unjust ways of making money. *What exactly am I good at?* I thought. Instantly I thought back to my cousin Nick, who made thousands of dollars trafficking illegal

narcotics all around the country. I thought of all the money he made; however, the thought of how the law eventually caught up with him also crossed my mind.

I found myself in my driveway wrestling with the decision of whether to call Nick to assist me with his connection. Then I saw my sick father in the window and how he is all the family I have, since I'm an only child. The next thing I knew I found myself dialing the phone.

“Hey Nick, I have a question to ask you,” I nervously explained.

After explaining the entire situation with my father, his uncle, he agreed to meet with me in person to discuss a game plan.

Before Nick hung up the phone as he always does he told me, “Stay safe, see you tomorrow.”

Walking back into the house, I felt like a new person. I had a plan to save my dying father. I looked at my dad, smiled at him, and took a shower. In the shower the consequences of not just the law but my father finding out where the money came from made my head spin in all sorts of unforgiving scenarios. I thought back to high school when I got busted for possession and how it tore him apart emotionally. However, before I went to bed I thought to myself, *I can't lose my father. I want to see him at my wedding and to be able to hold his grandchildren. I want to see him retire and settle down in life. Most of all I want to see him smile again.*

The next morning, I met with my cousin to discuss our first move. As I drove over there, I must've hit every red light on the way to his house. Luck with lights never fell on my side, but today was different. It was almost as if the universe was trying to tell me something. Upon arriving I saw two black pick-up trucks parked outside Nick's house. Filled with nerves and anticipation, I knocked on the door and Nick let me in. As I walked in two men with face tattoos, the drivers of the trucks, padded me down. The smell of marijuana hit me like a Mack truck as Nick began giving me instructions for my first delivery.

Nick looked at me up and down with a smirk on his face and asked, “Are you sure you're up for this?”

I looked at him with no hesitation, “I have no choice but to be.”

Nick shrugged his shoulders, looked me in the eyes and stated, “Let's get started then.”

He explained the importance of hiding the narcotics in car tires. He explained his historic success over the years with trafficking drugs through state borders with ease. Once the two men with the face tattoos hid the drugs in my tires Nick turned and looked at me with a very serious face. “If you want to be successful and safe in this business you will do two things one, always drive with backup and two, never look through the narcotics.” I looked at him, knotted my head, and shook his hand.

Finally, the time to make money arrived. I got into my car with the two black pickups following close but not too close behind me. The four-hour drive was beautiful. Nothing but amazing autumn sunlight and the crisp cool wind brushing against my face. What was more beautiful was the \$10,000 payday I received once the delivery was made. A simple “Hey Bye” scenario with the two gentlemen as I pulled in and out of the garage and it was that easy.

The next thought that ran in to my mind, *Where am I going to tell my dad this money came from?* As I drove home and walked into my room I began looking for cancer fundraisers to create. I found the perfect website where I can create my fundraiser. It allows me to implement my drug money as an anonymous kind Samaritan. My dad at first wasn’t convinced. In order to keep my money out of the hands of the DEA, I could only transfer small amounts of money. However, as I continued making these four-hour drives and continued working with Nick the money continued to pile up. As a result, the donations were too large for my father to ignore. Even though he would often say, “I want to die in peace.” I could see in his eyes he regained hope. That small amount of hope gave me an opportunity to convince him to seek treatment.

Finally, once the donations accumulated to more than one hundred thousand dollars he looked at me and said, “Let’s go to the hospital.”

After hearing those words my risk and hard work finally felt worth it. We arrived at the hospital and spoke with a doctor. We arranged a biopsy and a payment plan done solely through the fundraiser. As we walked out of the hospital I saw my dad genuinely smile. I haven’t seen him smile like that since before mom left.

He looked at me with that smile and said, “I have hope again.”

That hope soon transformed into misery two days later after we knew the biopsy results. We went back to the doctor’s office to hear the cancer spread all over my father’s body, making surgery his only viable option for survival.

The doctor looked us both in the eyes and said, “Even the surgery is no guarantee.”

I didn't want to listen to that in my mind my dad was gonna get better no matter what. The doctor explained to us the uninsured cost to this procedure and my mouth almost dropped. I could be looking at another two to three more months of trafficking drugs. That was no concern to me, getting my father healthy was my number one concern. We figured out a month to month payment plan and the surgery was set for later next week.

The day of my father's surgery had arrived and he looked miserable.

In the car on the way to the hospital, he would tell me, "I hope this light stays red so I don't have to go to the hospital."

I could tell he didn't want to do this. He had that same look in his eye when mom made him sign the divorce papers. I could tell he was only doing this procedure for me. However, he still bit the bullet and walked into that hospital. I walked him into the operating room, gave him a hug, and said, "I love you."

About five hours later, the surgery was complete. The doctor walked out of the room and told me how well he had done. He explained the usual. How he's gonna need plenty of rest and attention. Unfortunately, since I'm so in debt I can't give him that attention. I did for a little when he was in the hospital, but once he was back home I hired a nurse to watch over him. I began working many hours and overnight shifts with Nick in order to pay off the surgery.

Nick would often ask me, "Why aren't you spending time with sick your father?"

I would often respond by saying, "Why not spend time with him once he's healthy?"

As the weeks turned into months I continued to work more and more hours. My father's health seemed to worsen and worsen as time went on. That only made me want to work more. It gave me a purpose. A purpose of doing something, instead of just staying at home hoping he'll get better. That purpose soon turned to fear and anxiety when my luck ran out with the law.

Lights in my rearview and twenty pounds of narcotics in my tires. Immediately fear and anxiety rocked my body like a seizure. My palms were sweaty, my backside got tight as the officer approached my vehicle.

"How you doing tonight sir?" said the officer.

“Just fine and yourself?” I confidently asked.

“Any guns or narcotics in the vehicle tonight?” the officer asked.

“No, Sir!” I reluctantly exclaimed.

Saying no was the hardest decisions I had to make. I knew that telling the truth was hands down the safer decision to make. The risk versus reward scenarios kept playing in my head over and over as the situation unraveled.

On the one hand, I can get away with this, on the other, if he finds anything this situation spirals out of control.

“Do you know why I pulled you over tonight?” asked the officer. I knew exactly why he pulled me over. The potent smell of weed from my tires wafted to the officer’s nose. As anyone would do I played dumb.

“No sir!” I stuttered in fear.

“I’m getting a strong smell of marijuana from your vehicle. Do you mind stepping out of the vehicle?” asked the officer.

My heart sank as I unbuckled my seatbelt, praying I would be able to buckle it again after this interaction.

Once again the officer asked me, “Is there anything in the car I should know about before my dog smells around your vehicle?”

After careful thought, I knew I was in trouble. I sincerely looked at him and said, “Honestly officer there is a joint under my seat, and I was smoking one before you pulled me over.”

Immediately he found the joint and arrested me with charges of possession and driving under the influence. As I sat in the back of the cop car, I couldn’t help but smile as he drove passed my car and I looked at my unsearched tires. I thought back to Nick and figured I’d thank him, but more importantly ask him to bail me out of Jail.

After spending the night in jail, I immediately raced home to check on my father. I placed my release form on the kitchen table, ran upstairs, and saw my father. As I held his weak brittle hand as he rested tears ran down my cheeks like a waterfall. Seeing him like that only made me wish it would all go away. Not being able to see him in that state of health, I left the room and continued to use drug trafficking as a coping mechanism. My run in with the law made me extra cautious making me hire my own backup. This extra cost only extended my drug trafficking career taking me away from my father.

Finally, the day came when I collected all the money I needed to pay off my father's surgery. I was so excited to come home and share the news with my dad. I called him numerous times eager to hear his voice, no response. I thought to myself, *he always answers his phone*. I practically ran into the house getting ready to think of a lie to explain how his cancer fundraiser paid off a \$250,000 surgery.

"Dad! Dad!" I didn't hear anything. I thought to myself, *that's weird he always greets me when I walk in*. I walked in the room to see his pale white, motionless body.

I looked for a heartbeat. "He's gone," I murmured.

On his night stand laid my release form left on the kitchen table weeks before. Followed by a letter from Nick explaining the entire situation. The letter, sent to me, consisted of Nick's concerns of me dealing with my father's illness. How I should spend time with my father instead of repressing it through drug trafficking. Finally, it all hit me at once as I collapsed onto my father's dead corpse in agony. Just as I did a few weeks ago I cried by my father's bedside, but not for the loss of my father but for the loss of time.

CREATIVE NON-FICTION

The Interest of Traveling Alone, *by Jess Chang*



I LOVE TO TRAVEL, A LOT.

NOT ONLY DO I LOVE TO TRAVEL, BUT I LOVE TO TRAVEL ALONE.



I was born in a typical Taiwanese family, but my childhood was not typical at all. Compared to other families who love to travel around the world, my parents' wish was that I got to know my homeland better. We traveled through the entirety of Taiwan: from cities and counties to lanes and streets, from the ablaze of light in Northern Taiwan to the delicious refreshments at the South; from the ancient tribes of Atayal in the mountains where my ancestors once resided, to the tribes with the boats along the East coast. They wanted me to get to know more about who I am and where I belong. Due to

the history of the colonial background, Taiwan was once colonized by the Dutch, Spanish and Japan ([Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018](#)), which makes me into 1/16 Atayal, 1/64 Dutch, and fully Taiwanese.

However, the places we visited were usually alongside five to six families. It somehow annoyed me when I still wanted to get to know more about the historical background of a certain thing while they wanted to rush to the next section.



Moreover, since I'm usually the oldest child among all of them, the job of babysitting the infants fell on me. After each trip, I became more and more unwilling to travel with the families. I wanted to travel by myself to where I will not be disturbed to enjoy my journey.



In 2016, at the age of thirteen, I joined a summer program called “Xplore” in the United Kingdom. I spent four months absorbing the different cultures and pieces of knowledge. We were able to explore by ourselves with groups of friends that we made there. Taking advantage of this, my group explored the beauty of The Big Ben and the remarkable views at Cambridge. We also visited where the most of the scripture tragedies 400 years ago were written, including *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Romeo and Juliet* which were famously penned by Shakespeare (“**William Shakespeare**”, 2015).



The things that truly opened my vision were the activities we performed. We not only kayaked but we learned how to rock-climb by ourselves. We even practiced how to target and shoot rifles, which was one of the most unforgettable events that first comes to my mind when I think back to that summer. Nevertheless, the British scenes were also one of the sweetest memories that still stays on the tip of my tongue. After four splendid months, I felt more comfortable and interested in traveling without adults. I felt that I learned how to deal with problems that happens in my life and how to effectively solve it by myself. During the program, I met a friend from Aix-Les-Bains, France. Together, we learned different cultures and our values of things in all kinds of fields. I promised her that I would visit her country and travel together someday as soon as possible. I could not wait until the day when I could travel all by myself and absorb all of the diversities among people and cultures.

It was the winter of my first high school year (2017) that I decided to travel to France to visit my friend, moreover, the main point to travel by myself. My parents were freaked out while the first moment I told them of what I had in my mind. Since my father loved to go on adventures and explore all around the world alone during his young age, the gene of traveling on one's self had passed on to me. Gradually, he decided to let go of me with my crazy thoughts of a 14-year-old girl traveling to France all on herself. However, he did not give me a large amount of money, my father wanted me to learn not to take everything for granted and learn to figure problems on my own.



During that period of time, the students in France were going through their final's week. Instead of staying at her home for the entire two weeks, I decided to stay at an AirBnB in order to let her focus on preparing for the exam. At the same time, I wanted to have more time to spend with myself on the first journey I have ever had. It is only now that I realize that the obstacles that I faced on this journey are what shaped me and taught me invaluable lessons, especially when traveling alone to unfamiliar countries.

Unfortunately, the time that I landed at Lyon airport was the time my friend was taking her final exam, so she wasn't able to pick me up. I tried to find public transportation to get to the AirBnB I booked. It was then that I found out that though English might be an international language for me, it was not for the people at the airport. That was when my body language and Google Translate helped me out. After a four-hour long time-toss, I finally got to my destination. While waiting for checking in, I found out that I wasn't able to check-in to my room due to my age on the passport I showed them. My height did not help, as when people often picture me as a young girl who's trying to run away from her home. Fortunately, among the obstacles I had faced so far, the internet worked. I was able to Face-time my parents and show the workers at the AirBnB to prove that I was not a run-away child from a foreign country.

However, my happiness did not last long. I discovered that I left my adapters at home. What's worse was that was the moment that I discovered that, my phone ran out of battery. Unfortunately, the front desk did not have the things I need. In order to save money on commuting and live through the couple days, I walked through the heavy February snow for exactly 36 minutes to an Apple store to get what I needed. After that, I lost my way of getting back and I panicked to death. During my panicking, a kind and benevolent woman appeared, wondering if I lost my way. Thus, she decided to drive me back. She invited me to have dinner with her.



I experienced the typical French dinner, which came along with the delicious appetizers called Raclette and cheese Foundu , combined with five kinds of cheese. We walked around the village in passing to visit a church that was over 200 years. I learned the history of the diligent village at the bottom of the Alps which was brought up by a queen named Victoria who discovered the spa at the year 1880 (Jean,2011). Even to this day, I still send Christmas cards to her every year and have plans to visit her during spring break. For me, she is a non-blood relation grandma. What if I traveled with my family and friends on this journey? The only thing I will gain are the pictures of the famous landmarks in Paris. I would have never been able to learn the beauty of kindness inside a decent woman and the origin of a remarkable small village inside Lyon.



Since then, it opened the interest and the journey of me traveling alone around the world.

In the summer of 2018, I went to Australia to learn and perform modern dance along with contemporary dance and breakdance through the *Dance and the Child International Australia* (daCi Australia) association. I absorbed so many experiences during my trip. In addition, I met wonderful friends during my performances and whom I still cherish to this day. My decision to travel overseas was fueled by the thirst of digging more into my interest and my curiosity of how people around the world express their emotions through body language. Not only that, but I wanted to make my dream of holding a gorgeous koala come true.



I traveled alone during the winter at the beginning of 2019 to Essen Werden, Germany, in order to take classes in ballet, contemporary and modern dance. I journeyed to Germany with the purpose to find out more about who I am and what I want. While I accomplished a land mile in my study of modern dance at The Folkwang Universität, I was able to gain new experiences in Germany. I ate brätwurst with beers at the Oktoberfest and visited the Brandenburg Gate alongside the Neuschwanstein Castle. I also learned the history of contemporary dance and traced it back to Pina Bausch, a famous dancer and choreographer in the 1950s. Among all the amazing trips I went on, the most remarkable and unforgettable one was the first time I experienced the happiness of traveling alone in France. It was the place that opened and started my journey of traveling alone. Thus, the journey of me traveling alone will never stop until the last day of my life.

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Movies and Me, by Hannah Singletary

“I find your lack of faith disturbing.”—Darth Vader

On October 30, 2012, Disney announced its plans to buy Lucasfilm for four billion dollars. Since then, Disney has released four Star Wars films and made over four billion, eight hundred dollars. Disney has announced Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge in both Disneyland and Disney World to open. Galaxy’s Edge will be a Star Wars theme park. It’s going to be a theme park like no one has seen before. The employees of the park will be taught the languages of the Star Wars movies, and a Cantina restaurant in the park will have a live band playing the exact instruments and music from the movies themselves. It will be a completely immersive experience, and its popularity will be unprecedented in terms of theme parks. Disney announced the parks back in 2012. They also posted warnings to let the public know that the parks could be full, and it may not even be possible to get in. “Access to the park, land and experiences may be restricted or unavailable depending on guest demand and other factors. Park tickets, Annual Passes, vacation packages and Walt Disney World Resort Hotel stays do not guarantee access to Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge. People will buy tickets anyway. I know this to be true because my family will be buying tickets for our annual Thanksgiving trip to Disney World.

My dad’s birthday falls around the third week of November every year. Sometimes, it even lands on Thanksgiving itself. We don’t eat turkey and mashed potatoes and stuffing like most families do. The Singletary’s drive the seven hours to Orlando, Florida. We stay at the same hotel. The Ritz Carlton Grande Lakes. There is a left tower and a right tower in the hotel. Whenever we stay on the left, the rooms never seem to be up to par. My father says, “We’re on the jersey side of this cesspool.” That, of course, is a line from Madagascar. Alex the Lion says it as he tries to persuade Marty to leave the island.

The same marble tile greets us as we step into the Florida hotel. It’s like we never left. We eat dinner in the same hotel lounge and complain the food is gross. We eat it anyway.

On Thanksgiving Day, the four of us cram into a little, four-door Uber and roll right up to the Animal Kingdom. Believe it or not, Disney's Hollywood Studios isn't actually our favorite park. We like the animals and the lack of people at the Animal Kingdom. My mom isn't a crowd person.

My dad and I line up for the Everest roller coaster as soon as we get there. The cool, wet ground of the mountain atmosphere only heighten our excitement. We'll wait as long as we have to. We even wait the extra ten minutes to ride in the front row of the rickety train car. There's 17 rows of seats on the roller coaster's train. I've ridden enough times to know.

My dad and I laugh at the people complaining about how nervous they are. They're worried about drops and turns and going upside down. The ride doesn't even go upside down. Newbies.

"Do you remember the first time you rode, Hannah? You were so nervous. You wouldn't stop screaming the whole time."

My dad doesn't scream on roller coasters. He laughs the entire time. From start to finish.

"Only because it was fun. I wasn't scared."

My dad just laughs.

I place my sunglasses in the seat pocket in front of me. I regret not asking my mom to hold them. I've never actually remembered to give them to her before.

As the train takes off, my dad and I reach our hands up to the sky. We fly down the hills, and my hair whips from side to side. My dad's right. I am screaming. But only because it's fun.

"The Force will be with you. Always." –Obi-Wan Kenobi

When I was 17, my dad dressed up the Singletarys and took us to *Dragon Con*. *Dragon Con* defines itself as "the largest multimedia, popular culture convention focusing on science fiction and fantasy, gaming, comics, literature, art, music, and film in the universe!" *Dragon Con* draws fans of Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, Anime, cosplay, comic books, Game of Thrones, Halo, World of Warcraft. *Dragon Con* offers attendees options to attend the National Puppet Slam, which offers admission to

people ages eighteen and over only. I can't say my family actually attended the National Puppet Slam.

To be honest, it wasn't what any of us thought it would be. My mom had my brother and I take pictures with furrries. At the time, my mom thought they were just cute, fluffy costumes. Later on, I had to tell her that, they were, in fact, furrries.

I dressed up in brown slouchy pants, a loose white shirt, and the Obi Wan Kenobi cape my brother bought from Target for Halloween one year. My dad had talked about Dragon Con for years, so I really did try to dress up. I walked down the stairs the morning of Dragon Con to find my father dressed in jeans and a white button down. He looked as if he could go out to brunch. "I'm a clone trooper. Do you see the white shirt?" My mother was dressed in all black. She could go to brunch as well. "I'm Darth Vader. Don't you see? I'm wearing all black." I was the only one that really dressed up at all. The fake Chewbacca in the Starbucks apron and the "clone troopers" in the Star Wars parade loved my costume. I fit right in at Dragon Con.

"It's a major award!" –Mr. Parker (The Old Man)

My dad has quoted movies since long before I even knew he was quoting anything. I genuinely used to think he was just talking. He can quote just about anything. It's usually Star Wars, of course, "Caddyshack," "Surf's Up," or "A Christmas Story." We used to watch "A Christmas Story" on TBS every Christmas for twenty four hours. We'd switch between that and the Star Wars marathon on Spike. That was until we cancelled the cable of course. My mom claimed we didn't watch enough TV. We just watched Netflix and Hulu. All we did was watch bootleg movies on the Internet anyway. Why would we need TV? My father, a graduate of the great University of Alabama, isn't happy about this when football season comes around in September.

"I can't believe I have to watch this fantastic game on this tiny iPad."

Every Christmas, my dad says, "I want a Red Ryder carbine action two-hundred shot range air rifle." He doesn't really. But Ralphie does. When our old family car, Bessie, breaks down, he says, "Only I didn't say, 'Fudge.' I said the word, the big one, the queen-mother of all dirty words: the F-dash-dash-dash word!" After all, that's what Ralphie said when he wanted to help his dad fix the flat tire. By the way, our old family SUV is named after the big old road-paving machine Lightning McQueen paves Radiator Springs with in Cars. Their screaming engines, overwhelming amounts of rust, and painfully toxic exhaust fumes match in all the worst ways.

In our living room, we have two Mr. Potato Heads sitting on the stone mantle above our fireplace. They frame the television that doesn't actually play anything. One is a clone trooper and one is a Darth Vader we made at Epcot in Disney World when I was around ten years old. I don't think that store exists anymore, but I could be wrong. I feel like I'd remember the rows and rows of random arms and legs and empty plastic potatoes splayed about. I'm not sure whose idea it was to put the Mr. Potato Heads on the mantle, but they have sat there for as long as I can remember. Beside the mantle, sitting on a clean white shelf, are little M&M figurines. They're only about the length of my middle finger, but we have quite a few. We have C-3PO, Darth Vader, Princess Leia, Queen Amidala, Luke Skywalker, R2D2 M&Ms. We used to have an Elvis one too, but it's gone. We're not sure where it is. I always forget about that one. It's not like it matched the Star Wars M&Ms anyway. So who cares? My mom does. The missing Elvis has become something of a conspiracy.

"Someone stole it."

My dad bought a "Caddyshack" print of a famous painting by David O'Keefe a few years ago at a gala. The print is entitled: *Tribute to a Green Jacket*. It's about as tacky and gaudy as the movie itself. It's actually one of my favorite pieces of art in the house. It hangs in my dad's office against a bright orange wall. Princess Leia is in the background if you look closely enough.

I remember when I saw it for the first time.

"What is that?" Who would ever buy anything so.... Weird?

"What are you talking about?! It's Caddyshack! It's Bill Murray! The funniest movie of all time." My dad was certainly offended.



We also have a print that's a play on "The Usual Suspects." The painting itself is entitled: *The Usual Suspects*. We were driving to my grandma's condo in Ft. Lauderdale when I was around thirteen when we stopped for a break in Orlando. We walked up and down the streets of Downtown Disney before we found an art gallery hidden towards the entrance. We walked inside, and my mom fell in love.

"I love this painting. I *love* this painting." She loved the painting. She had to have the painting. But we didn't buy it. It wasn't worth the money. We still had to drive to Ft. Lauderdale. We would be there a week. What would we do with the painting? "We don't need any more crap!" "I have so much stuff."

We drove to Ft. Lauderdale empty-handed. We stopped in Orlando on the drive back to Atlanta. It was a kind of tradition. We were all getting older. We couldn't handle the full ten-hour drive anymore. Curiosity got the best of my mother back in Orlando. We stood in that same art gallery a week later.

"I love that painting. I don't care. I'm going to buy it." She had said.

We stared up at *The Usual Suspects*. More importantly, we stared up at the big red "SOLD" tag.

My mom was clearly disappointed.

"Chris, look it's sold. Ugh, we should have bought it."

"We loved it too, Mom," my brother and I chirped from somewhere else in the gallery.

My dad just stared at her blankly. "I know."

"What do you mean?"

"I know it's sold. I bought it."

My dad bought her *The Usual Suspects*. It hangs in our living room. A few years later, the painter, Fabio Napoleoni, painted *The Usual Suspects Too*. We bought that one too.



“May the odds be ever in your favor!” –Effie Trinket

When I was younger, my dad would take me out of school to go see movies I’d been dying to see. He’d check me out of school so we wouldn’t have to worry about lines or the movie being sold out or having bad seats. The movie was always empty because, well, everyone else was in school. My dad and I saw lots of movies during the school day. We saw “Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince,” “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part One,” “The Hunger Games, Catching Fire,” and “Divergent.”

I remember in the seventh grade when “The Hunger Games” came out. I was sitting in my Language Arts class working on a project with my old neighbor Connor Buehlar. We were just finishing up our PowerPoint when my teacher got a call from the front office I was to be checked out for the day.

“Where are you going?” Connor asked me.

I grinned smugly. “To see The Hunger Games.”

His jaw dropped as I a skipped out of class.

My dad picked me up in Bessie, and we drove over to the AMC.

“See? We’ve got almost the whole theater to ourselves.” My dad would say as we arrived. “Isn’t this great?”

It was great. I saw Katniss Everdeen decorate Rue in flowers of pink and purple and yellow up and close personal. It was like my own, personal movie theater.

*“You know, I used to scout for songbirds- toucans- for this musical revue in Brazil. Now that’s show business.”
–Mikey (Surf’s Up)*

I’ve seen so many movies. I’ve seen everything from “Sharknado” to “The Royal Tenenbaums,” to “The Avengers” and “Shawshank Redemption.” When people ask me what I like to do I tell them I like to watch movies, that I’d love to be a scriptwriter or a movie producer one day, and that I follow Rotten Tomatoes religiously.

People ask me what my favorite movie is, and I’m always embarrassed to say it out loud. Everyone thinks my favorite movie is going to be something deep and profound like “Gone With the Wind,” or “The Godfather,” or “The King’s Speech.” My favorite movie in the entire world is “Surf’s Up.” Sometimes, people don’t even know what I’m talking about.

Sometimes, they ask, “The cartoon with the penguins that surf?” Yes, that’s the one. That’s my favorite movie. I’ve seen it at least thirty times. Just last month, I watched it three times. I watched it

one night before bed, I watched it one Friday with my roommates, and I watched it over spring break with my parents and my brother. My entire family can quote every single line. All my entire family does all day is long is quote lines “Surf’s Up.” We can’t get through a day without quoting at least one line. Just today, at dance, the president of our team discussed the upcoming competition next week. She told us not enough people were coming to practice, and we weren’t going to compete well if we kept this up.

I said, “What’s winning without the losers?” The line, of course, flew right over their heads. The line was taken from Tank Evans, a surfing penguin and the villain of the story.

People always ask me why that’s my favorite movie, and I honestly don’t really have a good answer. It’s funny, a good story, good characters. I don’t really know if that’s it though. I mean, my entire family can quote almost every line. We can watch that movie over and over and over again (There’s a line in “Surf’s Up” where Cody, the main character, tells his viewers that they are going to want to watch him “over and over and over again.”), and it really doesn’t get old. It really just gets better. I quote “Surf’s Up” here at school all the time, but nobody ever really gets it. It’s really fine though because I’ll just call up my dad and explain to him the horrors of me quoting “Surf’s Up” in a perfectly quotable moment to a person who has no idea. My dad will tell me that’s offensive, and I’ll tell him that I am offended actually. I don’t really mind that nobody here can keep up with all my “Surf’s Up” quotes. It would kind of ruin the fun anyway.

Most people don’t actually know about “Surf’s Up” because it was released just after “Happy Feet.” The creator of “Surf’s Up” sat down with a trusted friend one day and told him about this new movie he has planned. It was going to be about these penguins, and they’re going to surf and all this stuff. His friend told him it was a great idea, and he should totally do it, and it would totally be successful. That same guy turned around, sat at his desk and wrote out “Happy Feet”: the more well-known of the two penguin movies. He rushed out “Happy Feet,” so it would win out the box office over the later released “Surf’s Up.” My mom tells me that story every time we watch “Surf’s Up.” I’ve never actually looked it up to fact-check her, but I tell the story anyway to anybody who tells me they love “Happy Feet.”

“One can never have enough socks.” –Albus Dumbledore

I finished the final Harry Potter novel: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* in the fifth grade. I had seen “Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire” in an IMAX Theatre at the Mall of Georgia when I was just six years old. My dad and I reread all the Harry Potter books and watched all the movies before a new one would be released. We saw them all on the day they would come out. Any day other than the opening day was unacceptable. My family went to Universal Studios for the first time a few years

ago specifically so my dad and I could go to Harry Potter world. I rode the Dueling Dragons roller coaster four times in a row, and we waited three hours to ride the simulator inside the Hogwarts castle.

J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter book series, has written a detective series under a pseudonym in recent years after the success of Harry Potter. She writes these novels under the name: Robert Galbraith. She says she just wanted to try something new, and there would be too much pressure writing under her own name. J.K. Rowling and Harry Potter go hand-in-hand; Rowling wanted to write without that pressure. Although it's since been outed, Robert Galbraith is really one of the most famous children's authors of all time, her detective novels remain written by Robert Galbraith because, well, Robert seems to be extremely successfully on his own. I guess J.K. Rowling could reveal herself without being embarrassed.

I went to Harry Potter art camp when I was a kid. I was placed in Gryffindor. On Pottermore, I'm a Hufflepuff. I really wouldn't mind being in either one because, personally, I feel I relate to Luna Lovegood, but who wouldn't want to be in the house of Harry Potter? Luna's long blond hair and carefree, whimsical take on life reflected me perfectly.

Five of the eight Harry Potter movies appear on the list of the fifty highest grossing movies of all time. "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2" is one of only 36 films ever to make over one billion dollars. In total, the series has made over seven billion dollars worldwide; it's also the third highest grossing film series in history. The Harry Potter film series is credited as creating the modern big, blockbuster film franchise approach. Popular franchises that followed included The Lord of the Rings, Sam Raimi's Spiderman trilogy, and The Dark Knight trilogy. Additionally, the idea to split the finale of a series into two movies actually started with the splitting of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows." Follow-ups to this formula include the finales of the Hobbit, "Twilight: Breaking Dawn," "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay," and "The Avengers." Finally, the Harry Potter film series actually led to the popularity of young adult fiction film series. The Harry Potter series was the first of its kind; its success led to the popularity of the Twilight films and The Hunger Games series.

"There is no place like home." –Dorothy

- "Not a finga." ("A Christmas Story")
- "You'll shoot your eye out." ("A Christmas Story")
- "It's a pink nightmare." ("A Christmas Story")
- "Fragile...Must be Italian." ("A Christmas Story")
- "Thank you very little." ("Caddyshack")
- "You'll get nothing and like it." ("Caddyshack")

- “Looks good on you though.” (“Caddyshack”)
- “You’re gonna want to watch it over and over and over again.” (“Surf’s Up”)
- “You could fit a whole fish in there.” (“Surf’s Up”)
- “What’s winning without the losers?” (“Surf’s Up”)
- “I’m in Hillbilly Hell!” (“Cars”)
- “You hurt your what?” (“Cars”)
- “You turn right to go left.” (“Cars”)
- “Do. Or do not. There is no try.” (Star Wars)
- “I sense much fear in you.” (“Star Wars”)
- “These aren’t the droids you’re looking for.” (“Star Wars”)
- “I’m not a big fat panda. I’m THE big fat panda.” (“Kung Fu Panda”)

“You were the chosen one! It was said you would destroy the Sith, not join them.” –Obi-Wan Kenobi

The Avalon in Alpharetta, Georgia, opened when I was fifteen years old. It is a monstrous sprawling, outdoor mall with stores like Free People and Pottery Barn. It sure beats the little outdoor shopping mall by my house with a Red Robin and Cheeky’s, which is the cheap Mexican restaurant whose health rating can never seem to be above a 75, yet the wait every weekend is around two hours just for a table. Not only is the Avalon miles and miles above any outdoor shopping center in our area, it has a Regal Cinemas that boasts giant, red, reclining velvet seats. The poor excuse of an AMC Theater by my house typically has some kind of cheese sauce on the airplane seating it boasts.

The first movie we saw in those reclining seats was “The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part One.” My dad bought the usual large size popcorn we would somehow finish, a large Coke Zero my brother would finish and have to get up to go to the bathroom every five minutes, and Peanut M&Ms. Like always, my dad poured the Peanut M&Ms into the popcorn and shook it up. Like always, we would dig around in the popcorn bag to find the melty chocolate until we were fighting over who had enough M&Ms and who had none. My brother eats them all. He denies it though.

“Mockingjay Part 1” was an absolute disappointment, but I knew it would be anyway. *Mockingjay* was the worst and shortest book of the series, so how could they even make a part 1? My parents agreed as we dissected the lack of action and unnecessary amounts of politics. My mom said, “I am never going to another theater with those tiny seats. From now on, I’m going to a theater with those reclining seats. I didn’t know what I was missing!”

We did go back to a movie theater without reclining seats on a few occasions. This past Christmas we went to see “Mary Poppins Returns” at Movies 400. It’s the redneck movie theater one exit up from my house. One exit up is when the southern accents grow much more prevalent. The seats at Movies 400 were smaller than airplane seats; the theater was packed and gross. Popcorn was packed in the armrest cupholder and spilled soda littered the stairways.

My father referred to Movies 400 with the most serious of offences. “I’m stricken Movies 400. I’m never going back. I. Am. Never going back there.”

In the Singletary household, being “stricken” is the worst of the worst. We save it for the worst restaurants, the worst food, the worst recipes, the worst stores, the worst hotels. Being “stricken” is just. The worst. To “stricken” something is to say that you will never, ever, ever, ever return to a certain place of establishment or eat a certain food or do a certain activity ever again because it was just that traumatizing. It was just *that* bad. We do not stricken lightly. When you stricken something, the consequences are permanent. You can never go back under any circumstances. You just can’t. So you can’t make a mistake. We stricken Movies 400 that day.

My mom claimed the rest of America was copying our Christmas tradition. “Who goes to the movies on Christmas? Don’t all these people have families? This is our thing. Not theirs.”

We also eat Chinese food from the Chinese restaurant down the street. Wok-and-Chopstick. I went to high school with the owner’s son. Every year, on Christmas, it’s harder and harder for us to attend the restaurant in reference to one of our most sacred traditions. People want Chinese food on Christmas now too.

“Don’t all these people have families they need to cook for? It’s a holiday. Go home.”

We eat Chinese food to honor the Chinese food eaten by Ralphie and his family in “A Christmas Story” after the Bumpass’s dogs eat their Christmas turkey. Rest in Peace.

“Oh, my dear friend. How I’ve missed you.” –C-3PO

Interestingly enough, the most famous quote from Star Wars is, of course, “Luke, I am your father.” I’ve seen “The Empire Strikes Back” a million times yet, believe it or not, nobody ever remembers, including me, that Darth Vader doesn’t actually say that. In actuality, as Luke is hanging by his single hand in the air shaft, he tells Darth Vader that Obi-Wan told him he killed his father. Darth Vader responds with the less iconic, “No, I am your father.”

The fact that Darth Vader turned out to be Luke Skywalker's father is considered to be one of the biggest plot twists in history. George Lucas says he always knew Darth Vader would be Luke Skywalker's father. "Vader" actually means "father" in Dutch. It all seems like a strange kind of coincidence considering early scripts for the first Star Wars don't actually allude to the fact that Darth Vader is Luke Skywalker's father. In fact, in some scripts, Luke Skywalker actually has a whole different father altogether.

I watched Star Wars for the first time when I was around three or four. I don't really remember much, but I still watched it over and over. We had the box set of the original trilogy, and, later, after *Revenge of the Sith* was released on DVD, we had the box set for the new trilogy too. They don't even compare to the original though. How could they?

"There's nothing better than the original." That's what my dad always said before Disney bought Lucasfilm. Now he thinks "Rogue One" is the best. True Star Wars fans would think he was a fake fan, but my dad just says he loves any and all Star Wars.

Roger Ebert claims the original Star Wars actually gave him a kind of "out-of-body experience." He says the movie actually transported him from the theater and into another world, which, for him, is rare. The only other movies to complete the list of "out-of-body" experiences are: "Bonnie and Clyde," "Cries and Whispers," "Jaws," and "Taxi Driver." "Bonnie and Clyde" is due to the art and style, "Jaws" is because of its "slick commercialism," and "Taxi Driver" is for its "brutal strength" as Roger Ebert puts it.

The fairy tale and fantasy amazed Roger Ebert. Star Wars really isn't all that complicated. It's really just about a guy and his family. Star Wars is really based around one of the most basic stories that humans can tell. It's about the "Journey." Luke Skywalker is on the path to rescue Leia, and the fact that it's in space with the Death Star, and starships, and the Empire is really just ancillary. The amazing thing about the Star Wars is its simplicity in storytelling and its complex relatable characters. All the awesome space stuff just magnetizes everything. At the end of the day, Luke Skywalker is the underdog fighting to be the hero, Darth Vader is a confused villain with a good heart, Obi-Wan is the father figure, Han Solo is the goofy sidekick. And this simple yet complex story is what amazes Roger Ebert and the rest of the world.

I've been going through article after article. I've read through *The Odyssey* and *The Guardian*. Why do we watch movies? Every article says the same thing. "We watch movies to feel something."

Roger Ebert didn't actually plan to review films forever. It was just going to be a starting position. He would one day have a column and then write novels, but, eventually, he lost interest. He said

going to the movies just felt so “natural.” Throughout his life, he thought he saw about ten thousand movies and reviewed about six thousand. He said that he often forgot what he watched, and movies just kind of blurred together. But, he said, he “remembered the ones worth remembering.” He claimed that, “good movies are about good people.” It doesn’t really matter what kind of movie it is. It could be sad, happy, scary, an action film, silent, black and white, color. “The best movies aren’t about what happens to the characters. They’re about the example that they set.”

In a way, Ebert said the same thing the countless articles I read did too. We want to be entertained, “we want to feel something,” we want to watch real people do real things. George Lucas himself has claimed that Star Wars is just a soap opera about a screwed-up family.

“Every great film should seem new every time you see it.” –Roger Ebert

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Working Horse, Hauling, by Sean Lawall



“Working Horse, Hauling,” 1994, by Kate Javens (b. 1959)
oil painting on display at The Palmer Museum of Art, Penn State University

I.

He has been erased and redrawn many times, like a recurring nightmare, forced to return with more agonizing detail. Numb, exhausted, with his last breath, he pushes on, the imaginary cargo in tow, with no destination in sight. His greatest enemy shines down on him from above, draining the remaining color from his burdened body, drowning his identity and replacing him with a function.

Whip.

Whip.

Whip.

His cries are birds. Small, fleeing, nuisances. Insignificant. He is not heard. Paintings do not have mouths with which to speak, they only have hands, to create emotion, empathy, inspiration.

II.

As a child, I was regularly unhappy. Perhaps unhappy isn't the right word for it, but I was constantly distracted with the future. What are we going to learn in class tomorrow? How did I score on the quiz? What are my parents going to say?

The smell of dirt.

I loved being in the Boy Scouts, but I still couldn't escape the suffocating feeling of my inexplicable worry. My mother dropped me off by the muddy fire pit. As I laid in my tent, I was overcome with this familiar feeling. It was unfair for a 10 year old, with no worries, job, or responsibilities to feel this way. My friends and I went into the woods to take our minds off of the expectations of school and family. Out on the banks of the Tohickon, Paul, Tommy, and I fished, played frisbee, and talked about things that interest 10 year olds. We enjoyed each other's company, and my incessant worries were swept down the rapids.

Sunday morning, 8:00 AM.

It's time to go. It's almost time for school.

III.

He is unable to turn his head. He does not know what he pulls, only its essence. He knows its size. He knows its scent. He knows its weight.

He was not born for this. He was born to play, to explore, to roam. Instead, he has been harnessed to a contraption he does not want, and forced into a role he does not understand.

He toils further, into the unknown, into the white of the walls, to a destination that does not exist. There will be no carrot waiting at the destination. This moment of pain will last an eternity. His only consolation will be the empathy of onlookers, until he is covered, left in a room to be blinded with dust, and forgotten.

POETRY

A Valentine's Dinner, *by Rachel Hynds*

Neither of us want to be here,
but Dad and I assume our seats
at the tacky plastic booth.

I'd give anything to be a fly on the wall
at any other table, watching the patrons
who also must dine here
on this sacred holiday.
Instead I stare
at the faded fake bouquet
of yellow Texas roses
and gawk as Dad grapples
with six sauce packets.

I don't want to think of my mom
at the hospital down the road,
alone at her bed with only red
roses by her side,
riding through her aches
and haunted by Lysol,

Maybe I'll sneak her in a burrito
or better yet, wheel her out
the backdoor when the nurses aren't looking,
but guilt spreads in my stomach
like an illness
for dreading this impending visit.

I look up as Dad spills

a dot of hot sauce
on his white work shirt,
and now we're both laughing

because even though my stomach aches
and he hasn't slept in two days,
there's still something funny
about wearing a suit and tie
at Taco Bell,
even on Valentine's Day.

Home (after Ada Limón), *by Rachel Hynds*

First, it existed in simple terms: a crumbling street
with Easter-basket grass, a series
of phone wires past the wilted stop sign
leading to winding side streets untraveled by bike.
Mornings when the swamp
would grasp your neck with green
tightening tendrils, it filled your lungs
with fabric-softened breaths and cruel words, mousetraps,
and hand-me-down textbooks with doodled-in pages.
Soon it also breathes: Card tables
That a slammed-fist collapses, suitcases in the kitchen
and who-are-yous in reorganized bedrooms,
dead succulents, ugly cries, unannounced additions
to the Sunday church pew. Still though the tight-squeezed
home grows, and no longer defined by the crumbling street
and green glossy lawns, it follows its host's
journey, haunts and hurts us with memories of
the trails of fabric softener, shared bubbles to burst,
and afternoons when you swore it had you trapped.

Soldiers, *by Adi Solis*

Wonder what it's like to be born soldier.
Created to attack all that comes near.
Insults lurking at every corner,
Do not forget who's your kin.

Taught to turn against each other.
Society's survival of the fittest
Because together they are feared further.
Creators of the present and future as you know it.

Learned to compete and then crawl,
Women tending to their own injuries.
I will teach you to appreciate she who was:
The muse to the canvas forever.

There's an aesthetic reality in the flawed
Perfectly imperfect they are.

The Victim, by Adi Solis

Monsters emerge in the light of the day.
“Fear the darkness”, they say- it’s a lie.
some of your friends may be foes, by the way.

Grooming: the process to ruin- betrayal.

His, was the hand you were comforted by.
Monsters emerge in the light of the day.

When pain suffocates your insides into decay;
You confide your mother through tears that’re dry.
Some of your friends may be foes, by the way!

You say you don’t carry the scars on display.
Mourn the time you dressed in heels and a skirt.
Monsters emerge in the light of the day.

Her eyes see the truth but her mouth only prays.
‘Bout the night you came with your back smeared in dirt,
Some of your friends may be foes, by the way.

When pain leaks out, courage is what stays.
Both victims of one, with no justice in sight,
Monsters emerge in the light of the day.
Some of your friends are your foes, by the way.

Fixed Marriage, *by Adi Solis*

(an erasure of “Acquainted with the Night” by Robert Frost)

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-bye;
And further still at an unearthly height,
One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.

My Blue-Tinted Baby, *by Adi Solis*

Oh! My wretched-hearted sorrows.
My selfish self, mourns the restful
death that follows.
Have I *ever* wanted anyone gentler- than you

My blue tinted baby watching from above.
Before the cold wooden box comes-
rest in my soft arms my love.
What would I give for your eyes to see, before you go.

Tinted baby, tainted by death.
No life bore such color,
blue as the ocean's depth.
How, will I bear, heartfilled woes forevermore!

Oh my failed womb! Caved
to shelter and create your home.
Curse the ironic beauty fated
that was life and then stone.

My blue tinted baby! Loved for a lifetime
in sweet seconds, minutes maybe.
Remember me! When my sleep arrives.
The reunion in which angels sing the hymn.

Hear the caroling of the great love tragedy,
that is our song. Forever long,
will my chest carry valiantly
the love that has never felt so mournfully strong.

safety net, by Jordan Corley

you built a net
behind your lies
to prevent yourself from hurting
too much
even though the fall inevitably came.

a safety-net
you called it,
an ability to always bounce back
and quickly.

i've watched you fall
and bounce back
so many times now,
i wonder what would happen
if you fell without a net
and took the time
to rebuild yourself
brand new.
more stable
than the you
that came crashing down.

Imagination, by Jordan Corley

what would it be like
to just sit
in front of the water as it crashed
filling my head with the sounds
of white water falling
on top of a receding current
to close my eyes and just listen
to the calming rhythm of the waves
a consistency never dulled
by the ebb and flow of dark thoughts
a lullaby to sing them away
maybe I would hear
something beautiful
maybe I would find
something safe
I've had dreams of this moment forever
yearned for the day I might be free
of the treacherous noise filling my
daylight moments
prove your worth
there's no time
so much urgency in the voice
i wonder what it might be like
to take a breathe
and just be...

grown apart, *by Jordan Corley*

the years are far too many
to validate my words and make
them seem any less insane
on paper than when they swirl
around inside my head,
so i'll pretend the years that've passed
are actually only weeks
and the you that i remember
is the one that lives today

because when years go by
and people grow up,
they change
into something different.
they become closer
to their end person
when the changing finally stops.

i am scared your end person
is not the same person i remember
when we were both still growing.

i am scared your end person
and my end person
do not fit together
with the easy we once did.

i am scared our persons have grown apart
over the years that have passed us by.

we have changed too much
to fit together, anymore.

an irreversible truth
that has taken me years
to accept.

puppet strings, *by Jordan Corley*

there's an aching in my chest,
a pain that only dulls
when i know you're within reach
and one swift tug is all it would take
to pull you back in place
by my side
where i feel you belong.

but now you've gone and done
what i could never do
and severed the last of the flimsy strings
that still connected me to you.

i am uncomfortable with this empty space
and the freedom of my feet
no longer tied together by
the string that bound us in place.

To my sister, *by Anjelica Singer*

I thought I saw
You in my dream last night
Maybe I was awake,
I saw you at my bedside

You looked like Mom,
Blonde hair, blue eyes
Your aura covered me
In blankets
You finally made it here,
Everything was going to be alright

Jillian, they call you
It rings like soft windchimes
Your face looks like
Rose petals falling
From the sky

Are you my guardian angel?
I am protected when
I think of you
Sisters are supposed to be best friends
But I know it is more than that
I believe, Jilly, part of you
Is in me, too

Jilly, that is what
I'd call you.

In December, you turn twenty-three
Mom and Dad think
Of you everyday
They remembered you on Monday.

Visit them like you visit me
You'll always be their favorite "what if"
What if you came to be?

What if we shared clothes?
What if we had little fights?
I tug at this
Ball of yarn thread
To see who you
Would have been

I was supposed to have a sister,
I have an angel instead.

Dear Brad, *by Vicky Post*

In all my nightmares
I feel
the clenching terror that cascaded
through me each time
you caressed a child
like a lover.

With bourbon laced breath, you
pressed against me
and your pirate boxers
singed against my flesh
until it bubbled under the heat.
A picture of malevolence
masked as play.
You tore my skin away

until all that remained
was porcelain, handcrafted

by lust.

When newspapers
detailing your actions
struck the table
they slammed us out of
your bourbon soaked
delusion.
A frenzy of voices
shouted

endlessly,

swarming sound waves

surrounding me.

“Her
mother
is a puppet master!”

But I know and you
know,
I have no strings.
No, instead -

I am your porcelain doll
with no mouth that moves.

I hope I enter your

nightmares

and you know how it feels

for someone’s hand
to gently scrape your skin
clean off.

I’ll see you soon.

Inaction Fractured, *by Vicky Post*

I push you.
You charge at me,
your once intimate smile
contorts with hatred,
and fear
carves itself into my gut
until all that is left
is a puss yellow
that swallows me inside out.

So I shove you,
and my anger bursts through the surface
like a budding cyst.
Desperation tastes bitter on the tongue
and propels me
to your looming figure.

My hands
claw at you,
and one thought echoes
again and again -
“If I don’t,
He will.”

If I don’t,
He will

If I don’t,
He will

If I don’t,
He will

But you latch onto me
and I descend into
the cold pit -
You dug our grave, and I
yank us into it.

Another Night with Her, *by Vicky Post*

Kissing you, I am a fire
crackling up into the night.
I stretch into the vast sky
and become one with your stars.

When my sparks of orange reach
the twinkling night above,
I can finally rest.

Love, if you allow me to stay entangled with you
as pink fades to blue, and blue to black,
as the air chills
and faces turn away from us -
I will.

Our hands can clasp together
And when I slip into the loudness
of my mind, picking at the echoing words
that leave scabs on the brain,
just squeeze my hand
and I'll return.

I promise I'll return.

ART



Eden, by Woody Skidgel



Smoking Bubbles, *by Abby Guo*



Old Man Kissing His Wife's Hand, *by Abby Guo*



The French Dancer, by Kaitlyn Innerst



Looking through the Frame, *by Kaitlyn Innerst*



Lavender Field, *by Kaitlyn Innerst*



Birdcage, by Kaitlin Innerst



The Fisherman, *by Helen Sun*



Money, by Helen Sun



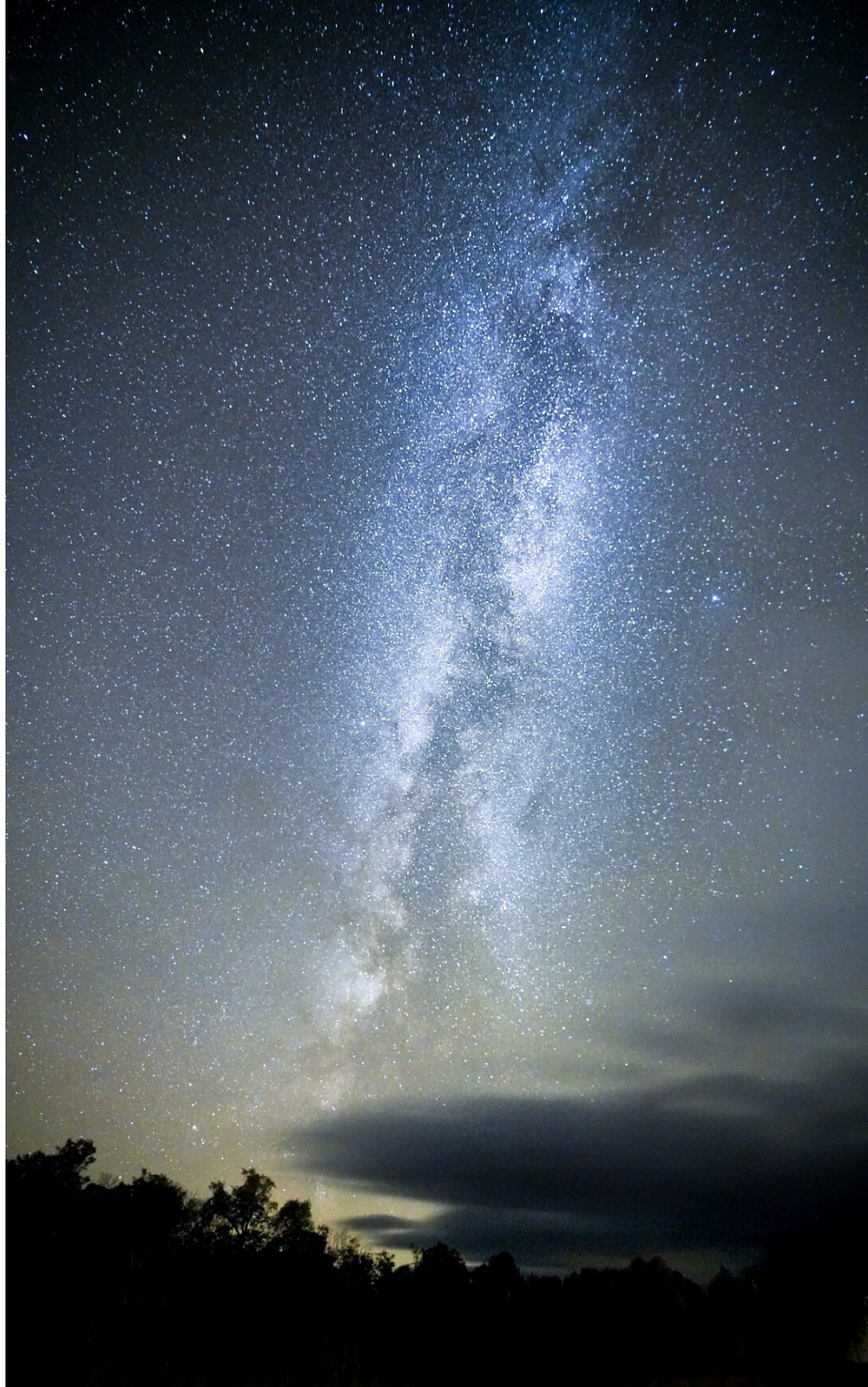
Autumn, by Helen Sun



Still Life, by Christina Chen



Collage Tokyo Night, by Christina Chen



Astrophotography, by Boyan Wang



Kids, by Boyan Wang