



Denali

Lane Community College

Editor-in-Chief—Sagegrace McKenzie

Art Editor—Iris Brandt

Additional Editing Contributions made by—Lexi Sinsabaugh

Layout Design — EmmaLee Dunlap and Jo Feigert

Cover Design —Jo Feigert

“Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable.”

Cesar A. Cruz

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Email Denali a denali@lanecc.edu

Voices 'n Voices!

I am deeply honored to be a part of something as exciting as showcasing the talented students and their wonderful creations here at Lane Community College. When I was first asked to write for the Denali, I envisioned a chance to promote the chinuk wawa class and ended up being so engrossed with the efforts that I took on the title as editor. Some of these voices are in the chinuk creole, with English translations to spread understanding. I hope this bridge invites more students to sign up for the amazing class!

Though this is my first time in this particular chair, the years of adoring all things poetic, creative, and unquestionably human, brought me right where I wanted to be. This role has been a true gift, allowing me to witness a symphony of voices. Some were stark; I found their rhythms changing my own tone as I read them aloud. Others were quieter, asking more of me, inviting me to slow down, to listen, and to learn.

Each perspective and voice, carrying with them the similarities and differences of you and me, have been linked together into one big, brilliant comeback.

This juxtaposition is who we are, as artists, as students, as humans. I hope this edition yells "We're back!" just as clearly as it whispers "We're home."

Sagegrace

Meet the Talents

Malcolm Duncan:

My name is Malcolm Duncan. I am an aspiring author and fan of horror and horror aesthetics. I enjoy writing poems with themes of horror and madness.

Bishop Foshee:

Bishop Foshee is a student in the LCC Chinuk Wawa program. In their free time, they enjoy reading and writing.

Cassandra Thoel:

Cassandra Thoel was born and raised in California's Bay Area to a hippie minister mother and a biker father. She moved to Eugene in 2016 and is currently a student at Lane Community College. She has held a wide variety of jobs, including working in multiple convenience stores, record shops, and at one time a 100% rescue pet shop. Her writing blends sharp observations with the absurdities of everyday life.

Charlie Davis:

Charlie Davis is a nontraditional student at Lane Community College pursuing an AAOT degree with plans to transfer to Portland State University's Bachelor of Social Work program. His poetry explores the internal human experience in relation to nature.

Charlie Hahn:

Charlie is a first year student at Lane, with plans to study writing and English at Reed College in the fall. Writing has always been a passion of hers and she is honored to be featured in the Denali!

Chuck Watson:

Chuck Watson is an American writer.

Devyn Henderson:

Devyn Henderson is an emerging writer who blends emotional intensity with lyrical precision. Drawing from introspection, spirituality, and her experience as a Black trans woman, Devyn's work explores love, identity, and personal power. Her raw, ethereal style invites reflection and honors authenticity. She is currently based in Eugene, Oregon

Micky:

I'm Braydon Michael Olson, and I use the pen name of Micky. I've been taking pictures my entire life, but I started to get seriously involved with photography around 2020, taking pictures of my friends skateboarding. People are my muse, and recently, with an uptick in restraints being put on the First Amendment, I've been covering folks at and around protests and specifically the journalists and photographers that attend these events.

Michael Ray Stark:

Michael Stark is a lifelong poet who finds relative joy in everyday occurrences. He believes the extraordinary comes from the ordinary. He is a fan of puns and wordplay and feels the creative mind is always looking for an outlet. He often says "Remember, it costs nothing to pay attention."

Mira Lea Rinehart:

I am the people's artist and my purpose is to show people their hearts through art. I am as the pencil is to the paper, a tool of the source. The anagram for my full name Mira Lea Rinehart is, "I am real in her art", coincidence or destiny?

River Shepherd:

I am a non-traditional student working on my AAOT and planning on transferring to UofO to get a degree in journalism. Poetry is another literary passion of mine, and I believe that poetry can be revolutionary. These are three very different poems, though all have nature and natural themes in them. My poetry typically includes natural themes and references. While some poems I write, like Cathedral, are inspired by my personal experiences and memories, many of my poems speak to the global audience and are inspired by issues like climate change, fascism, resistance, and speaking truth to power.

Scarlett Philibosian:

Scarlett Philibosian lives in Eugene and practices environmental and contract management. Currently exploring an ambivalent relationship with poetry, she wrote this piece from the love side of poems – honoring the process of giving words to hidden and uncomfortable feelings; and that what first pours out can be a more elemental form of poetry than a revised version presented to other people.

Waldo Przekop:

I often daydream about making art, music, or thinking about writing. Though, I struggle in appreciating my own creativity. I make and release folk music under the moniker "Cigarettes and Milk" and am forever stuck trying to make a video game. I like Honeydew Melon Popsicles. I also love my cat, Snoof.

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Endless Golden Spirals

By: Malcolm G. Duncan

Endless Spirals of gold and yellow.
Endless fractal of pain and sorrow.
Endless Horizon of wealth and power.
Endless fields grow bitter and sour.

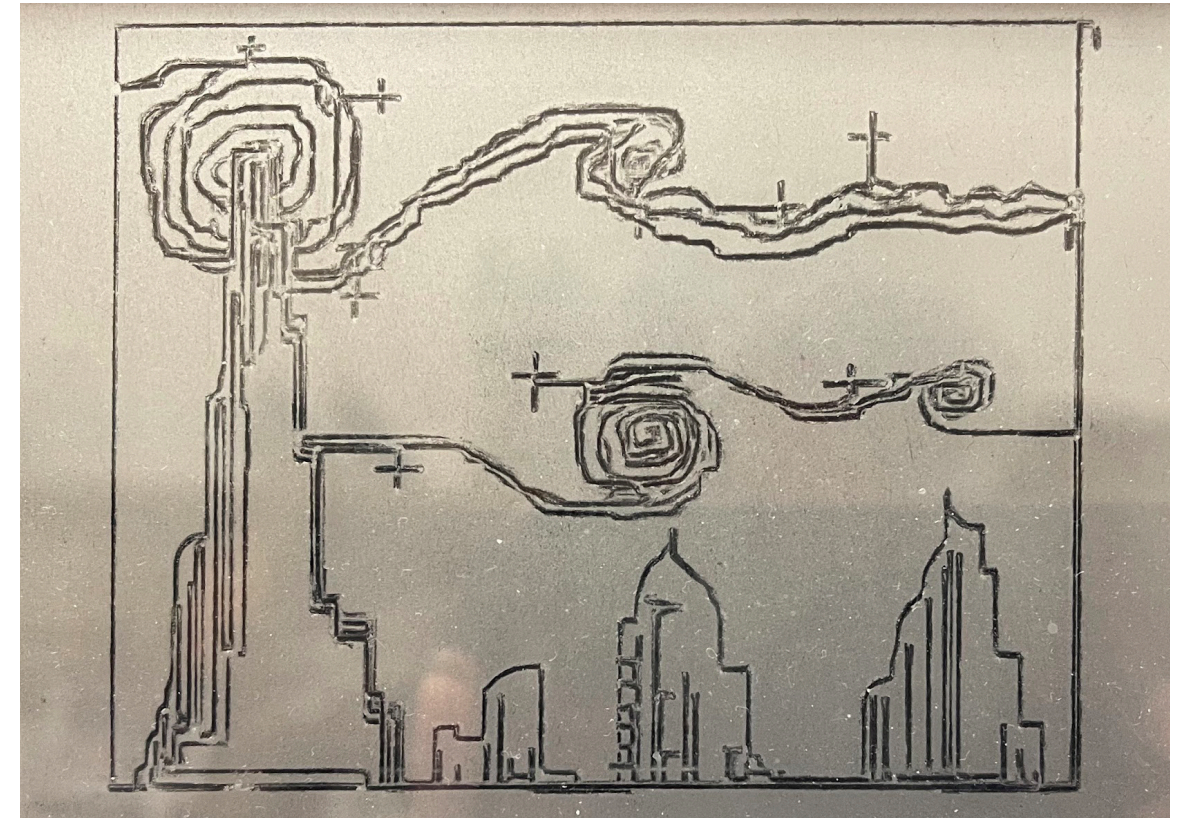
Kaleidoscope view of worlds beyond worlds.
Sanity as putty, endlessly molded and swirled.
Crystalline minds, so bright yet so fragile.
Endless wealth as the body grows sallow.

Endless visions of legacy and might.
Endless woes of toil and fright.
Endless growth of fat and plunder.
Endless depths of rage and hunger.

Guilt will crush the strongest souls.
Yet the weak will walk on unburdened soles.
Deeds unforgivable made tame by worse things.
The richest men sell morals for gold rings.

Endless sucking of blood from below.
Endless tearing of flesh left fallow.
Endless thirsting for the meat of mankind.
Endless need to slake hunger divine.

Hubris and vice are his domain.
Do not seek him if you wish to stay sane.
Every bit of yourself from you he will wring.
For you seek greed itself, known as the Yellow King.



A Sketchy Night

Waldo Przekop



Photography isn't Political. So say you.

Micky

Skipping Stone

By: Flora June Brown

It shone black like a pupil, fixed. I plucked it from its crater and cradled it in my palm. Still cold and damp with earth, it seemed so young- only just pulled from its mother's womb. And yet, its shape was smooth and flat. A body so well-suited for its task could only be

formed by years of weathering. In all its perfection, I thought I should pocket the creature. But, the thought was too little and came too late. My bones were struck by instinct, an old ritual. The small stone escaped my hand like a

new bird, ready. It skipped across that great mirror, leaving three suns and a moon upon the surface, like rain spots on a windshield. And once its fun was had, the stone finally dug its heels in, skidding to a halt. And for a single moment,

it learned to float. It said, "You can't have me," then sank down to the plush lake-bed awaiting it. And there, neck supported and eyes wide, the stone retired, its purpose served.

What a pleasure it would be, to look up
and see all those little ripples of your life.

The Overtaking

By: Michael Ray Stark

There is a game my nephew plays where I chase him in a menacing way as to evoke in him a fearful delight and a reason to run so quickly in a single direction opposite my pursuit

-

His short stride
so quick and frantic
my lumbering gait
so steady and forceful

-

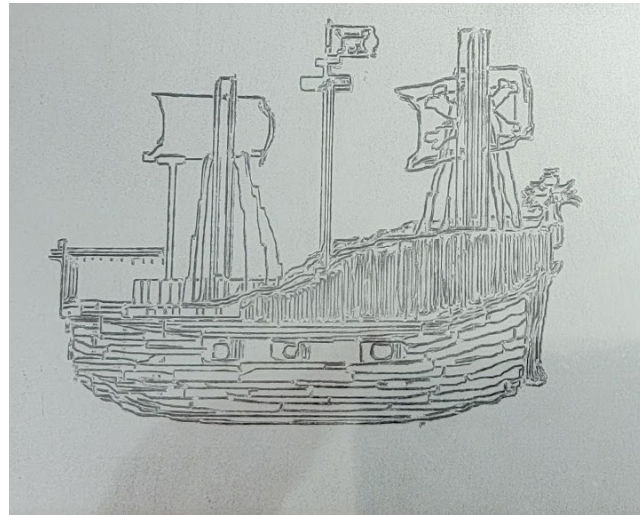
When his gleeful terror
produces a crescendo of laughter

-

I lift him from his sure footing
Making him weightless in loving arms
where he finds his courage
to wriggle free and set off once more

-

Leaving me with the impression that
childhood gives us far more lessons than we
could ever hope to learn.



A Vacant Vessel from the Fog

Waldo Przekop

Grammar Check

by Chuck Watson

It was COVIDtime; my own personal veering toward the apocalypse or the rim of an open hellmouth the descent into which would be my own personal succumbing to alcoholism, liver failure or what, a plague upon the earth parallel to that which was on the news, manifesting in my eye now as a literal sort of black cloud, pestilent, swarming with locusts that were the pandemic, the global disease knocking at my door the same time as this other, both trying to get in. Needless to say I was drinking a lot. I was drinking like the world was over or ending. I was drinking mainly Hamm's beer, which—with the liquor store discount—was like \$3.75 a six pack, tall boys. I was working in the liquor store.

I was working in the liquor store they had altogether exteriorized, the way I'd been exteriorizing my personal problems to anyone who would listen, drink in hand, vomiting up my life, my political positions in light of this radicalizing sickness, bile and bones, structures and schemas outpouring, vomiting too, for real when I'd had too much, and like so, the whole of the internal flow and mechanism had come outside the liquor store: the check-out line snaking round the building.

We was running orders out to cars.

We was calling over radios, handing bottles off—the midway point between us like batons in a relay.

I was taking orders. I was chief communicator cuz I got a clear voice. Buddy, people don't even know the names of the shit they drink everyday.

This lady, she want New Amsterdam.

She call it Anxiodyne Gin.

Took me seeing her with it, before the apocalypse, everyday to know.

I drank every day of this. We all drank every fucking day of this. By day I mean night, and then intermittently, in carefully administered sips such the accrued and accruing hangover did not crush us. Keg sales fell way off, so the beer was going bad. It was an act of mercy by ownership to let us drink this. They was turning a blind eye to us drinking this. Everyday a different configuration of us huddled shivering in the keg cooler, sucking from plastic cups. Everyday a different configuration, but always me in there.

Then out in the line again, running, in combat boots and gym shorts, car to car like a dopeboy. was we shivering in there, or shaking?

This one dude, he come up all the time, get his shit. He had a bird in the car, a parakeet.

I said then, what about this situation makes one say, man—I should bring the bird along. The world is ending. I don't want the bird left out.

This other fella, he brought his gun.

A semi-auto sitting with him in the passenger seat. Inevitable, really.

Other folks we turn away. They had a open container. They come out the line, right around—get back in. I don't have any kind of judgement. I can't afford any kind of judgements.

I don't abide any kind of judgement now.

Opening the liquor store we would put these pylons out, and whiskey barrels used heretofore for in-store decoration. Marking what was now two lanes full the whole day long with traffic, bumper to bumper; we was all of us everyday drinking. Rolling barrels over concrete, onto gravel, the grit of which crunching down, pressing in. I was so fucking sunburnt, man, and peeling. I was getting tan, dawg, and jacked from the running. We was making killer money with the stimmy and putting it all back in the form of Hamm's and Old Granddad and I was puking out back down the culvert by the liquor store dumpster. I was never more rich than that. I was sick and nearly dying. Somewhere in there our accountant Suzanne got pinched for embezzlement. Somewhere in there one of us ratted to the labor board about them skimming checks. Somewhere in there I bought a big fucking TV. We would roll the barrels back and pull the pylons, and even before the last car was really out, start officially drinking, what had transpired heretofore being, you know, off-record, not totally serious. I would crack that shit before the cooler down swung closed—Steel Reserve.

You ever get drunk at the liquor store?

We, each of us, had a little name tag we could put by our recommended item—my pick, your

pick. And it was often the high-end whiskies we had tried, a designer beer. I put that shit on Steel Reserve. We had a blind taste test, all the light beer at the liquor. This was before the world was ending. Red cups lined up, foaming. Craft vs. domestic—imports, Czech pils and shit in there. What won was Steel Reserve.

Told that to my girl now. Said no shit, y'all was alcoholics.

That beer is 8%

We took Sundays off—there were still laws. No one there to enforce em I saw I was out streetwalking, nobody there. Just me, in a denim jack laden with Miller Lite milk bottles. I was cheating on Hamm's. They had those twist-off caps. You could chug some, put it back away, and keep on. I was out, in my hometown, as the last man. I was drinking some, looking through vacant shop windows and wending through alleys, a ghost in a ghost city getting caught up I'm sure on countless security cameras and caring in no way. I mean, what you gonna do, I was born here. The world's over or ending. You gonna arrest me for drinking my Miller Lite milk bottle? My baby bottle of milk? I was talking to my reflection or what, and seeing my city in new ways, new angles, piss drunk in the noonday sun. I had six or eight beers on me, variously tucked away in the denim jacket. I had six or eight beers on me like a grenade belt, come on. I was down out by the train tracks, the copse of trees that rung downtown. Fuck these cops. I'll take em. I was out down by the train tracks walking, around to where a girl I used to see lived once. The tracks ran right behind her apartment. It would wake me but she slept through. I was down there walking, waiting for it to come, not finding it where I thought it was, should have

been, and actually started worrying for my sanity, whether I was lost out there, finally without thread—til I came to the spot. Gravel there, asphalt plates turned up and shifted. Somewhere the apartment had disappeared. I knew they smashed it with machines or what, but the thought, the magic in the going of it, where I was in relation, the empty tracks. I was listening; nothing was coming.

Contemporary Short Form

By: Devyn Henderson

Entity

I hide within you

Tucked tightly beneath your scars

Waiting to be found

Clarity

Love blinded the truth

Sweet illusions brought heartache

Clarity saves me.

Keys

Access is not free

Effort, presence, love are keys

For just us, to be

Affirmations

Eternal by God

Beauty by Mother Nature

Divine by Design



Sisters of Evermore

Mira Lee Rinehart

Cathedral

By: River Shepherd

Safe around me –
like a blackberry thicket.

You, the cathedral
with bramble dome

I, the patron below
taking the rabbit trail.

Sun breaks through
thorny canes green and brown.

You, the cathedral
branches holding up the sky.

I, the small creature
creeping under your thorns.

Birds sing hymns above
only they know the words.

You, the cathedral
the bramble-tree.

I, the small thing,
eyes wide, clinging

in dappled light
to your trunk.

Slicing Apples

By Michael Ray Stark

This morning I was slicing an
apple I didn't realize how long

It had been since I had done this
Years, to be precisely vague

-

I do remember that

They were your favorite snack

Paired with peanut butter

Two things that go so well
together

-

You always enjoyed the time I
spent Arranging the slices like a
small bouquet To present to you
with a flourish

-

I finished my snack slowly

As I washed my dish

The smell of fruit hung in the air

A remnant of a season that had
passed



The following test is in chinuk wawa language and may not be screen reader accessible.

ikta tipsu ya kəmtəks (What Grass Knows)

By: bishop foshee

ixt-san, tipsu ya nanich san. wik ya kəmtəks ikta san pi ʔaksta san. bət ya kəmtəks ya tiki san. san ya munk-wam tipsu pi tipsu ya chaku-tilixam q^hiwa san ya chaku k^hapa qusax. ukuk ikta, tipsu ya kəmtəks.

One day, a blade of Grass saw the Sun. Grass doesn't know who or what Sun is. But he knows he likes Sun. Sun warms him and that he grew because Sun was in the sky. Those things, he knows.

ixt-pulak^hli, tipsu ya nanich mun. wik ya kəmtəks ikta mun pi ʔaksta mun. bət ya kəmtəks wik ya tiki mun. mun ya munk-k^hul yaka pi tipsu wik ya chaku-tilixam q^hiwa mun ya chaku k^hapa qusax. ukuk ikta, tipsu ya kəmtəks.

One night, Grass saw Moon. Grass doesn't know who or what Moon is. But he knows he doesn't like Moon. Moon makes him cold, and he didn't grow because Moon was in the sky. Those things, he knows.

ixt-pulakhli, tipsu hayash-wawa mun. ya wawa,

“pus-ikta ma chaku?! wik-q^hənchi ma tiki chaku k^hapa qusax!” dret saliks uk tipsu.

One night, Grass scolds Moon. He says,

“Why have you come?! You never need to come into the sky!” Grass is very angry.

mun ya nanich uk ixt tipsu. wik saliks yaka. ya wawa tipsu,

“wik-q^hənchi na tiki chaku k^hapa qusax? wik kakwa ma wawa. na chaku k^himta k^hapa san pus wik mayka chaku-paya.” mun ya sitkum-hihi. wik tipsu ya sitkum-hihi.

Moon saw that one Grass. Moon's not angry. Moon says to Grass,

“I never need to come into the sky? It's not like you say. I come after Sun so you don't burn.” Moon smiles. Grass does not smile.

wəxt san, tipsu ya hala san.

“mun dret ya wawa nayka chaku-paya pus wik ya chaku k^himta k^hapa mayka. dret

kakwa ya wawa? əbə yaka ʔəminxwət?”

The next day, Grass yells to Sun.

“Moon told me that I'll burn up if Moon doesn't come up after you. Is what they said true? Or did Moon lie?”

san ya nanich uk ixt tipsu. dret tunus uk tipsu. alta san ya wawa “dret kakwa mun ya wawa. pus k^hanawi-san nayka miʔayt k^hapa qusax, nawitka kakwa ma chaku-paya. pi pus k^hanawi-san na miʔayt yakwa, dret tilay ma iliʔi chaku.”

Sun saw that one blade of Grass. That grass was very small. Then Sun said, “It really is like Moon says. If I sat in the sky all day, you would indeed burn up. And if I sat here all day, your land would become very dry.”

alta tipsu ya təmtəm “dret na tiki tseqw! pus dret tilay uk iliʔi chaku alta na chaku-hilu!”

Then Grass thinks, “I really like water! If the land becomes really dry then I'll die!”

alta ixt-pulakhli, tipsu ya nanich mun. sayaaa yaka miʔayt. bət k^ha ya wawa mun, “k^hilay-təmtəm nayka. wik nayka kəmtəks wik ʔush-pus wik-qhənchi ma miʔayt k^hapa qusax.”

Then one night, Grass sees Moon. Faaaar away Moon sits. But still Grass says to Moon, “I'm sorry. I didn't know it would be bad if you never sat in the sky.”

alta mun ya wawa “ʔush mayka. chxi-tilixam mayka. hayu ma tiki chaku-kəmtəks. bət, pus ma shiksh əbə tilixam wik ʔaska təmtəm ʔas tiki nayka- wawa ʔaska ikta ma chaku-kəmtəks khapa san pi nayka.”

Then Moon says, “You're good. You're young. You have much you need to learn. But, if your friends or family they don't think they need me- tell them what you learned from Sun and I.”

pi kakwa kwansəm tipsu yaka munk.

And like that it was forevermore Grass would do that.

The following test is in chinuk wawa language and may not be screen reader accessible.

yutqat-t^hiyaʔwit

k^hapa Sagegrace McKenzie

k^hanawi-q^ha hayu-xələl k^hapa leyk.

Movement is everywhere at the lake

k^hanawi-ikta hayu xələl-x ələl.

Everything is moving.

k^hapa win,

In the air,

k^hapa ston,

On the rocks,

k^hapa tipsu pi tatis,

On the grass and flowers,

hayu-hayu inəp^hu ʔaska ʔatwa-ʔatwa.

Many bugs are moving constantly.

dret ayaq ʔaska xələl.

They can really move.

ulq'-latet inəphu pi t'ukti-tipiʔ inəp^hu pi ant^hyeʔ,

Dragonfly, butterfly, bee,

k^hanumakwst ʔas ishish.

They dance together.

ma hayu-kəmtəksʔ

Do you hear?

lemush-let^hla ukuk,

That buzzing,

ʔaska pumpum ukuk.

That's their drums.

alta k^hapa kusax.

Then in the sky.

hayu-hayu kələkələ ʔaska ʔatwa-ʔatwa.

Many birds are moving constantly.

luxlux-kələkələ ʔas luʔluʔ saxali k^hapa tsəqw.

Swallows are circling high above the water.

dret ayaq ʔaska qhawaq!

They fly so fast!

kalaytən-kakwa ʔaska.

They're arrow-like.

hayash-k'aʔk'aʔ ya hihi.

Raven, he's laughing.

saxali pi kikwəli ya xələl yaka latet.

Up and down, he moves his head.

kwansəm yaka hayu-hihi.

He's always laughing.

alta k^hapa tsəqw.

Then in the water.

luʔluʔ, miʔayt khəltəs saxali k^hapa tsəqw.

Circles, just on the water's surface.

t'ik-t'ik-t'ik k^hapa uk tsəqw.

Drip, drip, drip on the water.

supna-supna-supna chaku shwaq^hiq.

Jump, jump, jump come frogs.

pi uk samən ʔas sic'hum

and the fish they swim,

kakwa-tsəqw ʔaska xələl.

like water, they move.

hayu-let^hla miʔayt khanawi-q^ha k^hapa uk leyk.

There is so much noise everywhere at the lake.

khanawi-tilixam ʔas hayu-xələl.

Everyone is moving.

k^hanawi-tilixam...

Everyone...

bət wik yutqat-t^hiyaʔwit.

but not Heron.

yutqat-t^hiyaʔwit ya mitxwit.

Heron, he stands.

ya miʔayt k^hapa tsəqw,

He stands in the water,

kakwa ston.

Like stone.

ʔawa ya xələl yaka latet.

Slowly he moves his head.

iləp-iwa...k^himt'a-iwa...

Forwards...backwards...

ʔawa...ʔawa...

Slowly...Slowly...

kakwa ya hal ya upt'ik^hi-ʔip^hayt.

Like this, he pulls his bowstring.

wik mayka hilu nanich yaka.

Don't look away.

ʔush-nanich.

Watch carefully.

p'uʔ!

Shoot!

yaka p'uʔ!

He shoots!

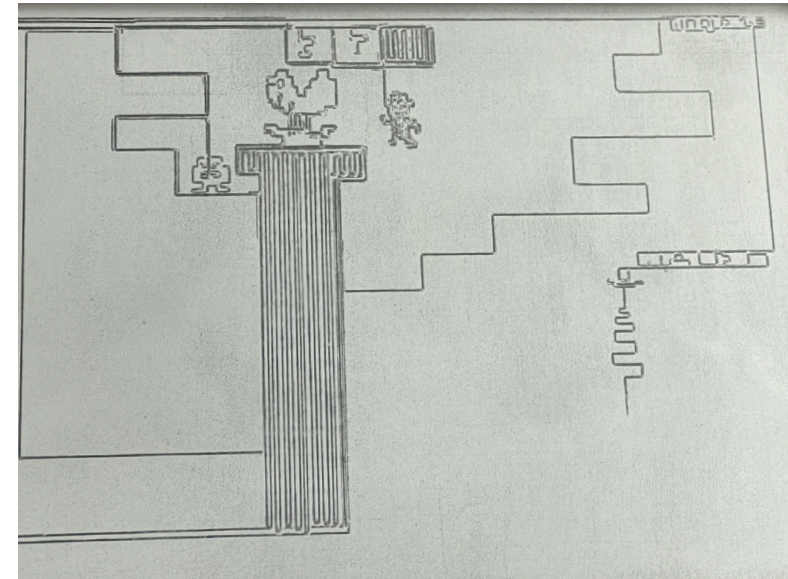
alta ya mək^hmək.

Then he eats.

BIOIO2G, ANTHIOI: in summation

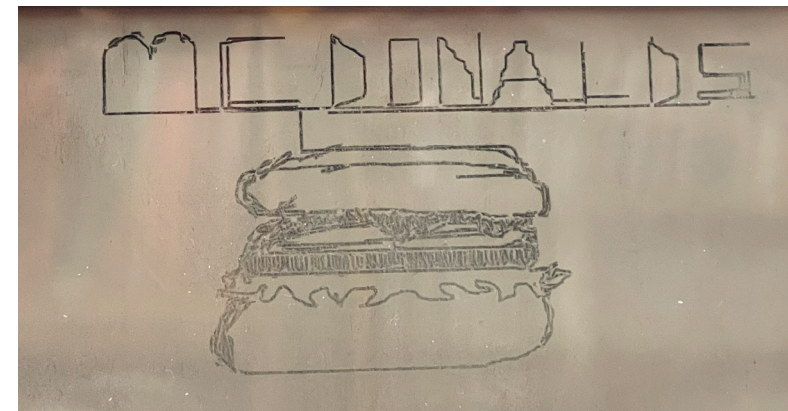
By: River Shepherd

It's a lot of living and dying
over millions of years, until -
Everything is
Different.



Funtile 1

Waldo Przekop



Funtile 2

Waldo Przekop

Textured Now

By: Flora June Brown

I lie, submerged in the back of her neck,
fully enclosed in the small, dark cavern,
formed from the slopes of her shoulder blades.
Her hair
rests upon me with a hefty weight,
still allowing light to pass through
like a sheet.
Each strand gleams.
Steam escapes skin.

I would like to suck her in,
deeper into my lungs. When I try,
I find I am at capacity.
I refuse to exhale for fear of waste.
I only wish I had a larger vessel.
An enormous pitcher to pour her from.
A glass,
so that she may be swirled and held
beneath my nose.

Her movements imprint upon me as if
I were clay or
paper, at the mercy of a soft pastel.
I must be textured now. Handprints
left all over me,
overlapping,
forming ridges,
perfect places, so well defined
I could set her
there, like a gem.

Cautionary Tales

By Charlie Hahn

Hand a fresh graduate a beer—or maybe four—and a half-smoked cigarette, filter bleached from nursing too many mouths. Let them speak—unguided, unjudged. You will find that he or she will almost always wind up, in one way or another, reminiscing, regretting, and reliving. They'll say something like, "Remember being a kid and thinking grown ups were so dumb for getting themselves addicted to everything? Man, we had no fucking clue." They'll trail off, sickened by hindsight. If there's a fire, their eyes will land on the flames, and they'll stare, remembering without even trying—without even wanting to. Sometimes I can't tell if nostalgia is just regret in disguise.

They'll remember a time when beer tasted like rotten cardboard and the smell of smoke made them sick. They'll remember when their stomachs felt hot and full of spaghetti-os, not warm boxed wine. Inevitably, others will join in. It's intoxicating. Not the drinks, but that cloying scent of humanity. It smells like hot breath and spring. They all know it's better to grieve together than alone. So they speak, to close the gap. Like children reaching for something warm. They trade mementos and anecdotes like baseball cards. They compare and contrast, they relate and listen and they revel in the knowledge that they are not alone. That it wasn't just them that succumbed to this universal trap; that despite the incessant warnings, the frantic horror stories, the worried words of mothers and teachers, they were not the only ones who had to learn the hard way. I'm not sure I know how to learn any other way. I'm not even sure if I want to.

They'll look for validation, invent explanation and place blame. "I only drink 'cause of my dad. He couldn't even get to sleep without tossing back a rack. He always told the best bedtime stories when he was drunk. I mean c'mon, I had no chance." He says this with a chuckle, a very dry chuckle. He's drinking a miller light—his dad's favorite. He can hear his own defensiveness now, and he doesn't like it much. I can hear it too. Back to the flames.

Eventually the blame will expire, and they'll transition to regret. "If onlys" and "what-ifs" chase the rising smoke somewhere no one can see; and the smoke teaches them to fly. To fly away from the reality that in the time it took to learn by means of experimentation, childhood was outlived. Everyone speaks with practiced certainty, rehearsing justifications already worn thin. It's too late now anyways—they've discovered warmth comes from that which has already been burned. You can't unlearn a truth, no matter how badly you might want to. Yet, hope lives on—

hovering somewhere close, always within reach. It is a flightless thing; hope. I'm afraid of hope, but I just can't seem to outrun it. Perhaps it's human nature. But if that's true, where does our cynicism fit? I think hope lives in my stomach, and nihilism clouds my head. My head tells me I have a stomachache. It begs the question,

"What's the point in learning from my mistakes if I don't even get a second go? Am I anything more than a cautionary tale?" A poorly rolled joint is being passed around. It's mostly leaves and stems but nobody seems to mind. No one ever describes joy—only relief. I wonder, though, how different the two really are.

And so we gather—for a drink, an abused cigarette, and the company of others like us. Others that at least try to pretend to understand our naked minds and backwards bodies; enablers do make the best of friends. The night ages and words slur. Everyone stays as long as they can. Not because it helps, but because it's what we do. I hope someone remembers to feed the fire. We'll need something to look at besides each other. Besides ourselves.

Empty Seats

By: Michael Ray Stark

Today, the empty seats on the bus
Are not a welcome sight

-

Today, they are a reminder
Of a spot once held by someone

-

Today, I long to see them filled
To save me from their vacant state

-

Today, these spaces are so persistent in their
meaning
I hope for all our sakes
This will not be the case tomorrow.



Homeless Fear

By: Michael Ray Stark



It happens now
Everytime I see
Someone who fits the description
Of a houseless person

-

I think of the elderly man
Stabbed to death randomly
outside a starbucks

-

I was in a hospital
When I read the article
So near and far from danger

-

Much like now
Biking past someone
Who I'm sure is a nice person

-

Though when I pass I notice
A large wooden handled knife
In a sheath the color of stone
Patiently waiting in a back pocket
When I am sure
It's longing for a warm kitchen to call
home.



“Reflections”

Waldo Przekop

Catalyst

By: Charlie Davis

Imbued with reckless temperament
like the running of the bulls,
chasing and clamoring towards
catastrophe. Stoked by the fervor
of cacophony. Proud horns when
our sadist whips about spilling
blood with linguistic swords. Knifing
out red canyons amongst the masses
as the mental divide splits wide,
with mouths agape mumbling
numb bemusement.

Our reaction conceives
hot consequence.

Our response favors
doors of discernment.

“And so it goes”, child mind
paves childish ways. Plastic
playground whirls. Tempting
fierce greed grabbing. Power
birthed by golden sharp
canine honed tongue. Inheritance
rotten, foul mouths breathe the
stench of distrust. Withering
the few with flowers. Engulfed
by spiraling towers. Thrust
opposite of earth.

Artificial Safety

By: Cassandra Thoel

I'm not much of a photographer. I mainly use my phone for catching shoplifters at work. In an effort to adopt a more positive outlook, I felt compelled to scroll through my camera reel, flipping through pictures of men I've caught shoving tall boys of Hurricanes down their pants and college kids sneakily concealing condoms that I would have a talk with later and pay for them out of my own pocket because they're too young to be having kids and I'm willing to shell out 6 bucks.

I came across a picture of my roommate's cat, Rocky. I thought it would be funny to have a small pumpkin for him to carve. He's like our needy 3rd roommate who never pays rent, loafers around, and watches the birds I feed outside. All his instincts as a fierce predator are gone, and if left to his own devices he wouldn't make it 5 minutes on his own outside with squirrels and cars zooming past. I had placed a butcher knife beside him to add a little danger to him. Like he'd kill you in your sleep, plotting your demise for not feeding him on time that day. I can't help but imagine that when he looked up, he was thinking *Why do you do this to me, woman?* I took the picture because I wanted to capture how ridiculous comfort looks when it's dressed up like danger. Rocky has no worries, no job, no rent, and yet I still find ways to make him look menacing, as if to project my own tension onto a cat who has never worked a day in his life.

The very next picture I took was at Lane in the center building by the elevator, showing the evacuation map and fire alarm with a sign saying "raise your fitness level one step at a time,

take the stairs." As if the sign were calling people fat, and you should lose weight because who knows if a fire happens, you're fucked. Below the sign was a hand sanitizer dispenser with more signs of danger and how you should take precautions because germs are everywhere. To the left, a sign with two hands clasping each other with white bold lettering saying "know your rights", "what is sexual misconduct", and followed by where to report if such an event might occur. More danger. I took that picture because it felt like a snapshot of modern anxiety. How every sign screams danger, responsibility, or shame. Even our encouragement to be healthy is worded like a threat. It's all supposed to make us feel "safe," but mostly it just reminds me how fragile everything is.

On one hand, you have Rocky, who gets fed twice a day, has his litter box scooped, flea treatment that costs an arm and a leg, a cat tree that he can climb and stretch on, nails done once a month, whose only current danger is constantly getting sung to various Fleetwood Mac songs by a crazy woman who is cooking with headphones on in the kitchen. Meanwhile, for humans, being surrounded by warnings in a 4x5 space only reminds us that the dangers of being outside are endless, being fat, burned up, and sexually assaulted, coated with a virus that could kill thousands if not millions.

It could be I'm drawn to the tension between safety and danger, comfort and chaos. The cat picture shows artificial danger in a safe world, and the elevator photo shows artificial safety in a dangerous world. How people and systems dress up their fears to make them feel manageable. My aesthetic seems to be humor mixed with quiet dread. I try to have my work drip with sarcasm and cynicism, mocking the world around me. However, despite overwhelming

cynicism, a core part of my aesthetic is the sense of frustrated optimism while being humorous and relatable. It could be my way of processing the world: laugh first as a coping mechanism, analyze later when it feels safe.

When I look back at both pictures together, I start to see a pattern form. One mocks Rocky, armed with his tiny pumpkin and my kitchen knife, represents a safe version of danger, a controlled chaos I can share on the internet, whereas the school signs, plastered with warnings, represent the opposite: a dangerous version of safety, where everything is regulated but nothing feels secure. Possibly I'm somewhere between those two pictures? A person trying to laugh at danger while living in a world that never stops warning me about it, trying to create fear. I said I wasn't much of a photographer, but maybe I just take pictures to prove I'm still looking.



The Seven Virtues

Mira Lee Rinehart

Villanelle for the angry-hearted

By River Shepherd

Let this anger be unfurled

Let us all ask now,

“Who killed the world?”

Trees, mossy, ancient, burlled;

burning up by millions now -

let this anger be hurled

at oil-igarchs around coffers curled -

let us never stop shouting,

“Who killed the world?”

Downpours on droughtlands, water pearled -

torrents too strong for fighting,

let this anger be whirled

toward rulers and states swirled -

into narcissism so blighting -

“Who killed the world?”

Since all is burning down around us,

and life itself will choke on ashes,

let this question be unfurled:

“Who killed the world?”

The Letter

By Charlie Hahn

The pages look flat and unremarkable amidst the eclectic shrine of teenage angst and boredom—though it’s easy to question how distinguishable the two really are. The wall is so littered with garbage, art, and memorabilia, it’s nearly impossible to determine its original color. Baby photos neighboring adult shop recipes with particularly witty slogans. Wild flower seed packets pinned next to emptied dime bags— only the colored ones of course. A thirty year old portrait of my mother and grandmother in a large golden frame, each clad in home-made dresses, adorned with red ribbons and velvet. As a girl the photo disturbed me. I couldn’t recognise my own mother underneath her pink childish features. Next to it hangs a collection of hospital bands. They’re held up by the zebra print duct-tape I got for Huanukka in 2013. My dad playing guitar. My mother holding a baby that isn’t me. My childhood friend whom I haven’t seen in years: we still have unspeakable secrets together; I wonder if she’s kept them. A photograph of Salvador Dhali. So many eyes. A sketch my mother drew of my ex boyfriend. A cluster of stickers I hate. Cigarette packs from all over the world. A piece of my fathers old shirt. A Shel Silverstein poem. Mirrors. Antique candleholders. Newspaper clippings. Posters. And there, usually obstructed by the mess of my comforter, in the humblest of corners, reads the most mysterious message I have ever received, unsatisfying for reasons it could not control.

Now clumsily pasted directly to the plaster, like a peeling advertisement on the side of a gas station, it taunts me. I received it during a spontaneous road trip to Canada with my mother

and younger brother. I can still smell the stink of that van, that saccharine, rancid aroma forever embedded in those stained seats. We were headed north to visit the newborn son of my mothers ex boyfriend. The one who brought her to Eugene eighteen years ago. The one she was still in love with when I was conceived. The one with stretched ear lobes. The one she requested witness my birth. The one who miraculously, has the same first name as my father.

Hilariously, I can’t remember where my father was during this excursion, even though this was quite a few years before him and my mother were separated. Samuel—my cosmic father not my biological one—lived off grid near the border in a cabin with his wife and new baby boy, affectionately named “Weaver” as directed by a friend who claimed she dreamt the baby be named after her favorite spider. They live comfortably in the woods accommodated by their tinctures, outhouse, wood stove, and copious psychedelics. Ordinarily, I would’ve been thrilled at the opportunity to get out of the city and enjoy a week exploring the forest, pretending to be a lost child and meeting trees. Unfortunately however, I was too distracted by the ache in my mouth to appropriately indulge.

I had just had my expander installed a few days before departure, and had not a moment of comfort since. It was a very strange feeling to have a mouth full of metal and colored rubber in a practically medieval setting. The juxtaposition was plain ugly, and though I tried desperately to ignore it, the pain only grew. Of course the family didn’t have any advil, just a stinky purple vial of some syrupy substance that Samuel would mix with lemon juice and hot water. By day three, the swelling was so extreme, the roof of my mouth had begun to swell around the expander itself. That night I woke up sobbing in the straw cot I was sharing with my mother. The pain was too much, and it was beginning to scare me. Knowing the nearest dentist or

Urgent Care was hours away, my mother could only attempt to distract me. She searched their bookshelf in the candlelight briefly before removing a faded copy of *Anne of Green Gables*. She read it aloud to me for hours, before falling back asleep with the book in her hands. I stayed up until morning reading: there was no sleeping with the pain. I found respite only in Anne's girlish tales of Avonlea.

In the morning Samuel found me clinging to his book. He let me stick a pencil through his gauged ears and treated me like an adult. They let me give Weaver a bath. The pain had spread to my head now, and I felt feverish. The whole trip had such a surrealness to it. By the fifth day, I was so sleep deprived and delirious I felt like I might never see home again. Time felt false, and the stink of incense and sawdust was the only thing tying me to reality. Obviously, my Mother had to cut the trip short. She frantically packed our belongings back into the van, piling things on top of each other instead of neatly stacking them like she had before.

Before we left, we all congregated on the dirt driveway to say our goodbyes. Samuel and my mother hugged each other so long it made me uncomfortable. His wife sent me home with her stinky concoction, and a sack of lavender and sage. Samuel gave me his book. But before he let me leave with it, he let me in on the book's secret. He told me the story of how he had found it in a freebox when he lived on the East coast as a teenager. In more recent years, he had discovered a secret envelope between its pages. He lamented on the magic and superstitious nature of such a finding, before tenderly handing me the book, then the note.

After settling into the car, I attempted to read it. In my state however, the loopy cursive and faded lettering were all but inscrutable to my tired eyes. Hardly lucid and enchanted by its mystery though, I gingerly tucked it away to be unboxed in my improved state. Ten hours never

felt so short.

Days later, I was back in the safety of my urban dwelling, nursed to health by antibiotics and Advil. I felt better overnight. Still not unpacked, I was reshelving my clothes when I came across the book. Enlightened by the memory of the treasure inside, I quickly unfolded the pages and began reading.

It was a letter dated January 29th, 1951. The contents are quite mundane really, but I had never read anything so enthralling. Just holding the pages felt uncanny. There were names of people that today are probably wandering the halls of nursing homes, or playing with their grandchildren, or more than likely, are nothing but decomposition and dust. The writer mentioned a new toboggan, and a pond that had frozen over. Robert was going to take the boys skating, and then to try out their new sled. Katherine received her new mittens. The sender was returning the book, and mentioned exchanging it because she had already read it. I immediately felt it was the most valuable thing I owned.

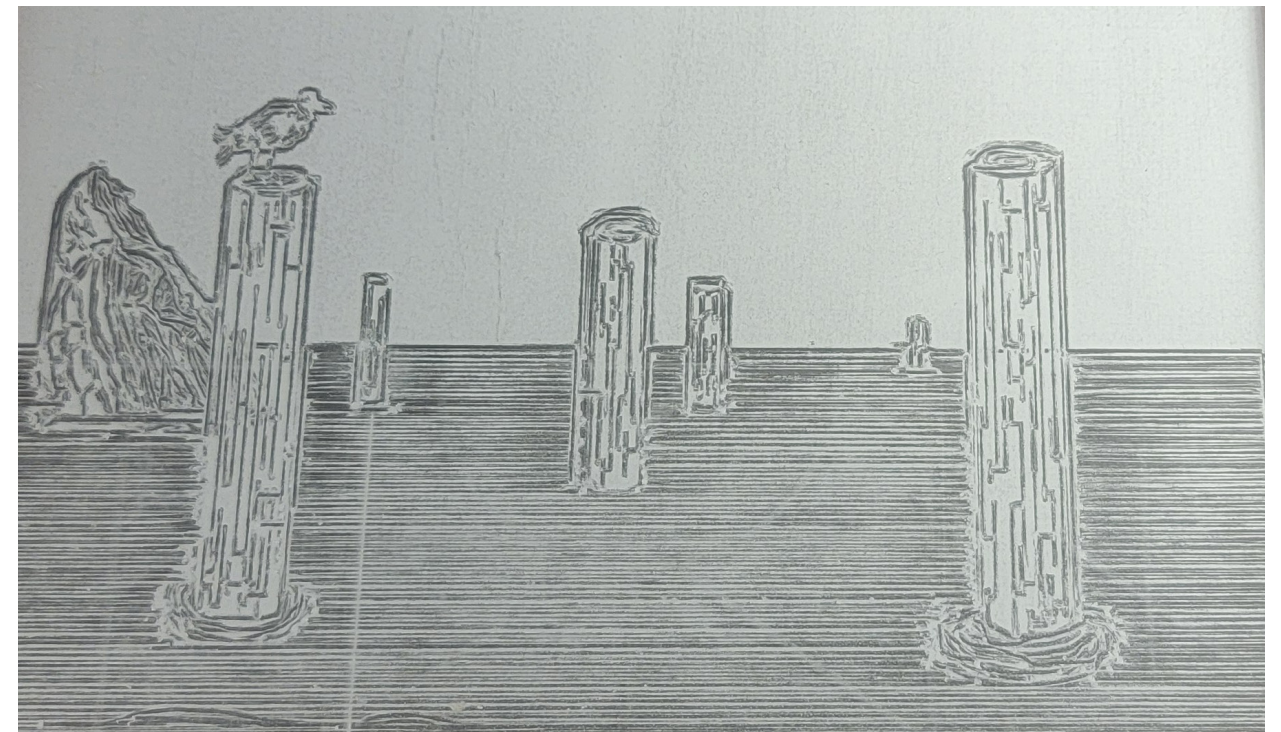
So naturally, as one does with that which is precious, I stowed it in my lockbox amongst jewelry and shells, tucked securely in the back of my closet. For years I would visit it, scrutinizing over its pages, until I eventually realized, to my dismay, it no longer evoked imaginings and fantasies of the characters whose life it illustrated, but poignant memories of my trip to Canada. Something so timeless, so specific was being misused in my hands. It deserved redemption, to be reborn, to be seen, to be truly appreciated—not locked away in a teenager's closet as a keepsake.

So, during a manic redecoration of my bedroom, I retrieved the pages and did what I could

to justify my hoarding of such an artifact. I flattened and mended the pages, before smothering them in glue and slapping them against my freshly painted wall. When I returned to admire them after drying, I was overcome by grief. I sobbed for hours, overcome by regret and embarrassment. I couldn't believe what I had done.

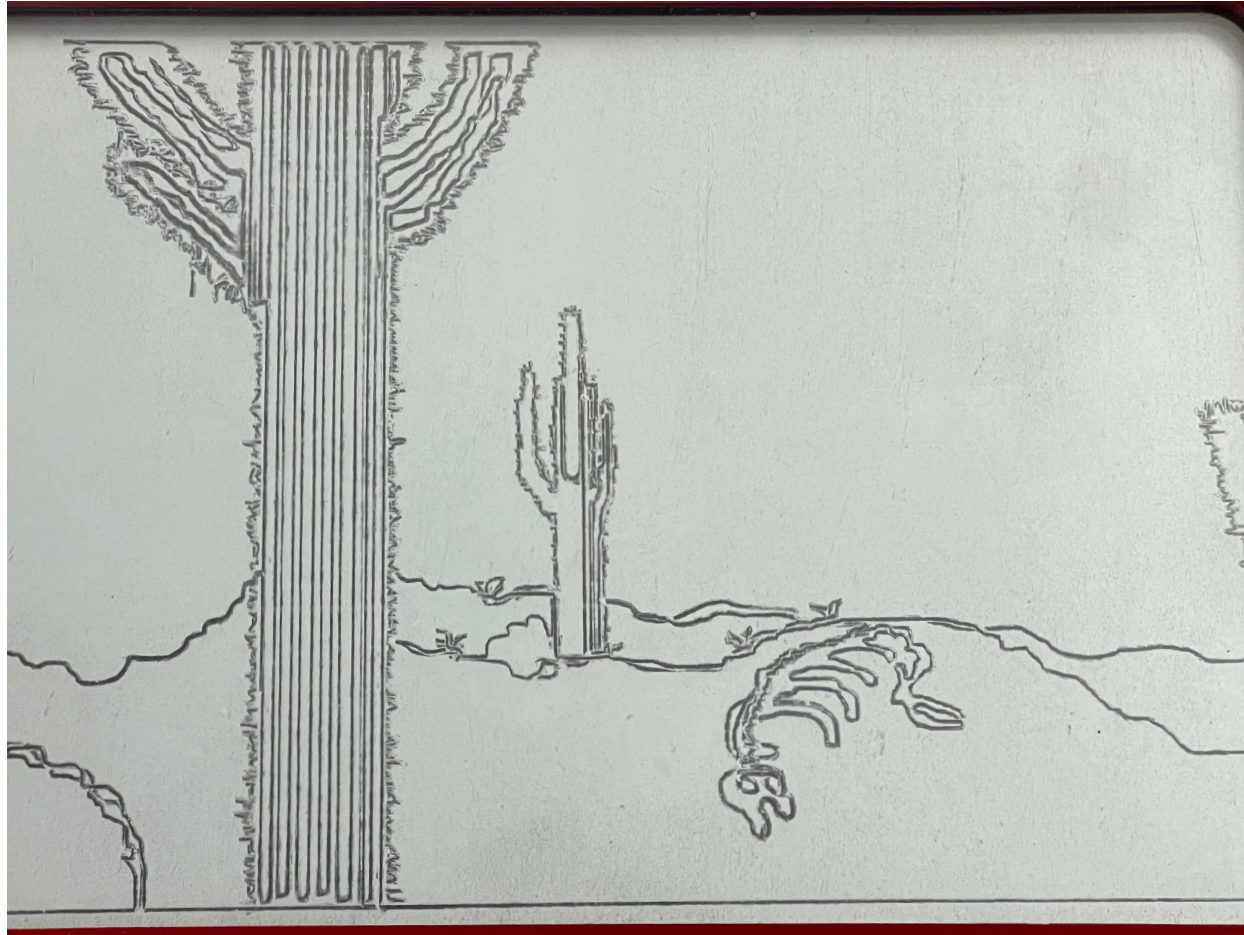
For weeks, this tragedy held my room hostage in a state of disarray and chaos, frozen in a time of upheaval and creative madness. There was no fixing it. The letter was figuratively and literally stuck there now, its removal certain to result in its own destruction. It was meant to be preserved, not displayed; treasured with the utmost care and delicacy. For nearly eighty years it had withstood the test of time, only to meet its end at the hands of an undiagnosed fourteen year old, forced onto a shrine it didn't belong to.

The greatest tragedy of all though is still this: I remember every delirious hazy detail of my five day trip to Canada like it was yesterday, seared into my mind by fever. What I don't remember is anything about the letter. The letter that's sealed to the wall in front of my bed, the one I see every night before falling asleep. I had to reread it line by line for maybe the hundredth time just to write this. It's one of those things that you want so badly to be significant, to be symbolic. But no matter how hard you try, or perhaps because of how hard you try, it just never sticks. At least not where you want it to.



“A Ponder of Forgotten Purpose”

Waldo Przekop



“Barren Vigil”

Waldo Przekop

In the Distance

By Charlie Davis

7000 miles away
from where I sit
the news hits,
27 dead 72 missing.
Bombs going off
in my head.

Gently sipping coffee.
Staring into the woods.

The winter wind
rips through the trees.
Dusty rubble
Pieces of flesh
Missing bodies
Can somebody
do something!

That was yesterday.
Today, I’m unscathed.

Or am I?
Or, are we?

Slipping past
the darkness.
Marking our graves.

The coffee tastes great.
The view is nice.

Winter is in the trees.
Sunlight pours down
silent as the distance,
and I'm sitting with
Bombs
Rubble
Flesh
Winter

Heart Breath

By Scarlett Philibosian

When I had something to say,
but did not know how to speak it,
barely knew how to feel it,
then I knew—

I knew—

Knew what?—

Knew there were letters lying unassembled, unspoken for:
my heart's breath,
that has no words.

And when I felt the energy rising,

flowing,

pressing outwards,

finally falling out of fingertips,

like practicing blessed witchcraft on myself,

a secret, perfect, chaos:

I answered my own calling, the

energy of my vortex.

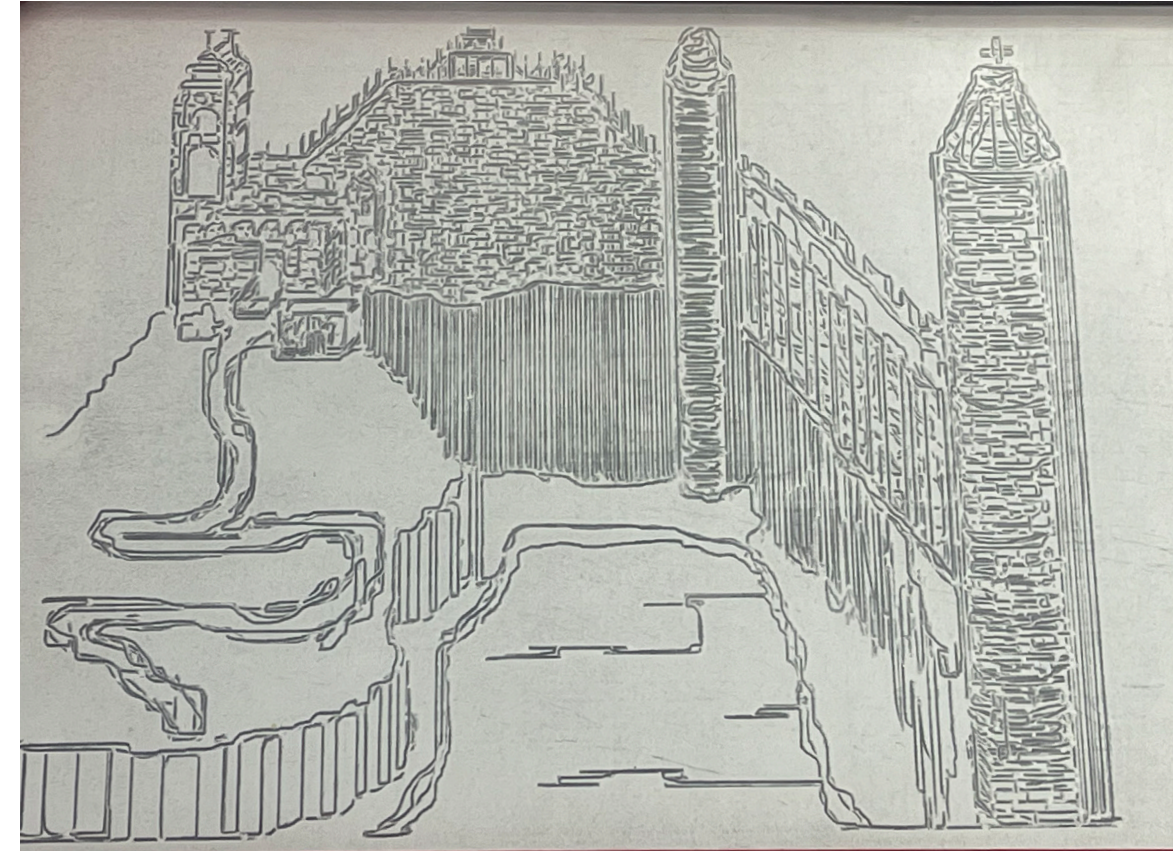
And then,

before I revised it,

before I smelled it for cliché, or tasted it for success,

before I even read it,

I was a poet.



“A Peaceful Respite”

Waldo Przekop